

# Affirmation and Negation

## Reading Avicenna's *Al-'Ibāra* Alongside Hellenistic Commentators

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**Abstract:** The relation of priority and posteriority between the affirmation and negation, which Aristotle put forth in *Peri Hermēneias*, has had some important consequences in terms of logical attribution and judgement. The problem encountered here is the question of whether affirmation (i.e., affirming something of something) and negation (i.e., denying something of something) share the same status as a statement (*qawl*). In the fifth chapter of the first article (I.5) of *al-'Ibāra*, the volume from *al-Shifā* corpus that corresponds to *Peri Hermēneias*, Avicenna deals with affirmation and negation in terms of these logical consequences and reveals his own position on the subject by way of distinguishing between attribution and judgement. However, the text of *al-Shaikh al-Rāis* presents some obscurities for the reader. The reason behind this obscurity is that a debate taking place among Hellenistic commentators lies in the background of Avicenna's text. This article proposes to study this text alongside the Hellenistic commentators in order to better understand the logical problem in the relevant passages from *al-'Ibāra*. Our guide in this reading will be Boethius, who wrote a Latin commentary on *Peri Hermēneias*. In the present study, I will try to reveal how the positions of the Hellenistic commentators (i.e., Alexander of Aphrodisias, Porphyry, and Syrianus), whose views Boethius conveyed, coincide with the views Avicenna defended and criticized regarding affirmation and negation. In this respect, my reading in this article aims to better understand Avicenna's relevant text and its logical extensions as well as the dimensions of his relationship with Hellenistic commentators.

**Keywords:** affirmation, negation, statement, attribution, judgement, logic, *al-'Ibāra*, *Peri Hermēneias*, Avicenna, Aristotle, Boethius, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Porphyry, Syrianus

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## Introduction

The second book of Aristotle's logical corpus, *Peri Hermêneias* [*On Interpretation*], which comes after *Katêgoriai* [*Categories*] and mainly deals with propositions and relations between propositions, puts forward that the first single statement-making sentence (Gr. *logos apophantikos*, Ar. *qawl jāzim*) is the affirmation (*kataphasis*) and the next is the negation (*apophasis*): *esti de eis prôtos logos apophantikos kataphasis, eita apophasis*.<sup>1</sup> How to understand the priority and posteriority between the affirmation and negation mentioned here has been a matter of debate among commentators in the Aristotelian tradition. However, far beyond being a textual preference, this priority and posteriority that commentators have discussed is related to an issue at the heart of logic, namely the question of attribution and judgement. The problem that needs to be solved logically regarding priority and posteriority is whether the expressions of affirmation and negation belong to the same genus or whether negation is subordinate to affirmation.

As for Avicenna's *al-Shifā*, which emerged as a rewrite<sup>2</sup> of the Aristotelian corpus in Arabic, *al-'Ibāra* is the work in Avicenna's monumental encyclopedia that corresponds to *Peri Hermêneias* and the fifth chapter of its first article of (*al-'Ibāra*, I.5) deals with affirmation and negation. Here, the extensions of Avicenna's nuanced treatment of the subject have importance in terms of predication. However, the text of *al-Shaikh al-Rāis* remains obscure to the reader in certain respects. The reason for this impenetrability is that a debate taking place among Hellenistic commentators lies in the background of Avicenna's text. As far as I could determine, the background discussion among the commentators whom Avicenna anonymously mentioned and criticized has yet to have been discussed.<sup>3</sup> However, reading Avicenna's text without comprehending the backdrop discussion makes

1 Aristotle, *On Interpretation* 17a8-9, *Aristotelis Categoriae et Liber de Interpretatione*, Ed. L. Minio Paluello (Oxford Classical Texts, 1949), 51; cf. Aristotle, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, Trans. J. L. Ackrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 46; cf. Aristotle, *Yorum Üzerine*, Trans. Saffet Babür (Ankara: İmge, 2018), 11; cf. Aristoteles, *Mantiku Aristū* (3 Vol.), Ed. Abdurrahman Badawī (Kuwait & Beirut: Wakālat al-Maṭbū'at & Dār al-Qalam 1980), I, 103.

2 I think the dialectic of identity and difference in this "rewriting" is extremely delicate and prolific in terms of the history of philosophy. For an interpretation of the identity and difference between Aristotle and Avicenna, see E. Burak Şaman, "Felsefe Tarihinde Aynılık ve Fark: Aristoteles ve İbn Sinā Arasında Bir Derrida Okuması", *Felsefe ve Tarih*, Ed. Gökhan Mürteza (İstanbul: Pinhan, 2020), 103–20.

3 Although they do not establish any connection with the commentators regarding affirmation and negation, for two important studies dealing with the logical consequences of the issue as discussed by Avicenna, see Jari Kaukua, "Avicenna on Negative Judgement", *Topoi* 39/3 (2020): 657–66; Wilfrid Hodges, "Affirmative and Negative in Ibn Sinā", *Insolubles and Consequences: Essays in Honour of Stephen Read*, Ed. Catarina Dutilh Novaes ve Ole Thomassen Hjortland (London: College Publications, 2012), 119–34.

understanding what the philosopher says difficult, even on a verbal level.

As such, I propose in this article to read *al-'Ibāra's* passages on affirmation and negation alongside the Hellenistic commentators. I think this reading will clarify the philosopher's text and its logical conclusions. At the same time, I believe that this reading will contribute to understanding the dimensions of *al-Shaikh al-Raīs'* relationship with the commentators and his familiarity with the commentators' discussions in terms of the history of philosophy.

The first section of my article will attempt to closely analyze *al-'Ibāra*, I.5. In the second section, I will try to identify the logical question that lays at the basis of the discussion as well as the commentators to whom Avicenna had anonymously referred. On this subject, I will take Boethius' commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Hermēneias* as my guide, in which he conveyed the views of the commentators whose commentaries have not reached the present. Boethius' commentary will take on an important function in deciphering the commentaries that Avicenna is understood to have benefited from but which are unavailable. In the third and last section, I will elucidate upon Avicenna's approach by pointing out the logical extensions of the philosopher's views on the subject.

## 1. Affirmation and Negation According to Avicenna: *al-'Ibāra*, I.5

In *al-'Ibāra* I.5, Avicenna identifies definitive statement (*al-qawl al-jāzim*) as all that can be said to be true (*şādiq*) or false (*kādhib*), which relates one meaning to another by means of affirmation (*ijāb*) or negation (*salb*).<sup>4</sup> After stating that the simple definitive statement (*al-qawl al-jāzim al-baṣīṭ*) is predicative (*ḥamlī*), he indicates the simplest (*absaṭuhu*) predicative to be the affirmative (*mūjīb*), followed by the negative (*sālīb*).<sup>5</sup>

4 See Avicenna, *al-Shifā: al-'Ibāra*, Ed. Mahmoud al-Khudairi (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib el-Arabi, 1952), 32; cf. *eş-Şifā: Yorum Üzerine*, Tran. Ömer Türker (Istanbul: Litera, 2006), 31. What is meant by *al-qawl al-jāzim* is the expressions declaring an assertion; the Aristotelian equivalent in *Peri Hermēneias* is *logos apophantikos*. The term is also referred to as *qawl jāzim* in the Arabic translation of Aristotle's work as edited by Badawī, cf. Aristoteles, *Mantiku Aristū*, I, 103. Allan Bäck translates it as *apocopate* and states that it can be called *apodeictic*; he gives an explanation regarding his latter suggestion in a footnote: "However the point here seems to be that only those nominal statements having an apocopate predicate are true or false, while other rhetorical or poetical forms are not," see Avicenna, *Avicenna's Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione* (hereinafter referred to as "*Avicenna's Commentary*"), Trans. Allan Bäck (Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 2013), 57. Saffet Babür translates the term as '*bildirsel tam deyim*' into Turkish, cf. Aristoteles, *Yorum Üzerine* 17a8, 11.

5 See Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 33; cf. *Avicenna's Commentary*, 59; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 32.

According to Avicenna, affirmation in its most general form consists of three things:<sup>6</sup>

(i) the subject (*mawḍūʿ*), namely that to which the attribution is made (*mansūb ilayh*)

(ii) the predicate (*maḥmūl*), namely that which is attributed (*mansūb*)

(iii) the attribution of existence (*nisba wujūd*).

In negation, while (i) and (ii) remain constant, what is at stake this time is not the attribution of existence but the removal of the existence of attribution (*rafʿ wujūd al-nisba*).<sup>7</sup> The original term *rafʿ* that Avicenna uses is worthy of consideration. To Avicenna, while affirmation includes the attribution of existence, negation does not include a relation such as the attribution of non-existence, instead it involves the removal of the existence of attribution. According to Avicenna, the reason why the negative comes after the positive is precisely related to this difference I have just mentioned, namely that negation includes the non-existence of attribution rather than the attribution of non-existence. This reasoning can be read more clearly in the following lines from Avicenna:

All non-existence (*ʿadam*) is made definite and true by existence (*wujūd*), whereas existence does not need for its being made true to pay attention to non-existence. Therefore, negation is conceived only when it attaches to and removes affirmation, due to being its non-existence. As for the affirmation, it is [something] existential that needs not be known by negation, and so the negative is posterior to the affirmative.<sup>8</sup>

وكلّ عدم فإنّه يتحدّد ويتحقّق بالوجود. والوجود لا يحتاج في تحقّقه أنّ يلتفت إلى العدم، فالسلب لا يتصوّر إلا أنّ يكون عارضاً على الإيجاب رافعاً له؛ لأنّه عدمه؛ وأمّا الإيجاب فهو وجودي مستغن عن أنّ يُعرف بالسلب فيكون السالب بعد الموجب.

In what Avicenna wrote above here, one can first identify one of the basic assumptions of classical philosophy, that a negative cannot be thought of on its own but instead must be thought of only as the absence of an affirmative. An

6 See Avicenna, *al-ʿIbāra*, 34; cf. *Avicenna's Commentary*, 59; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 33.

7 See Avicenna, *al-ʿIbāra*, 34; cf. *Avicenna's Commentary*, 59; *Yorum Üzerine*, 33. Bäck translates the term '*rafʿ*' as elimination, whereas I preferred removal.

8 Avicenna, *al-ʿIbāra*, 34; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 59-60; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 33. For the Avicenna quotations, I have used Bäck's translation with some modifications, although in some places I quite differ from his translation. As for the Arabic block quotations, I have added the Arabic text as edited by al-Khudairi. I have indicated the Arabic short quotations and the Arabic original of the terms in transliteration.

extension of this idea is that affirmation indicates existence, whereas negation indicates the removal of existence and, hence, non-existence. Therefore, the fact that existence always precedes non-existence is seen according to Avicenna as the reason why negation comes after affirmation.

However, Avicenna clarified and warned about his assertion quoted directly above, namely that the negative comes after the positive:

I do not mean by this that the affirmation is existent in the negation, as some commentators say.<sup>9</sup>

ولست أعني بهذا أنّ الإيجاب موجود في السلب، كما قال بعض المفسرين.

To which commentators does the claim here belong, and why does Avicenna object to this claim?<sup>10</sup> Within the framework of this article, I will try to determine to whom the idea Avicenna opposed belonged as well as the origin of the discussion on this subject in the history of philosophy. However, I will first focus on the explanation Avicenna gave as to why he opposed this idea.

To repeat, while Avicenna puts forth as a general thesis that the negative comes after the positive and that negation is the non-existence of affirmation, he specifically emphasized that this thesis should not be understood as affirmation being existent in negation, as some commentators had claimed. His arguments for this are as follows:

For, it is absurd for the affirmation to exist together with the negation. Rather, the thing which would be an affirmation considered on its own, is existent in the definition of the negation.<sup>11</sup>

9 Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 34; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 60; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 33.

10 In his work interpreting the commentary of Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas on Aristotle's *Peri Hermēneias*, Caner Çiçekdağı thought that Avicenna, with this admonition, was criticizing the view of the Heraclitan contradiction; therefore, in his own interpretation of this passage, Çiçekdağı wrote the following without associating the issue with the commentators and without mentioning Avicenna's reference to the commentators: "Yani İbn Sina yokluk ve ortadan kaldırmanın aslında varlık ve oluş temelinde olduğunu düşünmektedir. Öte yandan olumsuzlamayı olumlamanın içine dâhil etmek mümkün değildir, o zaman olumlama kalmaz ve her şey olumsuzlamadan ibaret olurdu. İbn Sina bir şekilde İlkçağ felsefesinin temel bir problemine değinmiş ve çelişki durumunu ele almıştır. Böylece Herakleitosçu bakış açısının eleştirisi Aristotelesçi bir tarzda gerçekleşmiştir. Bu anlamda İbn Sina olumlama ile olumsuzlamanın da bir arada olamayacağını çünkü o zaman olumsuzlamanın içinde olumlamanın ne potansiyel ne de aktüel olarak bulunabileceğini düşünmüştür." See Caner Çiçekdağı, *Peri Hermēneias Üzerine İki Yorum* (Bursa: Sentez, 2018), 90.

11 Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 34; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 60; cf. *Avicenna, Yorum Üzerine*, 33.

فإنَّ الإيجاب يستحيل أن يوجد مع السلب، بل الشيء الذي لو انفرد كان إيجاباً هو موجود في حدّ السلب.

Avicenna exemplified what he wanted to express with this sentence by way of sight and blindness. For him, when it is said that sight is in blindness, it is not meant that sight is existent in blindness, but that sight is existent *in the definition of blindness*; for, blindness is only defined by mentioning that it is the non-existence of sight (معنى هذا أنّ العمى لا يُحدّد إلاّ بأن يذكر أنّه عدم البصر).<sup>12</sup> Thus, Avicenna states that the existence of the attribution of affirmation (*nisbat al-ijāb*) in the attribution of negation (*nisbat al-salb*) is similar to the example of sight and blindness. Namely, the attribution of affirmation according to him is likewise mentioned in the attribution of negation in virtue of its being removed (على أنّها مرفوعة), not in virtue of its being a part (*juz'*) of negation or being included in the negation in terms of existence; rather, the attribution of affirmation is included *within the definition of the negation* (لا على أنّها جزء من السلب أو داخل في السلب وجوداً، بل داخل في حدّ السلب).<sup>13</sup> As such, the whole case is similar to the fact that sight is not existent in blindness itself, but in the definition of blindness. What Avicenna means by 'being included in the definition' is that sight's existence in blindness is mental. According to the philosopher, that the affirmation is existent in the negation does not follow from this. At this point, Avicenna, who distinguished between blindness itself and the knowledge of blindness, says that one cannot understand blindness without knowing what sight is. However, this does not mean that blindness itself (namely, the fact) involves sight; instead they are opposites. In short, Avicenna seems to have based his explanation on the difference between the fact of *x* and the knowledge of *x*.

At this stage, I will try to unpack the issue from Avicenna's perspective in order to understand better the position to which he opposed. In the proposition "The tea is not sweetened," I negate 'being sweetened' from tea, but I do not predicate 'being not sweetened' (non-sweetness) in tea, because to think in the latter way (i.e., to predicate non-sweetness in tea) would be to argue that affirmation exists in negation, as some commentators claimed. However, Avicenna considered that "The tea is not sweetened" as a negation *removes* (*yarfa'u*) the existence of sweetness in the tea and that this happens due to the combination of the particle of negation (*harf al-salb*, namely the 'not' in English) and the affirmation. Avicenna expressed this idea as follows:

12 See, Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 34; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 60; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 33.

13 Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 34-5; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 60; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 33.

When the affirmation is made existent in the negation, then in so far as the negation is removing it, it exists in the negation in so far as there is a combination of it and the particle of negation. Just as when you say "Zayd is not alive;" 'is alive' is what would be an affirmation about Zayd, if there were not a particle of rejection. However, the negation has arrived and removed this attribution.<sup>14</sup>

وإذا جعل الإيجاب موجوداً في السلب فإنّما هو من حيث إنّ السلب إنّما يرفعه فيوجد في السلب من حيث تركيب بينه وبين حرف السلب، كقولك: زيد ليس هو حياً؛ فإنّ >هو حيّ< هو الذي لو لا حرف النفي كان إيجاباً علي زيد، فجاء السلب فرفع هذه النسبة.

In brief, the situation in negation consists for Avicenna of removing the nexus between 'tea' and 'sweetened' in the example being discussed. So, the removal of the attribution or the nexus between the subject and the predicate means that no affirmation exists in the negation.

If we proceed by following the text of *al-'Ibāra*, we read that two views were able to emerge from here. After laying out the keystone regarding the difference between negation and affirmation, Avicenna clarified two perspectives on the subject under discussion and the two positions arising from them:<sup>15</sup>

(A) In one regard it is true to say the affirmation is not together with the negation, for how could the affirmation <both> support the negation and be able to combine with it?<sup>16</sup>

فمن وجهٍ يحقُّ أن يقال إنّ الإيجاب ليس يكون مع السلب، فإنّ الإيجاب كيف يساعد السلب وكيف يجتمع معه؟

(B) And in another regard, it is true to say negation is in reality an object removing the existence that is the affirmation, for the non-existence (*'adam*) and removal (*raf*) obtain the existence (*wujūd*) and occurrence (*husūl*), and are not made definite without it.<sup>17</sup>

ومن وجهٍ يحقُّ أن يقال إنّ السلب بالحقيقة أمر يرفع الوجود الذي هو الإيجاب، فإنّ العدم والرفع إنّما يتناول الوجود والحصول ولا يتحدّد دونه.

According to these two perspectives on affirmation and negation, Avicenna indicated two positions to emerge:

14 Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 35; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 60; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 33.

15 The classification marked as (A) and (B) below is mine.

16 Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 35; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 60; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 33-4.

17 Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 35; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 61; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 34.

(A') To consider affirmation and negation as unable to coexist prevents affirmation from being included in negation, both potentially and actually (يمنع الإيجاب أن يكون داخلاً في السلب بالقوة وبالفعل).<sup>18</sup>

(B') To consider that which causes affirmation to be included in the definition of negation causes affirmation to be included in negation (يجعل الإيجاب داخلاً في السلب).<sup>19</sup>

Mentioning these two positions, Avicenna rejected (B') as follows:

To have affirmation be a part of negation or to be existent in it does not mean that affirmation and negation are combined together.<sup>20</sup>

وليس كون الإيجاب جزءاً من السلب أو موجوداً فيه هو كون الإيجاب والسلب مجتمعين معاً.

Avicenna explained his answer, which includes his rejection of 'affirmation and negation being combined together', with the analogy of odd (*fard*) and even (*zawj*): The odd is existent in the even and the even is existent in the odd, but these facts do not require oddness and evenness to be combined so that a single thing is both odd and even.<sup>21</sup> We can exemplify what Avicenna intended to say with odd numbers like 3 or 5 and an even number like 4: The existence of an odd number such as 3 in the even 4 ( $4 = 3 + 1$ ) or the existence of an even number such as 4 in the odd 5 ( $5 = 4 + 1$ ) requires neither the combining together of oddness and evenness in 4 nor the qualification of 4 as both odd and even.<sup>22</sup>

After Avicenna rejects the second position (B'), he affirms the first position (A') with the following statement:

However, the state of the affirmation in relation to the negation is not this state. Rather it is part of the definition of negation. When it is part of the definition of negation, the negation does not become an affirmation, nor does what is being negated become affirmed, because the negation becomes existent through the affirmation which is part of it only in the intellect.<sup>23</sup>

18 See *ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 Although his interpretation differs from mine, see Bäck's footnote regarding this example, *Avicenna's Commentary*, 61, footnote 124.

23 Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 35-6; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 61; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 34.



لكن ليس حال الإيجاب من السلب هذه الحال، بل هو جزء من حدّ السلب وليس إذا  
كان جزءاً من حدّ السلب صار السلب إيجاباً، أو المسلوبُ موجباً، وصار السلب موجوداً  
مع إيجاب جزؤه إلا في الذهن.

Thus, Avicenna revealed that, because the affirmative is present in the definition of the negative, affirmation and negation cannot be equated at being statement and can coexist only in the mind. For the philosopher, the fact that affirmation is part of the definition of negation does not mean that the affirmation is existent in the negation, because the term needed in the definition of the thing being defined is existent in that thing only mentally, not existentially.

At the end of the relevant text, Avicenna additionally criticizes the commentators' discussions about whether affirmation or negation is superior:

As for what they take up from the account of whether the affirmation or negation is nobler, wherein some of them say, "The affirmation is nobler," while others say, "The negation about divine things is nobler than the affirmation," this is the kind of science that I do not understand and do not tend to understand.<sup>24</sup>

وأما ما خاضوا فيه من حديث أنّ الإيجاب أشرف أو السلب حتى قال بعضهم: إنّ  
الإيجاب أشرف؛ وقال بعضهم إنّ السلب في الأمور الإلهية أشرف من الإيجاب، فنوع  
من العلم لا أفهمه ولا أميل أن أفهمه.

Yet, why did Avicenna find the discussion of superiority meaningless, despite admitting the negative to be posterior to the positive (فيكون السالب بعد الموجب)<sup>25</sup>? Although Avicenna did not give a direct answer to this, as he only mentioned finding this discussion meaningless as quoted above, an answer appears to be able to be given through his theory of judgement. I will return to this issue in the third section of the article.

24 Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 36; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 61; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 34. In this quotation, the view which favors negation over negation in divine things seems to be related to the idea of negative theology in Neo-Platonism. Although discussing the relationship between Avicenna's view on affirmation and negation and negative theology seems very interesting, it is beyond the scope of this article.

25 See, Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 34; *Avicenna's Commentary*, 60; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 33.

## 2. Hellenistic Commentators in the Background of the Debate According to Boethius' Testimony

When attempting to cover the passage about affirmation and negation in Avicenna's *al-'Ibāra* as I did in the previous section, that another discussion is going on in the background about which Avicenna wrote his own lines with this discussion in mind does not escape notice. Moreover, he had already mentioned the commentators without specifying their names. At this point, I will try to determine this background with the thought that reading Avicenna's text alongside the commentators' texts will help better understand Avicenna's intent.

Boethius (d. 524) wrote two commentaries in Latin on Aristotle's *On Interpretation* (*Peri Hermēneias*),<sup>26</sup> and comes to aid in determining of what the discussion among the commentators regarding affirmation and negation consists. Notably, Boethius' voluminous second commentary seems essential for the Avicenna reader to understand the core of the question the philosopher was discussing, the camps in relation to the question as Avicenna put forth, and the ideas to which Avicenna himself was opposed and adhered. Moreover, the fact that the camps in relation to the question as put forth by Avicenna exactly match those expressed by Boethius is remarkable in terms of revealing Avicenna's dialogue with the Hellenistic commentators.

While commenting on the *Peri Hermēneias* passage that concerns this article (*Peri Hermēneias* 16a1-2), Boethius reminds the reader that various types of expressions (Lat. *dictio*) exist such as incomplete or complete sentences (Lat. *orationes vel imperfectae vel perfectae*), that the statement is a species of the perfect sentence (Lat. *oratio perfecta*), and that it can be simple (Lat. *simplex*) or combined (Lat. *compositus*).<sup>27</sup> He then conveys the following dispute and various opinions on the issue:

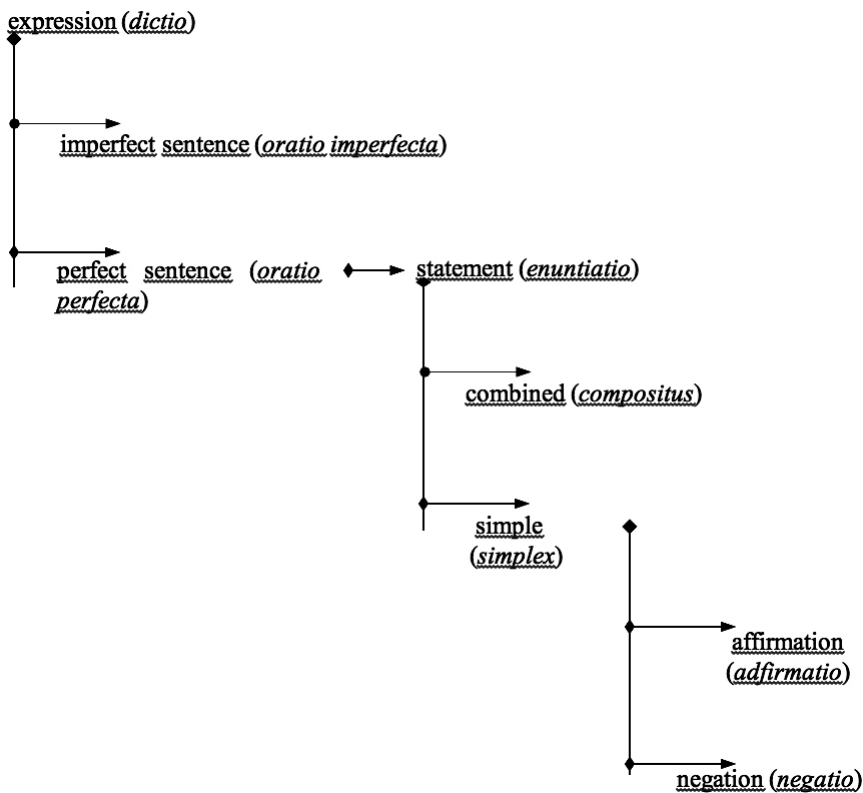
26 Boethius wrote two commentaries on *Peri Hermēneias*, one concise and the other voluminous: (i) *Anicii Manlii Severini Boetii Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermēneias: pars prior / prima editio*, Ed. Carolus Meiser (Leipzig, 1877); (ii) *Anicii Manlii Severini Boetii Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermēneias: pars posterior / secunda editio*, Ed. Carolus Meiser (Leipzig, 1880). The second commentary that this article follows will be referred to as '*Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermēneias: secunda editio*'.

27 Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermēneias: secunda editio*, 15–6; cf. Boethius, *On Aristotle on Interpretation 1-3*, Trans. Andrew Smith (Bloomsbury, 2010), 22.

Philosophers and commentators dispute the kinds of simple statement. For some say that affirmation and negation should be placed under the statement as species. Porphyry belongs to this group. While others do not agree at all but maintain that affirmation and negation are equivocal (Lat. *aequivocus*), that they are called by the same name, i.e., statement and statement is predicated of both as an equivocal name, not as a univocal (Lat. *univocus*) genus. Alexander is the first to belong to this group.<sup>28</sup>

de simplicis vero enuntiationis speciebus inter philosophos commentatoresque certatur. aiunt enim quidam adfirmationem atque negationem enuntiationi ut species supponi oportere, in quibus et Porphyrius est: quidam vero nulla ratione consentiunt, sed contendunt adfirmationem et negationem aequivoca esse et uno quidem enuntiationis vocabulo nuncupari, praedicari autem enuntiationem ad utrasque ut nomen aequivocum, non ut genus univocum; quorum princeps Alexander est.

First, I will schematize the classification here as Boethius put it.



28 Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 16; cf. Boethius, *On Interpretation* 1-3, 22. For the English translation of Boethius' Latin quotations, I have used Andrew Smith's translations with slight modifications.

The discussion that Boethius points to is whether affirmation and negation can be placed under the category of 'simple statement' in a way such that the latter constitutes the formers' genus in the last line of the above diagram. After Boethius divides the various views on this issue into two groups, he begins to emit the claims of both groups, starting with those of Alexander of Aphrodisias.

### 2.1. Alexander of Aphrodisias' View

Although Alexander of Aphrodisias (*circa* 200 C.E.), the renowned commentator of the peripatetic tradition, is known to have written a commentary on *Peri Hermêneias*, it has not survived to the present.<sup>29</sup> However, one can follow the section of his commentary that concerns this article through Boethius' testimony. According to Boethius, Alexander of Aphrodisias thought that affirmation and negation cannot be placed under the category of statement as its species because affirmation comes before negation. According to Boethius, Alexander's argument regarding this claim of priority was as follows:<sup>30</sup>

- i. All negation removes and destroys affirmation (*omnis negatio adfirmationem tollat ac destruat*).
- ii. If that is so, then the affirmation to be destroyed exists before the negation that is to destroy it (*prior est adfirmatio quae subruatur quam negatio quae subruat*).
- iii. One thing that is prior and another thing that comes after cannot be placed under the same genus (*in quibus autem prius aliquid et posterius est, illa sub eodem genere poni non possunt*).<sup>31</sup>

Alexander continues his arguments on this subject. According to the commentator, the precedence of affirmation over negation is also proven through the idea of combining and separating:<sup>32</sup>

29 See Dorothea Frede, "Alexander of Aphrodisias", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/alexander-aphrodisias/> (February 2022).

30 For this argument see Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 16; cf. Boethius, *On Interpretation* 1-3, 22-3.

31 Boethius' refers here to the section of *Categories* about the simultaneous (Gr. *hama*). For the relevant passage in *Categories*, see Aristotle, *Categories* 14b24–15a12, *Aristotelis Categoriae et Liber de Interpretatione*, Ed. L. Minio Paluello (Oxford Classical Texts, 1949), 42–43.

32 See Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 16–7; cf. Boethius, *On Interpretation* 1-3, 23.

- i. Every negation is a division (Lat. *divisio*), and every affirmation is a combination and connecting (*compositio atque coniunctio*). For when one says, “Socrates lives” (*Socrates vivit*), one joins (*conjungo*) life (*vita*) to Socrates. When one says, “Socrates does not live” (*Socrates non vivit*) one separates (*disjungo*) life from Socrates.
- ii. Affirmation, which is a connecting, is then prior to negation, which is a separation of what has been combined.

Another argument from Alexander is based on the negative particle and simplicity:<sup>33</sup>

- i. If the negative particle (*particula negativa*) is taken away from a negation, the affirmation alone is left. For example, in the sentence “Socrates does not live” (*Socrates non vivit*), if the particle “not” (*non*) is removed, “Socrates does live” (*Socrates vivit*) is what remains.<sup>34</sup>
- ii. Therefore, affirmation is simpler (*simplicior*) than negation.
- iii. Then, what is simpler must be prior (*prius*).

According to Alexander, quantity is also decisive for the priority of affirmation in addition to simplicity:<sup>35</sup>

- i. Every sentence (*oratio*) has a quantity (*quantitas*).
- ii. The sentence “Socrates walks” (*Socrates ambulat*) is smaller (*minor*) in quantity than the sentence “Socrates does not walk” (*Socrates non ambulat*).
- iii. Because affirmation is quantitatively lesser than negation, it must also be prior.

The last argument from Alexander that Boethius reports is based on state and privation:<sup>36</sup>

33 See Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 17; cf. Boethius, *On Interpretation* 1-3, 23.

34 I would like to emphasize the similarity between the example used in this argument and the one in Avicenna's following sentence: “Just as when you say “Zayd is not alive;” ‘is alive’ is what would be an affirmation about Zayd, if there were not a particle of rejection. However, the negation has arrived and removed this attribution” (see footnote 14 from the current article).

35 See Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 17; cf. Boethius, *On Interpretation* 1-3, 23.

36 Ibid.

- i. While affirmation is a state (*habitus*), negation is a privation (*privatio*).
- ii. State is prior to privation.
- iii. Therefore, affirmation is prior to negation.

According to Boethius, Alexander showed that affirmation precedes negation with all these arguments; for this reason, he argued that two species, one of which is thought to be prior and the other posterior in relation to each other, cannot be placed under the same genus (i.e., the genus of statement).<sup>37</sup>

On this issue, one conclusion can be arrived at that Avicenna had agreed with Alexander in the lines I quoted in Section 1 (i.e., “Therefore, negation is conceived only when it attaches to and removes affirmation”). Avicenna’s argumentation that affirmation precedes negation coincides with Alexander’s point of view. One can even determine that the Arabic expression ‘*rāfi’an lahu / yarfa’u*’ [removes] that Avicenna used is equivalent to the Latin *tollat* [removes] that Boethius used when quoting Alexander. In addition, of the two perspectives Avicenna distinguished which I have indicated as (A) and (B), (A) reflects Alexander’s view. According to Boethius, the first defender of the position emerging from the perspective Avicenna referred to in (A’), namely that affirmation is not included in negation and that affirmation and negation cannot coexist, is Alexander. At this point, one can say that Avicenna himself basically followed the Alexandrian position indicated in (A’). However, as I will discuss in Section 3, Avicenna had developed this position based on the distinction between attribution and judgement.

## 2.2. Porphyry’s and Syrianus’ Views

According to Boethius’ testimony, the Neo-Platonist commentator and pupil of Plotinus, Porphyry (d. ca. 305 C.E.), opposed Alexander in a commentary he wrote to Theophrastus<sup>38</sup> and insisted that affirmation and negation are species of statement, therefore both would fall under the genus of statement.<sup>39</sup> According

37 Ibid.

38 While Boethius used the expression “in a commentary he wrote to Theophrastus,” Porphyry is known to have written a commentary on *Peri Hermêneias*. Although this commentary has not reached us, one can find Porphyry’s view in the commentaries written by Boethius and Ammonius, see George Karamonalis, “Porphyry: The First Platonist Commentator on Aristotle”, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, Supplement*, no. 83, Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries, I (2004): 100, footnote 12; 105, footnote 39.

39 See Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 17; cf. Boethius, *On Interpretation* 1-3, 23.

to Porphyry, the things that should not be placed under the same genus are not those in a relationship of priority and posteriority in any respect but those who are prior or posterior in terms of their essence or substance (*secundum esse suum atque substantiam*).<sup>40</sup> Porphyry defended that, if this were not so, speaking of primary and secondary substances would not be possible. However, despite the priority and posteriority between two things, one places the primary and secondary substances under the common genus of substance because their essences are the same, which consists of not being in a subject (*in subiecto*). According to Porphyry, although affirmations precede negations in the production of the sentence, they similarly participate (*participant*) in the same genus of statement (*enuntiatio*) in terms of their essence and nature, for the essence (*esse*) of the statement is that truth and falsity can be found in it. According to the commentator, due to affirmation and negation sharing truth and falsity equally (i.e., having the same essence), they can be placed under the genus of statement.

In brief, although Porphyry accepted the priority of affirmation in the production of the sentence, he emphasized affirmation and negation to be synonymous (Lat. *univocus*)<sup>41</sup> in terms of being a statement by accepting the essence of statement as having truth and falsity. Summarizing Porphyry's position from above, Boethius stated that Porphyry had disproved Alexander's long and complex arguments and that one should follow Porphyry on this point.<sup>42</sup>

The third and last name Boethius quoted regarding discussions on this issue was Syrianus.<sup>43</sup> The Neo-Platonian commentator Syrianus (d. ca. 437 C.E.), the teacher of Proclus seems to have tried arriving at a theoretical point from a textual point in *Peri Hermêneias*:

40 For the following arguments developed by Porphyry contra Alexander that we have included in this paragraph, see *ibid.*, 17-8; cf. Boethius, *On Interpretation* 1-3, 23-4.

41 The Arabic equivalent for *univocus* is *mutawāṭi'*, and for *aequivocus* it is *mushtarak*.

42 See Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 18; cf. Boethius, *On Interpretation* 1-3, 24. Ammonius, who quotes Alexander's and Porphyry's positions quite closely to Boethius, also sides with Porphyry on this point. See Ammonius, *On Aristotle: On Interpretation* 1-8, Trans. David Blank (Bloomsbury, 2014), 24.

43 Syrianus wrote commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories* and *On Interpretation* with special attention and care, but neither of them has survived to the present; all we have left is his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. See R. Loredana Cardullo, "Syrianus' Lost Commentaries on Aristotle", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 33 (1986): 113.

Syrianus, whose surname is Philoxenus asks at this point why Aristotle has mentioned negation first and affirmation second in the words: "First we must lay down what a name is and what a verb is, and then what is a negation and an affirmation." Firstly, he said nothing on the point, because where both affirmation and negation can occur, negation can come first and affirmation afterwards, as in the statement "Socrates is healthy." The affirmation can be attached to him as in "Socrates is healthy", and a negation of the kind "Socrates is not healthy" can also be attached. This is because in his case, affirmation and negation can each occur; it just happens that negation comes before affirmation. For before he was born, he could be said to be not healthy, as the man who is not born cannot be healthy.<sup>44</sup>

Syrianus vero, cui Philoxenus cognomen est, hoc loco quaerit, cur proponens prius de negatione, post de adfirmatione pronuntiaverit dicens: primum oportet constituere, quid nomen et quid verbum, postea quid est negatio et adfirmatio. et primum quidem nihil proprium dixit, quoniam in quibus et adfirmatio potest et negatio provenire, prius esse negatio, postea vero adfirmatio potest, ut de Socrate sanus est. potest ei aptari talis adfirmatio, ut de eo dicatur Socrates sanus est; etiam huiusmodi potest aptari negatio, ut de eo dicatur Socrates sanus non est. quoniam ergo in eum adfirmatio et negatio poterit evenire, prius evenit ut sit negatio quam ut adfirmatio. ante enim quam natus esset <potuit dici sanus non est>: qui enim natus non erat, nec esse poterat sanus.

After quoting Syrianus' arguments, Boethius continued to clarify his interpretation. According to Syrianus, Aristotle mentions the negation first while declaring his plan at the beginning of *Peri Hermêneias*,<sup>45</sup> but in the continuation of the text, he did the opposite of what he had said while explaining the issue: After defining the noun and the verb, the Stagirite dealt with the sentence, the word, the affirmation, and finally the negation.<sup>46</sup> According to Syrianus, the reason why Aristotle did this was to point out that affirmation and negation are equal in terms of being statements.<sup>47</sup> Boethius also added his own interpretation of this subject: Syrianus in fact did not say anything contrary to Alexander's position that affirmation comes first; however, even though Syrianus accepted that the positive comes first with regard to the production of the sentence, he argued that the positive and the negative are equal with regard to the statement itself.<sup>48</sup>

44 Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 18–19; cf. Boethius, *On Aristotle On Interpretation* 1-3, 24.

45 See Aristotle, *On Interpretation* 16a1-2, *Aristotelis Categoriae et Liber de Interpretatione*, Ed. L. Minio Paluello (Oxford Classical Texts, 1949), 49.

46 Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 18-19; cf. Boethius, *On Aristotle on Interpretation* 1-3, 24.

47 Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 19; cf. Boethius, *On Aristotle on Interpretation* 1-3, 24.

48 Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis Peri Hermêneias: secunda editio*, 19; cf. Boethius, *On Aristotle on Interpretation* 1-3, 24.



Furthermore and based on the quote above, one can deduce that Syrianus in fact had considered negation as an affirmation. While stating the possibility of saying Socrates is healthy or not healthy, he seems to have treated negation as an affirmation. Recalling my example above where the tea is sweetened or not sweetened, Syrianus would think that, in the proposition “The tea is not sweetened,” one would be adding (to use Syrianus’ own word, Lat. *apto*) “being not sweetened” (non-sweetness) to the tea.

Returning to the analysis of the *al-'Ibāra* text, one can determine that the perspective in (B) and the position emerging from that perspective that Avicenna criticized corresponds to Porphyry and Syrianus’ view. Both commentators argued that affirmation and negation should be placed under the same genus of statement. In particular, Syrianus’ point of view (if Boethius has conveyed it correctly) seems to more clearly express the position Avicenna criticized. For as much as Porphyry and Syrianus stated that affirmation and negation are equal in terms of being statements, Syrianus appears to have openly defended the view that an affirmation exists in negation, which is the view Avicenna expressed and criticized in (B’).

### 3. Avicenna’s Approach

Avicenna’s approach toward the discussion I have attempted to summarize above, namely his emphasis on the fact that affirmation and negation are two distinct statements, is particularly crucial in the context of the philosopher’s theory of judgement. Avicenna describes affirmation and negation as a composition (*ta’lif*) by way of occurrence (*īqa’*) and removing (*naz’*),<sup>49</sup> evoking Aristotle’s terms of *synthesis* and *diairesis*.<sup>50</sup> However, the point needing to be underlined with regard to Avicenna is how he defines affirmation and negation in terms of existence in the context of attribution but considers them together with judgement. In *al-'Ibāra*, I.6, the philosopher clearly states that he defines affirmation and negation through existence:

...The affirmation there is the judgement of the existence of one thing to another, while the negation is the judgement of the non-existence of one thing to another.<sup>51</sup>

49 See Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 41; *Avicenna’s Commentary*, 67; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 39.

50 See Aristotle, *On Interpretation* 16a10–18, 49; Also see Kaukua, “Avicenna on Negative Judgement”, 658.

51 Avicenna, *el-'Ibāra*, 42; *Avicenna’s Commentary*, 68; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 40.

والإيجاب من ذلك هو الحكم بوجود الشيء لشيء آخر والسلب هو الحكم بلا وجود  
الشيء لشيء آخر

According to Avicenna, affirmation and negation are related to the existence (*wujūd*) and non-existence (*lā-wujūd*) of a thing, but these are two separate judgements. According to Avicenna, a correspondence exists between the existence of a thing in the external world, its existence in the mind, and its utterance;<sup>52</sup> linguistic utterances refer to mental content, while this mental content refers to the outside world.<sup>53</sup> When taking this relationship into account, the mental activity in affirmation is the occurrence (*īqā'*) of the copula (*rābiṭa*) between the subject and the predicate for Avicenna, while the mental activity in negation is their separation (*naz'*). These two operations are considered to be two separate mental operations, and hence two separate judgements.<sup>54</sup> This explains why Avicenna opposed the claim that an affirmation exists in negation, the claim he attributed to some commentators.

Moreover, because affirmation is related to existence, affirmation is prior in terms of existence according to Avicenna, as existence always has priority over non-existence to him.<sup>55</sup> However, in terms of being a judgement (i.e., mental operation), to discuss the superiority of affirmation over negation is useless. That is why in the lines I quoted at the end of Section 1 of the article and to which I promised to return in this section, Avicenna found the debates over the superiority of affirmation or negation (which is understood to have been a matter of debate among the commentators) meaningless. This can possibly be understood as follows: According to Avicenna, although affirmation precedes negation in terms of being simpler, discussing its superiority in terms of being a mental operation that includes a judgement possessing the value of truth at the level of judgement is meaningless.

What needs underlining regarding Avicenna's approach toward affirmation and negation in terms of its logical extensions is that he was attempting to emphasize

52 See Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, I.1, 1–4; Avicenna's Commentary, I.1, 25–8; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, I.1, 2–4.

53 See Kaukua, "Avicenna on Negative Judgement", 657.

54 On this point, see Kaukua, "Avicenna on Negative Judgement", 662; Kaukua brings up an important comparison with Frege at this point of his article.

55 The question of the primacy of existence in Avicenna would go beyond the limits of the article, but one of the places where Avicenna most clearly expressed this idea is in *Metaphysics*, I.5: "Existence is better known than non-existence (*'adam*). Because existence is known through itself, and non-existence is known through existence in any respect" (translation is my own); see Avicenna, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt I*, ed. George Anawati and Said Zāyid (Cairo, 1960), 36; cf. *eş-Şifā: Metafizik I*, Trans. Ekrem Demirli and Omer Türker (İstanbul: Litera, 2004), 33–4.

the distinction between the existential and the mental. Affirmation and negation are related to existence (*wujūd*) and non-existence (*lā-wujūd*). In this regard, the positive statement (i.e., the existential) precedes the negative statement (i.e., the non-existential). However, this does not mean that affirmation is present in negation, for negation is the removal (*raf'*) of the existence of the attribution that is found in affirmation. In this respect, the attribution of existence in affirmation is a judgement, and the removal of the attribution happening in the negation is another judgement different from the affirmation at the level of judgement. To put another way, Avicenna seems to have distinguished *the level of existence* (i.e., the removal of the attribution of existence between the subject and the predicate) from *the level of judgement* that comes from the unity of this subject-predicate-attribution triad. In other words, one can argue that a difference exists for Avicenna between the predicate existing in the subject (existential/factual) and the judgment regarding the predicate existing or not existing (mental/epistemic) in the subject. In this respect and in my opinion, although Avicenna stated that affirmation comes before negation, he did not consider the statement as a univocal genus for affirmation and negation, as he distinguishes between the level of being subject to judgement and the level of judgement. For the same reasons, even though non-existence is stated with respect to existence and therefore negation is only stated with respect to affirmation, *al-Shaikh al-Rāis* argued that negative is different from affirmative in terms of statements.

In effect, Avicenna's approach here can be considered alongside the discussions that had taken place around the issue of the parts of the proposition (*ajzā' al-qaḍiyya*) in later Islamic logic. In the post-Avicennan Islamic tradition, the issue at the heart of the logic debates on this subject was the debate over whether the proposition has three or four elements, as based on the difference between attribution/nexus (*nisba*) and judgement (*ḥukm*).<sup>56</sup> Unlike the traditional point of view, which accepts categorical propositions as consisting of three parts (i.e., subject [*mawḍū*], predicate [*maḥmūl*], and the attribution between them), important logicians of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, especially Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, divided the parts of the proposition into four: subject, predicate, attribution, and judgement (i.e., the affirmation or

56 For an extensive study that I have benefited greatly and that deals with this issue, see Khaled el-Rouayheb, "Does a Proposition Have Three Parts or Four? A Debate in Later Arabic Logic", *Oriens* 44 (2016): 301–331. Again, as an important study on the same subject, see Eşref Altaş, "XVIII. Yüzyıl Eczāü'l-kaziyye Risaleleri ve Darendeli Mehmed Efendi'nin *Risāle fi't-tefrika beyne mezhebi'l-mütahhirin ve'l-kudemā fi'l-kaziyye ve't-tasdik* İsimli Eseri", *MÜ İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 38 (2010/1): 25–46. Note that I have preferred 'attribution' for the translation of the term *nisba*, while el-Rouayheb uses 'nexus.'

negation of the attribution).<sup>57</sup> The four-part view, which is thought to have been initiated by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1365), was later developed and defended by names such as Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390) and al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī Seyyid Şerīf el-Cürcānī (d. 1413) and would be objected by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 1502); afterwards, the objections would be continued by names such as Mīr Abū l-Faṭḥ ‘Arabshāhī (d. 1568) and Mīrzā Jān Bāghnavī (d. 1587).<sup>58</sup>

The crucial move that Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī made in the commentaries he wrote on Najm al-Dīn al-Kātībī’s *al-Risāla al-Shamsiyya* and Urmawī’s *Maṭāli‘ al-anwār* was to differentiate between the attribution between the subject and the predicate and the occurrence or non-occurrence of that attribution (*wuqū‘ al-nisba aw lā wuqū‘ ihā*).<sup>59</sup> Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī had departed from being able to conceive the attribution separately from its occurrence or non-occurrence; for this reason, he distinguished between the attribution in the proposition and the judgement regarding that attribution.<sup>60</sup> This attribution, which is judged to have occurred or not, has been called *al-nisba bayna bayn* [in between attribution] since Jurjānī, and whether it is the same in positive and negative propositions has also been discussed by the glossators.<sup>61</sup>

Al-Dawānī opposed this four-part analysis and based his objection on the fact that what is conceived and what is judged are one and the same attribution; therefore, according to him, to divide the parts of the proposition in four is a mistake.<sup>62</sup> According to Mīrzā Jān, who argued like al-Dawānī that the three-part analysis of propositions belonging to whom he referred to as the “older logicians” was the correct attitude: Only one single and complete attribution exists that is affirmative in the affirmative proposition and negative in the negative proposition.<sup>63</sup>

This discussion I have outlined, which is also intertwined with the issue of conception and judgement is important in terms of the theoretical extensions of the dialogue that Avicenna had had with Hellenistic commentators on the subject

57 See el-Rouayheb, “Does a Proposition Have Three Parts or Four?”, 302–3. Also see A. I. Sabra, “Avicenna on the Subject Matter of Logic”, *Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980): 760–761.

58 See el-Rouayheb, “Does a Proposition Have Three Parts or Four?”, 308, 318.

59 Ibid, 304.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid, 309–10.

62 Ibid, 313.

63 For the opinion Mīrzā Jān expressed in his gloss on Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *Sharḥ al-Maṭāli‘* (*Ḥāshiyah ‘alā taşdiqāt Sharḥ al-Maṭāli‘*) see ibid, 320.

of statements. As I have attempted to point out above, the two levels between which I believe Avicenna made a distinction (whether the predicate is in the subject and the judgement about whether the predicate is in the subject) actually appears to correspond to the distinction between the level of attribution and the level of judgment that is witnessed in later Islamic logicians. From this point of view, Avicenna's elaboration upon the relationship between affirmation and negation in terms of statement by underlining their difference in terms of being a statement and emphasis on the removal of the existence of attribution in the negative statement are crucial with regard to the issue of the parts of the proposition.

As for Avicenna's attitude toward Hellenistic commentators, traces of the philosopher's reserved approach to the commentators can often be found in his texts. As was seen in the text I have discussed in the framework of this article (i.e., *al-'Ibāra*, I.5), Avicenna considered the commentators to be drowning in the details. In *al-'Ibāra*, I.9, Avicenna describes the commentators as people "who came after Aristotle and who like to multiply issues and burden others with the task of dealing with unnecessary things so that they are compelled to confirm the issues on which they had made a mistake within this compounding."<sup>64</sup> Again, Avicenna was sometimes quite self-confident about succeeding in the final evaluation and warned the reader as follows about the commentators: "You should understand this passage in this way and not pay attention to the interpretations with which they (i.e., the commentators of Aristotle) deal."<sup>65</sup> However, as I have tried to emphasize in the study, Avicenna was erudite in the discussions among the commentators. Although he referred to them anonymously, he addressed them in one layer of his text and criticized their views one by one. This attitude of Avicenna (who I reminded as having rewritten the Aristotelian corpus in Arabic) leads one to ponder the philosopher's relationship with both Aristotle and the commentators of Aristotle. In the example I have discussed within the framework of this article, one can conclude that Avicenna had taken the ancient philosophical tradition and commentators seriously but aimed to leave behind the discussions that he found unnecessary and overly complicating within this tradition.

However, the discussion Avicenna had with the commentators echoed both in his theory of judgement and in later Islamic logic. This indeed indicates how

64 Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 65; Avicenna's Commentary, 91; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 59.

65 Avicenna, *al-'Ibāra*, 13; Avicenna's Commentary, 38; cf. *Yorum Üzerine*, 12.

critical Avicenna's rewriting the Aristotelian corpus in Arabic was in terms of its logical extensions. Avicenna's arguments for affirmation and negation are a clear example of how his ideas are directly related to Hellenistic Aristotelianism on one hand and to later discussions of Islamic logic on the other.

#### 4. Conclusion

As a logical predication, the affirmation and negation with regard to a subject, the relationship between these two types of predications, and the discussions about judgement that emerged regarding these types of predications first appeared with Aristotle and were continued by the Hellenistic Aristotle commentators. In turn, Avicenna's attitudes toward this subject is crucial both in terms of containing the discussions in the Aristotelian tradition and in terms of his original response.

In this respect, Section 1 of the study attempted to closely follow and analyze the passages in which Avicenna had dealt with affirmation and negation in the context of 'statement' in *al-'Ibāra*, I.5. In the background of these obscure passages, as their readers can immediately sense, lies a discussion among the commentators, commentators to whom Avicenna referred anonymously. In this debate, I determined by following Boethius' testimony that a camp had existed led by Alexander of Aphrodisias, with a second camp among which Porphyry and Syrianus having been mentioned. Moreover, I have shown that surprisingly, and surprising enough to warrant further study, the two perspectives to which Avicenna had referred in the passages in question coincide exactly with those Boethius had quoted.

Section 2 of the article showed how the debate that had caused conflict among the commentators was about whether affirmation and negation could be placed under the single genus of statement (*Gr. logos*, *Ar. qawl*, *Lat. enuntiatio*). Regarding this point, Alexander emphasized affirmation to precede negation and argued that giving the same name to both is homonymous (*aequivocus*). On the other hand, Porphyry and Syrianus argued affirmation and negation to be synonymous (*univocus*) in terms of being statement.

I have determined that Avicenna had summarized the views of these two camps in the text of *al-'Ibāra*, I.5 and seemed to accept that statement can only be said as homonymous for affirmation and negation, just as Alexander had argued. In addition, Avicenna had developed the following position: He argued that, although one precedes the other and one is built on the other, two contradictory

judgements need to be talked about in affirmation and negation, and hence two separate statements. In this respect, he opposed the views attributed to Porphyry and Syrianus, while particularly criticizing the idea attributed to Syrianus that stated affirmation to be present in negation.

Section 3 is where I tried to point out the importance of Avicenna's approach in terms of the extensions of his philosophy regarding the planes of existence and judgement. I emphasized that Avicenna had tried to understand affirmation and negation through existence and non-existence, but had distinguished it from the mental (i.e., the level of judgement). Considering this distinction that is encountered in Avicenna in relation to the issue of the parts of the proposition that took place among later Islamic logicians, I have placed emphasis on the difference between attribution (*nisba*) and judgement (*hukm*).

In conclusion, I have claimed with this article that, on one hand, reading Avicenna's text alongside the commentators has helped understand the philosopher's intention better, the logical problem he dealt with, and the source of the problem. On the other hand, I have also drawn attention to the as much of the precision of Avicenna's relationship with Hellenistic commentators from the aspect of the history of philosophy (and logic in particular) as I could detect in this reading. I've also indicated that the dialogue with the commentators did not simply fade; it had extensions in the context of both Avicenna's own conception of judgement and the discussions that took place in later Islamic logic.

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