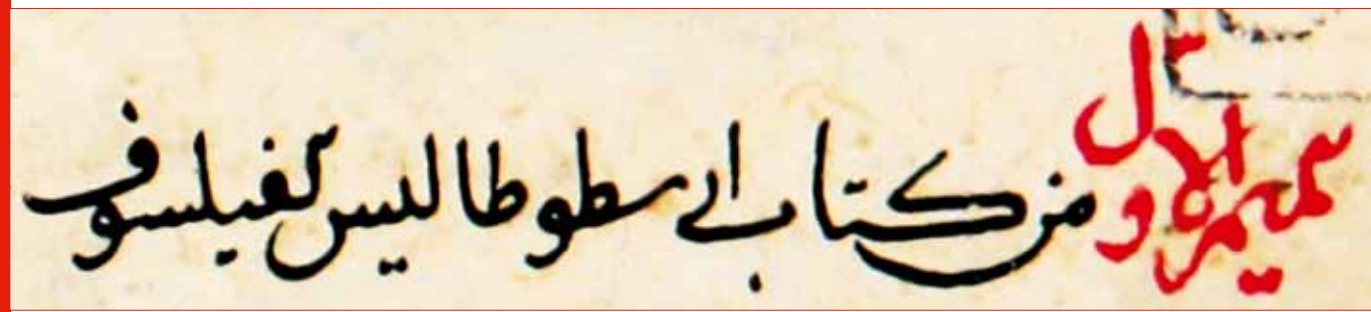
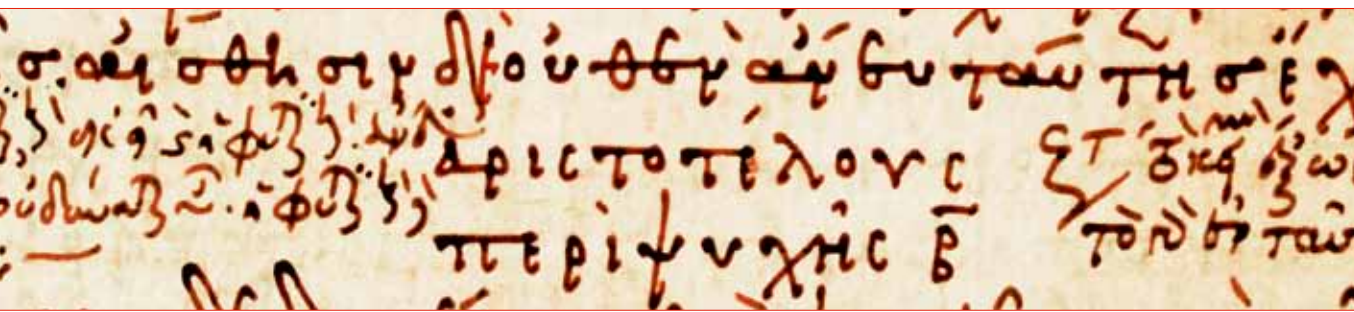


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Platonic and Neoplatonic Terminology for Being in Arabic Translation

Cristina D'Ancona

Abstract

The Arabic version of the *Enneads* is the earliest datable text in which appears the term *anniyya*, that features in Avicenna's metaphysics and lies in the background of the Latin definition of the *Causa prima* as *esse tantum*, typical of the *Liber de Causis*. This paper examines some examples of the use of 'to be' in the Arabic translation of the *Enneads*. It also discusses the description of the First Cause as 'pure Being' or 'first Being' in the Arabic Plotinus, and compares it with the *Divine Names* of the pseudo-Dionysius.

In his entry *Anniyya ou Inniyya* in the *Dictionnaire* appended to the *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle*, A. Hasnawi maintains that (i) in the Arabic translation of Neoplatonic texts *anniyya* corresponds both to τὸ εἶναι and τὸ ὄν; (ii) in the Arabic translations of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* it corresponds to τὸ τί ᾗν εἶναι; (iii) there is a sort of "semantic instability" in this term, which enables it to cover a wide range of meanings, from "what is" to "the very fact to be", and "the essence" (or "definition"). Hasnawi remarks that it features in Avicenna's vocabulary, and comes to the conclusion that "*Anniyya (inniyya)* est ainsi assimilé à la copule, à laquelle est reconnue une signification 'véritative', pour employer une expression de Ch. H. Kahn".¹ I shall focus here on the translations of Neoplatonic writings,² which count, as the late lamented Richard M. Frank pointed out,³ as "the earliest certainly datable text" containing this word.⁴ Frank provided examples for contending that

¹ A. Hasnawi, "*Anniyya ou Inniyya* (essence - existence)", in S. Auroux (ed.), *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle - Les Notions Philosophiques - Dictionnaire*, tome I, PUF, Paris 1990.

² For further information and other examples (e. g., from the Arabic version of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*), see the seminal study by S. M. Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian*, Brill, Leiden 1964, 94-97, and especially G. Endress - D. Gutas, *A Greek & Arabic Lexicon (GALex). Materials for a Dictionary of the Mediaeval Translations from Greek into Arabic*, Volume One, Brill, Leiden 2001, 428-36. On the grammatical derivation and the semantics of *anniyya* see G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus. Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in arabischen Übersetzung*, Imprimerie Catholique, Wiesbaden-Beirut 1973 (Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft), 80-81; on the vocalisation *anniyya* instead of *inniyya*, see *ibid.*, 85-86.

³ R. M. Frank, "The Origin of the Arabic Philosophical Term *anniyya*", *Cahiers de Byrsa* 6 (1956), 181-201 (also in Id., *Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism in Medieval Islam. Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalam*, I, ed. by D. Gutas, Variorum CS Series, 833, Ashgate 2005).

⁴ Frank, "The Origin", 185.

anniyya “most often (...) represents τὸ ὄν, τὸ ὄντα in the Greek text”, but also “is used to equal the Greek εἶναι”.⁵ He called attention to the fact that F. Dieterici, to whom we owe the *editio princeps* of the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*,⁶ clearly saw the correspondence between *anniyya* and the Greek locution τὰ ὄντως ὄντα.⁷ I shall first try to answer the question to what extent the translator of Plotinus into Arabic was acquainted with the meaning of τὰ ὄντα, τὰ ὄντως ὄντα. Then I shall narrow the focus on a typical feature of *anniyya* in the Neoplatonic Arabic literature, namely, the fact that it is adopted not only as a key word for the intelligible reality, but also as a name of the First Principle.

I

In a well known passage of *Enneads* V 1[10], *On the Three Principal Hypostases*, Plotinus explores what he acknowledges to be a crucial difficulty in his philosophy, namely, how on earth is it possible that “from a unity such as we say the One is did anything become an independent entity, whether a multiplicity, a dyad or a number” (trans. Atkinson).⁸ His answer in this passage is that the First Principle ‘produces’ multiplicity by no alteration, i. e., without ceasing to remain perfectly simple. What the One ‘produces’ first is the intelligible pattern of the entire reality, which is at one and the same time also the divine mind. This principle, the Intellect, is said to be the first image to have appeared of the One (ἀγαλλμα τὸ πρῶτον ἐκφανέν, V 1[10], 6.14-15). The treatise *On the Three Principal Hypostases* is one of the most discussed among the Plotinian writings which deal with the topic of the ‘production’ of the Intellect out of the One,⁹ and I shall leave aside any attempt to follow step by step the course of Plotinus’ reasoning. Only a single, non-controversial

⁵ Frank, “The Origin”, 186.

⁶ F. Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles aus dem Arabischen übersetzt*, J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung Leipzig 1882 (also in Id., *Die Philosophie bei den Arabern im X. Jahrhundert n. Chr. - Gesamtdarstellung und Quellenwerke*, XII, G. Olms Verlag, Hildesheim 1969).

⁷ Frank, “The Origin”, 181; Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles*, 199, n. 13.3: “Der schwierige terminus *anniyya* (richtig *inniyya*) ist die Antwort auf die Frage, ob etwas sei, nämlich die, dass etwas sei ὄντι ἔσται, er ist von uns mit ‘Wesenheit’ übersetzt, und möchte dem griechischen τὰ ὄντως ὄντα, wirklich seiend, entsprechen”.

⁸ V 1[10], 6.4-6. See *Plotinus: Ennead V 1. On the Three Principal Hypostases*. A Commentary with Translation by M. Atkinson, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1983, LVIII. The passage is worth quoting in full: “Why did it not remain on its own, but such a great multiplicity flowed out from it, which is seen in the world and which we claim to refer back to it?” (lines 6-8).

⁹ See the *status quaestionis* in J. Bussanich, *The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus*, Brill, Leiden 1988 (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 49), 34-54. Other discussions of the same chapter include my “Re-reading *Ennead* V 1[10], 7. What is the scope of Plotinus’ geometrical analogy in this passage?”, in J.J. Cleary (ed.), *Traditions of Platonism*. Essays in Honour of John Dillon, Ashgate, Aldershot - Brookfield - Singapore - Sydney 1999, 237-61, E. Emilsson, “Remarks on the Relation between the One and Intellect in Plotinus”, *ibid.*, 271-90, and D. O’Brien, “La matière chez Plotin: son origine, sa nature”, *Phronesis* 44 (1999), 45-71.

point must be mentioned here. Admittedly, the ‘production’ taken into account in this passage has nothing to do with the process involved in the Aristotelian accounts either of the causality of a craftsman, or of birth and growing up of living beings. The timeless nature of the ‘production’ of the intelligible reality is explicitly stated.

ἐκποδῶν δὲ ἡμῖν ἔστω γένεσις ἢ ἐν χρόνῳ τὸν λόγον περὶ τῶν ἀεὶ ὄντων ποιουμένοις·
τῷ δὲ λόγῳ τὴν γένεσιν προσάπτοντας αὐτοῖς αἰτίας καὶ τάξεως αὐτοῖς ἀποδώσειν.

Let us discount genesis in time, since we are discussing eternal entities; when in our discussion we predicate ‘birth’ of them we shall be giving them some part in the hierarchy of causation (trans. Atkinson).¹⁰

This is the reason why the One ‘produces’ what comes forth from it without any change whatsoever, including willing.¹¹ The immobile causality which is attributed to the First Principle is explained by the fact that both the cause and its effects share in the main feature of the Platonic Forms, i.e., timeless identity.¹² The First Principle remains unchanged, i.e., does not alterate its absolute simplicity and oneness even though it gives rise to the many, and the explanation advanced is that the entities involved in this ‘production’ are timeless: both the One and its first effect, i.e., Intellect, share in independence of time and immutability. Notwithstanding its transcendence to Being and Intellect, Plotinus’ One ‘acts’, so to speak, in precisely the same way as Forms do, giving rise to their effects by their changeless permanence. An analysis of the problems involved in this doctrine would exceed the limits of this paper; let us take for granted that for Plotinus both the principle of Forms and Forms give rise to their effects by means of their changeless identity, even though

¹⁰ V 1[10], 6. 19-22, trans. Atkinson, *Plotinus: Ennead V 1*, LVIX.

¹¹ V 1[10], 6.22-27: “We must say, then, that what arises from the One arises without its having moved; for if anything were to arise as a result of its having moved, what arose would be a third term after it, subsequent to the movement, and not a second term. Therefore, the One must be unmoved, and if anything is secondary and subsequent to it, this must have become a separate entity without the One’s having inclined its attention, exercised its will, or moved in any sense”, trans. Atkinson, *Plotinus: Ennead V 1*, LVIX.

¹² G. Vlastos, “Degrees of Reality in Plato”, in R. Bambrough (ed.), *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, London-New York 1965, 1-19 (also in G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*, Princeton U. P., Princeton 1973, 58-75); G. E. L. Owen, “Plato and Parmenides on the Timeless Present”, *The Monist* 50 (1966), 317-40; R. H. Bolton, “Plato’s Distinction between Being and Becoming”, *Review of Metaphysics* 29 (1975), 66-95; A. Nehamas, “Plato on the Imperfection of the Sensible World”, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1975), 105-17 (also in G. Fine [ed.], *Plato 1. Metaphysics and Epistemology*, Oxford U. P., Oxford 1999, 171-91); G. Fine, “Separation”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1984), 31-87; R. G. Turnbull, “Becoming and Intelligibility”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 6 (1988), Supplementary Volume, 1-36.

their causality differs in other respects.¹³ Plainly, immutability does not mean permanence over time in this case, but separatedness in nature from that kind of being which admits change. Both Forms and the One, which is their principle, are always what they are, so that the 'appearance' of Forms 'after' the One does mean subordination according to the hierarchy of causation.

This passage belongs to V 1[10], a treatise which has been probably translated in its entirety into Arabic, even though some parts are lacking in the Arabic text that has come down to us, scattered in two distinct writings: the pseudo-*Theology* and the so-called *Sayings of the Greek Sage*. The translator was Ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī,¹⁴ and the translation is available in print in Arabic (except for chapters 7-10)¹⁵ and in the English translation appended by Geoffrey Lewis to the so-called *editio maior* of the *Enneads* (including chapters 7-10).¹⁶ This is the Arabic rendering of the passage quoted above:

¹³ For a discussion of this point in Plotinus one may see my "Ἀμορφον καὶ ἀνείδεον. Causalité des Formes et causalité de l'Un chez Plotin", *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 10 (1992), 69-113.

¹⁴ Chart of the extant Arabic translation of V 1[10]:

V 1[10], 2.10-25 3.6-6.20 6.25-36	<i>Sayings of the Greek Sage</i> (Marsh 539, 32r7-33r6; cf. Lewis, 263) <i>Theology of Aristotle</i> , VII, Badawī 108.5-114.18 <i>Sayings of the Greek Sage</i> , Badawī 184.3-185.2; 189.14-17
V 1[10], 7.18-26 7.40-42 8.1-10 10.24-30	<i>Sayings of the Greek Sage</i> , Badawī 185.4-19 <i>Sayings of the Greek Sage</i> (Marsh 539, 21r13-v9; cf. Lewis, 281) <i>Sayings of the Greek Sage</i> (Marsh 539, 43r6-v10; cf. Lewis, 281) <i>Sayings of the Greek Sage</i> (Marsh 539, 45r2-46v1; cf. Lewis, 285)
V 1[10], 11.1-12	<i>Theology of Aristotle</i> , IX, Badawī 129.9-133.3

(Badawī = 'A. Badawī, *Aflūṭin 'inda-l-'Arab*, Dār al-Nahḍat al-'arabiyya, Cairo 1966; Lewis = Plotini *Opera* ediderunt P. Henry et H.-R. Schwyzer, Tomus II. *Enneades* IV-V. Accedunt *Plotiniana Arabica* quae anglice vertit G. Lewis, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1959; Marsh 539 = MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marsh 539).

¹⁵ The Arabic version of this part of treatise V 1[10] is extant in the *Sayings of the Greek Sage*. On this text, see F. Rosenthal, "Aš-Šaykh al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus-Source", *Orientalia* 21 (1952), 461-92; 22 (1953), 370-400; 24 (1955), 42-65 (also in Id., *Greek Philosophy in the Arab World*. A Collection of Essays, Great Yarmouth 1990); M. Aouad, "La Théologie d'Aristote et autres textes du Plotinus Arabus", in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques*, I, CNRS Éditions, Paris 1989, 541-590, esp. 574-80; after Aouad's survey, one may see my "The Greek Sage, the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* and the Arabic Plotinus", in R. Arnzen – J. Thielmann (eds), *Words, Texts and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea*. Studies on the sources, contents and influences of Islamic civilization and Arabic philosophy and science dedicated to Gerhard Endress on his sixty-fifth birthday, Peeters, Leuven 2004, 159-76; see also E. Cottrell, "L'Anonyme d'Oxford (Bodleian Or. Marsh 539): bibliothèque ou commentaire?", in C. D'Ancona (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*. Proceedings of the Meeting of the European Science Foundation Network "Late Antiquity and Arabic Thought. Patterns in the Constitution of European Culture", Strasbourg, March 12-14, 2004, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2007 (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 107), 415-41; E. Wakelnig, "A New Version of Miskawayh's *Book of Triumph*: an Alternative Recension of *al-Fawz al-asghar* or the Lost *Fawz al-akbar*?" *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 19 (2009), 83-119.

¹⁶ See above, n. 14. On the various extant parts of the Arabic Plotinus see F. W. Zimmermann, "The

وينبغي لك أن تنفي عن وهمك كل كون بزمان إذا كنت إنما تريد أن تعلم كيف
 أبدعت الآليات الحقيقية الدائمة الشريفة من المبدع الأول
 You must dismiss from your imagination all coming into existence in time, if you wish to know
 how the true everlasting noble essences were originated from the First originator (trans. Lewis).¹⁷

In this passage, the Arabic words corresponding to the Greek τὰ ἀεὶ ὄντα are only *al-anniyāt* and *al-dā'ima*, but the translator felt entitled to amplify the Greek locution by means of two supplementary adjectives: *al-ḥaqqiyya*, 'true', and *al-šarīfa*, 'noble'. If we try to get clearer about the qualification added by these words to the original locution, we recognize immediately the mark of the Platonic hierarchy of the two levels or kinds of being as it is presented at *Tim.* 28 B-C, where the true and everlasting being is contrasted with becoming.¹⁸ By inserting *al-ḥaqqiyya*, the translator contrasts those beings which are told 'to be' in the true sense of the word from other beings, about which 'to be' is said with no truth. On the other hand, using *al-šarīfa* he suggests to contrast those beings which occupy a higher position in a scale of value with other beings of a lower degree of value. Such an orthodox Platonic explanation of the nature of the intelligible items is a leit-motiv throughout the *Enneads*, and especially in the three last ones, which have been translated into Arabic. But it is worth noting that this explanation is by no means suggested by the near Greek context of the quoted sentence, a fact which allows us to conclude that the equivalence between the everlasting beings (τὰ ἀεὶ ὄντα, *al-anniyāt al-dā'ima*) and the true, higher beings belonged to the translator's own train of thought.

A common Platonic-Aristotelic background in his philosophical education might suffice to explain why he felt entitled to interpret everlastingness as belonging to the higher degree of reality, namely, that degree which in the Platonic as well as in the Aristotelian tradition is often characterized as 'divine' – precisely the word which is often translated by *šarīf*.¹⁹ Be this as it may, it is of some interest to get closer to the philosophical implications of the established equivalence between 'everlasting, higher beings' and 'true' beings.

The hidden assumption in this equivalence is that something can be credited with real being only if it does not perish or cease to be what it is. To interpret 'true' as primarily related to the thing itself, and secondarily to the mental act which acknowledges that such

Origins of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*", in J. Kraye, W.F. Ryan, C.-B. Schmitt (eds), *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: the 'Theology' and Other Texts*, The Warburg Institute, London 1986, 110-240, and Aouad, "La Théologie d'Aristote et autres textes".

¹⁷ Badawī, 114.14-15, English trans. Lewis, 275.

¹⁸ *Tim.* 27 D 5 - 28 A 3.

¹⁹ See for instance Badawī 109.16, where *šarīfa* corresponds to Plotinus' θεϊότεραν (*scil.*, the soul) in V 1[10], 3.20, and Proclus' θεῶν ψυχῆς (Dodds 176.1), turning into *nafs šarīfa* in the *Liber de Causis* (ed. Bardenhewer, 63.5).

a thing 'is', equals to endorse the Greek understanding of τὸ ὄν as actual reality, which is opposed to the uncertain status of the objects of mere δόξα. We all are indebted to Charles Kahn for the analysis of the Greek use of the verb "to be" in this overdetermined sense.²⁰ To say that something 'really is' means that such a thing escapes the instability in our judgement precisely because it escapes the instability in its nature. A thing which meets this requirement is referred to by means of the verb εἶναι and its cognate forms, often qualified by the adverbs ὄντως (for which we do not possess in modern languages a corresponding adverb derived from 'to be') and ἀληθῶς, 'truly'.

Another hidden assumption in the equivalence between 'everlasting' and 'true' is more committal. To couple 'the everlasting beings' with 'the true, higher beings' involves the belief in the truth of the inference 'if everlasting, then real, then superior in dignity to the things that come to be and pass away'. This is the genuine Platonic assumption that, since immutability is the warrantee for real being, the timeless and changeless Forms are also true realities in the higher degree. This assumption too has been studied by Kahn in his ground-breaking study of the philosophical uses of 'to be' in Plato.²¹ Thinking that entities endowed with immutability are true beings involves believing that full reality belongs to those entities which are grasped by intellect, instead of belonging to the objects of sense-perception, whose warrantee to be always what they are is doubtful. To do so means to endorse the hypothesis of Forms, and this is precisely the case of the quoted passage. The translator did not find in the Greek text but the two words τὰ ὄντα and ἀεί, and coupled them (i) with the idea of superiority to non-eternal beings ("noble"), and (ii) with that of truth or full reality ("true"). Therefore, the Arabic translation of V 1[10], 6.19-20 perfectly grasps the meaning of the Greek text, where τὰ ἀεί ὄντα means in fact the Forms: the translator did recognize them under the words "the everlasting beings",²² since he amplifies them in a way which testifies his acquaintance with Platonic ontology.

It is worth noting also that the translator is able to distinguish the cases in which Plotinus is speaking about τὰ ὄντα in this specialized sense from the cases in which the Greek verb 'to be' is used in a much more general sense. Let us examine just one example. In IV 8[6],

²⁰ C. H. Kahn, "The Greek verb To Be and the Concept of Being", *Foundations of Language* 2 (1966), 245-65, and Id., *The Verb 'Be' in Ancient Greek*, Reidel, Dordrecht-Boston 1973 (Part 6 of *The Verb 'Be' and its Synonyms. Philosophical and Grammatical Studies* edited by J.W.M. Verhaar, Foundations of Language Supplementary Series, vol. 16), esp. 331-70.

²¹ C. H. Kahn, "Some Philosophical Uses of 'To Be' in Plato", *Phronesis* 26 (1981), 105-34. See also L. Brown, "The Verb 'To Be' in Greek Philosophy: Some Remarks", in S. Everson (ed.), *Language*, Cambridge U. P., Cambridge 1994, 212-36.

²² A fact which is less trivial than it seems to be: the translator could well have interpreted "the everlasting beings" as referred to the separate substances which in the Aristotelian theology move the heavens.

7.5-6 Plotinus is speaking about the descent of soul into the world of becoming. Soul cannot be blamed for this, because it is naturally located midway between the intelligible and sensible worlds. This idea is expressed by the words μέσην τάξις ἐν τοῖς οὐσίς ἐπισηχοῦσαν (“it occupies a middle rank among realities”, in Armstrong’s translation), and the participle τὰ ὄντα here is plainly intended to cover both the levels or kinds of being the soul stays in the middle of, namely, the intelligible and the sensible ones. In this case, the translator renounced to rendering literally τὰ ὄντα, and transformed Plotinus’ μέσην τάξις ἐν τοῖς οὐσίς into *bayna al-‘alamayn*,²³ i.e., the intelligible and the sensible worlds. On the grounds of the Arabic version of V 1[10], 6.19-20, one is entitled to say that the translator understood the exact meaning of Plotinus’ ‘being’ in the specialized sense of the Platonic intelligible realities. On the grounds of the version of IV 8[6], 7.5-6, one is entitled to say that he did not reproduce mechanically this overdetermination²⁴ of τὰ ὄντα, but was able to distinguish a generic use of ‘being’ from the cases in which it means ‘true, everlasting, and intelligible reality’. One may ask whether or not he was also able to recognize the instances of an overdetermined use of ‘to be’ when he has no Greek guidance. The Arabic version of IV 7[2], 14.13 provides a case in point.

Treatise IV 7[2], *On the Immortality of the Soul*, is of crucial importance from the viewpoint of the textual relationship between the Greek text of the *Enneads* and the Arabic version.²⁵ This treatise is scattered over three chapters of the pseudo-*Theology*; its final part, which contains the passage at stake here, is reproduced in its entirety into Arabic.²⁶ Chapter I of the pseudo-*Theology* begins with the topic of the descent of the soul, with which deal chapters 13-15 of *On the Immortality of the Soul*. Plotinus expounds the idea — ultimately coming from Plato’s *Timaeus* — that the ‘descent’ of the soul means

²³ Badawī, 87.18 = Plotino, *La discesa dell’anima nei corpi (IV 8[6])*. *Plotiniana Arabica (Teologia di Aristotele, I e VII; “Deti del Sapiente Greco”)*, Il Poligrafo, Padova 2003 (Subsidia mediaevalia patavina, 4), 252.13.

²⁴ I take this term in the sense expounded by Kahn, “Some Philosophical Uses of ‘To Be’ in Plato”, 105 as follows: “the uses of εἶναι in Plato (as in Greek generally) are often *overdetermined*: several grammatical readings of a single occurrence are not only possible but sometimes required for the full understanding of the text”.

²⁵ Cf. “The Arabic Version of *Ennead IV 7(2)* and its Greek Model”, in J. M. Montgomery (ed.), *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy. From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank*, Peeters, Leuven 2006 (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 152), 127-56.

²⁶ Table of the extant Arabic translation of IV 7[2]:

IV 7[2], 1.1-4.34	<i>Theology of Aristotle</i> , IX, Badawī 121.1-129.7
IV 7[2], 8 ¹ .9-8 ² .10	<i>Theology of Aristotle</i> , III, Badawī 45.1-48.8
IV 7[2], 8.36-44	<i>Theology of Aristotle</i> , III, Badawī 48.8-49.9
IV 7[2], 8 ² .15-8 ⁵ .20	<i>Theology of Aristotle</i> , III, Badawī 49.9-55.19
IV 7[2], 13.1-15	<i>Theology of Aristotle</i> , I, Badawī 18.11-21.17

that soul organizes the sensible universe according to the intelligible pattern which lies in the separate Intellect. This is precisely the reason why the world-soul must be immortal, being eternally related to an eternal entity, νοῦς. In chapter 14, Plotinus argues that individual souls too must be immortal, derived as they are from a unique origin, Soul as a principle, and possessing as they do “life” in their own right, a topic ultimately derived from Plato’s *Phaedo*. In his short review of Plato’s main tenets about soul, Plotinus does not omit the tripartite soul of the *Republic*, and says that if one would argue against the soul’s immortality on the basis of the Platonic tripartition, contending that any compound has to be resolved into its components, the reply is that immortality does not belong only to the higher part of soul, but also to the lower, which shares in the immortality of its own principle notwithstanding the fact that it is intermingled with body. In fact, Plotinus concludes,

ἀφειμένον δὲ τὸ χεῖρον οὐδὲ αὐτὸ ἀπολεῖσθαι, ἕως ἂν ἧ, ὅθεν ἔχει τὴν ἀρχήν. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος ἀπολεῖται.

when the worse part is abandoned, even it does not perish, as long as that from which it has its origin exists. For nothing of real being perishes (trans. Armstrong).²⁷

Only two interpretations of Plotinus’ use of τὸ ὄν are possible in this context. One might imagine that the participle is intended to indicate ‘all that exists’ without qualification, something which has a distinct monistic (or, for that matter, ‘Parmenidean’) ring: even those faculties of soul which are intermingled with body are eventually immortal, because ‘being’ taken in itself cannot be destroyed. Alternatively, one might understand the sentence as referred to the true and everlasting being of the suprasensible realm every soul is derived from or related to, and in this case Plotinus’ elliptical expression means “nothing [belonging in its own nature to this kind of being] decedes from [true] being”. This interpretation is endorsed by Armstrong, and fits well with the context as well as with the more general Plotinian ontological tenets. But in order to clarify this issue, Armstrong suitably adds “real” to “being” in his translation. The Arabic translator did the same. In the corresponding place of the pseudo-*Theology* we find the following sentence:

²⁷ IV 7[2], 14.12-13 (trans. Armstrong in the Loeb Series, vol. IV, 391).

غير أن تهلك أو تبديد كما ظنَّ أناس لأنَّها متعلِّقة ببديئها وإن بعدت منه ونأث . ولم يمكن أن تهلك آنيَّة من الآنيَّات لأنَّها آنيَّات حقَّ لا تدبُّر ولا تهلك كما قد قلنا مرارا but <soul> does not perish or cease to be, as some think, because she is attached to her origin, even though she be far from it and remote. It is impossible that any of the essences should perish; for they are true essences, which do not pass away or perish, as we have frequently said (trans. Lewis).²⁸

Armstrong recognizes that Plotinus is speaking here of ‘being’ in the overdetermined, Platonic sense; the Arabic translator had the same feeling, but nothing in the immediate context forced him to do so, and his interpretation, as he himself says, relies on his own understanding of what the Greek text is referring to. At variance with the passage from V 1[10] quoted above, the translator did not limit himself to add supplementary qualifications to Plotinus’ words. Here he had in front of him only τὸ ὄν, instead of the qualified expression τὰ ἀεὶ ὄντα, and expanded its meaning through an entire sentence of his own: the words “for they are true essences, which do not pass away or perish, as we have frequently said” have no counterpart in Greek. Hence, we are entitled to conclude that he recognized the Platonic notion of ‘being’ and commented on it by means of the two features which Kahn denominates ‘veridical’ (true essences) and ‘durative’ (do not pass away or perish). In precisely the same vein, the Arabic translator of the *Elements of Theology* adopts *anniyya bi-haqqin* for Proclus’ ὄντως ὄν.²⁹

There is another interesting testimony of the translator’s understanding of the specialized sense of ‘being’. It is taken from the translation of IV 8[6], *On the Descent of Soul into the Bodies*, a treatise which has been translated into Arabic in its entirety.³⁰ The

²⁸ Badawī, 21.2-3 (slightly modified); trans. Lewis, 221.

²⁹ *Liber de Causis*, ed. Bardenhewer, 61.11, corresponding to *El. Th.* 88, ed. Dodds, 80.25; see G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus* (quoted above, n. 2), 93-99. There are reasons for thinking that the *Liber de Causis* was compiled out of a complete Arabic version of the *Elements of Theology*: I have tried to argue for this in two papers, “Sources et structure du *Liber de causis*” and “Al-Kindī et l’auteur du *Liber de Causis*”, in *Recherches sur le Liber de Causis*, Vrin, Paris 1995; for an overview on the studies on this texts up to 2003, see C. D’Ancona - R. C. Taylor, “Le *Liber de Causis*”, in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques*, Supplément au vol. I; CNRS Éditions, Paris 2003, 599-647.

³⁰ Table of the extant Arabic translation of IV 8[6]:

IV 8[6], 1.1-2.8	<i>Theology of Aristotle</i> , I, Badawī 22.1-25.14
IV 8[6], 3.6-5.13	<i>Sayings of the Greek Sage</i> (Marsh 539, 22v10-28v9; cf. Lewis, 235-41)
IV 8[6], 5.24-8	<i>Theology of Aristotle</i> , VII, Badawī 84.1-91.21

See Plotino, *La discesa dell’anima nei corpi* (IV 8[6]). *Plotiniana Arabica* (Teologia di Aristotele, I e VII; “Detti del Sapiente Greco”), quoted above, n. 23.

end of chapter 6 of this treatise contains an account of the relationship that soul establishes between the sensible and intelligible worlds. Soul acts on matter and makes it participate in the intelligible nature, transforming it into something real, to the extent in which the world of coming-to-be and passing away can be real. The sentence under scrutiny here, opened as it is by the particle οὖν, “therefore”, provides the reason for this.

δεῦξις οὖν τῶν ἀρίστων ἐν νοητοῖς τὸ ἐν αἰσθητῶ κάλλιστον, τῆς τε δυνάμεως τῆς τε ἀγαθότητος αὐτῶν, καὶ συνέχεται πάντα εἰσαεὶ τὰ τε νοητῶς τὰ τε αἰσθητῶς ὄντα, τὰ μὲν παρ' αὐτῶν ὄντα, τὰ δὲ μετοχῆ τούτων τὸ εἶναι εἰσαεὶ λαβόντα, μιμούμενα τὴν νοητὴν καθόσον δύνανται φύσιν.

The greatest beauty in the world of sense, therefore, is a manifestation of the noblest amongst the intelligibles, of their power and of their goodness, and all things are held together for ever, those which exist intelligibly and those which exist perceptibly, the intelligibles existing of themselves and the things perceived by the senses receiving their existence for ever by participation in them, imitating the intelligible nature as far as they can (trans. Armstrong).³¹

The most beautiful part of the visible world – in all likelihood the sun – provides an indication of the highest reality within the intelligible realm. Plotinus' allusion to the δύναμις and ἀγαθότης of this reality is clearly reminiscent of Plato's analogy between the visible sun and the principle of the Forms, the Good lying beyond them in power and dignity.³² Both the intelligible and visible world are linked up together by the self-communicating power of this unique principle. The difference of value between the two worlds is expressed here by means of the usual Platonic criterion of self-standingness. The intelligible realities are subsistent in virtue of themselves, the highest visible realities, the heavens, imitate this self-standingness according to their capacity, i.e., in so far as they possess everlasting being. The Arabic translation is heavily interpretative.

فإن العالم الحسي إنما هو إشارة إلى العالم العقلي وإلى ما فيه من الجواهر العقلية وبيان قواها العظيمة وفضائلها الكريمة وخيرها الذي يغلي غليانا و يفور فوراً. ونقول: إن الأشياء العقلية تلزم الأشياء الحسية، والباري الأول لا يلزم الأشياء العقلية بل هو الممسك بجميع الأشياء العقلية والحسية³³، غير أن الأشياء العقلية هي آليات حقيقة³⁴ لأنها مبتدعة من الآنية الأولى بغير توسط، والأشياء الحسية فهي آليات دائرة لأنها

³¹ IV 8[6], 6.23-28, trans. Armstrong (in the Loeb Series, vol. IV, 417).

³² *Resp.* VI, 509 B 6-10. However, Plotinus here is taking into account not only the One, but also Intellect and Soul, i.e., the three divine principles (cf. V 1[10], 7.49); this explains the plural “the noblest amongst the intelligibles”.

³³ This is the reading of MS Istanbul, Aya Sofya 2457, f. 150r1-2, reflected in Lewis' translation; Badawī, 87.9-10 reads: الأشياء العقلية والحسية بل هو الممسك لجميع الأشياء

³⁴ Badawī, 87.9-10 reads *anniyāt ḡafīyya*, “concealed” or “invisible essences”; the MS Istanbul, Aya Sofya 2457,

رسوم الآنيات الحقية ومثالها، وإنما قوامها ودوامها بالكون والتناسل كي تبقى وتدوم، شبهها بالأشياء العقلية الثابتة الدائمة.

(i) For the sensible world is but an indication of the world of mind and of the intellectual substances within it, and evidence of their immense powers, their noble virtues and their good, which boils up and bubbles over. (ii) We say that the intelligible things cleave to the sensible things, but the first creator does not cleave to the intelligible things; rather is he the one who holds on to all things, intelligible and sensible. (ii.i) though the intelligible things are true essences, (ii.ii) for they originate from the first essence with no intermediation, (iii) and the sensible things are perishable essences, for they are pictures and likenesses of the true essences; their maintenance and their continuation by genesis and procreation is in order that they may abide and continue in imitation of the permanent continuing things of the mind (trans. Lewis).³⁵

In sentence (i) the words “For ... good” are closely related to the Greek, while the words “which boils up and bubbles over” are added; in sentence (ii) only the words “We say that the intelligible things cleave to the sensible things” come from Plotinus, while the rest of the sentence is added; in sentence (iii) the words “the sensible things” and “are pictures and likenesses of the true essences” come directly from Greek, while the rest of the sentence is added.

As for the philosophical meaning, in sentence (i), the Arabic translation faithfully reproduces the doctrine of the original passage, even though Plotinus’ thought is simplified to a certain extent.³⁶ In sentence (ii), the Arabic text develops the original Greek passage along a new path. Instead of explaining the continuity of the intelligible and sensible levels of being in terms of participation, as Plotinus does, the Arabic translator has recourse to the idea of the transcendence and universal causality of the First Creator, who is said to hold on all things, intelligible and sensible. The next step is especially interesting. The Arabic version says that (ii.i) the intelligible things are true beings (*anniyyāt haqqiyya*), since (ii.ii) they derive immediately from the first being (*al-anniyya al-ūlā*).

As in the passages quoted above, the expression “true beings” refers to the intelligible beings; but the reason for this lies in that they derive immediately from the First Creator (*al-bārī al-awwal*), which is now said to be the “First Being, *al-anniyya al-ūlā*”. Instead of finding with Plotinus the distinctive feature of the intelligible realities in their self-standingness, contrasted with the derivative nature of the sensible things, the Arabic says that the intelligible things are “true beings” because they derive immediately from a principle which is the first, nonderivative instance of being.

f. 150r2, has the variant reading حفية. The correct reading is obviously *anniyyāt haqqiyya*, as in Lewis’ translation.

³⁵ Badawī, 87.8-12, trans. Lewis, 245.

³⁶ The Arabic version skips the idea that the most beautiful part of the sensible world gives an image of the highest among the suprasensible principles.

Even though the translator parts company with Plotinus on this point, his reasoning is inspired by the Platonic hierarchy between the participants (the sensible things which are said to be “pictures and likenesses” of the true beings), and the pure, nonderivative principle (the “First Being”).

Indeed, as it happens to be the case with Plato himself,³⁷ he takes into account not only the participants and the *per se* principle, but also the participated character, which provides the link between the individuals and the *per se* principle. Here the link between the First Being and the sensible things is provided by the true beings, the intelligible substances. A threefold hierarchy is established, with the First Principle standing at the top, the intelligible things in the middle, and the sensible world at the bottom. The sensible things are said to participate in the intelligible realities and, at one and the same time, to be under the causal influence of the First Principle, whose power covers both the intelligible things and their sensible likenesses or imitations.

There is something genuinely Plotinian in this picture: the topic of the intelligible world as the first, immediate offspring of the One, a feature of Plotinus’ universe which is typical of Arabic Neoplatonism, even in texts based on Proclus (who parted company with Plotinus on this specific point).³⁸ But there is also something new, namely, the idea that the One is the First Being, and that the intelligible things owe their nature of “true beings” to their immediate derivation from this supreme, nonderivative instance of Being.

This is admittedly unplotinian, because Plotinus firmly maintains that the One transcends being, i.e., intelligible reality, and for this reason cannot be grasped by intellection, which always accompanies being. However, even in his departure from Plotinus’ doctrine, the translator spontaneously follows a Platonic course of reasoning, in so far as he deals with ‘being’ as with a property which can be participated at various degrees, while the *per se* principle of this participation remains pure and isolated in its transcendence.

II

The first chapter of the *Theology of Aristotle* contains a long and interesting example of the translator’s use of ‘being’ for denoting the First Principle. It occupies two and half pages in Badawi’s edition, and is placed between the translation of chapters 2 and 3 of IV 8[6], *On the Descent of Soul into the Bodies*.³⁹

³⁷ As for instance in *Phd.* 102 D 6-7, where αὐτὸ τὸ μέγεθος is compared with τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος, or *Symp.* 211 A 8 - D 3, where αὐτὸ ... ὁ ἔστι καλόν is compared with the instances of beauty in the beautiful things.

³⁸ On this point one may see my “La doctrine de la création *mediante intelligentia* dans le *Liber de Causis* et dans ses sources”, *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 76 (1992), 209-33.

³⁹ Scholars disagree on the authorship of this section of the pseudo-*Theology*, which has no counterpart in the Greek. According to Zimmermann, “The Origins of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*”, 115-16 and 141-

Crucial as it is for the origins of Arabic Neoplatonism and of Arabic philosophy as a whole,⁴⁰ we cannot embark here in commenting on this long passage: I shall narrow the focus on only one point. Plotinus is saying that if we want to know whether or not it is good for our soul to be connected with body, we have to turn to Plato and to his doctrine of the production of the world-soul by the Demiurge.⁴¹ In the pseudo-*Theology* an account of “Plato’s” doctrine follows, put in the mouth of an author who in all likelihood is “Aristotle” himself.⁴²

The latter praises Plato for having provided a general explanation of the nature of the universe, which includes the account of the destiny of the human souls, but is by no means limited to this. In fact, “Plato” has described the hierarchy of the principles: after the First Cause there are the intelligible things, and after them come the visible things; soul is intermediate between the intelligible and visible things. This picture was endorsed by the author of the *De Causis* in his revision of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*.⁴³

The most evident departure from Plotinus’ doctrine lies in that the First Principle is not only the supreme instance of unity, but also the supreme instance of being. In this passage, the First Principle is called twice *al-anniyya al-ūlā al-ḥaqq* and once *al-anniyya al-ūlā*. An examination of the sentences containing these denominations will provide us with a clearer insight of the translator’s understanding of ‘being’, as well as of the reasons why he felt entitled to conceive of the First Principle as the “First Being”.

According to the speaker, “Plato” began his rectification of the errors of the previous philosophers, who were misled because they sought for the true beings in the sensible world, by distinguishing the intelligible from the sensible things.⁴⁴

42, followed by P. Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus. A Philosophical Study of the Theology of Aristotle*, London 2003, 171-77, the author of the passages independent of Greek is the translator of the *Enneads* into Arabic, Ibn Nā’ima al-Ḥimṣī. I have tried to argue in favour of al-Kindī’s authorship of the passage mentioned above in “*Pseudo-Theology of Aristotle*, Chapter I: Structure and Composition”, *Oriens* 36 (2001), 78-112.

⁴⁰ I shall limit myself here to note that the final part of this section echoes the problem of the literal or allegorical interpretation of the genesis of the world in time in the *Timaeus*, discussed at length by John Philoponus. The author of this passage squarely endorses the allegorical interpretation of the world’s creation in the *Timaeus*.

⁴¹ IV 8[6], 2.6-8.

⁴² Plotino, *La discesa dell’anima nei corpi* (IV 8[6]). *Plotiniana Arabica*, 302-17.

⁴³ On this one may see my “Cause prime non est yliathim’. *Liber de Causis*, prop. 8[9]: le fonti e la dottrina”, *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 1 (1990), 327-51.

⁴⁴ Badawī, 25.5-26.4, English trans. Lewis, 231: “We intend to begin by giving the view of this surpassing and sublime man on these things we have mentioned. We say that when the sublime Plato saw that the mass of philosophers were at fault in their description of the essences, for then they wished to know about the true essences they sought them in this sensible world, because they rejected intelligible things and turned to the sensible world alone, wishing to attain by sense-perception all things, both the transitory and the eternally abiding — when he saw that they had strayed from the road that would bring them to truth and right, and that sense-perception had won the mastery over them, he pitied them for this and was generous towards them and guided them to the road that would bring them to the truth of things”.

ففرّق بين العقل والحسّ، وبين طبيعة الأنبيات وبين الأشياء المحسوسة
 He [= Plato] distinguished between mind and sense-perception and between the nature of
 the essences and the sensible things (trans. Lewis).⁴⁵

The crucial ontological tenet in the hypothesis of Forms is presented as follows:

وصيّر الأنبيات الحقيّة دائمة لا تزول عن حالها، وصيّر الأشياء الحسيّة دائمة واقعة تحت
 الكون والفساد.

He established that the true essences were everlasting, not changing their state, and that the
 sensible things were transitory, falling under genesis et corruption (trans. Lewis).⁴⁶

This summary of Plato's theory counts as a premise for claiming that both levels of
 reality, the intelligible and the sensible, depend upon the unique First Cause, an idea
 which the speaker presents as rooted in the Platonic distinction between the intelligible
 and sensible realms

فلما فرغ من هذا التمييز بدأ فقال إنّ علة الأنبيات الحقيّة التي لا أجرام لها والأشياء
 الحسية ذوات الأجرام واحدة وهي الأنبيّة الأولى الحقّ، ويعني بذلك البارّي الخالق.
 When he had completed this distinction, he began by saying: "The cause of the true essences,
 which are bodiless, and of the sensible things, which have bodies, is one and the same, and
 that is the first true essence, meaning by that, the Creator, the Maker (trans. Lewis).⁴⁷

This passage is reminiscent of the adaptation of IV 8[6], 6 quoted above,⁴⁸ and in
 addition to elucidating the creationist background of the Arabic Plotinus, it establishes
 that the Creator is the "first essence, *al-anniyya al-ūla*". Another sentence follows, linking
 together the causality of the Good and the notion of 'being'.

ثم قال إنّ البارّي الأول الذي هو علة الأنبيات العقلية الدائمة والأنبيات الحسيّة الدائرة،
 وهو الخير المحض، والخير الذي⁴⁹ لا يليق بشيء من الأشياء إلا به. وكل ما كان في العالم

⁴⁵ Badawī, 26.4-5, trans. Lewis, 231.

⁴⁶ Badawī, 26.5-6, trans. Lewis, 231.

⁴⁷ Badawī, 26.6-8, trans. Lewis, 231.

⁴⁸ See above, p. 33 and n. 35.

⁴⁹ Badawī, 26.10 reads *wa-l-ḥayru lā yalīqu*, but the MS Istanbul, Aya Şofya 2457, f. 115v9, reads *wa-l-ḥayru alladī lā yalīqu*, which gives a better sense: the First Creator is pure Good, namely, that kind of "good" which, unlike other instances of good, cleaves to nothing save itself. Compare also the German translation by Dieterici, *Die sogenante Theologie des Aristoteles* (quoted above, n. 6), 13: "...ist das reine Gute, das Gute, von dem gilt, dass es keinem der Dinge, sondern nur sich (selbst) entspricht", notwithstanding the fact that his Arabic text reads

الأعلى والعالم الأسفل من خير فليس ذلك من طباعها ولا من طباع الأنبيات العقلية ولا من طباع الأنبيات الحسية الدائرة، لكنها من تلك الطبيعة العالية. وكل طبيعة عقلية وحسية منها بادئة، فإن الخير إنما ينبعث من الباري في العالمين لأنه مبدع الأشياء، ومنه تنبعث الحياة والأنفس إلى هذا العالم.

Then he said “The First Creator, who is the cause of the everlasting intelligible essences and of the transitory sensible essences, is absolute good, and that good which cleaves to nothing save itself. Every good⁵⁰ in the upper world and in the lower world comes not from their nature, nor from the nature of the intelligible essences, but from the high nature. Every nature, intelligible and sensible, has its beginning in that, for the good is sent in the worlds only from the Creator, for he is the originator of things, and from him are sent life and souls into this world” (trans. Lewis slightly modified).⁵¹

The pure Good gives to the intelligible as well as to the sensible things their “beginning”. The link between the idea that the First Principle is the nonderivative and true instance of being and the idea that it is pure Good lies in the notion of ‘cause’. In so far as the First Principle is the cause of everything, it is also that Good which allows things to be, meaning that they ‘begin’ to be. It is tempting to interpret this statement in a squarely existential way: that ‘being’ which comes from the First Being might well be the *existence* of both the intelligible and sensible things. This impression is strengthened by the following passage, a few lines later, where the speaker is still reporting ‘Plato’s’ utterances:

وإنما صار العقل مقويا النفس على تصوير الهولي من قبل الأنبياء الأولى التي هي علة سائر الأنبيات العقلية والنفسانية والهولانية وسائر الأشياء الطبيعية. وإنما صارت الأشياء الحسية حسنةً بهيئةً من أجل الفاعل الأول، غير أن ذلك الفعل إنما هو بتوسط العقل والنفس. ثم قال إنَّ الأنبياء الأولى الحق هي التي تفيض على العقل الحياة أولاً، ثم على النفس، ثم على الأشياء الطبيعية، وهو الباري الذي هو خيرٌ محض.
“Mind came to give the soul power to inform matter only by virtue of the first essence, which is the cause of the other essences, those of mind, of soul and of matter, and all natural things. Only because of the first agent did the sensible things become beautiful and splendid, but this action took place only through the medium of mind and soul”. Then he said: “It is the true first essence that pours forth life, first upon mind, then upon soul, then upon the natural things, this being the Creator, who is absolute good” (trans. Lewis).⁵²

like Badawī’s (F. Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles aus arabischen Handschriften zum ersten Mal herausgegeben*, J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, Leipzig 1882 [repr. Rodopi, Amsterdam 1965], 12.13).

⁵⁰ Lewis is right in taking *kullu mā kāna* as referred to *hayr*; so does also Dieterici, *ibid.*: “Alles Gute, was in der Hoch- und Niederwelt ist”.

⁵¹ Badawī, 26.9-14, trans. Lewis, 231.

⁵² Badawī, 27.1-6, trans. Lewis, 231.

This passage seemingly allows us to discover in the ninth century Baghdad a forerunner of Thomas Aquinas' *actus essendi*. According to 'Aristotle', 'Plato' maintains that the First Being gives rise to the entire universe because of its efficient causality ("the First Agent"), which consists in creating them. The First Agent is "the First Being, *al-anniyya al-ūlā*", and all the degrees of creation are called "beings, *anniyyāt*": *prima facie*, this elicits the conclusion that what is given by the Creator is the *esse existentiae*, and that the supreme instance of such an existential 'being' lies in the Creator himself. However, this is a questionable assumption to make. Nothing in the passage quoted above suggests that 'being' should be understood as the *actus essendi* which is attached to the essences in order to make them 'exist'. The philosophical doctrine that would elicit this interpretation, namely, the Avicennian topic of 'being' as that which makes an essence to become something really or actually existent,⁵³ is totally lacking. A full discussion of Avicenna's tenet that 'being' is attached to the essences is beyond the scope of this paper;⁵⁴

⁵³ Coming after the seminal study by A.-M. Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sinā (Avicenne)*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1937, É. Gilson, *L'être et l'essence*, Vrin, Paris 1972² (Problèmes et controverses), 129-30, accounts for Avicenna's position as follows: "Tout être réel est une essence réalisée par sa cause et tout d'abord par sa cause première, qui est l'Être nécessaire ou Premier. L'essence existante est donc un possible réalisé. Or, si nous prenons ce possible en tant que réalisé par sa cause, il nous apparaît comme une essence qui, possible en ce qui est d'elle-même, se trouve rendue nécessaire par l'efficacité de sa cause. L'existence s'offre donc ici comme une détermination ultérieure de l'essence. [...] S'il en est ainsi, on peut dire que, en un premier sens, la doctrine d'Avicenne prépare celle de saint Thomas sur la distinction d'essence et d'existence, mais qu'en un deuxième sens elle en annonce une toute contraire. Ce que saint Thomas gardera de la doctrine d'Avicenne, c'est son point de départ, c'est-à-dire cette remarque, d'importance en effet capitale, que la définition de l'essence n'inclut pas son existence. Il faut donc bien, dans les deux doctrines, que l'existence s'ajoute à l'essence, et, dans les deux doctrines, c'est à l'acte créateur qu'il appartient de l'y ajouter; il y a donc distinction d'essence et d'existence chez Avicenne, au sens général où l'on peut dire qu'il y en a une dans tout créationisme, c'est-à-dire dans toute doctrine où la cause de l'existence de l'être fini lui est radicalement extrinsèque parce qu'elle se trouve finalement en Dieu". See also A.-M. Goichon, "La philosophie de l'être", *IBLA* 57 (1952), 49-61; M.-A. Alonso, "La *al-anniyya* de Avicena y el problema de la esencia y existencia (fuentes literarias)", *Pensamiento* 14 (1958), 311-46; M.-Th. d'Alverny, "*Anniyya - anitas*", in *Mélanges offerts à Étienne Gilson*, Pontifical Institute, Toronto 1959, 59-91 (also in *Avicenne en Occident. Recueil d'articles en hommage à Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny*, Vrin, Paris 1993); J. Jolivet, "Le vocabulaire de l'être et de la création dans la *Philosophia prima* de l'*Avicenna Latinus*", in J. Hamesse - C. Steel (eds), *L'élaboration du vocabulaire philosophique au Moyen Age*. Actes du Colloque International de Louvain-la-Neuve et Leuven, 12-14 septembre 1998 organisé par la S.I.E.P.M., Brepols, Turnhout 2000, 35-49 (repr. in Id., *Perspectives médiévales et arabes*, Vrin, Paris 2006 [Études de philosophie médiévale, 89], 217-27); O. Lizzini, "*Wu ġūd-maw ġūd*/Existence-Existent in Avicenna: A Key Ontological Notion of Arabic Philosophy", *Quaestio* 3 (2003), 111-38.

⁵⁴ Standardly it is assumed that Avicenna's starting point for the distinction between essence and existence was Greek philosophy, especially in the form of Aristotle's remark that one thing is to ask *τί ἐστίν*, and another different thing is to ask *εἰ ἔστι* (cf. *An. Post.* II 1, 89 b 24-25); see F. Rahman, "Essence and Existence in Avicenna", *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 4 (1958), 1-16; D. Burrell, "Essence and Existence: Avicenna and Greek Philosophy", *MIDEO* 17 (1986), 53-66; Id., "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers", in N. Kretzmann - E. Stump (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, Cambridge U. P., Cambridge 1993, 60-84, esp. 65-70. However, according to J. Jolivet, "Aux origines de l'ontologie d'Ibn Sinā", in J. Jolivet - R. Rashed (eds), *Études sur Avicenne*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1984 (Collection Sciences et philosophies

nevertheless, it is germane to the argument here to notice that the First Cause as pure Being features among Avicenna's own tenets, and plays predictably a role in this theory.⁵⁵ Put otherwise, in so far as Avicenna's doctrine presupposes the idea that the First Principle is pure Being, it cannot count as an explanation of it.

The focal idea in the passage quoted above is that the causality of Intellect and Soul depends upon that of the First Principle, a purely Neoplatonic idea, even though the language in which it is expressed contains the Aristotelian echo of the First Agent. The principle whose causal power is prior to that of Intellect and Soul is the nonderivative and true Being. When, in the same course of time,⁵⁶ a philosopher (possibly al-Kindī⁵⁷) wrote on the grounds of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* a syllabus of metaphysical theology in axiomatic form, he put forth this opinion as follows:

الأشياء كلها ذات هويات من أجل الهوية الأولى والأشياء الحية كلها متحركة بذاتها من أجل الحياة الأولى والأشياء العقلية كلها ذوات علم من أجل العقل الأول. وذلك أنه إن الهوية الأولى تعطى معلولاتها كلها الهوية... ونعود فنقول إن الهوية الأولى ساكنة وهي علة العلة وإن كانت تعطي الأشياء كلها الهوية فإنها تعطىها بنوع إبداع وأما الحياة الأولى فإنها تعطى ما تحتها الحياة لا بنوع إبداع بل بنوع صورة وكذلك العقل إنما يعطى ما تحته من العلم وسائر الأشياء بنوع صورة لا بنوع إبداع لأن نوع الإبداع إنما هو لليلة الأولى وحدها

All things have essence through the first being, while all living things move themselves through their essence due to the first life, and all intellectual things have knowledge due to the first intelligence. This is because, if every cause gives something to what it causes, then undoubtedly the first being gives being to everything it causes. (...) Now, let us repeat and say that the first being is at rest and the cause of causes. If it gives being to all things, then it gives [it] to them by way of creation. And the first life gives life to those which are under it, not by way of creation, but by way of form. Likewise, an intelligence gives knowledge and the remaining things to those which are under it only by way of form, not by way of creation, because this way belongs to the first cause alone (trans. Taylor).⁵⁸

arabes), 19-28, Avicenna's distinction between 'being' and 'essence' is rooted essentially in the *Kalām*; R. Winstonsky, "Notes on Avicenna's Concept of Thingness (*šay'iyya*)", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 10 (2000), 181-221, sides with him. See also Th.-A. Druart, "*Šay'* or *res* as Concomitant of Being in Avicenna", *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 12 (2001), 125-42.

⁵⁵ Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Sifā' al-Ilāhiyyāt* (2), ed. ed. M. Y. Mūsā, S. Dunyā, S. Zāyid, al-Hay'a al-'amma li-šū'ūn al-maṭābī' al-amiriyya, Cairo 1960, VIII, 4, 344.10: ونعود فنقول إن الأول لا ماهية له غير الأنية. For a commentary on this statement, based on Avicenna's train of thought in VIII, 4 and related texts, see Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence*, 343-54.

⁵⁶ As demonstrated by Endress, *Proclus Arabus*, quoted above, n. 2.

⁵⁷ As surmised in my "Al-Kindī et l'auteur du *Liber de Causis*", quoted above, n. 29.

⁵⁸ *Liber de Causis*, ed. Bardenhewer, 92.2-93.4; English translation by R. C. Taylor, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes* translated by V. A. Guagliardo, O. P., Ch. R. Hess, and R. C. Taylor, The

The distinction between the causality “by way of form” and that “by way of creation”⁵⁹ must be left aside here, in order to narrow the focus on the notion of ‘being’ at stake in this passage, and on its unmistakably Neoplatonic roots.⁶⁰ In this philosophical tradition, especially in post-Plotinian developments, ‘being’ is the most universal among the principles that pervade all the Forms, in a clear echo of Plato’s *Sophist*. Since the more a character is universal, the higher is its principle, ‘being’, which is the most universal feature shared by all the intelligible Forms, comes from the highest among the intelligible principles. It does not derive from the first principle absolutely speaking, the One beyond being and intellection, but from the highest intelligible Form, which is responsible, for all that is, of the very fact that it is intelligible. The assumptions which are involved in the Neoplatonic notion of being, as well as its philosophical merits and difficulties, go beyond the limits of this paper; however, the idea that ‘being’ is the most universally participated form (in the things), and the highest among the intelligible principles (in itself) lies in the background of both the passages quoted, that from the pseudo-*Theology* and that from the *Liber de Causis* – an idea which has admittedly nothing to do with existence. The two passages inherit from the most evident feature of the Neoplatonic notion of being, namely, its universality, coupled with the clause that governs the Neoplatonic logic: the extensionality of a given Form, far from corresponding inversely to its intensionality, reflects the causal power of the principle the Form comes from.⁶¹ In post-Plotinian authors, and chiefly in Proclus, this logic gives rise to a hierarchy among the three aspects that Plotinus, as a creative reader of the *Sophist*, had attributed to the true, intelligible reality: being, life, thought.⁶² In so far as it is presupposed by the more specific features of life and thought, being derives from a principle which is more universal than the principle of life and that of thought.

As quick and unsatisfactory as it may be, this reminder of the basic Neoplatonic tenets about ‘being’ helps us to appreciate the sense in which the Arabic passages quoted above, albeit rooted in the Neoplatonic notion of being, part company with it. As we saw, in the

Catholic University of America Press, Washington 1996, 111 (I have slightly modified Taylor’s translation in order to make it correspond to the Arabic text: in the volume just mentioned, Taylor translates the Latin version commented upon by Thomas Aquinas, which is somehow different from the Arabic).

⁵⁹ For more details on this one may see “‘Cause prime non est yliathim’. quoted above, n. 43.

⁶⁰ One may see on this my “La doctrine néoplatonicienne de l’être entre l’antiquité tardive et le Moyen Âge. Le *Liber de Causis* par rapport à ses sources”, in *Recherches sur le Liber de Causis* (quoted above, n. 29).

⁶¹ A.C. Lloyd, “Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic”, *Phronesis* 1 (1955-56), 58-72; 146-160.

⁶² On Plotinus’ interpretation of the παντελώς ὄν of *Soph.* 248 D 7-8, see the basic study of the late lamented P. Hadot, “Être, vie et pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin”, in *Les sources de Plotin*. Fondation Hardt. Entretiens sur l’Antiquité Classique, 5, Genève 1960, 107-157 (also in Id. *Plotin. Porphyre. Études néoplatoniciennes*, [L’Ane d’or], Paris 1999, 127-181).

Arabic Plotinus and in the *Liber de Causis* the First Being is the First Principle itself.⁶³ There is no longer a separate principle of being, distinct from the One, the Pure Good, God Almighty – various names for one and the same reality, the unique First Cause. The reasons why Plotinus kept the First Principle transcendent with respect to being are present in the Arabic version, but they do not prevent the latter for including ‘pure Being’ among its names.

These reasons were intimately related to the idea that the First Principle escapes any predicative statement. We must pause to note that Arabic Plotinus, as well as the *De Causis*, know and endorse negative theology.⁶⁴ But in Arabic Neoplatonism this no longer implies that the First Principle is beyond being. One may come to the conclusion that this reveals a poor understanding of the epistemological and metaphysical grounds of negative theology, but it is more promising to observe that other examples of Neoplatonic metaphysics in a creationist context exhibit a similar approach. The pseudo-Dionysius provides an interesting example of the same mix of negative theology on the one side, and definition of the first principle as the supreme instance of Being, on the other. It is well known that in the pseudo-Dionysian corpus the First Principle is located beyond speech and predication: what men say about him are nothing if not names that indicate the various ways of his causality, although telling nothing about his nature. The pseudo-Dionysius maintains also that, once taken for granted that we are not speaking about God himself, but about its causality,⁶⁵ the most appropriate description of this causality consists in saying that God is the pure Being which pours forth being on each and every degree of reality. Being is the most universal (meaning at one and the same time basic and comprehensive) among God’s bestowals.

In chapter V of the *Divine Names*, after having discussed in chapter IV the non-substantial character of evil, the pseudo-Dionysius declares his intention to celebrate the οὐσιωσυμία of God. Naming God as the true Being, τὸ ὄντως ὄν, does not imply flying in

⁶³ Other studies on this doctrine include R. Taylor, “Aquinas, the *Plotiniana Arabica* and the Metaphysics of Being and Actuality”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59 (1998), 241-64 and P. Adamson, “Before Essence and Existence: al-Kindi’s Conception of Being”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40 (2002), 297-312.

⁶⁴ The typical formulation of it is given in the *Liber de Causis*, prop. 5, Bardenhewer 69.7-71.8: “The first cause transcends description (*sifa*). Languages fail in describing it only because of the description of its being. For [the first cause] is above every cause and is described only through the second causes which are illuminated by the light of the divine cause” (trans. Taylor, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, 45).

⁶⁵ I.e., our relationship to and dependence on the first principle, a purely Plotinian move: compare *DDN* V 1, 180.8-13 Suchla (quoted above in the main text) and VI 9 [9], 3, 49-54: “For to say that it is the cause is not to predicate something incidental of it but of us, because we have something from it while that One is in itself; but one who speaks precisely should not say ‘that’ or ‘is’; but we run round it outside, in a way, and want to explain our own experiences of it, sometimes near and sometimes falling away in our perplexities about it” (trans. Armstrong in the Loeb Series, vol. VII, 315).

the face of negative theology, because the οὐσιωνυμία does not aim at revealing the οὐσία of God (note the typical oxymoron ὑπερούσιος οὐσία); indeed, the scope of the οὐσιωνυμία is to express the causality of God, whose effect is 'being' (οὐσιοποιὸν πρόοδον).

Μετιτέον δὲ νῦν ἐπὶ τὴν ὄντως οὐσαν τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος θεωνυμικὴν οὐσιωνυμίαν. τοσοῦτον δὲ ὑπομνήσωμεν, ὅτι τῷ λόγῳ σκοπὸς οὐ τὴν ὑπερούσιον οὐσίαν ἢ ὑπερούσιος ἐκφάνειν· ἄρρητον γὰρ τοῦτο καὶ ἄγνωστόν ἐστι καὶ παντελῶς ἀνέκφαντον καὶ αὐτὴν ὑπεραῖρον τὴν ἔνωσιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν οὐσιοποιὸν εἰς τὰ ὄντα πάντα τῆς θεαρχικῆς οὐσιαρχίας πρόοδον ὑμῆσαι.

Let us now proceed to the theological name of being, which is exclusively the name of what truly is. Further, we must remember that the aim of our discourse is not to manifest the being beyond being as beyond being for this is ineffable, unknown, completely non-manifest, and exceeds unity itself. We are to celebrate the being-producing procession of the thearchic source of beings in all beings (trans. Jones).⁶⁶

Being is the most appropriate among the divine names, in so far as it logically and ontologically antecedes any further perfection. In precisely the same way as in the passages of the Arabic Plotinus and Proclus quoted above, being antecedes life and intellection:

καὶ πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων αὐτοῦ μετοχῶν τὸ εἶναι προβέβληται, καὶ ἔστιν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι πρεσβύτερον τοῦ αὐτοζωῆν εἶναι καὶ αὐτοσοφίαν εἶναι καὶ αὐτομοιότητα θείαν εἶναι, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα, ὅσων τὰ ὄντα μετέχοντα, πρὸ πάντων αὐτῶν τοῦ εἶναι μετέχει.

Being is projected before every other participation of the before being. Being itself in itself is prior to the being of life itself, the being of wisdom itself, and the being of divine similarity. Further, everything that participates in these participates in being before all of these (trans. Jones).⁶⁷

I alluded before to the idea of the anteriority of Being with respect to Life and Intellect as to a typical development of late Neoplatonism. Here is the pseudo-Dionysian version of this topic.

[...] φέφε τὰγαθὸν ὡς ὄντως ὄν καὶ τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων οὐσιοποιὸν ἀνυμνήσωμεν. [...] καὶ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς οὐ πῶς ἐστὶν ὢν, ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς καὶ ἀπεριορίστως ὄλον ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸ εἶναι συνειληφῶς καὶ προειληφῶς. [...] καὶ οὔτε ἦν οὔτε ἔσται οὔτε ἐγένετο οὔτε γίνεταί οὔτε

⁶⁶ *DDNV* 1, 180.8-13 Suchla, English trans. J. D. Jones, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite. The Divine Names and Mystical Theology* Translated from the Greek with an Introductory Study, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee 1980, 163, slightly modified (here and in the following quotations, I substituted "being" for Jones' "be-ing").

⁶⁷ *DDNV* 1, 183.18-21 Suchla, English trans. Jones, 166.

γενήσεται, μάλλον δὲ οὔτε ἐστίν, ἀλλ' αὐτός ἐστι τὸ εἶναι τοῖς οὔσι, καὶ οὐ τὰ ὄντα μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι τῶν ὄντων ἐκ τοῦ προαιωνίως ὄντος.

[...] let us celebrate the good as really being, and as producing being for all beings together. [...] God is not somehow being, but simply and unlimitedly being, comprehending and anticipating the whole being in itself [...]. Moreover, God neither was, nor will be, nor has come to be, nor is come to be, nor will come to be, nor, indeed, is not, but is the being for beings. Not only beings but even the being itself for beings is from the being before eternity (trans. Jones).⁶⁸

This interpretation of the Neoplatonic doctrine is reminiscent of the Arabic passages quoted before, where pure Being was contrasted with the specific and more limited perfection of subordinated Forms like life and thought. This affinity between the Greek and the Arabic phrasing comes as no surprise, given that the translator of the *Enneads* into Arabic was a Christian from Hims, in whose educational background the pseudo-Dionysian corpus could hardly have had no part at all.⁶⁹ As noticed before, a common Platonic-Aristotelic background aptly accounts for the translator's correct understanding of the 'being' in the overdetermined sense of 'intelligible reality'; however, in order to account for his understanding of the First Principle as pure Being a more peculiar background is needed: a post-Plotinian and, for that matter, post-Proclean attitude to conflate together the anteriority to the Forms of the One and the universality of the Form 'Being', that is by no means unprecedented. As a matter of fact, another example exists, that of the pseudo-Dionysius. Some weak support to the hypothesis that if Plotinus' One equals Pure Being in the Arabic version, this has to do with the pseudo-Dionysian background of the translator is offered also by the remark that in this set of texts nothing recalls the typical features of the Islamic discussion of the *ṣifāt Allāh*.⁷⁰ True, the term recurring in the statements of negative theology is *ṣifa*, the key term of the mu'tazilite discussion, both in the pseudo-*Theology* and in the *Liber de Causis*; but there is no effort to fit together the Neoplatonic negative theology and the mu'tazilite attempts to reconcile

⁶⁸ DDN V 4, 182.17-18 and V 5, 183.4-5, 7-10 Suchla, English trans. Jones, 164-65. I commented upon the relationship between these Dionysian passages and the relevant passages of both the *Plotiniana Arabica* and the *Liber de Causis* in my "Esse quod est supra aeternitatem. La Cause première, l'être et l'éternité dans le *Liber de Causis* et dans ses sources", *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 59, 1992, 41-62.

⁶⁹ S. Brock, "A Syriac Intermediary for the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle*? In Search of a Chimera", in D'Ancona (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists* (quoted above, n. 15), 293-306, points out that "While the existence of a Syriac intermediary now appears unlikely, Christian Neoplatonist circles of the sixth century do seem to provide a milieu that could explain a number of features in the *Theology* and related texts".

⁷⁰ For a comparison between the Neoplatonic and mu'tazilite accounts of the divine attributes one may see my "*Causa prima superior est omni narratione*. Il tema delle *ṣifāt Allāh* nel primo neoplatonismo arabo", *Oriente Moderno* 19 (80), n.s., (2000), 519-55, and P. Adamson, "Al-Kindī and the Mu'tazila: Divine Attributes, Creation and Freedom", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 13 (2003), 45-77.

with *tawhīd* the reality of the divine attributes.⁷¹ Finally, even when the One is said to be 'pure Being' nothing in the Arabic Plotinus recalls the peculiar features of 'Existent' as one among the Beautiful Names, as they can be singled out from the treatises *Fī l-Asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt* examined by Daniel Gimaret.⁷²

In the first part of this paper, I have tried to substantiate by means of some examples taken from the Arabic Plotinus the contention that *anniyya* can recover the veridical-durative use enucleated by Charles Kahn in Greek prosa, especially philosophical. But in the Arabic Plotinus there is more than the 'Platonic' verb 'to be'. Here, the overdetermined meaning of 'being' applies to the First Principle, as transcendent as it may be with respect to intelligibility and predication: a doctrinal complex reminiscent of the pseudo-Dionysian ideas about being and the First Principle. On the one hand, this counts as a footnote to Richard Frank's claim that the term *anniyya* inherited from the semantics of being in the Syriac version of the pseudo-Dionysius;⁷³ on the other, this suggests to add another item to the set of the meanings of 'to be' in Arabic texts based on Greek sources. It has been suggested by Kahn in a groundbreaking article that existence in the modern sense becomes a central concept in philosophy only in the period when Greek ontology is radically revised in the light of a metaphysics of creation: that is to say, under the influence of Biblical religion. As far as I can see, this development did not take place with Augustine or with the Greek Church Fathers, who remained under the sway of classical ontology. The new metaphysics seem to have taken shape in Islamic philosophy, in the form of a *radical* distinction between necessary and contingent existence: between the existence of God

⁷¹ See R. M. Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes. The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Mu'tazila in the Classical Period*, SUNY Press, Albany 1978; Id., "Attribute, Attribution, and Being: Three Islamic Views", in P. Morewedge (ed.) *Philosophies of Existence, Ancient and Medieval*, Fordham U. P., New York 1982, 258-78. On the aš'arite views, see also the classical work by M. Allard, *Le problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al-Ash'arī et de ses premiers grands disciples*, Imprimerie Catholique, Beyrouth 1965; Id., *La doctrine d'al-Ash'arī*, Cerf, Paris 1990 (Patrimoines. Islam), esp. 234-57 and 283-365.

⁷² See D. Gimaret, *Les Noms Divins en Islam*, Cerf, Paris 1988 (Patrimoines. Islam), esp. 133-62. Under the label "Existant", Gimaret lists *mawǧūd*, *kā'in*, *tābit*, *ḥaqq*, *šay'*, *dāt*, *nafs*, *šahṣ*, *ǧawhar*; he also analyses the descriptions provided by Muslim theologians for each of them. A. al-Jamal Elamrani, *Sur la révélation de Dieu à Moïse d'après la sourate Tā' hā', versets 11-14*, in *Dieu et l'être. Exégèses d'Exode 3,14 et de Coran 20,11-24*, Centre d'Études des Religions du Livre, Études Augustiniennes, Paris 1978, 171-77, remarks that "Les exégètes ne se sont donc pas posés, à propos de ces versets, de question sur l'Existence ou l'Être de Dieu. Ils sont contraints par le texte de la Révélation du Coran d'une part, et le hadith (tradition du prophète Mohammed) qui, parmi les 99 noms ou attributs divins, ne mentionne pas l'attribut de 'mawjud' (existant) pour qualifier Dieu. Le problème philosophique de l'Être ébauché chez al-Farabi et élaboré par ibn Sina dans la théorie du 'wajib al-wujud' (l'Être dont l'existence est nécessaire) est étranger aux commentateurs classiques du Coran" (176).

⁷³ See above, note 3. H. Hugonnard-Roche, "Le vocabulaire philosophique de l'être en syriaque d'après des textes de Sergius de Reš'aynā et Jacques d'Édesse", in Montgomery (ed.), *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy* (quoted above, n. 25), 101-25.

on the one hand, and that of the created world on the other. The old Platonic contrast between Being and Becoming, between the eternal and the perishable (or, in Aristotelian terms, between the necessary and the contingent) now gets reformulated in such a way that for the contingent being of the created world (which was originally present only as a 'possibility' in the divine mind) the property of 'real existence' emerges as a new attribute or 'accident', a kind of added benefit bestowed by God upon possible beings in the act of creation.⁷⁴

Also to this accurate description of Avicenna's metaphysics of essence and existence a footnote can be added: calling the First Principle 'Pure Being' does not imply only that it has a totally nonderivative *existence*: it implies also that it is the *per se* principle of a *Form*, 'being', that can be participated in various degrees, and is the most universal among *Forms*. If a philosopher had access to the Arabic Neoplatonica (as Avicenna did), he was exposed to texts where the topic of the First Principle as *anniyya faqat* meant "simply and unlimitedly being, comprehending and anticipating the whole being in itself", to put it in pseudo-Dionysius' words.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ch. H. Kahn, "Why Existence did not Emerge as a Distinct Concept in Greek Philosophy", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 58 (1976), 323-34. A. Graham, "Being in Linguistics and Philosophy: a Preliminary Inquiry", *Foundations of Language* 1 (1965), 223-31, maintains that this is rooted in the very nature of Arabic: "It was in Arabic, which sharply separates the existential and copulative functions, that the distinction between existence and essence emerged" (223) a claim which is somehow challenged by F. Shedadi, *Metaphysics in Islamic Philosophy*, Caravan Books, Delmar, New York 1982, 30-41.

⁷⁵ As Alonso pointed out with justice in his 1958 study mentioned above (n. 53), after a survey of the occurrences of *al-anniyya* in the pseudo-*Theology*, "sería, por ejemplo, un absurdo entender por la palabra 'al-anniyya' la existencia que nosotros contraponemos a la esencia cuando se propone el problema de la distinción entre esencia y existencia. Hemos propuesto, al menos, como provisional la palabra 'esencia'. Sustitúyase en cualquiera de los casos aducidos por la palabra 'existencia' e inmediatamente aparecerá el absurdo. El matiz que más sobresaie en todos los casos no es tampoco el de la esencia en cualquier aspecto, sino en el de la idea platónica" (317).

