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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

C. Cerami, *Génération et substance. Aristote et Averroès entre physique et métaphysique*, De Gruyter, Boston – Berlin 2015 (*Scientia Graeco-Arabica*, 18), XIII + 734 pp.

This volume is composed of two parts devoted respectively to Aristotle's (Chapters I-V) and Averroes' (Chapters VI-IX) doctrines of substantial generation, a topic that in the view of the author Cristina Cerami is vital for both philosophers.

Substantial generation differs from nonsubstantial change, as stated by Aristotle mainly in *Physics* I 7 and in *De Generatione et corruptione* I 3-4,¹ in so far as nonsubstantial change entails the continuity of the subject, whereas substantial generation consists in coming-to-be *simpliciter*.² C. Cerami sets for herself first the task of "clarifier le statut de la génération substantielle dans la philosophie naturelle du Stagirite et d'expliquer le dédoublement de l'étude de la génération dans son enquête métaphysique" (pp. 1-2). Thus, the first five chapters elaborate more on the double status that the author detects, as in the opening sentence just quoted, in Aristotle's analysis of coming-to-be *simpliciter*. With this problem deal Chapter I, "La génération substantielle dans le corpus philosophique d'Aristote: les critères d'une étude systématique" (pp. 23-62), and Chapter II, "Les premières causes de la nature et du mouvement naturel dans son ensemble" (pp. 63-95).

That Aristotle approaches substantial generation in two different ways emerges, according to C. Cerami, from a comparison between *Physics* I, where one and the same subject, matter, ceases to be this and becomes that – following a pattern that is labelled "modèle prédicatif"³ – and *De Generatione et corruptione*, where Aristotle's focus is on the rise of a new entity taken as a whole, ὅλον. In the first case matter counts as subject, and the coming-to-be of a given being depends upon form; in the second case, matter enters as a constituent of the 'thatness' of the thing, because substantial generation only refers to individual substances, that are composed out of matter and form: "Si les substances achevées sont les seules véritables substances, c'est parce qu'elles sont les seules à être τὸδε τι et en un sens absolu, tandis que ni les éléments ni les corps homéomères ne le sont. Pour être quelque chose d'absolument déterminé, elles doivent être quelque chose d'absolument un. La matière ne peut être un substrat autonome par rapport à la forme" (p. 127), at variance with what happens in *Physics* I 7, where matter stands as a principle that either receives a form, thus becoming something, or ceases to possess that form.

Cerami parts company with the contemporary interpretations of Aristotle's primary substance that see two models at work, and that she recapitulates as follows: (i) that of *Metaphysics Zeta*, Chapters 7-9 plus *Physics* I, where the individual (τὸδε τι) cannot be the primary substance precisely in so far as it results from the union of matter and form, thus failing to meet the basic criterion of priority, namely

¹ According to C. Cerami, *Physics* I 7 and *De Gen. corr.* I 3-4 offer "deux modèles explicatifs différents" (p. 25). The difference is dealt with chiefly at pp. 96-128 but also later on, and consists essentially in that in the *De Gen. corr.* "Aristote ne parle plus simplement de deux contraires qui sont tour à tour prédiqués d'un substrat permanent, mais d'un changement radical de sujet à la suite du processus de génération. On aura une génération absolue quand se produit un changement total de telle chose en telle autre, du feu, par exemple, en terre. Quand le changement affecte le sujet propre des prédications accidentelles, défini comme étant composé d'un aspect formel et d'un aspect matériel, on aura là une génération absolue" (p. 109). Cf. also below pp. 415-16.

² *Phys.* I 7, 190 a 31-33: πολλαχῶς δὲ λεγομένου τοῦ γίγνεσθαι, καὶ τῶν μὲν οὐ γίγνεσθαι ἀλλὰ τὸδε τι γίγνεσθαι, ἀπλῶς δὲ γίγνεσθαι τῶν οὐσιῶν μόνον, κατὰ μὲν τᾶλλα φανερόν ὅτι ἀνάγκη ὑποκεῖσθαι τι τὸ γιγνόμενον. *De Gen. corr.* I 2, 317 a 20-22: ἔστι γὰρ γένεσις ἀπλῆ καὶ φθορὰ οὐ συγκρίσει καὶ διακρίσει, ἀλλ' ὅταν μεταβάλλῃ ἐκ τοῦδε εἰς τὸδε ὅλον.

³ See below, pp. 415-16.

not to be derived from something else, and (ii) that of *Metaphysics Theta*, where the individual is a whole, with matter conceived of as a mere property of the individual substance.⁴ Only this second model allows the τὸδε τι to be primary substance. This interpretation sounds unconvincing to C. Cerami, and this on two counts: first, because it implies that *Metaphysics Zeta* 7-9 and *Physics* I share one and the same account of substantial generation, an idea that is the duty of the first part of this book to dismantle; second, because it entails the reliance of a physical theory upon a metaphysical principle, that of the priority of actuality over potentiality. “Le fait d’affirmer que la doctrine de *Phys. I/ Met. Z* 7-9 est corrigée à la lumière de la théorie de la puissance et de l’acte (...) conduit inévitablement à admettre une dépendance de la physique à l’égard de la métaphysique”.⁵ Since her interpretation of the relationship between the two sciences in Aristotle goes against this, Cerami maintains that “les conclusions qu’Aristote tire en *Met. Z* 7-9 présentent le modèle propre à la génération substantielle, celui qui tient compte d’une suprématie du τὸδε τι et qui considère la génération absolue comme l’advenir d’un nouveau sujet unitaire composé d’un aspect matériel et d’un aspect formel” (p. 57).

The focus on the τὸδε τι and its rise occupies Chapter III, “Du général au spécifique: l’étude de la génération substantielle dans ses caractéristiques propres” (pp. 96-128) and Chapter IV, “La mise en œuvre de l’étude de la génération substantielle: la génération animale” (pp. 129-64), both dealing with the *De Generatione et corruptione*.

An individual substance comes to be out of another individual substance, a whole produced by another whole: this entails a change with respect to *Physics* I. Aristotle “modifie le modèle prédicatif de *Phys. I* et présente la génération absolue comme le remplacement de deux étants, dont le premier serait

⁴ Cerami refers chiefly to the studies by M.L. Gill, *Aristotle on Substance. The Paradox of Unity*, Princeton U.P., Princeton 1989, and by M.J. Loux, *Primary Ousia. An Essay on Aristotle’s Metaphysics Z and H*, Cornell U.P., Ithaca-London 1991. I think that her account of the position of M.L. Gill is based on statements like that of pp. 167-8 of *Aristotle on Substance*: “a substantial form can now count as a proper subject, since the generic matter of which the form is predicated is in fact a property of the form rather than the form’s being a property of it. Substantial form properly satisfies the subject criterion of the *Categories* and *Metaphysics Z* 3 because, being separate and τὸδε τι, the form is that of which things are predicated but not itself predicated (in the normal way) of anything else” and that of pp. 240-1: “I opened this book with a paradox that seems to undermine the claim of living organisms and other composites to be primary substances. The unity of composites is problematic because every generated object, with the exception of elements, contains matter from which it was generated and that survives in it as a constituent. (...) A generated composite cannot be a vertical unity if the preexisting matter from which it was generated remains within it as a definite subject to which the form of the composite belongs”. As for Loux’s interpretation, Cerami refers to pp. 109-46 of *Primary Ousia*, but a good summary of his position lies also, so it seems to me, in the chapter entitled “Form as Ousia”, pp. 183 and 187: “the theory of *Metaphysics Z* and *H* commits Aristotle to two theses: first, that the essence of a substantial form involves nothing, whether intrinsic or extrinsic to the form, that functions as matter; second, that although the matter for a given form can be defined only by reference to the matter and form whose predicative relation enables us to explain why it is the kind of thing it is, what functions as proximate matter or subject for a substantial form can always be defined independently of that form. But how, in turn, are a form and its matter related to the composite particular into whose analysis they enter? Well, they are its *ousiai*. (...) The substantial form associated with the species is what constitutes the *ousia* of the relevant particulars. The form is not, however, predicated of those particulars. It is predicated of the parcels of matter making up the particulars, and the predication at work here is accidental rather than essential”.

⁵ One may think that the allusion is to the claim of *Metaph. H* 1, 1042 a 27-28 that matter is only potentially an individual substance (ὕλην δὲ λέγω ἢ μὴ τὸδε τι οὐσα ἐνεργείᾳ δυνάμει ἐστὶ τὸδε τι), a claim that is sometimes referred to in the scholarship with which Cerami disagrees. In reality, Cerami’s point is more general than this, and is explained at p. 195, n. 93, as follows: “Dans sa monographie sur *Met. Z*, M.L. Gill (...) estime que le but du passage final de *Z* 7 est de montrer la nature non unitaire de la substance composée. L’interprète précise néanmoins que la position présentée dans ces lignes, et plus globalement dans le livre *Z*, ne correspond pas à la doctrine définitive d’Aristote. Le livre *Z* n’est en réalité qu’un passage dialectique dans la recherche sur ce qu’est substance. C’est en effet dans les livres successifs et avec l’introduction des notions d’acte et puissance, qu’il expliquera que la matière et la forme constituent un tout unitaire, du fait que la matière n’est que substance en puissance”.

moins déterminé que l'autre et, par conséquent, matière de celui-ci. Le vrai sujet de la génération n'est pas une matière demeurant identique au cours de la transformation, mais le nouvel étant produit de la génération: le nouveau tout qui vient à être. La génération absolue n'est donc pas un simple processus de remplacement de deux contraires, mais la constitution d'un nouveau ὄλον à partir d'un autre, moins déterminé, qui sert de matière. Comme Aristote l'avait énoncé, la génération absolue est le changement de l'objet dans sa totalité, voire un changement dans sa matière et dans sa forme" (p. 116).⁶

According to Cerami, the change of pattern in the *De Gen. corr.* with respect to *Physics* I paves the way to the notion of substance as it features in *Metaphysics Zeta*, and Chapter V "Le quelque chose qui vient à l'être: substance et génération dans le livre Z de la *Métaphysique*" (pp. 165-229) is devoted to outline her own interpretation of this admittedly controversial book of the *Metaphysics*. In her outline of the contents of *Zeta*, and in particular with her interpretation of chapters 7-9 as a pathway to *Theta* with its assessment of the priority of actuality over potentiality as the true criterion for primary substance,⁷ Cerami expounds her understanding of the relationship between physics and metaphysics in Aristotle. "Cela confirme, dans un cadre plus général, que la recherche naturelle fournit à la recherche métaphysique des résultats dont celle-ci ne peut se passer. L'examen de la génération et les conclusions auxquelles Aristote parvient au fur et à mesure que sa recherche naturelle se spécifie fournissent un contenu à sa théorie métaphysique. (...) De ce point de vue, la philosophie de la nature et de la génération ne peut être considérée comme subordonnée à la science de la substance: c'est en revanche la première qui doit être considérée comme antérieure à la métaphysique" (p. 229).

Both this interpretation of Aristotle's theory of substantial generation and the general frame in which Cerami inscribes it are explicitly grounded in Averroes' own reading. This is stated at the beginning of the volume⁸ and represents the overarching topic of Part II, "Averroès entre physique et métaphysique", comprised of Chapters VI–IX.

Substantial generation is accounted for, as Cerami has anticipated in Part I, in a way that is inspired by Averroes: "On pourrait dire, en portant à bout l'intuition qu'on attribuera à Averroès, que la matière est une propriété par soi d'un type particulier. *La matière en ce sens aurait certaines caractéristiques des affections accidentelles, ainsi que certaines propriétés de l'essence. C'est en suivant cette idée qu'un certain aristotélisme dont Averroès est l'héritier fera de la doctrine des accidents essentiels un point crucial de son ontologie*" (p. 57 and *fn. 67*).

It is not only the case that Averroes understands substantial generation in a way that meets the interpretation favoured by Cerami. The main point is rather that Averroes does so because he understands the relationship between the *Physics* and the *De Gen. corr.* in exactly the way that has guided the interpretation advanced in the first part of Cerami's book. This is detailed in Chapter VI, "L'étude de la génération substantielle et l'ordre du corpus physique d'après Averroès" (pp. 237-83), where the thesis of the volume is stated as follows: "On a montré que l'explication du phénomène de la génération substantielle qu'Aristote fournit ne peut se comprendre hors du projet philosophique

⁶ It is not entirely clear to me whether this shift is understood as a refinement on the part of Aristotle of the criteria set in *Physics* I, with these criteria remaining valid as a general frame, or the shift is intended as a change of mind: pp. 62, 69, 99, 101, and 460 seem to go in the first direction, while at p. 165 the claim that "Afin de distinguer une génération véritablement absolue d'une génération relative, il faut modifier le modèle indifférencié de *Phys.* I et suivre les indications du *DGC* qui imposent une *restructuration du réel* selon le critère appelé du τὸδε τι" (my emphasis) seems to go the other way round.

⁷ "Les résultats de *Met. Z* 7-9 non seulement contribuent au but du livre dans son entier, mais ne contredisent pas les résultats auxquels les livres suivants et notamment le livre Θ parviendront: démontrer que la substance première, en tant que forme, est l'actualité d'un substrat qui n'est qu'en puissance ce qu'elle est en acte" (p. 228).

⁸ "S'il faut lire Aristote pour comprendre Averroès, il faut aussi lire Averroès pour comprendre Aristote" (p. 20).

global dans lequel il l'inscrit. Car le paradigme explicatif qu'il en donne diffère en fonction du but visé dans les différentes parties de son corpus physique et métaphysique. Selon le traité, la génération substantielle est considérée, de façon plus ou moins abstraite, comme un processus partageant la même nature que les autres devenirs ou comme un phénomène absolument unique possédant ses caractéristiques propres. C'est le but visé qui impose à l'analyse son niveau de généralité. (...) L'analyse des traités qu'Averroès a écrits dans la seconde phase de sa réflexion, notamment les Commentaires Moyens (CM) et les Grands Commentaires (GC) des œuvres d'Aristote, montre que le même principe exégétique vaut aussi dans le cas de sa reconstruction de la théorie aristotélicienne de la génération (...). Averroès envisage en effet au sein de la physique une distinction entre des recherches générales et des recherches spécifiques. Les recherches générales précèdent les autres parce qu'elles envisagent les étants naturels en tant que tels, c'est-à-dire en tant que doués d'un principe de mouvement interne, et que, ce faisant, nous conduisent aux causes absolument premières et aux accidents essentiels que tous les étants naturels partagent. Les recherches physiques se spécifient en revanche suivant les divisions du genre du corps naturel où l'on distingue les cinq corps simples, puis les corps composés de plus en plus complexes. Dans les recherches 'spécifiques', on procède alors de l'étude du simple vers celle du composé, c'est-à-dire de l'étude des corps simples vers l'étude des êtres composés de plus en plus complexes, lesquels s'achèvent dans l'homme" (pp. 237-8).

Cerami is aware of the fact that in this assessment of the hierarchical relationship of Aristotle's works Averroes is nothing other than the last representative of the Aristotelian curriculum as it was postulated in the philosophical schools of late Antiquity. She devotes an interesting section of Chapter VI to provide evidence of this heritage in Averroes' approach, mostly *via* al-Fārābī.⁹ Here we see that Averroes endorses the Farabian (and for that matter also Avicennian) focus on the scope of one or another work (*ḡarad*, that translates *σκοπός* and is in its turn translated as *intentio*). The place of a given work in the systematic order of the corpus is assigned by its *intentio*. Averroes' account of the *ordo* of Aristotle's *Physics* and its *intentio* is quoted by Cerami¹⁰ and commented upon as follows: "Il y a donc dans la physique, comme dans toute science théorique, deux parties: une première partie qui traite des choses partagées par tous les étants qui sont objet de la science, et un ensemble d'autres parties qui traitent des choses que chaque espèce de ces étants possède en propre. Dans le cas de la science naturelle, Aristote a consacré à la partie générale le traité de la *Physique*, qui a donc pour but de faire connaître les choses communes à tous les étants naturels, tandis qu'il a consacré aux différentes parties spécifiques les autres traités de son corpus. (...) C'est pourquoi il faut que la partie générale de la philosophie naturelle précède celle qui porte sur les diverses espèces des étants naturels" (pp. 244-5 and 249).

This allows Averroes to solve most of the problems of mutual consistency between statements that, like the ones discussed in the first part of the book, *prima facie* account for the same thing in different ways. As we have just seen, if the account of substantial generation provided in the *Physics*

⁹ This is done chiefly on the grounds of a passage extracted from the *Prologue* of the *Long Commentary* on the *Physics*, where Averroes endorses the late Antique curriculum. Cerami says: "Selon une pratique devenue courante depuis les commentateurs de l'antiquité tardive, introduite dans le monde arabe par al-Fārābī, Averroès y présente les huit questions préalables (*capitula*) relatives au livre commenté: (1) quelle est l'*intentio* de l'œuvre (2) son utilité, (3) quel est son ordre (*ordo*) par rapport aux autres traités scientifiques, (4) en combien de parties elle est divisée (*divisio*), (5) quelle est la relation (*proportio*) de la science physique aux autres sciences théorétiques, (6) quelle est la méthode suivie (*via doctrinae*), (7) quel est le nom du livre, (8) quel est le nom de l'auteur" (pp. 241-2).

¹⁰ The passage is quoted at pp. 244-5 from the Junctine edition (repr. Frankfurt a.M. 1962), vol. IV, 3 c 1- g 8 (as for the *ordo* of the *Physics*) and 1 g 6-16 (as for the *intentio*).

agrees with that provided in the *De Gen. corr.*, it is precisely because in the *Physics* Aristotle wants to explain change in general, while he devotes the *De Gen. corr.* to explaining elemental combinations with an eye to the rise of the living being. “C’est en considérant ces critères d’organisation comme les principes au cœur de la physique aristotélicienne qu’Averroès conclut que les traités physiques d’Aristote constituent l’exposition des résultats de la recherche scientifique. C’est pour cette même raison, assure-t-il, que ces traités doivent suivre l’ordre contraire à l’ordre de la découverte des principes, selon lequel on procède, par induction, du particulier à l’universel. L’ordre du corpus, qu’Averroès appelle ‘ordre de l’enseignement’ (*ordo doctrinae, tartīb al-ta’līm*), va en effet des causes universelles aux causes particulières (...). C’est au moyen de cette distinction entre un ordre de la découverte et un ordre de l’enseignement qu’Averroès peut rendre compte des déclarations apparemment contradictoires d’Aristote” (p. 240). This substantiates Cerami’s claim that Averroes represents a vantage point for the reader of Aristotle.¹¹

As I have said before, this interpretation is the overarching concern of the two parts of the book. This drives me to the first of my two main perplexities. In her exposition of Averroes’ solution, Cerami continues: “Lorsque Aristote assure qu’il faut procéder des faits vers leurs causes et du particulier vers l’universel, l’ordre prescrit est celui de la découverte; lorsqu’en revanche il prescrit de procéder des causes universelles vers les causes particulières, et de l’universel vers le particulier, il n’est plus question de la recherche, mais de l’exposition de ses résultats. Dans ce cas alors, l’ordre à suivre est celui qu’Aristote a adopté lui-même dans son corpus physique, en plaçant au tout début le traité qui expose la démonstration des causes universelles, à savoir la *Physique*, puis les traités qui étudient les causes de plus en plus particulières” (p. 241). This solution is by no means Averroes’ own idea: on the contrary, it is rooted in the scholastic tradition he inherits, as Cerami has already explained and as she recalls also here.¹² But by the same token one is led to contextualize the proposed solution: in other words, if it is perfectly understandable that Averroes has recourse to it, the contemporary scholar struggling with the statements of one or another work of the corpus cannot help but resist using it as a tool to unravel Aristotle’s intentions. Averroes ignored that the structure of the corpus was dictated not by Aristotle, but by an uninterrupted chain of scholars bent on his acroamatic works, a chain that is rooted, even before the late ancient commentators whose echo reached him, and even before Alexander of Aphrodisias who acted as one of their main interlocutors, in Andronicus of Rhodes’ systematic edition – or in that of Andronicus’ source.¹³

The structure of Aristotle’s physical *corpus* described in Part I of the book¹⁴ explicitly mirrors the structure it has in Averroes’ eyes.¹⁵ This is not to say that the century-long systematizations

¹¹ See above n. 8.

¹² “L’idée selon laquelle il faut suivre dans l’exposition de la doctrine l’ordre contraire à celui de la découverte découle directement de la façon dont Averroès évalue le corpus scientifique d’Aristote, mais aussi de la conception qu’il formulait du savoir de son propre temps” (p. 241).

¹³ For some caveats on the originality of Andronicus’ edition as well as for the general frame of the point raised here cf. J. Barnes, “Roman Aristotle”, in J. Barnes - M. Griffin (eds.), *Philosophia togata II. Plato and Aristotle at Rome*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1997, pp. 1-69 (reprinted in G. Nagy [ed.], *Greek Literature in the Roman Period and in Late Antiquity*, Routledge, Abingdon 2001).

¹⁴ “Selon le plan esquissé dans le prologue du traité des *Météorologiques* (...) la recherche naturelle d’Aristote se présente comme un système cohérent dans lequel chaque étude joue un rôle précis. La *Physique* traite des premières causes de la nature et du mouvement naturel dans son ensemble; les deux premiers livres du *De Caelo* traitent des astres dans l’organisation de leurs déplacements supérieurs, tandis que les deux derniers livres du *De Generatione et corruptione* décrivent la nature des composants ultimes (les quatre éléments) et expliquent leurs transmutations cycliques” (p. 96).

¹⁵ “De ce point de vue, Averroès semble repérer dans la reconstruction du corpus physique deux démarches parallèles,

of Aristotle's works are wrong and lead astray. Such is not the case: it goes without saying that the systematic planning that is reflected in Andronicus' edition and that serves as the basis for the formation of the scholastic *corpus* is based on some uncontroversial statements by Aristotle. How could it have been otherwise? But one thing is to refer to the topic of the subalternation of the sciences, as Aristotle surely does,¹⁶ and another different thing is to organise the treatment of the physics as a systematic whole where each departmental science has its precise place.¹⁷ More importantly, this should not cloud the zetetic nature of the Aristotelian works that have come down to us. If I can advance the impression of an outside reader, in the case of substantial generation it is not certain that the different status of matter that emerges if one compares *Physics* I 7 with *Metaphysics Zeta* can be traced back to a difference in the level of the analysis, let alone that the *manuductio* from *Physics* I 7 to *Metaphysics Zeta* is prompted by the focus of the *De Gen. corr.* on the rise of the individual substance. This is surely a way to make Aristotle's statements consistent, and an interesting one: my perplexity is less on the solution itself, that from the viewpoint of an exegete preoccupied with the whole consistency of the system is appealing, than on the fact that it was foreseen as such by Aristotle himself.

Chapter VII, "Les racines universelles de la nature: l'étude générale de la génération" (pp. 294-439) elaborates on the idea that in Averroes' eyes the distinction between physics and metaphysics pivots on the fact that "le physicien doit établir l'existence des causes premières matérielle et motrice, mais qu'il n'étudie ni la cause formelle première ni la cause finale dernière. (...) une seule explication semble se dégager: le fait que la physique n'arrive ni à la forme première ni à la fin dernière découle de la manière dont le physicien considère ces deux causes, et, en dernière instance, du genre-sujet qui limite l'horizon de sa recherche. (...) C'est en donnant cette explication qu'Averroès peut conclure que la physique est une science absolument autonome capable d'arriver par ses seuls moyens aux principes premiers de son genre-sujet" (pp. 307-8). In Chapter VIII, "La voie vers le plus parfait. L'étude propre

du général vers le particulier et du simple vers le complexe. (...) On commence en ce sens du corps simple incorruptible, le corps céleste, qui est cause éloignée des corps sublunaires, mais qui est étudié en *DC* I-II en tant que tel; puis on en vient à l'étude des corps sublunaires, en procédant de l'étude des corps simples vers l'étude des corps dont les formes sont de plus en plus complexes. C'est en fonction de ce critère causal que l'étude des quatre corps simples engendrables et corruptibles de *DC* III-V précède celle de *DGC* II, parce que ces corps sont étudiés, dans le premier traité, en tant que tels, alors qu'ils sont étudiés en tant que causes des corps composés dans le second traité, qui vise à établir les causes et les accidents essentiels des corps composés" (pp. 238-9).

¹⁶ In her presentation of Aristotle's statement about the physical sciences, Cerami (p. 96, see above n. 14) refers to *Meteor.*, I 1, 338 a 20 – 339 a 9. This well-known passage has attracted much scholarship and is commented upon by J. Brunschwig, "On Generation and Corruption I.1: A False Start?", in F. De Haas - J. Mansfeld (eds.), *Aristotle: On Generation and Corruption, Book I. Symposium Aristotelicum*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2004, pp. 24-63. Brunschwig says: "The authenticity of this passage, sometimes suspected a long time ago, was successfully and definitely established (...). But it is equally generally agreed that Aristotle is not describing here the actual chronology of his physical treatises; he is rather giving a largely retrospective overview of the ordered mapping of the topics he has dealt with; he is probably indicating also the order in which he would like his treatises to be read. This overview certainly influenced the order in which the physical treatises were put in the so-called Andronicos' 'edition' (if we can still use this familiar description of what Andronicos did, after the doubts raised by Barnes [1997]), as well as in Ptolemy's catalogue of Aristotle's works (...), and still of course in the medieval manuscripts and all our modern editions" (p. 28 n. 12).

¹⁷ A telling example of systematization of this part of the corpus has been provided by Ph. Hoffmann in his brand-new study "I trattati di storia naturale e la zoologia nella classificazione neoplatonica degli scritti di Aristotele tra il V e il VI secolo d.C.", in M.M. Sassi with E. Coda and G. Feola (eds.), *La zoologia di Aristotele e la sua ricezione dall'età ellenistica e romana alle culture medievali*. Atti della X "settimana di formazione" del Centro GrAL (Pisa 18-20 novembre 2015), Pisa U.P., Pisa 2017 (Greco. Arabo, Latino. Le vie del sapere. Studi, 6), pp. 145-69.

de la génération substantielle” (pp. 440-534), Cerami presents Averroes’ understanding of substantial generation as an attempt to steer a middle course between Alexander of Aphrodisias’ hylemorphism and Galen’s account of the living being.¹⁸ Chapter IX, “La noblesse de l’être: physique, ontologie et théologie dans le *Grand Commentaire de la Métaphysique*” (pp. 535-671) completes the picture of Averroes as the continuator of the “néo-aristotélisme engagé par Alexandre d’Aphrodise” (p. 534).

This rich and useful volume substantially contributes to the ongoing research on Arabic philosophy, especially because it is cast in the explicit theoretical perspective that I have tried to outline above: the usefulness of reading Aristotle with Averroes’ lens. It is not surprising that in doing so C. Cerami is naturally inclined to downgrade the importance of the Neoplatonic sources in shaping the Arabic Aristotle. This is apparent in several minor points, like for instance her treatment of Averroes’ allegiance to the principle of the priority of the first cause over the secondary causes.¹⁹ This is also apparent in her main picture of Averroes’ cosmos, and this drives me to my second perplexity.

One of the inspirations of this book is the idea to disentangle Averroes from the tradition of the Graeco-Arabic ‘Peripatetism’, with its undeniable mix of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic tenets. This is especially evident in the treatment of the *Dator formarum*, that counts in Averroes’ eyes as a misunderstanding on the part of some Muslim philosophers of the basic rules of Aristotle’s causality. “Mais qui sont ces ‘autres philosophes musulmans’ qui défendent, avec Avicenne, la séparation des deux ordres de causalités²⁰ et l’existence d’un Donneur des formes? Dans le *CM* du *GA*²¹, on l’a vu, Averroès affirme qu’Ibn Bāḡḡa défendait la même thèse qu’Avicenne, en assurant que ‘ce qui transforme la matière n’est pas ce qui donne la forme’. En associant les deux penseurs, Averroès a expliqué que leur doctrine affirmait que seul l’Intellect Agent donne la forme animée’, tandis que ‘celui qui transforme la matière donne la forme de la complexion’. Il suggérait, par la suite, d’identifier cet Intellect Agent au principe efficient que ‘nombreux péripatéticiens’ appellent ‘Donneur des formes’ et dont, d’après eux, les puissances formatrices tiennent leur origine. (...) Il faut donc supposer que ce soit Ibn Bāḡḡa, dans le *GC* de la *Met.*, la cible innommée de la critique d’Averroès” (p. 637). Cerami mentions also al-Fārābī as one of the targets of Averroes. She is right, because the former explicitly states in his *Epistle on the Meanings of ‘Intellect’* that the Agent Intellect introduces the Forms both on matter and on the human potentiality to intelligize.²² (I am less sure about the identification of the Farabian work Averroes is alluding to²³). One may readily

¹⁸ Cf. pp. 443-4.

¹⁹ For instance, Averroes’ distinction between the *causae simplices, primae et universales* on the one hand, and the *causae compositae, secundae et particulares* quoted at p. 535 gives a distinct Neoplatonic ring for any reader of Prop. 1 of *Liber de Causis*: “Omnis causa primaria plus est influens super causatum suum quam causa universalis secunda”. Another echo of the *Liber de Causis*, this time of Prop. 30-31, occurs in Averroes’ distinction between the separate substances that are “more eternal” in so far as they are immobile, and those substances that are divine, but in perennial movement (p. 546).

²⁰ Cerami has explained this expression just before, p. 636. According to the theory criticised by Averroes, “les phénomènes sensibles sont le produit de deux ordres de causalité parallèles: celui du corps, comprenant les corps sublunaires et les corps célestes (...); celui de l’intelligible qui met en jeu un intellect séparé dont procèdent toutes les formes substantielles des étants naturels”.

²¹ I.e. the *Middle Commentary* on the *De Generatione animalium*.

²² Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Risalat fi ‘l-‘aql*. Texte arabe intégral en partie inédit établi par M. Bouyges S.J., Beyrouth 1938 (Bibliotheca arabica scholasticorum. Série arabe. Tome VIII, fasc. 1), pp. 30.3-31.4.

²³ Cerami, p. 650, quotes a passage by Averroes where the latter alludes to the work by al-Fārābī “On the Two Philosophies”. She sides with D. Wirmser in thinking that the work alluded to is the Farabian *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*,

acknowledge that Averroes wanted to disentangle Aristotle from all this; the question is to what extent did he succeed in his endeavour, and to what extent his cosmos, even without the *Dator formarum* as the author of the sublunar forms, was really different from al-Fārābī's and Avicenna's. True, according to Averroes "Il n'est pas besoin de postuler l'existence de formes séparées et d'un Donneur de formes pour expliquer la génération, car ce sont les puissances formatrices qui le font" (p. 656). However, when Averroes explains why Aristotle did postulate an Agent Intellect as the source of our intellections,²⁴ his picture of the cosmic hierarchy has much more in common with al-Fārābī's and Avicenna's than with Aristotle's and Alexander's. While τὸ ποιητικόν (Aristotle) and the νοῦς ποιητικός (Alexander) coincide with the Unmoved Mover, the Agent Intellect of al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes is a separate substance that, far from coinciding with the Unmoved Mover, is the last of the separate intelligences.²⁵

To sum up, Averroes' reading of Aristotle is oriented by the exegetical tradition in two crucial respects: first and foremost, by the reconstruction of Aristotle's works as parts of a systematic whole envisaged as such by Aristotle himself, a reconstruction that, initiated by Alexander of Aphrodisias, was continued by the Neoplatonic commentators at Alexandria. Second, Averroes' interpretation of the Aristotelian cosmos is oriented by the Neoplatonic distinction between the First Principle and the separate Intellect, or intellects, causing the soul to intelligize.

Notwithstanding these perplexities, Cristina Cerami's volume is rich and instructive; also, it is not its minor merit to allow this sort of questions to rise.

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but the work alluded to is rather the *K. al-ğam'*, where the question of the interpretation of Aristotle's theology is raised in exactly the same terms. Compare Averroes' statement quoted by Cerami: "Et si ces gens en sont arrivés à cela, c'est qu'ils n'avaient pas compris la démonstration d'Aristote à cet endroit et qu'ils n'ont pas reconnu sa vérité. Et on ne s'étonne pas seulement d'Avicenne, mais aussi d'Abū Naşr. Il apparaît, en effet, à son propos dans son livre *Sur les deux Philosophies*, qu'il soulève des doutes sur cette question" with Fārābī's claim in the *Harmonization of the Two Opinions of the Two Sages: Plato and the Divine Aristotle* that "Some presume that Aristotle is of the opinion that the world is eternal and Plato of a different opinion, that is, that he is of the opinion that the world is generated and has a maker" (trans. Butterworth, p. 153); then al-Fārābī starts quoting the pseudo-*Theology* and crediting Aristotle with an emanationist account that lies in the background of Averroes' remark. The Farabian authorship of the *Harmonization* has been challenged, but this is another question, with no relevance for the identification of the doctrine criticised by Averroes here.

²⁴ The passage quoted by Cerami at p. 665 runs: "S'il existe quelque chose d'incorporel, il ne pourra transformer la matière qu'au moyen d'un autre corps soustrait au changement, comme les corps célestes. Et c'est pour cela que les intellects séparés ne peuvent fournir une forme mélangée à la matière. Si <Aristote> a été amené à introduire un intellect agent séparé de la matière dans l'advenue des puissances intellectives uniquement, c'est parce que les puissances intellectives sont pour lui non mélangées à la matière" (my emphasis).

²⁵ The identification of the Agent Intellect with the tenth intelligence results from Averroes' *Epitome of the Metaphysics*, p. 136 van den Bergh ("Der aktive Intellekt emaniert aus dem untersten dieser Bewegter, und wir wollen annehmen, dass dieser der Bewegter der Sphäre des Mondes sei"), and even if one readily agrees that Averroes changed his mind as for the cosmological role of the Agent Intellect, it seems uncontroversial that he continued to grant it the function of activating the human potential intellect. H.A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, On Intellect. Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect*, Oxford U.P., New York - Oxford 1992, p. 315, recapitulates the point as follows: "Although he repeatedly revised his position on the active intellect's role as a cause of sublunar existence, Averroes remained firm throughout his career regarding the active's intellect nature. Like his predecessors among the Arabic Aristotelians, he consistently construed it as an incorporeal substance transcending the human soul; and he took for granted that it is the last link (...) in the hierarchy of incorporeal intelligences".