Causality and Calculative Thinking:
An Avicennian Response to Heidegger

Selami Varlık*

Abstract : Heidegger contrasts meditative thinking, which allows detachment from beings, with calculative thinking, which maintains an instrumental and interested relationship with them. In his view, the principle of reason is the main tool for dominating available things. He also embeds the Medieval essence-existence duality within this framework of causality geared towards manipulating beings, judging that the religious notion of creation failed to distance this duality from Greek essentialism. Now, by appropriating the Islamic notion of creation *ex nihilo*, Avicenna places an ontological indigence at the heart of the created world. He believes that a being necessary by something other than itself remains contingent in itself, even after being caused. Thus, knowledge of the cause doesn't grant dominance over the thing but fosters detachment from contingent being, recognizing its dependence on an upstream otherness. Moreover, Meister Eckhart, who according to Heidegger perfectly illustrates meditative thought, is indebted precisely to this ontological poverty established by Avicenna. In addition to describing this possible objection from Avicenna to Heidegger, the more general aim of this study is to explore the possibility of an ethical and disinterested use of the principle of reason.

Key words: Avicenna, Heidegger, Causality, Calculative Thinking, Creation, Contingency, Meister Eckhart.

* Assist. Prof. Istanbul 29 Mayis University, Department of Philosophy. Correspondence: svarlik@29mayis.edu.tr

Introduction

In his book *Penser au Moyen Age* Alain de Libera asserts that the medieval issue of the relationship between philosophy and religion found its initial expression in Islamic philosophy. This thought, which should not be excluded from "our heritage," he says, had a twofold consequence for the medieval world.[1] First, through the harmonization of Greek philosophy and revelation, Muslim philosophers gave impetus to the idea of intellectual universality, within which the pursuit of truth could be collective and cumulative. The quest for knowledge responded to an intellectual curiosity surpassing borders and languages. Secondly, Avicenna in particular enabled medieval thought to develop a "spirituality of intellectual work," which anticipated the beatific vision.[2] He established a link between strictly intellectual labor and spiritual contemplation, making the exercise of thought itself an ascetic practice. In this way, Avicenna "not only introduced the West to reason, to its profane use, in a word to science, he also introduced it to religious rationality, to a very strict rationality placed, for the first time and rigorously, at the service of a monotheistic religion."[3] Islamic philosophy thus contributed to a certain de-professionalization of contemplation, a secularization of the philosophical ideal that marked the birth of the figure of the intellectual. This new conception had repercussions up to Dante and Meister Eckhart, who popularized it and encouraged its spread. De Libera explains that not only does Eckhart's thought, which is sometimes considered to be exclusively mystical, in no way represents the "twilight of Medieval rationalism,"[4] but that he was also in line with the philosophical contemplation of the Muslim philosophers.[5] It is also in this sense that his notion of *Gelassenheit*, or releasement, represented the end of an instrumental conception of thought.

This defense of meditative thought is also found in Heidegger, who draws upon Meister Eckhart to illustrate his critique of calculative thinking, aiming to extend the subject's domination over available beings. In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, written well before his influential text on technique, Heidegger uses the term "*Vorhandenheit*" to designate the product as available, ready to be instrumentalised by the sub-

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1   Alain de Libera, *Penser au Moyen Age* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 123.

2   de Libera, *Penser*, 141.

3   de Libera, *Penser*, 101.

4   de Libera, *Penser*, 296.

5   de Libera, *Penser*, 287.

ject. The thing is then "apprehended as something that, qua finished, is available at any time for use."[6] Being is therefore what is available, at hand (*vorhandenes Verfügbares*). Furthermore, Heidegger extends this critique to the principle of reason, more generally targeting causality, with an emphasis on the instrumentalization of things, reduced to an available fund (*Bestand*). Now, this causality is at the heart of Avicenna's metaphysics, which de Libera places at the beginning of the influence that extends to Heidegger. We can thus see the framework of the problem that will interest us here: the releasement that Heidegger praises against medieval ontology and its conception of causality is perfectly embodied by Meister Eckhart who, precisely, is fully dependent on the Avicennian duality between essence and existence. Indeed, according to Avicenna, a thing that does not fully possess its existence deserves no attachment.

Our study consists of two parts—ontological and epistemological—each addressing Heidegger's position in the first subsection and responding to it with Avicenna in the second. In the first subsection, I will explore how Heidegger reduces the medieval duality between essence and existence to the paradigm of available being characteristic of the Greek essentialist view, arguing that the religious notion of creation conforms to this model of producing a being readily available for use. The second subsection will respond to this position by showing how Avicenna places ontological indigence at the heart of being, considering that a necessary being by another remains fundamentally contingent in itself. I will thus emphasize the way in which Avicenna's appropriation of the Islamic notion of creation *ex nihilo* enables him to dissociate himself from the total independence of being. The third subsection will examine the consequences for Heidegger of this medieval ontology, which, for him, prefigures the principle of reason through which the subject reduces being to serve as an instrument for its ends. Heidegger contrasts this calculative thinking with meditative reasoning, evoking Meister Eckhart's *Gelassenheit*. Our fourth subsection will be dedicated to deconstructing this critique by showing how, in Avicenna's framework, certain knowledge of the cause does not allow us to dominate the thing but to develop a detachment towards contingent being by becoming fully aware of its ontological poverty. Understanding the cause of something means understanding how much its existence relies on something else upstream.

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6   Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982), 114. The term *Vorhandenheit* is thereby distinct from the use Heidegger makes of it in *Being and Time*, where it is distinguished from *Zuhandenheit*.

Our study ultimately aims to consider the conditions for a more ethical and disinterested use of rationality, challenging the view of reason solely as a tool for domination. Thus, I argue that Heidegger's meditative thinking can coexist with the principle of reason. It is thus a question of contributing to studies on the subject of the complex relationships between Heidegger and medieval philosophy, rehabilitating the latter philosophy from Heidegger's criticisms.[7] But this contribution is intended to be original on two points. First, unlike the majority of these studies, it does not seek to rehabilitate Saint Thomas but rather Avicenna, as a figure belonging to this philosophical tradition without being reduced to it, given his Islamic presuppositions.[8] Second, this study is located less on a strictly ontological level to say that Avicenna is not concerned by the Heideggerian critique of metaphysical understanding of being than on an epistemological level in order to proceed with a rehabilitation of the principle of reason as a properly metaphysical mode of thought.[9] Supporting this

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7   Numerous studies have been devoted to a comparison between Heidegger and Saint Thomas, sometimes defending the latter faced with criticism from the former, notably through the notion of *actus essendi* preventing any essentialisation of being. See Caitlin Smith Gilson, *The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Being-in-the-World: A Confrontation Between St. Thomas Aquinas and Martin Heidegger* (New York: Continuum, 2010); Johannes B. Lotz, *Martin Heidegger und Thomas von Aquin* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1975); Etienne Gilson, "Appendices : Réponses à quelques questions," *L'être et l'essence*, Paris: Vrin, 1962), 350-378; Jean-François Courtine, "Heidegger et Thomas d'Aquin," *Quaestio* 1, n° 1 (2001): 213-234; John D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay On Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982). The latter explains that Avicenna is fully in line with the Heideggerian critique, since he presents existence as an accident of essence (p. 109).

8   Many studies have responded to Caputo's accusation by attempting to show the extent to which Avicenna's metaphysics escapes the essentialisation of being. In this respect, the works of Nader el-Bizri is particularly noteworthy: Nader el-Bizri, *The Phenomenological Quest: Between Avicenna and Heidegger* (New York: SUNY Press, 2000); Nader El-Bizri, "Avicenna and Essentialism", *The Review of Metaphysics* 54, No. 4 (Jun. 2001): 753-778. More generally, on Heidegger and Islamic thought, see Alparslan Açikgenç, *Being and Existence in Şadrā and Heidegger: A Comparative Ontology* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993); Muhammad Kamal, *From Essence to Being: The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra & Martin Heidegger* (London: ICAS Press, 2010). While these books focus on specific authors and concepts, less numerous works offer an overview, particularly through the reception of Heidegger's philosophy. See Mouchir Basile Aoun, *Heidegger et la pensée arabe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011); Kata Moser, Urs Gösken and Josh Hayes (eds.), *Heidegger in the Islamicate World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019). Let's also mention a more general work that explores the intersection between philosophical hermeneutics and Islamic thought: Sylvain Camilleri, Selami Varlik (eds.), *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Islamic Thought* (Cham: Springer, 2022).

9   In a footnote, Peter S. Dillard questions Heidegger's critique of the principle of reason, in the more general context of his critique of Thomistic metaphysics: "in merely rejecting Aquinas's meta-

approach is Jocelyn Benoist's position, who expresses astonishment at the lightness with which the death of the principle of reason is decreed, "as if one could even imagine a thought that did not in some way bring it into play."[10]

Essence-Existence Duality and Availability of Beings

In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger examines the distinction between essence and existence in the thought of St. Thomas, who considers it real, Duns Scotus, for whom it is formal, and Suárez, who deems it rational; the latter offering the most complete form of this systematization. The quiddity of a thing is therefore independent of the fact that this thing exists or not. An external cause is necessary for essence to pass into the state of effective existence. God is the only exception, as his essence and existence are one. Heidegger inscribes this duality in the paradigm of an available being as a constant presence. He argues that Scholastic philosophy takes the emphasis on substance in Aristotle's work even further, prioritizing *ousia* over *dunamis*. Thus, all of St. Thomas's determinations regarding *realitas* refer back to fundamental concepts already developed in Greek ontology. He contributed to the development of a system in which being is a constant presence as Being-at-hand.

On the one hand, the *essentia* of the thing, which accidentally receives existence from outside, designates the fact of having a determinate reality. As an answer to the question *ti esti*, essentia designates the quiddity (*Sachheit*), the reality (*realitas*) of the thing. It refers to "that which each thing already was in its thingness, before it became actual."[11] The thing could not have been actually realized, actualized except insofar as it was thinkable as possible to be actualized. Therefore, the medieval concept of essence resembles the Greek model, which reduces being to a constant presence, no-

physics of causation, Heidegger still has not provided a satisfactory, noncausal account of appropriation as the "sending" of being/time." Peter S. Dillard, *Heidegger and Philosophical Atheology: A Neo-Scholastic Critique* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 140. Jean Grondin makes the connection between hermeneutics as an effort to understand the meaning of things and metaphysics as an effort to know the reasons for the world (Jean Grondin, "La métaphysique du sens des choses," *Philosophiques* 41, n° 2 (fall 2014): 353-357). Metaphysics is thus defined as a "vigilant effort of human thought to understand something about being as a whole and its reasons." (Jean Grondin, *La beauté de la métaphysique: Essai sur ses piliers herméneutiques* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2019), 180.

10   Jocelyn Benoist, "Dépassements de la métaphysique," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*, 129, n° 2 (2004), 174.

11   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 85.

tably through the figure of *ousia*. Essence, *das Wesen*, thus designates what each being already was. So, the thing was already what it currently is, though not yet fully existent. On the other hand, *existentia* designates the actual existence of the being, what the Scholastics call *actualitas* (*Wirklichkeit*), derived from the Greek concept of *energeia*. In a broader sense, *existentia* means being actualized, and correlatively, ability to act. *Actualitas* also refers to the idea of action (*Handeln*), where the hand (*Hand*) is already present. Something truly exists when it is in act, in virtue of an *agere*, an action. But then, like *essentia*, *existentia* also refers to the idea of permanence of Being-at-hand, rendering essence fully available through effective existence.[12] This concept of available presence is captured by the German term *Vorhandenheit*, which refers to the dual idea of the full presence of a substance and its availability. The adjective *vorhanden* can denote both the present and the available, depending on the context. Moreover, *vor* refers to being "before," and hand to the "hand." The terms *ousia* and *Vorhandenheit* are therefore closely related: both refer to permanent presencing (*ständige Anwesenheit*). Temporal degradation, which for St. Thomas represents the mark of the contingency of a thing, is only an accidental change of a substance, which itself does not change. Just as the transition from essence to existence in no way affects its permanence, since it always remains unchanged, so the material becoming of the thing does not affect this permanence either. In Heidegger's view, the temporal becoming of things does not question the reign of presence. The same form remains unchanged despite the degradation of the matter.

Aristotelian time, crucial to medieval metaphysics, is based on an understanding of being as being-extant. When he wrote *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger was particularly attentive to how Aristotle addresses the question of time, to which he devotes the end of the work. Time in Aristotle is part of a play of anteriority and posteriority that fundamentally remains dependent on the now, since "ever different nows are, *as different*, nevertheless always exactly *the same*, namely, now."[13] Thus, the essence of time always lies in the now, even though it always tends towards another moment. The later now is a not-yet-now and the earlier now is a no-longer-now. Every remembered and anticipated moment can only be understood in terms of a present, whether past or future. Therefore, the representation of time as a continuous line is deceptive since each now, as a new present, renders the others irrelevant.

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12   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 88.
13   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 247.

This common understanding of time situates it in a permanent extant presencing. Each now is a new extant being that replaces the previous one, but the very model of presencing is not called into question. Thus, this common understanding of time has at its disposal "no other horizon for understanding being than that of extantness, being at *hand*."[14]

In Heidegger's view, the existence of being implies a *Vorhandenheit* because it is the result of an act of production by the hand of God. It is through the concept of production that medieval *existentia* connects with the Greek *ousia*. The Being-at-hand is a product available for the human hand precisely because it is produced by the *hand* of God. This reference to divine intervention invites us to evaluate the *essentia-existentia* duality within the framework of the theological notion of creation of the world. In Thomas, creation expressed in philosophical language precisely represents the transition from essence to effective existence.[15] This duality underscores the distinction between *ens increatum*, namely God, and *ens creatum*. Unlike finite beings, which are "possible beings" that may not be, God's essence includes existence. But for Heidegger, the medieval conception of divine creation does not succeed in dissociating itself from the Greek model, and therefore corresponds to a production, an realization of essence, which itself is already a constant presence. For even if creation out of nothing is not identical with producing something out of a material that is found already on hand, nevertheless, "this creating of the creation has the general ontological character of producing."[16] In medieval scholasticism, the *ens productum* remains an object coming from the hands of a *dèmiourgos* or a *téchnitès*. Ancient ontology therefore provided the perfect conceptual framework for the Christian interpretation of being as *ens creatum*.[17]

Consequently, the creator par excellence is above all considered as a cause. The scholastics applied Aristotle's theory of the four causes of being to the doctrine of

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14   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 272. Emphasis added.

15   For a comparison of Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna's theories of creation see Rahim Acar, *Talking About God and Talking About Creation: Avicenna's and Thomas Aquinas' Positions* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005).

16   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 118.

17   Heidegger revisits this continuity in *Being and Time*: "createdness [*Geschaffenheit*] in the widest sense of something's having been produced [*Hergestelltheit*], was an essential item in the structure of the ancient conception of Being." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 46.

creatio ex nihilo. The *eidos* governing the production of things in Greek philosophy becomes, for scholastics, the *forma* through which things are created. Heidegger examines Aristotle's four causes, with particular attention to the material cause, which he perceives as problematic given that, unlike the pre-existing matter of the artisan, creation *ex nihilo* is supposed to occur from nothing. However, Heidegger contends that there is indeed a matter in this production: it is the *nihil*, conceived as sort of pre-existing substance, representing the material for this creation. It is in this sense that creation is made from (*ex*) nothing (*nihilo*). The pre-existing thing cannot be pure nothingness since the very being of this nothingness in Christian theology poses a problem: "if God creates out of nothing precisely He must be able to relate Himself to the nothing. But if God is God he cannot know the nothing, assuming that the 'Absolute' excludes all nothingness."[18] The *nihil* preceding creation is therefore not true nothingness.

The effectiveness of the divine act enables the production of an inherently consistent object, something that exists autonomously and is, therefore, available for use. The thing created then "stands for itself, detached from causation and the causes."[19] This argument of the autonomization of the fully existing thing is central to the way in which it becomes available. Certainly, Thomas emphasizes the radical dependence of the being on the divine act. But Heidegger sees no reason to challenge this overall autonomization, because the actualized being "nevertheless exists absolutely for itself, is something that is for itself."[20] This self-sufficiency of being is analyzed in § 20 of *Being and Time* which dates from the same period and where Heidegger explains how, even though fully created, substance gains autonomy in Descartes. The being of a "substance," writes Heidegger, is "characterized by not needing anything."[21] Certainly this being is then qualified as *ens perfectissimum* and corresponds to God, whose assistance remains necessary for the conservation of the being. However, both the created and the creator are termed *beings*. Heidegger observes an inconsistency within the metaphysics of creation, as it establishes an infinite distance between creator and creature while simultaneously granting both the status of being. Des-

18   Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics," *Basic writings: from Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 107-108.

19   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 87.

20   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 103.

21   Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 125.

cartes calling the created being *substance* exemplifies this shift, allowing the created being some autonomy by not needing another being, despite requiring God for its preservation.[22] The heart of the problem therefore lies in the question of the analogy of being. While the expressions "God is" and "the world is" don't have the same meaning, in both cases "being" is still the term used. Heidegger is therefore not convinced by the medieval analogy which had precisely the function of resolving the problem since it represents a third way between univocity and homonymic equivocity.

In Heidegger's view, if the Christian doctrine of creation ex nihilo has failed to impart genuine vulnerability to the created world by dissociating itself from the Greek *ousia*, it is because it was situated within the realm of faith, completely distancing itself from philosophical discourse. Heidegger dismisses the biblical notion of creation, deeming it religious rather than philosophical. Thus, this vision could not ask the question of the meaning of being, since "through the truth of revelation, promulgated in church doctrine as absolutely binding, the question of what the being is has become superfluous."[23] The being of beings was reduced to the fact of being created by God: "*Omne ens est ens creatum.*" Consequently, we cannot address the question "Why is there something rather than nothing?" that Heidegger explores in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. It is in the name of a denunciation of philosophy considered as madness by Saint Paul, that Heidegger justifies this incapacity to answer the question of the origin of being.[24] In contemporary philosophy Karl Barth, who influenced Heidegger on the question, represents one of the main figures of the reduction of creation to the field of revelation, therefore excluding reason: "*Nihil observation de contingenta mundi nisi ex revelatione.*" The statement may seem somewhat problematic since, while Heidegger criticizes Christianity for excluding any philosophical engagement with the concept of creation, he himself reduces the biblical notion of creation to the language of Greek essentialism. In truth, his argument is coherent: because Christianity presented a solely religious conception of creation, it could not provide a philosophical counterpoint to the Greek model based on the enduring nature of substance.

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22   Clavier considers that Heidegger exaggerates what is merely a "linguistic convention", a convenience. For fundamentally, in Descartes, substance remains that which only needs the ordinary assistance of God to subsist. Claver, "*L'épuisement,*" 738.

23   Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche. Volumes. III and IV*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper, 1991), 88.

24   Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 8.

Creation and The Ontological Indigence of Beings

As we have seen, Heidegger reduces the medieval duality between essence and existence to the paradigm of available being inherent in Greek essentialism, arguing that the religious notion of creation conforms to this model of producing a readily accessible being. In this regard, a confrontation with Avicenna may be relevant since, relying on Islamic presuppositions that fundamentally modify the relationship between faith and reason, he engages with the theological notion of creation through which he significantly reinterprets the Greek philosophical framework. Mirroring Heidegger's criticism, some scholars refuse to see in Avicenna a doctrine of creation out of nothing arguing instead that he adopts the Greek model. Michael Marmura speaks of a "denial of a doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*,"[25] while Parviz Morewedge points out the difference between "producing something out of nothing" and "producing something by emanation of his thought."[26] Likewise, Louis Gardet presents the *falsafa* as unanimous in "rejecting not only the dogma of the temporal creation of the world, but more profoundly the notion of true creation *ex nihilo*."[27]

Nevertheless, there is indeed a genuine conception of creation in Avicenna's thought, as highlighted by other experts, even if he does not conceive it on a temporal level. For he completes the theory of emanation by intertwining it with the monotheistic concept of creation. In his early work, the *Mabda'*, he describes creation (*ibdā'*) as "perpetually bringing into existence something that, in itself, is not (*idāmatu ta'yīs mā huwa bi-ḏāti-hi laysa*)."[28] We cannot therefore subscribe to Gardet and Anawati's position on the absence of creation *ex nihilo* in Avicenna, although he does not conceive of it in a temporal way.[29] Creation refers to the coming into existence of

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25   Michael Marmura, "The Metaphysics of Efficient Causality in Avicenna (Ibn Sina)," in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani*, ed. Michael Marmura (New York: SUNY Press, 1984), 181.

26   Parviz Morewedge, *The Metaphysics of Avicenna* (*Ibn Sīnā*) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 272.

27   Louis Gardet, M.-M. Anawati, *Introduction à la Théologie musulmane. Essai de théologie comparée* (Paris: Vrin, 1948), 320.

28   Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ād*, ed. Abdullah Nūrānī (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, 1984), 77.

29   For a response to Beatrice Zedler's denial of creation in Avicenna, see cf. Olga Lucia Lizzini, "A Mysterious Order of Possibles: Some remarks on Essentialism and on Beatrice Zedler's Interpretation of Avicenna and Aquinas on Creation," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 88, no 2 (2014): 237-270. Likewise, McGinnis judges that "Avicenna's notion of atemporal creation is one of genuine creation ex nihilo, and so is unlike Aristotle's notion of generation, which required preexisting forms and matter." Jon McGinnis, *Avicenna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 182.

that which, by essence, does not exist.[30] By continuously providing existence, creation eliminates the continuous non-being. Except for the Necessary Being, which is necessary in itself, everything else is necessary through another and possible in itself. Consequently, every created entity is subject to the duality of essence and existence and the secondary of the latter.

Avicenna provides a more explicit definition in the *Shifā*, where *ibdā'* is defined as "giving of existence to a thing after absolute nonexistence (*ba'd lays mutlaq*)."[31] Likewise, in the *Book of Definitions*, *ibdā'* designates first "the founding of something not from another thing" and second the fact "that absolute existence comes to a thing from a cause without intermediary," so that what was preventing the essence from existing is removed.[32] The act of bringing into existence withdraws the thing from non-existence, given that its essence does not imply its existence. Avicenna leaves no room for the idea of an eternal uncreated matter, as in Aristotle's philosophy. Creation excludes any mediation, be it through matter (*mādda*), instrument (*āla*), or any other thing or intention (*ma'nā*). Therefore, creation also excludes time because any time preceding the creative act would become an intermediary between God and the world. This is why *ibdā'* occurs without any intermediary such as matter, nor instrument, nor time. The duality between essence and existence, as well as the concomitant duality between possible being and necessary being, is the product of an encounter between the Greek model of emanation and the Qur'anic conception of creation ex nihilo as appropriated by Avicenna. Avicenna's religious model, where the intellectual dimension takes primacy, differs very clearly from the Pauline rejection of rational thought as madness. Avicenna aligns with the centrality of reasoning in the Islamic pursuit of *one* God, who contains no mystery.

Therefore, Heidegger's critique of essentialism does not really apply to Avicenna given that the issue is not to assert that essence precedes existence in the sense that

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30   Rahim Acar, "Creation: Avicenna's metaphysical account," *Creation and the God of Abraham*, ed. David Burrell, Carlo Cogliati, Janet M. Soskice, William R. Stoeger (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 78.

31   Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 203. For an analysis of the different terms Avicenna uses to express creation, cf. Jules Janssens, "Creation and Emanation in Ibn Sînâ," *Documenti e Studi Sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale*, no 8 (1997), 468 sq.

32   Ibn Sina, "Book of Definition," in *Books of Definition in Islamic Philosophy - The limits of words*, Kiki Kennedy-Day (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 114.

it would be endowed with a certain necessary preexistence, because here again it is existence which would in truth precede the essence judged as already existing. Seyyed Hossein Nasr aptly summarizes the impasse. If essence already exists independently of existence, then it would have already been existent, leading to an infinite regression.[33] Avicenna himself rejects the absurd idea that quiddity exists in itself before existing because that would call into question the absoluteness of the existence of the First.[34] On the contrary, when Avicenna presents existence as an accident of essence, he emphasizes the distinction between the Necessary Being and the contingent being, whose essence alone cannot suffice to produce existence. Therefore, despite the real duality between the two terms, essence can effectively exist only in the mind or the external world, as he emphasizes in *Ilāhiyāt* I, 5. In our view, the error also comes from a confusion of the ontological and chronological planes that Avicenna distinguishes very precisely. True to the theory of emanation, he conceives creation within an eternal model where the antecedence of the creator is ontological, not temporal. It is on a temporal plane, with a before and an after creation, that one envisions an essence seemingly fully existing even before acquiring existence. Whereas when following the essential conception, the essence synchronically dissociates from existence.

The major implication of this non-temporal conception is that creation does not take place once and for all and that the need for the continuous bestowal of existence remains at the heart of the created object. The existing thing which is necessary through something other than itself remains contingent in itself. Unlike the Thomist model that Heidegger seems to take as a reference, Avicenna conceives essence not in terms of potentiality but as possibility. Potentiality is distinguished from actuality, while possibility is distinguished from necessity. The difference is crucial because, for Aristotle, once actualized, the thing no longer has anything potential. Whereas with Avicenna, even when fully actualized it remains possible, or contingent in itself. It is precisely with Avicenna that the concept of possibility has acquired a genuine ontological dimension surpassing its logical sense in Aristotle. Possibility denotes that which can be or not be and receives its existence through something other than itself. Avicenna goes so far as to present the possible in itself as somewhat unreal or false: The Necessary Being is always real or true in itself; while the possible existent is "true

33   Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 69.

34   Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 276-277.

through another and false in itself."[35] In the duality between contingency in itself and necessity through something other than itself, the latter has naturally gained prominence in the reception of Avicenna. To the extent that the state of possibility could be entirely obscured, as is the case with A. M. Goichon, for whom the thing exists effectively only as necessary.[36] Yet what Avicenna fundamentally preserves by opposing temporal creation is the permanence of contingency within what now necessarily exists. Because even as necessary by something other than itself, the thing remains contingent in itself.[37] The state of possible non-being is then located in the present; it is neither relegated to a bygone past nor projected into an inevitable future. Ontological contingency is distinct from any future material perishability, the inadequacy of which Heidegger had pointed out in his critique of the notion of *existentia*.

Avicenna defines the possible as that which can exist or not exist, being neither necessary nor impossible. This dissociation of the modal and the temporal is crucial because it allows the maintenance of contingency, opposing any constant presence and availability of things. The temporal conception of creation is opposed to this concomitance, since we move from absolute non-being to absolute being without any element of non-being. However, according to Avicenna, the created thing, if not for the constant support of the Necessary Being itself, would return to non-existence at every moment and, in this sense, maintain its poverty. Poverty means being dependent on another in order to exist.[38] Thus, by rejecting a temporal view of creation, Avicenna avoids a similar view of destruction. This is how one should understand the verses "Everything will perish except His face (28:88)" or "Every being on earth is bound to perish (55:26)."[39] Avicenna comments on this verse in the *Shifā*: considered independently of the Necessary Being, things only deserve nonexistence.[40] A literal reading suggests everything is not just destined to disappear someday, but rather is constantly disappearing in the present.

35   Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 38.

36   A. M. Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sinâ* (*Avicenne*) (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1937), 160.

37   See Cüneyt Kaya, *Varlık ve İmkân: Aristoteles'ten İbn Sînâ'ya İmkânın Tarihi* (İstanbul: Klasik, 2011), 221-26.

38   For the implications of this idea in Ibn Kamāl, see Ömer Mahir Alper, *Varlık ve İnsan: Kemalpaşazâde Bağlamında Bir Tasavvurun Yeniden İnşası* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2010), 49 sq.

39   See Alper, *Varlık ve İnsan*, 68-69.

40   Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 284.

Unlike Avicenna, St. Thomas, who is aligned with Aristotle on this point, sees contingency as an effect of the potentiality of matter, as he explains it in his argument of the third way to prove the existence of God: "Quod possibile est non esse, quandoque non est (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I,2,3c);" that is, for something that may not be/exist, there is time when it is not/it does not exist. To be contingent is not to be eternal, to be subject to time, to the cycle of birth and death. In Thomas's view, contingency is based on the finitude inherent in temporality. The argument of the third way precisely relies on this indexing of ontological contingency to temporality: if everything is brought into being and passes away, there must have been a time when nothing existed. It is not, as in Avicenna, the need for a cause that determines contingency, i.e. the possibility of not being, but the fact of being composed of matter that is corruptible.

Despite some differences, Avicenna remains quite close to the Aristotelian understanding of time; but it is rather his way of dissociating contingency from temporality that enables him to distinguish himself from Heidegger's accusation of extantness. To better understand the difference with Thomas and Aristotle, we need to examine this feature more closely. Ontological contingency is distinct from any temporal perishability, so that it is now that the thing retains its status of contingency, preventing its autonomous existence. Avicenna therefore rejects a complete identification between, on the one hand, the necessary, the possible, and the impossible, and on the other hand, always, sometimes, and never.[41] If everything perishable is possible, the reverse is not necessarily true. The duality between necessary in itself and necessary through something other than itself adapts more easily to the caused/uncaused couple than to the permanent/impermanent couple. According to Wisnovsky, the reasons for this shift are theological. The existence of caused but eternal divine attributes requires a distinction between caused eternal things and eternal things without a cause. In Avicenna, the focus is less on the attributes of God than on celestial bodies, but the problem is the same.

The possible is not that which will cease to be or was not previously. This dissociation of the modal and the temporal is essential for our purpose, since it reveals that contingency does not concern a future non-existence, but the permanent possibility of not being now. It is precisely because creation did not take place in time, with a

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41   Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* (New York: Cornell University Press), 248. See Kaya, *Varlık ve İmkân*, 208 sq.

before and an after, that the essential contingency it causes is not located in time, does not belong to a future where the thing will no longer be. It is here and now that the thing might not exist, since even when it is caused, it remains a possibility of nothingness in itself. Therefore, according to the verse cited above, not everything is destined to disappear one day but is actually disappearing now. Avicenna emphasizes this permanence of indigence after quoting the verse where Abraham–after the disappearance of various celestial stars–declares that he dislikes what disappears.[42] The verb in verse 6:76 (*al-āfilīn*) is a present participle, which must be understood as literally meaning what is disappearing here and now.

For Heidegger, the alternative to the common understanding of time must be sought in early Christian experience. Saint Paul and Augustine proposes a vision in which the now is constantly projected ecstatically towards a future in the mode of care.[43] For the Day of the Lord will come "like a thief in the night."[44] The original conception of time is therefore largely inspired by a Christian facticity that experiences eschatological time, because every moment carries the uncertainty of the end of time. This insecurity is not found in Muslim thought which does not recognize the notions of Incarnation and original sin. Avicenna does not seem to fit into Heidegger's duality between chronological time and kairological time because, as we will see in the final part, the knowledge of the cause precisely aims to allow the soul to be fully aware of the ontological indicengy of the created world.

It is a similar idea of an ontological contingency which lies at the heart of being that we find in Meister Eckhart. The confrontation between Heidegger and Avicenna on their divergence concerning the relationship between creation and essentialism is all the more instructive because Heidegger relies on an interpretation of Meister Eckhart that aligns with the ontology of Avicenna. I will return to Heidegger's recourse to Meister Eckhart but let me here recall the latter's proximity to Avicenna on the duality between essence and existence. Heidegger does not dispute the debt of his German predecessor to medieval ontology.[45] Medieval mystical theology, he says,

42   Shams Inati, *Ibn Sina's Remarks and Admonitions: Physics and Metaphysics: An Analysis and Annotated Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 140.

43   See Jonathan O'Rourke, "Reading in Phenomenology: Heidegger's Approach to Religious Experience in St. Paul and St. Augustine," *Open Theology* 6, no. 1 (2020): 221-233. https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2020-0019 (18 feb. 2024)

44   1Th 5, 1-3.

45   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 83.

and especially the philosophy of Meister Eckhart, is not understandable without this famous distinction.[46] The latter in fact allows for an explanation of judgments that might otherwise seem excessive or paradoxical.[47] Eckhart's statement regarding the creature being nothing was condemned by the 26th condemnation bull of 1329 because what God created could not be pure nothingness. However, this proposition only means that everything created by itself is nothing (*creatum omne ex se nihil est*) that is, there is nothing in it that owes its reality to anything other than God. So much so that "if God withdrew from the creatures for just one moment, they would disappear to nothing."[48] As with Avicenna, the ontological indigence of the thing is based on its created status. The counterpart of the nothingness of the creature in itself is the declaration that being is God. If the creature is nothing in itself, it is precisely because fundamentally its very being, its origin, goes back to God. Thus, these two propositions rely on the very difference between essence and existence.

The same applies to the assertion that God is entirely outside and entirely inside. This position of Eckhart is particularly important as it aligns perfectly with his early appropriation by the young Heidegger. References, explicit or implicit, to Meister Eckhart are numerous in Heidegger's works, spanning from his early works in 1915 to writings in the 1950s. This is why his influence cannot be underestimated. He sees Eckhart as one of the few great thinkers of the premodern West, even referring to him as a "Master of thinking."[49] Heidegger wrote in 1948, "Since 1910, the master of letters and life, Eckehardt, has accompanied me."[50] In his dedicated work on the subject, Ian Alexander Moore specifies that Heidegger cites his predecessor nearly a hundred times.[51] The first explicit mention is in the exergue of the lesson given in 1915 ("The Concept of Time in Historical Science"). He cites the Sermon *Consideravit semitas domus et panem*, which states that "an ancient meister" says that the

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46   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 90.

47   Fernand Brunner, "Mysticisme et rationalité chez maître Eckhart," *Dialectica*, 45, No. 2/3 (1991), 106-107.

48   Meister Eckhart, "Speech 4," *Deutsche Werke I*, ed. J. Quint and G. Steer (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936–2007), 69-70.

49   Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures - Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, trans. Andrew J. Mitchell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 14.

50   Martin Heidegger, *The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence (1920–1963)*, trans. Gary E. Aylesworth (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003), 172.

51   Ian Alexander Moore, *Eckhart, Heidegger, and the Imperative of Releasement* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019), 97.

soul is placed between "one" and "two". Now, this ancient meister, of whom Echkart speaks, is none other than Avicenna. The aim is to underline the difference but also the proximity between God and the human soul. Another explicit mention is found in the concluding chapter of the habilitation dissertation, probably written during the year 1916. Heidegger cites his predecessor in a footnote regarding the correlation between subject and object, that is, between the soul and God.[52] Eckhart has managed to inscribe within existence the principled correlativity between transcendence and immanence. Thus, "transcendence does not mean a radical, vanishing removal from the subject: rather, there is a living relation based on correlativity."[53] We find here, in the young Heidegger inspired by Meister Eckhart, the beginnings of the idea of a self-transcendence of existence.[54] Now what Eckhart says here is that God is present within the creature without mixing with it, in the very fact that he maintains it in existence.

Eckhart places the possibility of nothingness at the heart of the existent, but he does not consider this existent as purely non-existent either. We cannot consider the created world as totally illusory, as defended by Della Volpe;[55] it does exist, but not by itself. It exists only to the extent that it is continuously supported by the divine being. How can a thing both exist and retain a form of nothingness within it? The dual Avicennian assertion that God is the necessary Being by Himself and that the creature is a necessary being by something other than itself helps us to better understand this tension. For the same thing is nothing-in-itself but fully existing through something other than itself. The reality of the thing is not denied, it is only the claim of total autonomy of its existence that is called into question.

This proximity is not fortuitous since Avicenna's metaphysics is one of Eckhart's main sources of inspiration, notably through the idea that *Esse est Deus*, which goes back to the figure of God as Necessary Being. God has no quiddity other than His existence. This is precisely how Eckhart reads the *Ego sum qui sum*. Eckhart explicitly refers to Avicenna's *Metaphysics* VIII.4 when speaking of God, "whose what-ness

52   Martin Heidegger, *Duns Scotus's Doctrine of Categories and Meaning*, trans. Joydeep Bagchee and Jeffrey D. Gower (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2022), 158.

53   Martin Heidegger, *Duns Scotus's Doctrine*, 163.

54   Emilio Brito comments that "what God is to the soul in Eckhart, Being is to Dasein in Heidegger." This does not imply that being is identified with God, but that there is a similarity of relationship. Cf. Emilio Brito, *Heidegger et l'hymne du sacré* (Leuven-Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1999), 450.

55   G. Della Volpe, *Eckhart o della filosofia mistica* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma, 1952), 179.

(*anitas*) is his that-ness (*quiditas*), as Avicenna says."[56] It is primarily with the expression "in omni creato aliud est esse et ab alio, aliud essentia et non ab alio" that Eckhart expresses the compound of possible essence and existence in each creature. Thus, dependence on the necessary being by itself is permanent. The phrase *ab alio*, equivalent to Avicenna's *bi-gayrihī*, perfectly expresses the relationship of constant dependence on an otherness. As Palazzo states, "it is highly likely, though not supported by explicit meister quotations, that Eckhart's very controversial teaching on the nothingness of creatures is also dependent on Avicenna's view that all the entities brought to existence by the Necessary Being are in themselves false."[57]

Causality Serving Calculating Thinking

Nonetheless, Heidegger turns to the same Meister Eckhart to illustrate his critique of the principle of reason, which he embeds within the context of the medieval duality between essence and existence. He advocates for a meditative mode of thought that thus stands in opposition to the calculative thinking seeking to control beings through the certain knowledge of their causes. As early as 1927, in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, the distinction between *essentia* and *existentia* is presented as "reminiscent" of Leibniz's principle of reason.[58] This observation takes on its full meaning when we look at two texts from the 1950s – "The Question Concerning Technology" (1954) and *The Principle of Reason* (1957), in which he studies the availability of beings from the angle of a critique of causality. "The Question Concerning Technology" situates causality in a downstream movement going from the cause to the effect. Causality is then primarily a means toward a premeditated, calculated, and thus controllable end. *The Principle of Reason* addresses the same causality in the other direction, within the framework of calling upstream for the reason of an already existing thing. Here we start from the thing and study its causes to provide the reasons that made the object available to humans.

In the first text, Heidegger addresses the question of causality primarily from the perspective of instrumentality. The more general issue is to criticize technical

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56 Meister Eckhart, *Die Lateinischen Werke, zweiter Band: Expositio libri Exodi 14-15* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1992), 20-21.

57 Alessandro Palazzo, "Eckhart's Islamic and Jewish Sources: Avicenna, Avicebron, and Averroes," *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ed. Jeremiah Hackett (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 267.

58 Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 92.

thinking, which he also calls "calculative thinking" (*das rechnende Denken*) in his text *Gelassenheit*, the title of which refers to Meister Eckhart. The cause that produces an effect is, above all, a means toward an end, which moreover appears among Aristotle's four causes: "Where ends are sought and means used, where instrumentality is sovereign, there dominates causality." The four causes that in 1927 described the process of divine creation as the production of a ready-to-hand being for human use now describe how the causality exercised by humans renders everything, such as a cup, available. Consequently, God becomes the God of philosophers and is reduced to obeying this causality and thus loses all sublime and mysterious dimensions.[59]

This model of availability aligns with the essence paradigm that has been in play since the beginning of the metaphysical tradition because Socrates and Plato already think of the essence (*Wesen*) of something as what is (*als das Wesende*) in the sense of what endures. These are the causes which characterize the presence of a present thing (*das Anwesen eines Anwesenden*). However, this instrumentality should not be understood merely in a practical sense. Causality concerns more fundamentally the very coming of the thing into appearance. The common sense of causing something is secondary and derivative to the very essence of causation. Heidegger has new recourse in this text to the notion of production, because it is through it that what is not yet present arrives in presence. Production through the four causes is therefore essentially what a thing passes from the hidden state to the unhidden state. Now the idea of the presence of a thing at our disposal is precisely what qualifies today, in the era of modern technology, the nature of a "standing-reserve (*Bestand*)".[60] But it is no longer a question of a simple *poiesis*, of a production, but of "a challenging (*Herausfordern*), which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such."[61] The notion of accumulation is central here because it extends the very idea that what comes into existence through causality becomes an object of storage because it exists autonomously. *Gestell*, translated as *Enframing*, is the term Heidegger uses for this provocative call by which nature is revealed as an available and exploitable stock. From then on, causality goes beyond the stage of instrumentality and puts itself at the service of the enframing given that, notably through modern physics, nature is reduced to a calculable and predictable set of forces.

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59   Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York–London: Garland Publishing, 1977), 26.

60   Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 17.

61   Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 14.

With causality, the thing fully gains its autonomy and becomes ready to use since a thing, a simple possible, is posited outside its causes. What is actualised in *actualitas* then stands "for itself, detached from causation and the causes."[62] Even if, in the religious conception, it is God who accomplishes the effectuation of being, this act grants an autonomy to a thing that now exists independently of the causes that necessarily accompanied its creation. Heidegger is referring here to the medieval formula, *rei extra causas et nihilum sistentia*, or the idea of the institution of the thing outside its causes and outside nothingness. This means that not only can creation *ex nihilo* not be an obstacle to this autonomization, it is even a condition of it, since something that was not now fully exists. With *existentia* an essence, a simple possibility is instituted outside its causes as something emerging from nothingness. It is the exteriority of the effect to the cause that ensures the independence of the object produced.

In fact, Heidegger follows Suárez whose approach is "the one most appropriate for working out the phenomenological exposition of the problem."[63] It is mainly from the theses and texts of Suárez that Heideger describes the scholastic conception of being. *Existentia* is located in nature, whereas essence is found in the understanding. But how do we get from the understanding that thinks about the essence of a thing to the nature in which it unfolds? Existence is effective precisely when this thing emerges from its causes into the world. Existence is marked by the complete fulfilment of the causal process that produced the thing. For Suárez, only exists that which is in nature and which now stands outside its causes after having passed through them. The content of the Suárezian model is that the rational distinction between *essentia* and *existentia* takes precedence over the real distinction that Heidegger attributes to St. Thomas.

In Suárez the multiplicity of the four causes can be fundamentally reduced to the efficient cause, which alone truly deserves the title of cause, whereas the other three are only analogical. Only the efficient cause is a true cause, because only it fully satisfies the privilege that Suárez grants to the extrinsic character of the cause. Thus, it is because the efficient cause, the only true cause, is fundamentally extrinsic to the thing that the thing exists "outside its causes (*extra causas suas*)."[64] The material,

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62   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 87.

63   Heidegger, *The Basic Problems*, 96.

64   Suárez, *Disputatio metaphysica* 31, 4, 6.

formal and final causes being intrinsic to the being, it is not outside of them that the thing can exist, since in fact they remain there. On the other hand, the efficient cause being external to the thing, it produces an object external to itself. This is why, Heidegger emphasises how the four causes are reduced to the efficient cause because it is fundamentally the efficient cause that acts instrumentally, with a view to an extrinsic result.

The text *The Principle of Reason* approaches the relationship between causality and calculation in the other direction, moving from the effect to the cause, in line with the principle of reason that states that nothing happens without reason or more commonly, "nothing happens without a cause."[65] *Nihil fit sine causa* recalls that the being and its knowledge always have a cause. As a principle of reason to be rendered, the principle of reason primarily concerns scientific demonstration. Since something exists only to the extent that it obeys the principle of reason, this call to provide the reason is characteristic of representative modern thought, to which modern sciences adhere. This injunction that leads to the certain knowledge of the reason for things allows extending human dominance over them. If the demanded reason must be sufficient, it must above all suffice to ensure the consistency (*Ständigkeit*) of the caused object.[66] The knowledge of the cause thus makes things available insofar as they are assured. This is why knowledge of the cause obeys calculating thought which can use things as it wishes.

In contrast to the desire for calculation through knowledge of causality, Heidegger writes two texts on the notion of *Gelassenheit*: a discussion between a researcher (*Forscher*), a scholar (*Gelehrter*), and a Meister (*Lehrer*) dating from 1944-1945, and the text of his lecture titled *Gelassenheit* (1955) and in which he makes the famous distinction between meditative thinking and calculative thinking. Calculating thought, which is in truth an escape from thought, proceeds through plans aiming at a determined end. This thinking resorts to the principle of reason, operating by calculation even if not dealing with numbers, as it employs instruments for a predetermined purpose. The essence of calculative thinking is to act towards a premeditated end, resembling the functioning of causality where the cause is a means to achieve the effect. In contrast, meditative thinking denotes a "releasement toward

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65   Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 22.

66   Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, 33.

things (*die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*),"[67] allowing for an equal soul in the presence of things that opposes any instrumentalization of reality. *Gelassenheit*, maintaining a completely disinterested relationship with the world, requires a "letting-be" (*sich lassen*), accompanied by a letting-happen. This soul equality does not require a refusal of things or even technical tools but rather necessitates an indifference, making it possible to use them while maintaining a certain distance. As with Eckhart – and Avicenna – the thing does indeed exist but it is only important not to get attached to it. Therefore, *Gelassenheit* implies simultaneously saying yes and no to technical objects and to things in general. Meditative thinking, says Heidegger, is the only way out in an environment where science has become uncontrollable.

From the first period of Eckhart's reception at the beginning of the century the notion of detachment (*Abgeschiedenheit*) plays a central role in this influence, as evidenced by a note from Heidegger's lecture course in the winter semester of 1915-1916.[68] Detachment, for Eckhart, does not mean a refusal of using things, which would still rhyme with a form of attachment to non-possession, but rather an indifference to the presence or absence of things. Therefore, detachment implies being unshakable in the face of anything positive or negative that may happen to the person: "true detachment is nothing else than for the spirit to stand as immovable against whatever may chance to it of joy and sorrow, honor, shame and disgrace, as a mountain of lead stands before a little breath of wind."[69] In this, the person ends up resembling God Himself since to be empty of all created things is to be full of God.

Now, in Eckhart detachment towards things fundamentally relies on their status as created things, which do not exist fully in themselves. They cannot deserve any desire or attention because they are incapable of existing by themselves, given that being belongs only to God. For Eckhart, this means that one must fully realize how things are nothing in themselves. Therefore, detachment from created things is thus an ethical consequence of an ontological realization.

67　Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking,* trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966), 55.

68　Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundlinien der antiken und scholastischen Philosophie* (Wintersemester, 1915/16, Fribourg).

69　Meister Eckhart, "On Detachment," in *Meister Eckhart, The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense*, trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (Newyork/Ramsey/Toronto: Paulist Press, 1981), 288.

Knowledge of The Cause as a Tool for Releasement

We have recalled to what extent Heidegger's disqualification of causality is based on the availability of beings through the essence-existence duality. It is time to see the consequences of the specificity of Avicenna's understanding of this duality on the relationship between causality and calculative thinking. In Avicenna's view, the concomitance between necessity through another and possibility in itself implies the simultaneous existence of cause and effect. The need for a cause arises not only at the birth of a thing but persists as long as the thing itself exists. Avicenna explains in the *Shifā* that believing in an anteriority rather than simultaneity between cause and effect is to mistakenly think that "thing is in need of the cause only for its origination."[70] The being necessary through another (*bi-ġayrihī*) is also a being necessary through its cause (*bi-ʾillatihī*). Causality becomes the principal sign of the need for otherness. Need (*ḥāja*) as ontological poverty reminds us that the effect always needs a cause to exist. The possible is poor because it cannot exist without something else, namely, without its cause. It is impossible for a thing that comes into being to continue to exist continually by itself independently of a cause that maintains it in being.

However, the produced object seems to exist autonomously once it exists. The building exists without its builder; the same goes for the child who outlives its father. The duality between physical causes that impart motion to things and the metaphysical cause that confers existence responds to this issue. The necessary Being is both the cause of things' movement at the physical level and the immediate cause of their existence at the metaphysical level. Avicenna expresses this difference through the distinction between a natural efficient causality and a metaphysical efficient causality.[71] The metaphysical efficient cause produces existence itself either absolutely, as in the case of necessary Being, or by producing the various forms of species that give specific existence to matter, as in the case of the Giver of Forms. However, God is not merely the first cause; He transcends the chain of causality in which He is present at every stage.[72] Hence, he is the Causer of causes (*musabbib al-asbāb*). There is no time interval between metaphysical efficient causes and their effects. These true causes exist simultaneously with their effects (*mawjūda maʿa l-maʿlūl*).[73] The builder is only

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70   Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 198.

71   Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 195.

72   Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, 141.

73   Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 198.

the cause of the physical motion that made the structure possible, while the metaphysical cause that provides existence and is always present ensures the subsistence of the structure. Thus, all causes contributing to the construction of the building are simultaneous with the subsistence of the building.[74] Unlike true causes (*ḥaqīqī*), natural causes are accidental (*bi-l-ʿaraḍ*) rather than essential; they are auxiliary causes. Accidental causes precede the effect in time and constantly replace each other in continuous movement; they only have a preparatory function for the action of true causes that give being and coexist with their effects. The preparation of matter to receive the form depends not only on the father or the builder but on a combination of causes intersecting at a given moment. It is when the entire causal complex exists in reality that the effect of this causal complex necessarily occurs.

Similarly, Eckhart emphasizes the difference between water heated by fire, which remains hot even after the fire is removed, and air illuminated by the sun, which loses its light as soon as the sun disappears.[75] As with the duality between physical causality and metaphysical causality, he proceeds to a distinction between two types of causality: on the one hand, univocal causality, where the effect belongs to the same genus as its cause, and on the other, analogical causality, which implies a difference in nature between the active and the passive.[76] The effects of the univocal cause continue even without the continued presence of that cause, as in the engendering of the son. For the analogical cause, on the other hand, the gift is provisional because, as pure grace, it lasts only as long as the action of the cause. Now God is the analogical creative cause of all things, since creation ex nihilo establishes a relationship of analogy. The analogical cause is in no way affected by the subject on which its action is exerted, and is therefore never weakened.

We have seen how Heidegger uses the argument of the independence of the effect from its cause to justify its availability to calculating thought. We certainly find the same idea in Avicenna, for whom the efficient cause designates "the cause which bestows an existence that is other than itself."[77] The efficient cause is not only a prin-

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74   Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 201.

75   Meister Eckhart, "Speech 41," *Deutsche Werke II*, ed. and trans. Josef Quint (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988), 294.

76   On this distinction cf. Emilie Zum Brunn, Alain de Libera, *Maître Eckhart: métaphysique du verbe et théologie négative* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1994), 84-87.

77   Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 194.

ciple of movement, as in the natural sciences, but it assures a gift of existence, as is the case with God in relation to the world. From then on, the formal cause is intrinsic to the produced thing, whereas the efficient cause is extrinsic to it. This existential approach to causality is at the heart of the Avicennian way of inscribing in it the very creation of the world. He thus moves away from the Aristotelian definition of the efficient cause as a simple source of change or movement and adopts a definition of the efficient cause as the source of being itself. This is why he adds that "it belongs to the effect in itself to be nonexistent and [then] to be, by its cause, existing." This sentence is at the heart of the opposition between our two philosophers because for Heidegger it is once again part of the paradigm of the effectuation of something that did not exist at all and which thus becomes fully existent outside its causes. Whereas for Avicenna, for whom exteriority implies no autonomy, it means that fundamentally without the permanent maintenance of this causal assistance the thing would still be pure non-existence. The need for a cause remains precisely because the thing is whereas it was not. This is why "the effect needs that which bestows existence on it always, permanently, as long as [the effect] exists." Therefore, being can never be a self-sufficient result. Instead, it is always fundamentally dependent on something other than itself. And according to Avicenna, the error of interpretation-which is what Heidegger is doing-comes from the belief in an anteriority in the relationship between cause and effect, whereas in truth there is a simultaneity, in accordance with his non-temporal vision of creation.

This is why, in the Avicennian proof of the existence of Being necessary in itself, it is fundamentally the necessity of an external cause which testifies to the indigence of the thing possible in itself and necessary by something other than itself. Moreover, the cause itself is caused and exists through something other than itself. The same cause is necessary concerning what it causes but contingent in being caused. The movement is not so much a descending movement of domination as an ascending movement of returning to the first cause.

If causality attests to the ontological need of the thing, the certain knowledge of the cause will allow full awareness of this persistent contingency. Certain knowledge, being knowledge of necessity through another, is also knowledge of the necessity of the cause. To know is to understand the absolute necessity the thing has towards its cause to exist. Therefore, certainty is no longer the certainty of domination or a calculation but of dependence, of a constant need for the metaphysical cause. This certainty allows full awareness of the radical contingency of all things outside the

Being necessary in itself. And knowledge must be certain because the ontological contingency of the created thing is itself certain and inevitable. In other words, the certain knowledge of a necessary thing implies certainty in knowing the otherness of that necessity, i.e., a need for a cause other than itself. In line with the duality and complementarity between natural efficient causes and the metaphysical cause as a vector of creation, the necessity of the cause refers to the necessity of the bestowing of existence. Knowing that a thing is *necessary* is being sure that it has been *necessitated*, meaning it necessarily needs a cause.

Heidegger regrets that medieval ontology was unable, any more than its ancient model, to pose the question of the mode of signification of being. The meaning of being seemed self-evident and therefore remained unclarified. Yet the plurivocity of being that Avicenna unfolds through the duality between possible being and necessary being invites us precisely to ask the question of the meaning of being. But it is then knowledge of the cause that enables us to understand that what seemed autonomous and available, that is, what seemed to exist necessarily in itself, is in truth only necessitated by another than itself, and therefore contingent in itself. It seems to us entirely possible, indeed necessary, to integrate Avicenna into a reflection on the meaning of being, given that the very effort to understand the reason for things is a hermeneutical task that serves the question of the meaning of being as a created being.

We should then cast a different perspective on the scientific knowledge of the necessary features of the world, in contrast to the skepticism found in Heidegger. As seen also in Eckhart, the world is both stable and fragile. On the one hand, Avicenna's world is not a completely evanescent being with no real existence. Under the rule of causality, it rigorously obeys immutable laws, making scientific knowledge possible and even necessary. On the other hand, this necessity is precisely not in itself but through another. Thus, the certainty of necessity also becomes the indubitable awareness of a form of contingency. While, if the subject is uncertain about the contingency of the thing, it leaves room for it to be otherwise, for the created thing to become necessary in itself. The ontological contingency of the existing thing is not itself contingent; it is certain and inevitable. The challenge is to make room for epistemological certainty in the subject concerning the ontological uncertainty of the object. While for Heidegger knowledge of the cause serves the autonomization of the thing that becomes available to satisfy the calculative thinking, for Avicenna it is the same knowledge of the cause which allows us to fully realize the impossible

ontological autonomy of the thing and therefore to renounce an instrumental relationship with the world.

Then not only does causality not oppose the spiritual detachment inherent in *Gelassenheit*, but it even becomes its condition. The pinnacle of instantaneous knowledge of all causes of all things is reached when the soul becomes a perfect mirror of the intelligible world. It thus becomes transformed into "an intelligible world that parallels the existing world in its entirety, witnessing that which is absolute good, absolute beneficence, [and] true absolute beauty."[78] It is then fully aware of the contingency of the created being in its entirety through the knowledge of the metaphysical cause.[79] Now, just as on a descending ontological plane, natural efficient causes prepare the action of the metaphysical cause; on an ascending epistemological plane, perfect knowledge of natural causes prepares for the knowledge of the metaphysical cause and remains indispensable.

Certain knowledge of the cause thus has spiritual and ethical consequences. Like Eckhart's *Gelassenheit*, for Avicenna, the real knower (*'ārif*) maintains a serene and joyful relationship with the world in all situations. Everything makes him content because he sees the Truth in everything other than the Truth.[80] Avicenna somewhat represents the philosophical foundation of the doctrine of the unity of existence (*wahdat al-wujūd*): it is the same being emanating from the divine flow that makes the multiplicity of contingent things exist. The vision of the same necessary being through each contingent being thus allows the overcoming of all calculation. The sage's goal is to reach a state of detachment from the path of everything other than the truth (*al-ḥaqq*). Avicenna distinguishes between the *zāhid*, the *'ābid*, and the *'ārif*, who is absolutely not in a logic of calculation since he pursues the truth for its own sake, not to achieve an end external to it. Whereas, for the *non-'ārif*, asceticism and piety are like two forms of commercial transactions. This approach treats religious devotion as a kind of transaction, exchanging worldly goods for rewards in the afterlife.[81]

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78   Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, 350.

79   For knowledge of the metaphysical cause, see Ömer Türker, *İbn Sînâ Felsefesinde Metafizik Bilginin İmkânı Sorunu* (İstanbul: İsam Yayınları, 2011), 235-37.

80   Shams Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism. Remarks and Admonitions: Part Four*, trans. Shams Inati (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 89.

81   Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism. Remarks and Admonitions*, 82.

We saw that Heidegger establishes continuity between divine action and human action, both following a logic of production incapable of calling into question the primacy of the available being. Avicenna himself extends this analogy but in a spirit of renunciation of all calculation. One who knows being acts without calculation or personal interest, just as God creates without calculation or premeditation. Creation is not prompted by desire or need; it is a gift, a pure a pure generosity generosity (*al-jūd al-maḥḍ*), meaning an act with neither intention (*qaṣd*) nor end beyond the act itself. Therefore, creation is not temporal, for it would then confirm, for Avicenna, the idea of divine calculation for a purpose. We therefore see to what extent the necessary conception of creation allows him to dissociate himself from the model criticized by Heidegger and which fundamentally rests on free will. This generosity, which means wealth and abundance, is opposed to ontological poverty, which is the mark of the contingent being. God indeed has an intention, but it is nothing other than His essence itself since there is no duality in Him.[82]

Avicenna makes a distinction between two kinds of generous acts. In the first case, the agent receives compensation, which can be a tangible good but also a simple thank you, gratitude, or a good reputation. This expectation is a sign of imperfection. Expecting such compensation is already not being generous because the wise one recognizes that any action motivated by desire is ultimately self-serving. Whereas, in the second case, nothing is expected in response to the generous act. For "generosity is providing a benefit that must be for no compensation."[83] The divine act is thus an act of pure generosity because it has no purpose beyond generosity itself. In the generous act, the agent is in no way affected by what he does or by anything that follows what he does. If Heidegger explains, with Angelius Silesius, inspired by Eckhart, that "the rose is without why,"[84] against the metaphysics of causality, Meister Eckhart's "without why" is very close to Avicenna's position since God gives not only entirely but also freely, expecting nothing in return. As Eckhart puts it "God acts without 'why' and has no 'why.'"[85] To the point that Eckhart presents, like Avicenna, this generous gift as necessary.[86]

82 For the difference between wealth and poverty in Avicenna, see Alper, *Varlık ve İnsan*, 53.

83 Inati, *Ibn Sina's Remarks and Admonitions: Physics and Metaphysics*, 145.

84 Angelus Silesius, *Der cherubinische Wandersmann* (Basel, 1955), 35.

85 Meister Eckhart, "Speech 41," 71.

86 Meister Eckhart, *Opus sermonum*, VI, n. 56.

Conclusion

In summary, our first two subsections have shown how Avicenna, through his non-temporal conception of creation *ex nihilo*, places an ontological indigence at the core of beings, considering that a necessary being by something other than itself remains fundamentally contingent in itself. This stance distances Avicenna from Heidegger's reduction of the medieval duality between essence and existence to the paradigm of available being inherent in Greek essentialism. The following two subsections have examined the implications of this major difference from the perspective of causality. For Heidegger, this essence-existence duality foreshadows the principle of reason, enabling the subject to reduce being to a mere instrument according to the logic of calculative reason. Now, for Avicenna, knowledge of the cause does not entail dominating the thing. Rather, it cultivates detachment towards contingent being by fully acknowledging its ontological poverty. Understanding that a thing is caused means being aware that its existence does not belong to it inherently and remains constantly dependent on an otherness.

In his *Very Short Introduction* to continental philosophy, Simon Critchley highlights the major risk faced by continental philosophy of sliding into an anti-scientific obscurantism on the pretext of avoiding the excesses of scientism, which are also very real. He argues that the debate between Carnap and Heidegger perfectly illustrates this issue, impacting in a certain manner the very duality between continental and analytic approaches. Thus, we need an "existential conception of science" that would allow us to maintain a concern for lived wisdom without abandoning the rigour of scientific discourse.[87] It is precisely on this point that the path we have explored in Avicenna is fundamental. This rehabilitation of causality, with the reinstatement of the concept of creation *ex nihilo*, extends beyond the studied divergence between the two philosophers involved. It allows us to question the possibility of escaping from what the Heidegger scholar Jean Greisch refers to as a "wisdom of uncertainty."[88] For it is necessary to overcome the opposition between, on the one hand, a calculating causality that reduces being to a simple availability

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87   Simon Critchley, *Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford, 2001), 117.

88   Cf. Jean Greich, *L'herméneutique comme sagesse de l'incertitude* (Paris: Le Cercle Herméneutique Éditeur, 2015).

and, on the other hand, an ethical and disinterested approach that would exclude any principle of causality, even though this is the basis of both intellectual reasoning and scientific progress.[89]

In the 1950s, Heidegger, aware of the threat of atomic energy, emphasized the urgent need to know how to manage the problem of a science that had become uncontrollable. He regretted that man was not ready enough to face up to this technicisation of the world. But the meditative thinking he proposes as an alternative to calculating thinking is not the only way forward, contrary to what he suggests. The real challenge lies precisely in the possibility of a meditative reason that does not turn its back on the notions of causes, proofs and arguments. This is why I fully share Jocelyn Benoist's scepticism about Heidegger's phenomenological conviction that metaphysics can be overcome. Failing to take into account the diversity and complexity of the latter, this vision extends and radicalises the profound enmity towards causality that accompanied the beginnings of phenomenology. This is why he is astonished at the lightness with which people speculate about the death of the principle of reason, "as if one could even imagine a thought that did not in some way bring it into play."[90] This does not mean that Heidegger's warnings are not still relevant, at least as a reminder of a permanent risk, including for the medieval conception of causality.

This divergence with Heidegger is all the more important given the growing body of work that attempts to bridge his philosophy with Islamic thought. This connection is built on shared critiques of the modern subject and the idea of knowledge as a way of being. What is important is to establish a rational dialogue on his philosophy with its similarities and differences. It is precisely through this dialogue of reason that I have proceeded in this study on both a synchronic and a diachronic level: on the one hand, by engaging in a philosophical confrontation between the two authors using a common ontological and epistemological terminology to express opposing theses;

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89   Another way in which Heidegger might encounter the spiritual significance of the principle of reason could be through the way in which Leibniz conceives it. For him, reason "is never merely calculation, but always also a mirroring of the universe". See Renato Cristin, *Heidegger and Leibniz: Reason and the Path* (Dordrecht/Boston/ London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 121. See also on the same theme: Hans Ruin, "Leibniz and Heidegger on Sufficient Reason," *Studia Leibnitiana*, Bd. 30, H. 1 (1998), 49-67.

90   Jocelyn Benoist, "Dépassements de la métaphysique," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*, 129, n° 2 (2004): 174.

on the other hand, by confirming the results thus obtained through recourse to the historical figure of Meister Eckhart, who stands between the two philosophers. This is why, moreover, I have not resorted to any comparative or intercultural approach here, because the same *Wirkungsgeschichte* links the two philosophers here, even if we cannot, of course, reduce Avicenna to this historical tradition. Thanks to this continuity, the encounter between medieval and contemporary philosophers can be the occasion for mutual decentering, because, as de Libera reminds us, we cannot "work on the Middle Ages without letting the Middle Ages work in us."[91] This is why it is vital that the encounter between the contemporary and the medieval should be genuinely reciprocal, so that the former can also be challenged by the latter.

But behind the philosophical divergences lie also the theological differences between the conceptions of the relationship between faith and reason in the two religions concerned. For even if we avoid any reductionist essentialisation that would deny the plurality and complexity of each tradition, dominant features - the study of which goes beyond the scope of this work - remain on both sides.[92] The respective dualities between, on the one hand, the notions of mysterium and *tawhīd* on a theological level and, on the other hand, original sin and *fitra* on an anthropological level should not be overlooked. For if Heidegger reproaches the Christian conception of creation for not being situated in a philosophical level following Pauline mistrust of reason, he himself remains dependent on this mistrust in the very way he excludes the principle of reason from the field of releasement. Moreover, de Libera considers that Tempier's Christian condemnation of Islamic philosophy was aimed less at the theory of the double truth than at this model of philosophical contemplation and earthly beatitude, accessible through intellectual work, and which represented a danger for Christian life. If many works trace the religious background of Heidegger's thought, it seems essential to us to evaluate his religious sources through a confrontation with Islamic theology which joins them on certain points but also differs from them on others which are fundamental.

Avicenna occupies a unique space. In Western philosophy, he embodies both familiarity – on the philosophical level – and difference – due to his Islamic background. It is this hybrid status that can be the vector of rich conflicts on a concep-

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91   de Libera, *Penser au Moyen Age*, 190.

92   Cf. Louis Gardet, M.-M. Anawati, *Introduction à la Théologie* musulmane, 416.

tual level and numerous cross-fertilisations.[93] The same can be said of Fārâbī, Averroes, Ibn Tufayl and many others who, on the one hand, are to some extend part of the history of European philosophy without being reduced to it, but, on the other hand, are nourished by an Islamic worldview which, if it sometimes comes close to it, is also very different from the Christian background of certain contemporary philosophers.

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93 For a more extensive study of this sameness-otherness status, see Selami Varlik, "Application of Tradition in Gadamer and the Sameness-Otherness of Islamic Philosophy," in *Differences in Identity in Philosophy and Religion: A Cross-Cultural Approach*, ed. Lydia Azadpour, Sarah Flavel, Russell Re Manning (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 69-89.

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