

AVICENNA AND THE *LIBER DE CAUSIS*: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DOSSIER

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RESUMEN

Partiendo del conocimiento que los árabes tuvieron de los textos neoplatónicos atribuidos a Aristóteles, tales como la *Pseudo-Teología* y el *Liber de Causis*, la autora de este estudio investiga el posible conocimiento que Avicena tuvo de este último libro, conocido en el mundo árabe por el título de *Kalām fī maḥd al-ḥayr*. Se apoya, para ello, en el análisis de cuatro pasajes de la *Metafísica* de la gran enciclopedia filosófica *Al-Šifā'* («La curación»).

Palabras clave: Avicena, neoplatonismo, *Pseudo-Teología*, *Liber de Causis*. *Al-Šifā'*.

ABSTRACT

Taking as a starting point the knowledge that the Arab world had of the Neoplatonic texts ascribed to Aristotle, such as the *Pseudo-Theology* and the *Liber de Causis*, the author of this study investigates the possible knowledge that Avicenna had of this under book, well-known in the Arab world under the title of *Kalām fī maḥd al-ḥayr*. In order to demonstrate this, she provides an analysis of four passages that belong to the *Metaphysics* of the great philosophical encyclopaedia *Al-Šifā'* («The cure»).

Key words: Avicenna, Neoplatonism, *pseudo-Theology*, *Liber de Causis*, *Al-Šifā'*.

The Neoplatonic influence on Ibn Sīnā's philosophical thought has been acknowledged time and again in many important areas of his work. His metaphysical and psychological doctrines, as well as his ideas about the ascension towards the First Principle and final union with it (*ittiṣāl-wuṣūl*), have been explored from the viewpoint of their relationship with the Neoplatonic sources.¹ The

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¹ A.M. Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1937, gives room only seldom to the Neoplatonic sources of Ibn Sīnā's thought. The Neoplatonic influence has been acknowledged, albeit differently evaluated, by L. Gardet, *La pensée religieuse d'Avicenne (Ibn Sīnā)*, Paris, Vrin, 1951 (*Études de Philosophie Médiévale*, 41), *passim*; A.M. Goichon, «La philosophie de l'être», in *IBLA*, 57 (1952), pp. 49-61; J. Janssens, *Avicenna: tussen neoplatonisme en islam*, Ph.D. Leuven 1984 (I am very grateful to Jules Janssens for having allowed me to read a section of his dissertation: see below, note 38); Id., «Ibn Sīnā's Ideas of ultimate realities: Neoplatonism and the Qur'ān as problem-solving paradigms in the Avicennian system», in *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*,

attention of scholarship was obviously attracted mostly by the *Notes* Ibn Sīnā wrote on the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, the main remaining part of the Arabic version of seventeen Plotinian treatises. Translated into Arabic within the circle of al-Kindī and adapted to the religious and cultural needs of the new-born *falsafa*, the Plotinian writings became an important part of the philosophical curriculum of those among the Arab intellectuals who were interested in foreign sciences. Even though we still do not possess a critical edition of the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* and related Plotinian Arabic texts,² a series of research by Paul Kraus,³ Franz Rosenthal,⁴ Gerhard Endress⁵ and Friderich W. Zimmermann⁶ shed light on this text and reached the conclusion that it traces back to the so-called "Arabic Plotinus Source", namely, to a translation of selected treatises from *Enneads* IV-VI which was wider than the pseudo-*Theology* itself, and whose remaining parts share in the same stylistic and doctrinal features.⁷ The Prologue to the pseudo-*Theology* informs us that it was

10 (1987), pp. 252-271; A.L. Ivry, «An evaluation of the Neoplatonic elements in al-Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics», in *Acts of the International Symposium in Ibn Turk, Khwārezmī, Fārābī, Bīrūnī, and Ibn Sīnā*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1990, pp. 163-174; P. Morewedge, «The Neoplatonic structure of some Islamic mystical doctrines», in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought* ed. by P. Morewedge, SUNY Press, Albany, 1992, pp. 51-75 (Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern, 5); M. Marmura, «Quiddity and universality in Avicenna», *ibid.*, pp. 77-87; L. Westra, «Self-knowing in Plato, Plotinus and Avicenna», *ibid.*, pp. 89-109. On the contrary, according to E. Booth, *Aristotelian aporetic ontology in Islamic and Christian thinkers*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1983, p. 109, «there is nothing Plotinian in [Ibn Sīnā's] *al-Šifā'* ontology». On Ibn Sīnā's psychology, see now the synthetic but really useful study by M. Sebti, *Avicenne. L'âme humaine*, Paris, P.U.F., 2000. M. Sebti takes into account the Plotinian inspiration of many aspects of the Avicennian doctrine of soul, its nature and operations.

2 The *editio princeps* of the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* was provided in 1882 by F. Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles aus arabischen Handschriften zum ersten Mal herausgegeben* von F. Dieterici. Leipzig, 1882 (repr. Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1965). The work was edited once again by 'A. Badawī, *Aflāḥ 'inda l-'Arab. Plotinus apud Arabes. Theologia Aristotelis et fragmenta quae supersunt*, Cairo, Dār al-ḥaḥḍat al-'Arabīyya, 1955, 1966, Kuwait 1977 (Dirāsāt Islāmīya, 20). For the *status quaestionis* on this text see M. Aouad, «La *Théologie d'Aristote* et autres textes du 'Plotinus Arabus'», in *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques* publié sous la direction de R. Goulet, I, Paris, Éd. du CNRS, 1989, pp. 541-590.

3 P. Kraus, «Plotin chez les Arabes. Remarques sur un nouveau fragment de la paraphrase arabe des *Ennéades*», in *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, 23 (1940-41), pp. 263-295.

4 F. Rosenthal, «Aš-Šayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source», in *Orientalia*, 21 (1952), pp. 461-492; 22 (1953), pp. 370-400; 23 (1954), pp. 42-65 (repr. in *Greek Philosophy in the Arab World. A Collection of essays*. Greath Yarmouth, 1990).

5 G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus. Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in arabischer Übersetzung*, Imprimerie Catholique, Wiesbaden-Beirut, 1973 (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 10).

6 F. W. Zimmermann, «The Origins of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*», in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages. The *Theology* and other texts*, ed. by J. Krayer, W.F. Ryan and C.B. Schmitt, London, The Warburg Institute, 1986, pp. 110-240.

7 The pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* is presented by G. Endress as «an extensive commentary-paraphrase of texts from the *Enneads* (books IV-VI) of Plotinus, transmitted and received as Aristotle's true 'Theology' (*Uṭlūḡīyā wa-huwa qawl 'alā l-rubūbiyya*) as commented by Porphyry, and translated by 'Abd-al-Masīḥ ibn Nā'ima from Ḥimṣ (the ancient Emesa). Other parts of the Arabic Plotinus source, homogeneous in terminology, style and interpretation with the 'Theology', and stemming from the same 'Plotinus source' of the Arabic tradition, have been transmitted separately as dicta of the 'Greek master' (*al-Šayḥ al-Yūnānī*) and in an 'Epistle on Divine Knowledge' (*Risāla fī l-'ilm al-ilāhī*). The 'Theology of Aristotle' and its corollaries are fundamental for al-Kindī's world-view in which he places his propaganda for rational research» (G. Endress, *The Circle of al-Kindī. Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy*, in *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism. Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences dedicated to H.J. Drossaart Lulofs on his ninetieth birthday*, ed. by G. Endress and R. Kruk, Leiden 1997, pp. 43-76, the quotation, p. 53).

meant to be read in continuity with Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and as providing an account of the suprasensible causes whose necessary existence was established by Aristotle himself.⁸ On the grounds of this Prologue and other texts produced within the circle of al-Kindī,⁹ Zimmermann maintained that the idea of an inner harmony between Aristotle's metaphysics and Plotinus' theology inspired both the production of the Arabic Neoplatonic texts and their attribution to Aristotle—a baffling fact indeed, which led many scholars in the past to conceive of the Arabic Neoplatonic texts as items of deliberate forgery.¹⁰ In Zimmermann's interpretation, on the contrary, the attribution of the Neoplatonic materials to Aristotle is but an effect of reading Aristotle's metaphysics within the Neoplatonic framework, an approach which is partly inherited from late Antiquity, and partly due to the intention to supplement Aristotle's own thought with a proper theological doctrine.¹¹ This pattern evidently lies in the background of the repeated claim by al-Fārābī, in his treatise *On the*

8 «Now we have previously completed an explanation of them [i.e., the four Aristotelian causes *al-hayūla*, *al-šūra*, *al-'illa l-fā'ila*, *al-tāmm*], and an account of their causes in our book which is after the *Physics*, and have arranged these causes in the divine intellectual arrangement, after the exposition of the soul and of nature and its action. (...) Now since we have completed the customary prefaces, which are principles that lead on to the explanation of what we wish to explain in this book of ours, let us not waste words over this branch of knowledge, since we have already given an account of it in the book of the *Metaphysics*, and let us confine ourselves to what we have presented there, and at once mention our aim in what we wish to expound in the present work, which is universal knowledge, composed in order to deliver ourselves of the sum of our philosophy and towards which we have directed the whole of what our books contain, so that the mention of the aims of it may induce the student to desire it, and may help him to understand it, in such of it as it has gone before» (transl. Lewis): ed. Dieterici, p. 2.11-13 and 3.2-8; ed. Badawī, p. 5.1-3 and 5.10-6.2. Lewis' translation of the Arabic faces the Greek in *Plotini Opera* ediderunt P. Henry et H.-R. Schwyzer, Tomus II. *Enneades IV-V*, accedunt *Plotiniana Arabica* quae anglice vertit G. Lewis, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1959 (the text quoted, p. 487).

9 In particular, Zimmermann points to the Arabic translation of a Byzantine paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima*, on which called attention Endress in his *Proclus Arabus*, and which has been recently edited by R. Arnzen, *Aristoteles' De Anima. Eine verlorene spätantike Paraphrase in arabischer & persischer Überlieferung*. Arabischer Text nebst Kommentar, quellengeschichtlichen Studien & Glossaren, Leiden, Brill, 1998 (Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus, 9). An overview of the texts translated and circulating within the circle of al-Kindī can be found in Endress, *The Circle of al-Kindī*. See also D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Society (2nd-4th / 8th-10th centuries)*. London 1998, in part. pp. 141-150. I have argued in favour of Kindī's authorship of the Prologue to the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* in *Al-Kindī on the Subject-Matter of the First Philosophy. Direct and Indirect Sources of al-Falsafa al-ūlā, Chapter One*, in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?* Akten des X. Internationalen Kongresses für mittelalterliche Philosophie der Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale 25. bis 30. August 1997 in Erfurt. Herausgegeben von J. A. Aertsen und A. Speer, Berlin - New York, de Gruyter, 1998, pp. 841-855.

10 Aristotle was indicated as the author not only of the *excerpta* from Plotinus' *Enneads*, but also of the reworking of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*: the *Liber de Causis* bears in its most ancient Arabic manuscript (Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Or. 209) the title *K. al-īdāh li-Aristūṭālīs fī l-hayr al-mahd* (see R.C. Taylor, *The Liber de Causis (Kalām fī mahd al-hayr). A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism*, Doctoral Dissertation University of Toronto, Toronto 1981, p. 106-107).

11 Against the hypothesis of a conscious forgery lying behind the attribution to Aristotle of Neoplatonic materials, Zimmermann contends that «Those around Kindī evidently perceived Greek philosophy in terms of the Aristotelian curriculum of late antiquity. The theology that was its goal accordingly was *Aristotle's* theology. But where in Aristotle, the freshly recruited student of philosophy might ask, is his theology? His *Metaphysics*, a few sketchy passages apart, is about a host of other things. Those around Kindī knew that there was no further work by Aristotle devoted to theology. Kindī expressly says that the *Metaphysics* is Aristotle's only book on metaphysics ('things incorporeal'). Apparently, their answer was that the theology sketched by Aristotle had been elaborated by later Greek philosophers such as Plotinus, whose accounts they united into a compilation under the title of 'Theology'—or, indeed, of 'Aristotle's Theology'. Plotinus's theology could be regarded as Aristotelian in the sense that, like Aristotle's, it exemplified the natural theology of the philosophers, not the scriptural theology of Islam or Christianity» (Zimmermann, «The Origins of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*», p. 122).

Harmony between Plato and Aristotle,¹² according to which the pseudo-*Theology* provides a testimony of the deep coherence not only between Aristotle and Plato, but also between the entire philosophical tradition stemming from Greece and the Qu'ranic revelation. It seems that the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* was read as crowning the theological part of Aristotle's metaphysics still within the time of Ibn Sīnā and even later, as we may learn from the *Treatise on metaphysical science* (*Kitāb fī 'ilm mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a*) by the physician and philosopher 'Abd al-Laṭīf ibn Yūsuf al-Baġdādī (1162-1231), who, two centuries later than Ibn Sīnā, locates it as the conclusion of his companion on metaphysics.¹³

Ibn Sīnā's *Notes on the pseudo-Theology of Aristotle*¹⁴ belonged in the almost completely lost *Kitāb al-Inṣāf wa-l-Intiṣāf*,¹⁵ the *Book of fair judgment* which was meant, according to Ibn Sīnā's

12 Al-Fārābī, *L'harmonie entre les opinions de Platon et d'Aristote* (*K. al-ġam' bayna ra'yay al-ḥakīmayn, Aflāṭūn al-ilāhī wa-Aristū'ālīs*), ed. F.M. Najjar - D. Mallet, Damas, Institut Français de Damas, 1999.

13 This extremely interesting work, which is still unpublished as a whole, contains a compendium of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, except Book *Lambda*, which is dealt with at more length and on its own, immediately after the compendium of the *Metaphysics*. The compendium of Aristotle's Book *Lambda* is followed by the one of Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De providentia*. The compendium of the *Liber de causis* follows, and also the one of twenty propositions drawn from Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, intermingled with five among the *Questions* of Alexander. Finally, al-Baġdādī summarizes the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*. Only the chapters where al-Baġdādī deals with books *Alpha - alpha elatton* and *Lambda* of the *Metaphysics* and with the *Liber de causis* have been edited and/or translated until now: see on books *Alpha - alpha elatton* A. Neuwirth, «Neue Materialien zur arabischen Tradition der beiden ersten *Metaphysik*-Bücher», in *Welt des Islams*, 18 (1977-78), pp. 84-100; on book *Lambda*, see A. Neuwirth, '*Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī's Bearbeitung von Buch Lambda der aristotelischen Metaphysik*', Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1976; on the *Liber de Causis*, see R.C. Taylor, «'Abd al-Latif al-Baġdādī's Epitome of the *Kalam fi Mahd al-Khayr* (*Liber de causis*)», in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in honor of George F. Hourani*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1984, pp. 286-323. On al-Baġdādī's compendium of the twenty propositions of the Arabic *Elements of Theology*, see Endress, *Proclus Arabus*, pp. 33-43.

14 The *Notes* (*Šarḥ Kitāb Uṭlūġiyyā al-mansūb ilā Aristū li-Ibn Sīnā*) have been edited by 'A. Badawī, *Aristū 'inda l-'Arab*. Dirāsāt wa-nuṣuṣ ġayr mansūra, I, Cairo, Maktabat al-Nahḍat al-Miṣriyya, 1947, pp. 37-74 (Dirāsāt Islāmīyya, 5). See also the French translation by G. Vajda, «Les notes d'Avicenne sur la 'Théologie d'Aristote'», *Revue Thomiste*, 59 (1951), pp. 346-406, and L. Gardet, «En l'honneur du millénaire d'Avicenne. L'importance d'un texte nouvellement traduit», in *Revue Thomiste*, 59 (1951), pp. 333-345 (repr. with the title «Avicenne commentateur de Plotin» in *Études de philosophie et de mystique comparées*, Paris, Vrin, 1972, pp. 135-146 (Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Philosophie)). The *Notes* have been published by Badawī, from the ms Cairo, Dār al-kutub, Hikma 6, a collection of texts belonging to the Aristotelian tradition, about which see D. Gutas, «Notes and texts from Cairo manuscripts, II: texts of Avicenna's library in a copy by 'Abd al-Razzāq as-Signāḥī», in *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, 2 (1987), pp. 8-17, especially pp.12-13, where the author lists other manuscripts containing the *Notes* and a second recension of them, bearing the title *Tafsīr Kitāb Uṭlūġiyyā mina l-Inṣāf 'an aṣ-Šayḥ... Ibn Sīnā*. Among the works contained in the Cairo ms and edited by Badawī in *Aristū 'inda l-'Arab*, there are an anonymous translation of chapters 6-10 of Book *Lambda* of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Themistius' paraphrase of Book *Lambda*, Ibn Sīnā's notes on *Lambda*, on the pseudo-*Theology* and on the *De Anima*, and some treatises by Alexander of Aphrodisias or attributed to him. According to Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition. Introduction to reading Avicenna's philosophical works*, Leiden, Brill, 1988, p. 138, the two commentaries on the *Theology* Ibn Sīnā is credited with—the *Šarḥ* edited by Badawī and the *Tafsīr*—are «two partially overlapping recensions». The two texts «may be disciples' notes taken down from a lecture given by Avicenna, or copies from Avicenna's original draft by two different disciples' or possibly copies of each other at some unspecified remove».

15 The appearance to the *K. al-Inṣāf* of the *Notes on the pseudo-Theology of Aristotle* as well as of those on Book *Lambda* of the *Metaphysics* is stated by the Cairo ms quoted in the previous note: see Badawī, *Aristū 'inda l-'Arab*, p. 37.1 (notes on the pseudo-*Theology*) and p. 22.1 (notes on Book *Lambda*). As for the notes on Aristotle's *De Anima*, which follow those on the pseudo-*Theology* (see Badawī, *Aristū 'inda l-'Arab*, pp. 75-112), the ms does not mention the *K. al-Inṣāf*: the title given to this work is *al-Ta'liqāt 'alā ḥawāṣī kitāb al-naḥs li-l-Aristū'ālīs* (Badawī, *Aristū 'inda l-'Arab*, p. 75.1) but Badawī claimed, chiefly on the basis of the affinity in structure, that it belonged in the *K. al-Inṣāf* as well (Introduction, p. 28). Badawī was followed in this by S. Pines, «La 'Philosophie Orientale' d'Avicenne et sa polémique contre les Bagdadadiens», in *Archives d'Histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age*, 19 (1952), pp. 1-37, in part. p. 10 n.

own words in the *Letter to al-Kiyā*,¹⁶ to establish the correct exegesis of many difficult Aristotelian tenets about which the so-called “Western” school —the Christian commentators of Aristotle at Bagdad— and the “Eastern” one —Ibn Sīnā himself— were at variance.¹⁷ In his comprehensive study on the composition and history of the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*,¹⁸ Zimmermann takes into account Ibn Sīnā’s *Notes* and concludes that he made use of its original version, namely, the one which was produced within the circle of al-Kindī, and not of the so-called “longer version”, namely, the one which gave rise to the Latin translation, and which bears additions probably inspired by ismā‘īli thought.¹⁹ Also, Zimmermann discusses the issue of the skepticism about the pseudo-*Theology* which apparently transpires from Ibn Sīnā’s *Letter to al-Kiyā*, and concludes that he held no doubts that the pseudo-*Theology* belonged to Aristotle’s school, if not that it was written by Aristotle himself.²⁰ More important for our purposes here, Zimmermann observes that «Avicenna’s references imply a canon of sources; a canon concluded, as he indicates in his *Letter to al-Kiyā* (...), by the *Uthūlijīyā*; a canon similar, therefore, to that charted by Baghdadi’s *Metaphysics*».²¹

3 and p. 21. Kraus, «Plotin chez les Arabes» (quoted before, n. 3), p. 274, dealt with the *Notes* as with a “chapter” of the *K. al-Insāf*; on the contrary, Gardet, *La pensée religieuse d’Avicenne* (quoted before, n. 1), p. 22, was cautious about the appartenance to the *K. al-Insāf* of the *Notes* on the pseudo-*Theology*; Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian tradition*, pp. 137-139, maintains that the notes on Book *Lambda* and on the pseudo-*Theology* did belong in the *K. al-Insāf*, whereas the notes on the *De Anima* were *marginalia* in the proper sense.

16 The *Letter to al-Kiyā* was discovered by Paul Kraus in the Cairo ms mentioned before, n. 14, and has been edited by Badawī, *Aristū ‘inda l-‘Arab*, pp. 120-122. See the English translation by Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian tradition*, pp. 60-64, from which I quote here the passage containing the mention of the *Notes* on the pseudo-*Theology*: «I had composed a book which I called *Fair Judgment*. I divided scholars into two groups, the Westerners and the Easterners, and I had the Easterners argue against the Westerners until I intervened to judge fairly when there was a real point of dispute between them. This book had contained approximately twenty-eight thousand questions. I commented clearly on the difficult passages in the original texts up to the end of the *Theologia Aristotelis*, despite the fact that the *Theologia* is somewhat suspect, and I talked about the oversights of the commentators» (pp. 63-64).

17 The demonstration of this point — against the previous view that the “Westerners” Ibn Sīnā alluded to were the Greek commentators of Aristotle and the “Easterners” were the Arab ones — was made by Pines, «La ‘Philosophie Orientale’ d’Avicenne et sa polémique contre les Bagdadiens», *passim*. See also H.V.B. Brown, «Avicenna and the Christian philosophers in Bagdad», in *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition*. Essays presented (...) to Richard Walzer ed. by S.M. Stern, A. Hourani and H.V.B. Brown, Oxford, Cassirer, 1972, pp. 35-48. For the passage of the *Letter to al-Kiyā* where Ibn Sīnā mentions the scope of the *K. al-Insāf*, see above, n. 16, where the translation by Gutas is quoted. According to al-Qifī and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a, Ibn Sīnā’s *Kitāb al-Insāf wa-l-Intiṣāf* contained twenty volumes and was completely lost in the sack of Ispahan; but according to Ibn Sīnā’s biographer Bayhaqī, something of it survived. In fact, Paul Kraus was able to find in the Cairo ms mentioned before, note 14, three items belonging in the *K. al-Insāf*. The surviving fragments of the *Kitāb al-Insāf* and the testimonia about it are discussed by Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian tradition*, pp. 130-140.

18 See note 6.

19 On the so-called “longer version” see Aouad, «La Théologie d’Aristote et autres textes du ‘Plotinus Arabus’», pp. 564-570.

20 Kraus, «Plotin chez les Arabes», p. 273, interpreted Ibn Sīnā’s statement that in the *K. al-Insāf* he discussed the philosophical works until the end of the *Theology*: «for all one may find to object» in it (*Letter to al-Kiyā*; in Badawī, *Aristū ‘inda l-‘Arab*, p. 121.20; transl. Zimmermann, p. 184; Gutas translates «despite the fact that the *Theologia* is somewhat suspect»: see above, n. 16) in the sense that Ibn Sīnā was doubtful about Aristotle’s authorship of the *Theology* ascribed to him. On the contrary, Zimmermann, «The Origins of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*», p. 184, maintains that «Avicenna seems far from rejecting the ascription of [the *Theology*] to Aristotle. At the very least, he seems to accept the Kindi-circle concept of the **Theology* as a supplement to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*», and explains Ibn Sīnā’s cautious formula as a doubt related to the chaos of the text (p. 184).

21 Zimmermann, «The Origins of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*», pp. 183-184; the quotation, p. 184.

Now, if the philosophical materials on the Greek doctrines about the first principles of the universe Ibn Sīnā had at his disposal were arranged into a canon similar to the "Kindian" one reflected in al-Baġdādī's *Kitāb fī 'ilm mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a*, it seems that one might assume without too much questioning that, since the latter contains the *Liber de Causis*, Ibn Sīnā too had access to it. On the contrary, some scholars in the past insisted upon the fact that he apparently does not make any use of the *De causis*, and took this as proof of the alleged lack of the *De causis* from the scene of Islamic philosophy of the classical age in the East. There would be little point in recalling here the arguments of those scholars who wanted to locate the composition of the *Liber de Causis* in the XII Century Muslim Spain, a thesis which was ruled out by Endress' *Proclus Arabus* in 1973.²² But, even once established the origin of the *Liber de Causis* in the IX Century Bagdad on such a firm basis as its stylistic and doctrinal affinities with other works produced within the circle of al-Kindī, the alleged lack of evidence of any knowledge whatsoever of the *Liber de Causis* in the works of al-Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā did not cease to trouble the scholars working in the field.²³ Richard C. Taylor proposed a solution for this baffling fact which pivots on the possibility that the much wider and more famous pseudo-*Theology* obscured the *Liber de Causis* and made in some sense useless, in al-Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā's eyes, to have recourse to it, since they had the pseudo-*Theology* at their disposal.²⁴ In what follows, I would like to add a few pieces of evidence to the dossier of Ibn Sīnā's Neoplatonic sources, discussing four passages from the *Metaphysics* of the *Kitāb al-Šifā'*²⁵ which are reminiscent, so it seems to me, not of the pseudo-*Theology* or of another unidentified Neoplatonic text, but of the *Liber de Causis* itself.

22 Endress' compelling arguments locating the composition of the *Liber de Causis* within the circle of al-Kindī were confirmed later on by E.K. Rowson, «An unpublished work by al-ʿAmīrī and the date of the Arabic *De causis*», in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 104 (1984), pp. 193-199. For the *status quaestionis* on the *Liber de causis* see now C. D'Ancona - R.C. Taylor, «Le *Liber de Causis*», in *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques* publié sous la direction de R. Goulet, Supplément au vol. I publié par J.-M. Flamand, forthcoming.

23 H.A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*, New York - Oxford, Oxford U.P., 1987, p. 294, suggests that the proof Ibn Sīnā advances for the existence of the *neccessesse* rests on Neoplatonic doctrines transmitted through the *De causis*, but this claim is approached with prudence by R.C. Taylor in his review of Davidson's book, published in *Speculum*, 65 (1990), pp. 646-648. 'A. Badawī, *La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe*, Paris, Vrin, 1968, pp. 68-69, has recourse to Ibn Sīnā's terminology: his definition of the First Principle as "al-*ḡanī al-tamm*, the perfectly rich", is reminiscent of the definition of the First Cause as "al-*ḡanā' al-akbar*, the greatest richness", which appears in *De causis* 20[21], p. 98.2 Bardenhewer; p. 22.2 Badawī (see below, n. 25). According to R.C. Taylor, «The *Kalām fī maḥd al-khair* (*Liber de Causis*) in the Islamic philosophical milieu», in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages. The Theology and other texts* (see note 6), pp. 37-52, especially p. 46 n. 34, this terminological argument cannot count in itself as a proof of Ibn Sīnā's knowledge of the *Liber*. J.R. Michot, *La destinée de l'homme selon Avicenne. Le retour à Dieu (ma'ād) et l'imagination*, Leuven, Peeters, 1986, pp. 59-60, points to the similarity between Ibn Sīnā's threefold distinction "eternity - perpetuity - time" and the doctrine of the *De causis* (cf. prop. 29[30], p. 112.9-113.8 Bardenhewer, p. 30.1-7 Badawī; for the full reference to the editions of the *De causis* see below, note 25).

24 Taylor, «The *Kalām fī maḥd al-khair* (*Liber de Causis*) in the Islamic philosophical milieu», p. 43.

25 Ibn Sīnā's *Metaphysics* will be quoted by page and line of the Arabic and Latin texts: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Šifā' Al-Ilāhīyāt* (I), texte établi et édité par G.C. Anawati, S. Dunyā, préface par I. Madkour; (II) texte établi et édité par M.Y. Moussa, S. Dunyā, S. Zayed, Le Caire, Organisation Générale des Imprimeries Gouvernementales, 1960; Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima sive de scientia divina*, édition critique de la traduction latine médiévale par S. van Riet, I-IV, Louvain-Leiden, Peeters-Brill 1977; V-X, Louvain-Leiden, Peeters-Brill, 1980 (Avicenna Latinus, 3-4). See also the French translation, Avicenne, *La Métaphysique du Šifā'*, introd., trad. et notes par G.C. Anawati, I-II, Paris, Vrin, 1978-1985 (Études Musulmanes, 21; 27). The *Liber de Causis* will be quoted by page and line of the two editions of the Arabic text avai-

(i) VIII 4, p. 347.10 (p. 402.48-49) — The crucial fourth chapter of treatise VIII deals with the attributes (*ṣifāt, proprietates*) of the *necesse esse*.²⁶ Ibn Sīnā opens the chapter by recalling the point he has just established at the end of chapter 3, namely, that the first agent principle (*mabda' awwal fā'il, principium primum agens*) cannot be but one.²⁷ True, he is talking in this chapter of the *necesse esse*, and the argument he has developed from the beginning of treatise VIII concerns the first principle in the series of efficient causes. But the referential identity between the *principium primum agens* and the *necesse esse* had already been established when, in treatise VI, Ibn Sīnā argued that in the metaphysical discourse —at variance with what happens in the physical one— the agent principle is not confined to the status of the beginning of movement, but is the true principle of being (*mabda' al-wuġūd*), i.e., the unique Creator.²⁸ If so, the argument for the unicity of the first agent principle concludes also in the unicity of the *necesse esse*. Once recalled that the *necesse esse* cannot be but one,²⁹ Ibn Sīnā proceeds to the next move, namely, to establish that the attributes which necessarily follow from the very fact of its being the *necesse esse* do not involve any composition whatsoever in it.³⁰ Notwithstanding the manifest Neoplatonic inspiration of this claim, the argument supporting it parts company with the Neoplatonic doctrine of the lack of any relationship whatsoever in the First Principle. Whereas in Greek Neoplatonism, both for Plotinus and Proclus, the relationship between the derivative realities and the First Principle is univocal —in other terms, the derivative realities are related to the First Principle, but the reverse is not true—,³¹ according to Ibn Sīnā the First Principle does have a relationship (*iḍāfa, relatio*) with its derivatives. But this by no means implies that the First Principle is multiple or composite: its *relationes* are but *comitantes essentiae* (*lawāzīm li-l-ḍāt*) and *causatae essentiae*, which means that they come *after* the essence of the First Principle and are neither fundamentals nor parts of it.³² After having quickly solved a difficulty,³³ Ibn Sīnā proceeds to the crucial point of the whole chapter: the First Principle does not possess a *quidditas* (*māhīya*) but its own *anitas* (*annīya*).³⁴ In order to support this claim, he embarks upon an argument whose main steps are the following: the very notion of *necesse esse* indicates the quiddity of that principle, in precisely the same way as 'one' or 'man' indicate the quiddity of those realities.³⁵ But once we take into account the nature of the First Principle of the uni-

lable in print: O. Bardenhewer, *Die pseudo-aristotelische Schrift Ueber das reine Gute bekannt unter dem Namen Liber de causis*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1882 (Nachdruck... Minerva GmbH, Frankfurt a. Main, 1961); 'A. Badawī, *Al-Aflāḩīnīya al-muḩḩata 'inda l-'Arab*, Cairo, Maktabat al-naḩḩat al-miṣrīya, 1955, pp. 1-33 (Dirāsāt Islāmīya, 19). The Latin text of the *De causis* will be quoted from A. Pattin, «Le Liber de causis. Édition établie à l'aide de 90 manuscrits avec introduction et notes», in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 28 (1966), pp. 90-203. The English translation quoted is by Taylor, *The Liber de Causis (Kalām fī maḩḩ al-ḩayr): A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism*, quoted above, n. 10.

26 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 343.7-349.6; Latin: p. 397.53-404.1.

27 VIII 3, Arabic: p. 342.1; Latin: p. 395.12-13.

28 VI 1, Arabic: p. 257.13-16; Latin: p. 292.17-24.

29 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 343.10-11; Latin: p.397.55-58.

30 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 343.11-15; Latin: p. 397.58-398.65.

31 See for instance VI 9[9], 3.49-54; Proclus, *El. th.* 116 and 122.

32 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 343.16-344.5; Latin: p. 398.65-77.

33 To admit that the First Principle has *relationes* which are *causatae essentiae* seems to open the way to an infinite regress, in so far as what relies each of them to its cause is, in turn, another *relatio*. Ibn Sīnā claims to have already solved this difficulty before (III 10), where he argued that relationship cannot proceed to the infinite.

34 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 344.10; Latin: p. 398.83-399.84.

35 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 344.11-14; Latin: p.399.85-90.

verse, we realize that those philosophers who conceived of it as unique —discarding those who thought that there were many first principles— did so either because they sought to locate the first principle in this or that element and said that it was one, or because they thought that the one itself (*ḍāt al-wāḥid*) was the First Principle. This very fact shows that a difference exists between the quiddity which has 'unity' or 'being' as its predicates, and the one, or being, taken in itself, in so far as it is 'one' or 'being'.³⁶ This is why in the First Principle no composition whatsoever takes place. If we assume, for the sake of argument, that the quiddity 'man' exists by necessity, we still have a quiddity which exists by necessity: not so in the case of the First Principle. Far from being a quiddity which possesses the *necesse esse*, the First Principle is the *necesse esse*, and nothing more, unless one is ready to accept that it receives the *necesse esse* from another principle than itself, a consequence which goes against its very definition.³⁷ Another point Ibn Sīnā wants to establish is that everything which possesses both quidditas (*māhīya*) and being (*anitas, annīya*) is a derivative reality. The point is made by refusing to conceive of quiddity and being as two components of the given thing. 'Being' can either accompany a quiddity, and in this case the thing *is*, or not accompany the quiddity, and in this case the thing *is not*; which implies that being comes from something else than the given quiddity. This is why Ibn Sīnā calls it a *comitans (lāzim)* of the given quiddity, namely, something which is not a part of its definition or nature but can accompany it, in which case the quiddity turns to be a real being. The hypothesis of a quiddity which in itself, i.e., in its very nature or definition, necessarily implies being is ruled out as absurd: such a quiddity would be anterior to its own being, in so far as it would receive it from itself. But if each and every quiddity which possesses being has it from another principle than itself, this proves the *demonstrandum*: everything which possesses being is a derivative reality. «Igitur omne habens quidditatem causatum est; et cetera alia, excepto necesse esse, habent quidditates quae sunt per se possibiles esse, quibus non accidit esse nisi extrinsecus».³⁸

The conclusion Ibn Sīnā draws from this argument, so it seems to me, is reminiscent of the *Liber de Causis*. He says:

Fa-l-awwalu lā māhīya laḥū, wa-ḍawātu l-māhīyāti yafrīdu 'alayhā al-wuḡūdu minhū, fa-huwwa muḡarradu l-wuḡūdi (...).

Primus igitur non habet quidditatem, sed super habentia quidditates fluit esse ab eo; ipse igitur est esse expoliatum (...).³⁹

36 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 344.14-345.5; Latin: p. 399.91-99.

37 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 345.6-346.3; Latin: p. 399.00-400.20.

38 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 346.15-347.9; Latin: p. 401.33-402.47. The quotation, p. 347.8-9 (Arabic); p. 402.44-47 (Latin). The argument I have summarized received much attention in scholarship, from Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā* (quoted above, n. 1), pp. 343-354, onwards: see G.F. Hourani, «Ibn Sīnā on necessary and possible existence», in *Philosophical Forum*, 4 (1972), pp. 74-86; H.A. Davidson, «Avicenna's proof of the existence of God as a necessarily existent being», in *Islamic Philosophical Theology* ed. by P. Morewedge, Albany, SUNY Press, 1979, pp. 165-187; Janssens, *Avicenna: tussen neoplatonisme en islam*, Ph.D. Leuven 1984 (quoted above, n. 1), p. 128-133; D.B. Burrell, «Essence and existence: Avicenna and Greek philosophy», in *MIDEO*, 17 (1986), pp. 53-66. For further information see J.L. Janssens, *An Annotated bibliography on Ibn Sīnā (1970-1989). Including Arabic and Persian publications and Turkish and Russian references*, Leuven, University Press, 1991, and Id., *An annotated bibliography on Ibn Sīnā: First Supplement (1990-1994)*, Louvain-la-Neuve, FIDEM, 1999.

39 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 347.10; Latin: p. 402.48-49.

The idea that the First Principle does not have any form and that for this reason is 'pure being' clearly echoes the Neoplatonic doctrine of the One, reshaped in the peculiar form it received in the Arabic version of Plotinus' and Proclus' writings. At variance with the Greek original texts, in the Arabic version of their works a typical doctrine was worked out, a doctrine which conflates the original Plotinian tenet of the transcendence of the One with respect to any μορφή or εἶδος with the claim that this principle transcends them precisely in so far as it is 'pure Being', *annīya* (or *huwīya*) *faqaṭ*. This doctrine is non-Plotinian and non-Proclean, and two attempts have been made in order to account for its presence in the Arabic Neoplatonic texts, which trace back both to Greek sources. Some scholars (Pines, Thillet, Taylor) think that this doctrine traces back to Porphyry, who parted company from Plotinus in his own commentary on the *Parmenides* and claimed that the One is οὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι καθαρόν.⁴⁰ On the other hand, it has been suggested that the source of this peculiar doctrine is to be found in the works of the pseudo-Dionysius.⁴¹ At all events, in the three main Arabic Neoplatonic texts —the reworking of the Plotinian treatises, the Arabic translation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* edited by Endress, and the *Liber de Causis*— the topic of the transcendence of the One with respect to intelligible reality is coupled with the idea that it is so precisely because the true One is 'pure Being' as well. In the above-mentioned passage, Ibn Sīnā does not quote literally one or other of the Arabic Neoplatonic sources which are likely to lie in the background of his assessment: the terminology he adopts is his own, as is clearly indicated by his favourite expression *muḡarrad al-wuḡūd, esse expoliatum*, a syntagma which reformulates in Ibn Sīnā's proper terms the definition of the First Principle as 'pure Being' —*annīya faqaṭ* (or *huwīya faqaṭ*: literally, 'solely being')— of the Arabic Neoplatonica of the circle of al-Kindī.⁴² The transcendence of the First Principle with respect to everything which possesses quiddity is reformulated by Ibn Sīnā in his own terminology as well. Not that the term *māhīya* does not appear in the Arabic Neoplatonica;⁴³ but it is not used to deny the presence of quiddity in the First Principle: in order to express this idea, the Arabic Plotinus has recourse to the typical couple *ḥilya wa-šūra*, "shape and form"; the Arabic Proclus, at times, makes use also of *kayfīya*, "quality", for this purpose.⁴⁴ But even though Ibn Sīnā

40 P. Thillet, «Indices porphyriens dans la pseudo-Théologie d'Aristote», in *Le néoplatonisme*. Actes du Colloque international du CNRS, Paris, Éd. du CNRS, 1971, pp. 293-302; S. Pines, «Les textes arabes dits plotiniens et le courant "porphyrien" dans le néoplatonisme grec», *ibid.*, pp. 303-317; R.C. Taylor, «Aquinas, the *Plotiniana Arabica* and the metaphysics of being and actuality», in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59 (1998), pp. 217-239.

41 See my «*Esse quod est supra aeternitatem*. La cause première, l'être et l'éternité dans le *Liber de causis* et dans ses sources», in *Archives d'Histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age*, 59 (1992), pp. 41-62; «La doctrine néoplatonicienne de l'être entre l'Antiquité tardive et le Moyen Age. Le *Liber de causis* par rapport à ses sources», in *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, 59 (1992), pp. 41-85 (better printed in *Recherches sur le Liber de Causis*, Paris, Vrin, 1995, pp. 121-153); «L'influence du vocabulaire arabe: "Causa prima est esse tantum"», in *L'élaboration du vocabulaire philosophique au Moyen Age*. Actes du Colloque International organisé par la SIEPM, Louvain-la-Neuve/Leuven, 12-14 sept. 1998, p. 51-97 (forthcoming).

42 For the syntagma *annīya faqaṭ* in the Arabic Neoplatonica see Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'inda l-'Arab*, pp. 67.14; 71.15, 16; 147.14, 15; 160.12; 161.7; 179.2; 197.9; for the syntagma *huwīya faqaṭ*, see p. 161.2.

43 In the Arabic Plotinus *māhīya* is not referred to the First Principle but to soul: see Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'inda l-'Arab*, p. 45.5. The synonymous expression *mā'īya* parallels Plotinus' τὸ εἶναι at p. 69.17 Badawī, but once again it is referred to intellect and not to the First Principle.

44 For the typical couple *ḥilya wa-šūra* see Endress, *Proclus Arabus* (quoted above, n. 5), pp. 134-139; 212. The term *kayfīya* is not so often used in the Arabic Plotinus: see Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'inda l-'Arab*, pp. 38.9; 46.2, 6; 94.11; 128.15-16. *Kayfīya* parallels Plotinus' ποιότης at pp. 45.12; 46.1 and 13. In the Arabic version of prop. 73 of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* an interpolated passage claims that the First Cause is *huwīya faqaṭ* because it has no *kayfīya* whatsoever: see Endress, *Proclus Arabus*, p. 25.18 [Arabic text].

is not quoting this or that passage *verbatim*, he is not echoing a generic inspiration either. The tenet that the First Principle has no form whatsoever, indeed is pure being, and that precisely for this reason it pours forth being onto all things, is by no means unprecedented. In the *Liber de Causis*, this doctrine is stated as follows:

*wa-l-'aqlu dū hilyatin*⁴⁵ *li-annahū annīya wa-šīra wa-kaḍālika l-naḥsu dātu hilyatin wa-l-tabī'atu dātu hilyatin wa-laysa li-l-'illati l-ūlā hilyatum li-annahā annīyatun faqat. Fa-in qāla qā'ilun lā budda min an yakūna lahā hilyatum, qulnā hilyatuhā lā nihāyatuhā wa-šahṣuhā l-ḥayru l-mahḍu l-mufīdu 'alā l-'aqli ḡamī'a l-ḥayrāti wa-'alā sā'iri l-ašyā'i bi-tawassuṭi l-'aqli.*⁴⁶

And the intelligence possesses shape because it is being and form, and likewise soul possesses shape and nature possesses shape, but the First Cause does not have shape because He is only being. So if someone says: He must have shape, we say: His shape is infinite and his essential nature is the Pure Good pouring forth all goods on the intelligence and on all other things through the mediation of intelligence (transl. Taylor).⁴⁷

True, the idea that the First Principle is 'pure Being' is not exclusive of the *Liber de Causis*: on the contrary, it is common to all the Neoplatonic texts which are likely to have been available to Ibn Sīnā, and in particular it occurs in the pseudo-*Theology* he commented upon.⁴⁸ Moreover, the topic of the shapeless nature of the First Principle seems to have been worked out in the Arabic Plotinus, and transmitted from the Arabic Plotinus to the Arabic Proclus, namely, to the Arabic translation of the *Elements of Theology* and to the *Liber de Causis*.⁴⁹ So, one is spontaneously inclined to say that it was in the pseudo-*Theology* that Ibn Sīnā found the doctrine of the passage quoted above, and that there is no reason to have recourse to the *Liber de Causis* in order to account for it. But a closer inspection shows that he is likely to have in his memory the passage of the *De causis*.

45 Both Bardenhewer and Badawī print here *kullīya* ("totality"). The correct reading *hilya* ("shape", "form") was recognized by Rosenthal, «Aṣ-Ṣayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source» (quoted above n. 4), p. 469 and by Endress, *Proclus Arabus*, pp. 136, 212; see also G. Serra, «Alcune osservazioni sulle traduzioni dall'arabo in ebraico e in latino del *De generatione et corruptione* di Aristotele e dello pseudo-aristotelico *Liber de Causis*», in *Scritti in onore di Carlo Diano*, Bologna, Patron, 1975, pp. 385-433, especially pp. 423-427; R.C. Taylor, «St. Thomas and the *Liber de Causis* on the hylomorphic composition of Separate Substances», in *Medieval Studies*, 41 (1979), pp. 506-513.

46 *Liber de Causis*, prop. 8[9], pp. 78.8-9.1 Bardenhewer, p. 12.14-17 Badawī.

47 Taylor, *The Liber de Causis (Kalām fī mahḍ al-ḥayr)*. A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism, pp. 299-300.

48 Ibn Sīnā commented upon a long passage of chapter I of the pseudo-*Theology* which is totally independent from Plotinus (Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'inda l-'arab*, pp. 25.15 - 28.3) and where the First Cause is said to be "first and pure Being" (*al-annīya al-ūlā al-ḥaqq*, p. 26.8); see *Šarḥ Kitāb Uṭlūḡiyā al-mansūb ilā Aristū li-Ibn Sīnā*, in Badawī, *Aristū 'inda l-'Arab* (quoted above, n. 14), p. 46.3-15; transl. Vajda, pp. 363-364.

49 I have argued in favour of this point in my «L'influence du vocabulaire arabe: "Causa prima est esse tantum"» (quoted above, n. 40), in part. pp. 77-80, on the grounds of the fact that the topic of the First Cause as *annīya faqat* in so far as it has no *hilya* neither *šīra* is but a modification of the Plotinian doctrine of the First Principle as ἄμορφον καὶ ἀνείδεον. This doctrine is typical of Plotinus and was abandoned by Proclus. The fact that the topic of the First Cause as *annīya faqat*, having no *hilya* neither *šīra*, appears in the Arabic Plotinus and in the Arabic Proclus as well (both in the *Proclus Arabus* edited by Endress and in the *Liber de Causis*) creates a drift towards the idea that it was first worked out in the adaptation of Plotinus, and later endorsed by the translator of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* and by the author of the *Liber de Causis*.

The passages of the Arabic Plotinus where the First Principle — be it called True One, First Cause, God Almighty, or Creator — is said to be ‘pure Being’ are many,⁵⁰ but there is one in particular which might have inspired Ibn Sīnā. In this passage, two of the doctrinal features of Ibn Sīnā’s own passage are present, namely, the shapeless nature of the First Principle (*lā māhīya lahū* in Ibn Sīnā’s account) and its denomination as ‘pure Being’ (*muğarrad al-wuğūd* in Ibn Sīnā’s account). The passage is found in the collection of the ‘Sayings of the Greek sage’⁵¹ and is related to the following passage in *Ennead* V 1 [10], 7.20-21:

(...) ταύτη γὰρ πάντα ἐξ ἐκείνου, ὅτι μὴ τι μορφῇ κατείχεται ἐκεῖνος· μόνον γὰρ ἓν ἐκεῖνο·

(...) for this is how all things come from him, because he is not confined by any shape; that One is one alone (transl. Armstrong).

The Arabic rendering of this passage amplifies, as usual, the Greek of Plotinus, adding both a monotheistic interpretation of Plotinus’ One and a peculiar interpretation of its shapeless nature:

The First Creator does not resemble any thing, because all things are from Him and because He has no shape (*hīlya*) and no special, inherent form (*sūra*). The First Creator is absolutely one, i.e., He is mere being (*annīya faqaṭ*) without any peculiar attribute (*sifa*). All attributes break forth from that being (transl. Rosenthal).⁵²

This passage of the Arabic Plotinus counts, so it seems to me, as one of the sources of the passage of the *Liber de Causis* I have quoted before.⁵³ The same addition, namely, the interpretation of the Neoplatonic One as *annīya faqaṭ* or *huwīya faqaṭ*, as well as the account of this feature in terms of lack of any attribute (*sifa*) or quality (*kayfīya*), appears also in the interpolated passages which accompany the Arabic translation of props. 2, 21, 73 and 74 of the *Proclus Arabus* edited by Endress.⁵⁴ My guess is that this topic has been worked out first in the paraphrasis of V 1[10], and that, by circulating within the circle of al-Kindī, it influenced both the translator of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* and the author of the *Liber de Causis*. But I have two reasons for not thinking that the passage of the Arabic Plotinus preserved in the doxography of the ‘Greek Sage’ counts also as the source of Ibn Sīnā’s statement.

First, in reading the three passages in parallel — the one from the Arabic Plotinus, the one from the *Liber de Causis* and the one by Ibn Sīnā — it is easy to see that it is only in the *De Causis* that

50 In addition to the passages quoted above, n. 42, see also Badawī, *Aflūṭīn ‘inda l-‘Arab*, pp. 27.2; 51.8; 87.10; 131.3, 14, 15; 132.9, 18 (*al-annīya al-ūlā*); pp. 26.8; 27.5 (*al-annīya al-ūlā al-ḥaqq*); p. 113.14 (*al-annīya al-ūlā al-mubtadi‘a*); p. 134.13 (*al-huwīya al-ūlā*); p. 135.15 (*al-huwīya al-ūlā al-mubtadi‘a*).

51 See Rosenthal, «Aš-Šayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source» (quoted above n. 4) and Aouad, «*La Théologie d’Aristote et autres textes du ‘Plotinus Arabus’*» (quoted above, n. 2), pp. 574-580.

52 Arabic text in Badawī, *Aflūṭīn ‘inda l-‘Arab* (quoted above, n. 2), p. 185.5-7 and in Rosenthal, «Aš-Šayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source», p. 478; transl. Rosenthal, p. 479.

53 See my «*Cause prime non est iylathim. Liber de Causis*, prop. 8[9]: le fonti e la dottrina», in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, 1 (1990), pp. 327-351 and note 48 above.

54 I have tried to support this claim in the paper quoted above, n. 48.

all the three elements which do appear in Ibn Sīnā's statement are present together, namely (i) the idea that the First Principle is 'pure Being', (ii) because it has no quiddity, (iii) and that it pours forth being onto things which possess quiddity. Items (i) and (ii) appear in the Arabic Plotinus. In the passage from the *Liber de Causis* the items (i)-(iii) appear together, and for this reason it seems sensible to accept it as the source of Ibn Sīnā's statement. True, one might object that in Ibn Sīnā's passage we are told that the First Principle - Pure Being pours forth *being* onto the things which possess quiddity, and in the passage from the *Liber de Causis* we are told that it pours forth "all the goods" onto the derivative realities. But the idea that the First Cause, which is only being and pure being, pours forth being onto the derivative realities which are endowed by this or that form —life, intelligence, movemen— by subordinate immaterial principles is a typical feature of the *Liber de Causis*. This topic had few chances of appearing as such in the Arabic Plotinus, in so far as it is an interpretation of a typical Proclean tenet, namely, the causality of the three main principles ὄν, ζῶν and νοῦς. In his reworking of prop. 138 of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, the author of the *Liber de Causis* interprets Proclus' ὄν as if it were the 'pure Being' which, in his eyes, merges with the True One and is but the First Cause, or God himself. Of course, it is not so for Proclus; but the reworking of Proclus' proposition allows the author of the *De causis* to conclude his proposition 17[18] with the following sentence, which has no antecedent in Greek:

We resume and say, then, that the First Entity (*al-huwīyat al-ūlā*) is quiescent and is the cause of causes, and if He gives all things entity (*al-huwīya*), He gives it in the manner of origination. The first life gives life to what is below it, not in the manner of origination, but in the manner of form. And, likewise, the intelligence gives knowledge and the other things to what is below it only in the manner of form, not in the manner of origination, because the manner of origination belongs to the First Cause alone (transl. Taylor).⁵⁵

When the author of the *Liber de Causis* —still in a passage which has no Greek antecedent, i.e., the one quoted above from proposition 8[9]— maintains that the First Cause pours forth "all goods" onto the things which possess shape, in the light of the present passage one can confidently say that this means that it pours forth first and foremost *being*. Or at least so it seems in Ibn Sīnā's eyes, even though his own notion of being is obviously different from the one we can glean from the assessments scattered in the *Liber de Causis*, and is original to him. To sum up, I am inclined to think that Ibn Sīnā's passage is redolent of the passage of proposition 8[9] of the *Liber de Causis* quoted above, and that in taking from it his inspiration Ibn Sīnā is aware of the passage of proposition 17[18] just quoted, where the First Cause is said to pour forth being onto all its derivatives.

The second, additional reason I have for thinking that the proximate source of Ibn Sīnā's tenet is the passage of the *Liber de Causis*, and not the passage of the Arabic Plotinus, is that the latter does not appear in the pseudo-*Theology*. As we have just seen, it comes from V 1[10] and is preserved in the doxography of the 'Greek Sage'. As happens in general for the entire tradition of the Arabic Plotinus, in the case of V 1[10] too one is struck by the fact that the actual remaining parts

⁵⁵ *Liber de Causis*, prop. 17[18], pp. 92.10-93.4 Bardenhewer, p. 19.9-12 Badawī; transl. Taylor, *The Liber de Causis (Kalām fī maḥd al-ḥayr)*. A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism, p. 312.

of the translation of treatises from *Enneads* IV-VI—i.e., the pseudo-*Theology*, the pseudo-Farabian *Epistle on the Divine Science* and the “Sayings of the Greek Sage”⁵⁶—follow a sort of chess-board pattern. In other words, the Arabic texts preserved in the three actual testimonies of it, albeit deriving from one and the same translation—as has been shown with compelling arguments by Kraus, Rosenthal, Endress and Zimmermann—do not overlap, if not only at times and for short portions. In the case of V 1[10], the chess-board is the following:

Plotinus’ Treatises vs *Plotiniana Arabica*

B. = ‘A. Badawī, *Aflūṭīn ‘inda-l-‘Arab. Plotinus apud Arabes. Theologia Aristotelis et fragmenta quae supersunt*, Cairo, Dār al-Nahḍat al-‘Arabīya, 1966

D. = F. Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles aus arabischen Handschriften zum ersten Mal herausgegeben*, Leipzig 1882 (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1965)

L. = *Plotiniana Arabica* ad codicum fidem anglice vertit G. Lewis, in *Plotini Opera* II, *Enneades* IV-V ediderunt P. Henry et H.-R. Schwyzer, Desclée de Brouwer - L’Edition Universelle, Paris-Louvain 1959 (L.* = passages of the *Sayings* covering the same textual portion preserved in the *ps.-Theology*)

R. = F. Rosenthal, «Aṣ-Ṣayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source», *Orientalia*, 21 (1952), pp. 461-492; 22 (1953), pp. 370-400; 24 (1955), pp. 42-65

<i>Enneads</i>	<i>ps.-Theology</i>	<i>Epistola de scientia divina</i>	<i>Sayings of the Greek Sage</i>
V 1[10], 2.10-25 3.12-6.3	VIII, B. 108.5-114.18—D. 104.9-112.10		L. 263 L. 267*; L. 273-275*; B. 184.4-185.2; B. 189.14-17 R.474-478
7.18-42			L. 281; B. 185.4-19; R. 478-480
8.1-10			R. 486 L. 281
10.24-30 11.1-12.20	IX, B. 129.9-133.3—D. 130.12-135.11		L. 285

As this table shows, the passage of the ‘Sayings of the Greek Sage’ related to V 1[10], 7.19-20—which inspired in all likelihood the author of the *Liber de Causis* for his proposition 8[9]—does not belong in those where the pseudo-*Theology* and the ‘Sayings of the Greek Sage’ overlap. This is to say, a reader of the pseudo-*Theology* in the form it came down to us could not have had access to it. Ibn Sīnā was such a reader, as Zimmermann contends⁵⁷ and as a detailed inspection of his

⁵⁶ For the three texts mentioned and the actual state of the research on each of them, see Aouad, «*La Théologie d’Aristote et autres textes du ‘Plotinus Arabus’*» (quoted above, n. 2).

⁵⁷ Zimmermann, «The Origins of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*», p. 183.

Notes confirms. Of course, the possibility exists that he had access also to other sources, preserving that part of the Arabic translation and paraphrase of V 1[10], and one should not force an argument taken from the remaining parts of the transmission, in the case of such a complex textual tradition, so many aspects of which are still obscure. But the fact remains that the passage which, in the Arabic Plotinus, resembles more to Ibn Sīnā's statement does not belong in the part of the translation-paraphrase he had at his immediate disposal in the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*.

As a conclusion of the analysis of the relationship among the texts which are the best candidates for having been the source of Ibn Sīnā's claim that the First does not possess *quidditas* and pours forth being onto the *habentia quidditates*, I would like to stress once again that this amounts only to stating that the passage quoted from the *Metaphysics* of the *Kitāb al-Šifā'* echoes the *De causis* passage. Ibn Sīnā's use of his source is free: not only the terminology is his own, but also the philosophical implications he draws from the doctrine of the *Liber de Causis* are original.

(ii) VIII 4, p. 348.5-6 (p. 403.69-73) — Still in the same chapter of treatise VIII, Ibn Sīnā contends that the First Principle cannot be known by means of a definition or a demonstration, in so far as it does not possess a cause:

wa-li-dālika fa-inna l-awwala lā faṣla lahū, wa-id lā ġinsa lahū wa-lā faṣla lahū fa-lā ḥadda lahū, wa-lā burhāna 'alayhī, li-annahū lā 'illata lahū.

Et ideo non habet differentiam; quia enim non habet genus, nec habet differentiam, ideo non habet definitionem. Nec fit demonstratio de eo quia ipse non habet causam.⁵⁸

The Arab philosophers were acquainted since al-Kindī's time with the idea that the First Principle transcends not only every predicative assessment, but also the ontological structure which is presupposed by predication, namely, the classification according to genera and species.⁵⁹ But Ibn Sīnā does not limit himself to recall this *topos*; indeed he points to a reason why the First Principle cannot be known according to the usual way taken in demonstrative science, i.e., through a definition; and the reason given recalls, so it seems to me, the following passage of proposition 5[6] of the *Liber de Causis*:

Fa-min dālika šāra l-awwalu waḥdahū yafītu l-šifata wa-innamā kāna kaḍālika li-annahū laysa fawqahū 'illatun yu'rafu bi-hā, wa-kullu šay'in innamā yu'rafu wa-yūṣafu min tilqā'i 'illatihī fa-idā kāna l-šay'u 'illatan faqaṭ wa-laysa bi-ma'tūlin lam yu'lam bi-'illatin ulā wa-lā yūṣafu li-annahū 'alā mina l-šifati wa-laysa yabluġuhū l-mantiqū.

58 VIII 4, Arabic: p. 348.5-6; Latin, p. 403.69-73. I owe to Marc Geoffroy the observation that the words which follow immediately in the Arabic, *wa-li-dālika lā l-mm (?) lahū*, should be read *wa-li-dālika lā lima lahū*, and allude to opposition between *mā* and *lima*: about God, the question "*lima?*" cannot be asked, in so far as it does not possess a cause; by implication, it cannot be known through a *burhān* but only through a *dalīl*, which is represented by God's effects.

59 Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī, *Fī al-falsafa al-ūlā*, in *Rasā'il al-Kindī al-falsafīya*, ed. M. Abū Rīda, Cairo, Dār al-fikr al-'arabi, 1950, p. 160.13-161.5; see also R. Rashed - J. Jolivet, *Œuvres philosophiques et scientifiques d'al-Kindī, volume II. Métaphysique et cosmologie*, Leiden-Boston-Köln, Brill, 1998 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, 29), p. 95.10-19 (French transl., p. 94), and the English translation by A.L. Ivry, *Al-Kindī's Metaphysics. A Translation of Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī's Treatise On First Philosophy (fī al-falsafah al-ūlā)*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1974, p. 112.

For this reason, therefore, the First alone came to elude description. That <was> so because there is no cause above Him through which He might be known and every thing is known and described only by way of its cause. Thus, if the thing is only a cause and not an effect, it is not known or described through a first cause because it transcends description and speech does not reach it (transl. Taylor).⁶⁰

Of course, one might think that Ibn Sīnā is just recalling the well-known Aristotelian doctrine which is presupposed in this passage of the *Liber de Causis* and, in turn, in Proclus' proposition which lies in its background.⁶¹ But the fact that Ibn Sīnā makes use of this Aristotelian topic in precisely the same way as the author of the *Liber de Causis* does, and in precisely the same context, namely, the discussion of the *ṣifāt* of the First Principle, creates once again a drift towards the conclusion that he was aware of the passage quoted.

(iii) VIII 6, p. 355.9-12 (p. 412.59-64) and IV 3, p. 188.5-189.11 (p. 215.17-216.34) — In chapter 6 of treatise VIII, we are told that the *necesse esse* transcends even perfection: it is *fawqa al-tamām*, plus quam perfectum.⁶² In a purely Neoplatonic vein, Ibn Sīnā indicates as the cause of this status the fact that its *esse* is not confined to itself but pours forth onto the derivative realities, giving them their own *esse*.⁶³ Earlier in the *Metaphysics* of the *Kitāb al-Ṣifā'*, he had already credited the First Principle with transcendence to perfection itself. In chapter 3 of treatise IV, dealing with the notions 'perfection', 'imperfection', 'transcendence to perfection' and 'totality', he had already quoted the tenet of those "wise men" (*ḥukamā'*) who credited the First Principle with the status of transcendence to perfection itself (*fawqa al-tamām*). According to those wise men, in Ibn Sīnā's report, the First Principle lies not only above what is imperfect, but also above what is perfect, which, in his interpretation, is the intelligible world and Intellect.⁶⁴

It is tempting to see in this allusion a quotation of proposition 21[22] of the *Liber de Causis*, where the First Principle is said to create in so far as it is above perfection itself — *fawqa al-tamām*, reproducing Proclus' ὑπερπληρες.⁶⁵ As a matter of fact, the striking similarity between Ibn Sīnā's

60 *Liber de Causis*, prop.5[6], p. 70.2-7 Bardenhewer, p. 9.1-4 Badawī; transl. Taylor, *The Liber de Causis (Kalām fī maḥḍ al-ḥayr)*. A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism, p. 292.

61 The passage of the *Liber de Causis* is inspired by the following passage from *El. th.* 11, Dodds p. 12.15-17: ἡ γὰρ τῶν αἰτίων γνώσις ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶν ἔργον, καὶ τότε λέγομεν ἐπίστασθαι, ὅταν τὰ αἰτία γνωρίσομεν τῶν ὄντων.

62 Arabic: p. 355.9; Latin: p. 412.59-60.

63 Arabic: p. 355.9-10; Latin: p. 412.59-61.

64 IV 3: Arabic, p. 188.5-189.11; Latin: p. 215.17-216.34: «Dico autem quod sapientes etiam transtulerunt perfectum ad certitudinem essendi (...). Plus quam perfectum autem est id cui est esse quod debet habere et ab eo exuberat esse ad ceteras res, veluti si habeat suum esse quale oportet eum habere, et habet esse superabundans quo non est ei opus, et ab eo exuberat ad alia, et hoc sit ab eo essentialiter. Et hunc ordinem attribuerunt primo principio quod est ultra perfectionem, ex cuius esse in seipso, non ex causa alia ab eo, fluit esse exuberans a suo esse ad ceteras res. *Et ordinem perfectionis attribuerunt intelligentiae* ei quae, ex intelligentiis separatis, in principio sui esse est in effectu, cui non commiscetur aliquid potentiae nec exspectat alius esse. Si autem fuerit aliquid aliud ab ea, hoc etiam est ab esse quod fluit a primo» (my emphasis; see below, n. 67).

65 *Liber de Causis*, prop. 21[22], p. 99.9-100.1 Bardenhewer, p.23.1-2 Badawī: «He is above perfection because He is Originator of things and that which pours forth goods on them in a perfect emanation because He is a good which has neither limits nor dimensions», transl. Taylor, *The Liber de Causis (Kalām fī maḥḍ al-ḥayr)*. A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism, p. 318. This sentence comes from Proclus' prop. 131, Dodds p. 116.22-23.

statement and the proposition 21[22] of the *Liber* does not count in itself as a proof of his knowledge of this text, in so far as the same doctrine and terminology is found also in the pseudo-*Theology*, paralleling a passage of V 2[11] where Plotinus is speaking about the One as ὑπερπλήρης.⁶⁶ Not only so, but one can confidently say that the source of Ibn Sīnā's account of the opinion of the *ḥukamā'* about the First Principle as *fawqa al-tamām* is precisely the passage of the pseudo-*Theology*. The identity the "wise men" stated, according to Ibn Sīnā, between the "perfect" and the intelligible world - Intellect⁶⁷ is explicitly uttered in the passage of the pseudo-*Theology*.⁶⁸ This detail, which is peculiar to the pseudo-*Theology* in so far as it appears in a passage which has no correspondent in Greek, makes clear that the paraphrase of V 2[11] is the source of Ibn Sīnā's statement. What is more intriguing is the fact that in the next sentence he proceeds to establish a threefold hierarchy —the principle which is perfect; the *sufficiens* (*al-muktafī*); the *insufficiens* (*al-nāqīs*)— which is not present as such in the passage of the pseudo-*Theology*, but is still attributed by Ibn Sīnā to the *ḥukamā'* mentioned at the beginning of this section:

wa-ḡa'alū dūna l-tamāmi šay'ayni: al-muktafīya wa-l-nāqīša.

Id autem quod est infra perfectum posuerunt duo, scilicet sufficiens et insufficientes.⁶⁹

True, this hierarchy can be derived, in principle, from the passage of the pseudo-*Theology* as well,⁷⁰ but Ibn Sīnā's terminology and thought is more akin to the above-mentioned proposition 21[22] of the *Liber de Causis*. Echoing Proclus' threefold hierarchy ὑπερπλήρης - πλήρης - ἐλλείπων,⁷¹ the author of the *Liber de Causis* states that the absolute transcendence of the First Cause depends upon the fact that it is not only perfect, but above perfection. In fact, it does not simply transcend what is imperfect —*diminutum, nāqīs*—, but also what is perfect —*completum, tām*—, and consequently it is *supra completum, fawqa al-tamām*.⁷² The reason for this has been given immediately before:

66 V 2[11], 1.7-9: ὃν γὰρ τέλειον τῷ μηδὲν ζῆτεῖν μηδὲ ἔχειν μηδὲ δεῖσθαι οἷον ὑπερρῶν καὶ τὸ ὑπερπλήρες αὐτοῦ ποιοῖκεν ἄλλο. This text gives rise in the Arabic paraphrase to the following passage: «I say too that the absolute One is above completeness and perfection (*fawqa al-tamām wa-l-kamāl*). The sensible world is defective (*nāqīs*) because it is originated from the complete thing (*al-šay' al-tām*), which is mind; mind is complete and perfect because it is originated from the true absolute One, which is above completeness», Badawī, *Aflūṭūn 'inda l-'Arab*, p. 134.16-135.2; Lewis' translation (quoted above, n. 3), p. 291.

67 See above, n. 64. The relevant part of Ibn Sīnā's statement, in the Arabic, is p. 189.1: *wa-ḡa'alū martabata l-tāmāmi li-'aqlin mina l-'uqūli al-mufāriqati.*

68 See above, n. 66. I owe to Ahmed Hasnaoui the remark that in the entire chapter Ibn Sīnā does not indicate by the term *ḥukamā'* a specific "group" of thinkers, but the thinkers or authors in general, without committing himself to accept or refuse the doctrines quoted.

69 IV 3, Arabic: p. 189.4; Latin: p. 216.35-36. What follows in Ibn Sīnā's sentence counts as an explanation of his own: «Sufficiens (*al-muktafī*) est id cui attributum est aliquid per quod acquisitum est ei complementum sui in seipso. Insufficiens (*al-nāqīs*) vero absolute est id quod eget alio quod attribuat sibi completionem post completionem» (pp. 216.36-217.39; Arabic: p. 189.4-6).

70 See n. 66.

71 *El. th.* 131, p. 116.18-23 Dodds: οὐτε γὰρ τὸ ἐλλείπων οἰκεῖον τοῖς θεοῖς οὐτε τὸ πλήρες μόνον. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐλλείπων πᾶν ἀτελὲς ὑπάρχει, καὶ ἄλλο τέλειον ποιεῖν, αὐτὸ μὴ τέλειον ὑπάρχον, ἀμήχανον· τὸ δὲ πλήρες αὐτάρκες μόνον, οὐπὼ δὲ εἰς μετάδοσιν ἔτοιμον. ὑπερπλήρες ἄρα εἶναι δεῖ τὸ πληρωτικὸν ἄλλων καὶ εἰς ἄλλα διατεῖνον τὰς ἑαυτοῦ χορηγίας.

72 *Liber de Causis*, prop. 21[22], p. 99.8-9 Bardenhewer, p. 22.14-23.1 Badawī.

wa-dālika annahū lā yalīqu bi-hā l-nuqṣānu wa-lā l-tāmāmu waḥdahū li-anna l-nāqiṣa ḡayru tāmmin wa-lā yaqdaru an yaf'ala fi 'lan tāmman id kāna nāqiṣan wa-l-tāmmu 'indanā wa-in kāna muktafiyan bi-nafsihī fa-innahū lā yaqdaru 'alā ibdā'i šay'in āhara wa-lā an yufīda 'an nafsihī šay'an al-batta.

For neither deficiency nor mere perfection is appropriate to Him because the deficient is imperfect and unable to effect a perfect act since it is deficient. The perfect, in our view, although sufficient in itself, is unable to originate another thing and to pour forth anything from itself at all (transl. Taylor).⁷³

This is the passage which seems to lie in the background of Ibn Sīnā's threefold hierarchy of *fawqa al-tamām* —namely, the *nesesse esse*—, *al-tāmm*, *al-muktafī* —namely, Intellect and the intelligible world— and *al-nāqiṣ* —which is the world of coming-to-be and passing away. Not only because of the terminology —the term *muktafī* appears in the *De causis* passage, but not in the one from the pseudo-*Theology*—, but also because of the emphasis put on the hierarchy of the three levels, which lacks in the passage of the pseudo-*Theology* and counts, on the contrary, as the very focus of the passage of the *De causis*. There is a shift in Ibn Sīnā's terminology, because when the *nesesse esse* is said to be *fawqa al-tamām*, Intellect is called *al-tāmm*; on the other hand, when he mentions the two subordinate degrees *al-muktafī* and *al-nāqiṣ*, the first degree (the *nesesse esse*) is called simply *al-tāmm*. This means that he feels free to rework in his own way the doctrine he is gleaning from his sources. But this does not prevent this passage from counting as an interesting case in point. In fact, if the analysis I have made is correct, Ibn Sīnā is echoing *both* the pseudo-*Theology* and the *Liber de Causis* under the common heading of the “opinion of the *ḥukamā*”. He deals with both the Neoplatonic texts, the pseudo-*Theology* and the *De causis*, as with one and the same source, even though he subdivision of what comes after the first into the two degrees *al-muktafī* and *al-nāqiṣ* does not come from the passage of the pseudo-*Theology*, but from the *Liber de Causis*. Ibn Sīnā credits also with this doctrine the *ḥukamā*' he mentioned at the beginning of this passage.

Something similar happens also in the passage from VIII 6 I began with. After having claimed that the *nesesse esse* is above perfection⁷⁴ —a claim which in all likelihood traces back to the same source as the one of the passage from IV 3 we have just discussed, namely, the pseudo-*Theology*—, Ibn Sīnā says:

wa-wāḡibu l-wuḡūdi bi-dātihī ḡayrun maḥḍun, wa-l-ḡayru bi-l-ḡumlati huwa mā yatašawwaquhū kullu šay'in wa-mā yatašawwaquhū kullu šay'in huwa l-wuḡūdu, aw kāmalu l-wuḡūdi min bābi l-wuḡūdi.

Nesesse esse per se est bonitas pura, et bonitatem desiderat omnino quicquid est; id autem quod desiderat omnis res est esse et perfectio esse, inquantum est esse.⁷⁵

73 *Liber de Causis*, prop. 21[22], p. 99.4-8 Bardenhewer, p. 22.14-23.1 Badawī. Transl. Taylor, *The Liber de Causis (Kalām fī maḥḍ al-ḡayr)*. A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism, p. 318. The source of this passage is Proclus' passage quoted above, n. 71.

74 See above, n. 62.

75 VIII 6, Arabic: p. 355.11-12; Latin: p. 412.62-64.

It is possible that this is the passage Herbert Davidson has in mind when he claims that the denomination *al-ḥayr al-mahd* (*bonitas pura*) for the First Principle shows that Ibn Sīnā is aware at least of the title of the Arabic *Liber de Causis*.⁷⁶ But, even if one wants to leave aside the terminology, this passage contains an evident echo of proposition 22[23] of the *De causis*, where, in order to support the claim that the providence of the First Principle is more universal than the one of Intellect, the author argues that everything is longing for the good, which comes from the First Principle alone, whereas not everything is longing for thought, which comes from Intellect. This doctrine is directly derived from Proclus' proposition 134, which the author of the *Liber de Causis* is quoting almost literally.⁷⁷ In particular, the passage which inspires Ibn Sīnā's statement seems to be the following:

*wa-dālika innahū laysa kullu šay'in yaštāqu ilā l-'aqli wa-lā yahrišu 'alā naylihī wa-l-ašyā' u kulluhā taštāqu ilā l-ḥayri mina l-awwali*⁷⁸ *wa-tahrišu 'alā naylihī ḥiršan.*

For not every thing yearns for the intelligence and is eager to attain it, but all things do yearn for the First Good and are avidly eager to attain Him (transl. Taylor).⁷⁹

Once again, it seems fair to conclude that this passage lies in the background of Ibn Sīnā's statement quoted above. But if so, once again he is adding to the topic of the First Principle as *fawqa al-tamām*—coming in all likelihood from the pseudo-*Theology*—an echo from the *Liber de Causis*. More important, once again Ibn Sīnā is conflating his two Neoplatonic sources and keeps silent about any distinction whatsoever among them, as if they were a part of one and the same corpus of doctrines inherited by the “wise men” of the past.

(iv) VIII 7, p. 365.4-7 (p. 426, 50-56) — In this passage Ibn Sīnā outlines the hierarchy of the intelligibles, claiming that the first intelligible reality gushes forth from the First Principle without any intermediation, *bi-lā wāsiṭa*, and the subsequent intelligibles proceed from the First Principle through a mediation, *bi-tawassut*. The secondary intelligibles result from the impression (*irtisām*, *impressio*) in one and the same reality—which is presumably the intellectual substance of each sphere—but there is a hierarchy of causal power among them.⁸⁰

76 H.A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna & Averroes, on Intellect: their cosmologies, theories of the active intellect & theories of human intellect*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., 1992, p. 164.

77 *El. th.* 134, p. 118.29-32 Dodds: καὶ γὰρ τὰ μὴ νοοῦντα προνοεῖσθαι βούληται καὶ ἀγαθοῦ νου μεταλαγχάνειν· τοῦτο δὲ διότι νοῦ μὲν οὐ πάντα ἐφίεται, οὐδὲ οἷς μετασχεῖν δυνατόν, τοῦ δὲ ἀγαθοῦ πάντα ἐφίεται καὶ σπεύδει τυχεῖν.

78 The words *mina l-awwali* which appear both in Bardenhewer and Badawī editions are an addition by Bardenhewer, maybe on the basis of the Latin translation. The correct reading, according to Taylor's edition, *The Liber de Causis (Kalām fī mahd al-ḥayr). A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism*, p. 238.19, is *ilā al-ḥayr al-awwal*. The Latin text has «bonitatem ex primo»: see Patin, p. 238.19 (quoted above, n. 25).

79 *Liber de Causis*, prop. 22[23], p. 101.7-9 Bardenhewer; p. 23.15-24.1 Badawī. Transl. Taylor, *The Liber de Causis (Kalām fī mahd al-ḥayr). A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism*, p. 320. Marc Geoffroy called my attention to the *K. al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād*, I, 12, where Ibn Sīnā conflates the topic of the universal desire of good, coming from this passage of the *De causis* (if my analysis is correct) and the topic of the first principle as the final cause of the whole universe, coming from Book *Lambda* of the *Metaphysics*. I would like to thank very much Marc Geoffroy for having allowed me to read his unpublished French translation of this part of the *K. al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād*: Avicenne. *Le principe et le retour*, trad. et commentaire par M. Geoffroy, forthcoming.

80 VIII 7, Arabic: p. 365.4-7; Latin: p. 426, 50-56: «De universitate igitur intellectuum quiddam est intellectum (*ma'qūl*) cuius primus est principium nullo mediante (*bi-lā wāsiṭa*), sed fluit esse eius ab eo principaliter, et quiddam est intellectum, cuius primus est principium aliquo mediante (*bi-tawassut*), et esse fluit ab eo secundario, et similiter est dispositio de esse illorum intellectuum; quamvis enim eorum impressio sit in una re eorum, tamen quaedam sunt prius et posterius secundum ordinem causae et causati».

The derivation of Intellect from the First Principle *bi-lā tawassuṭ* and of everything else through the mediation of Intellect is a typical doctrine of the Arabic Plotinus, which was endorsed, in turn, by the author of the *Liber de Causis*.⁸¹ Ibn Sīnā is clearly aware of this typical feature of the Arabic Plotinus, even though he transforms it and puts it in the service of his own reasoning about the status of the intelligibles within the divine mind: he is in fact dealing here with the *intellecta* as they are first *in essentia primi* and secondarily in the subsequent separate principles. No doubt that the distinction between the immediate and mediate derivation from the *essentia primi* (*bi-lā wāṣiṭa* - *bi-tawassuṭ*) comes from the Arabic Plotinus. As a matter of fact, the topic of the creation of Intellect *bi-lā tawassuṭ* and of everything else *bi-tawassuṭ al-'aql* counts as an interpretation of a doctrine which is at one and the same time crucial for Plotinus, and abandoned by later Neoplatonists like Proclus, i.e., the definition of Intellect as the ἄγαλμα τὸ πρῶτον of the One and the doctrine of its immediate derivation from the One itself. The Arabic translation-paraphrase constantly interprets this relationship as the divine creation of Intellect without any intermediate, and creation of everything else through the mediation of Intellect. This recurrent *topos* of the Arabic Plotinus lies in the background of Ibn Sīnā's development. However, he combines the doctrine of the Arabic Plotinus with the idea of a hierarchy of intelligibles, some of which are prior to others and more powerful than others, depending upon their immediate or mediate derivation from the First Principle. This topic does not come from the Arabic Plotinus, in so far as it traces back ultimately to the Proclean doctrine of the different rank of the intelligible forms according to the hierarchical degree of the divine intellects they are intelligized by. To be more precise, Ibn Sīnā's claim recalls the doctrine of propositions 4 and 4[5] of the the *Liber de Causis*.

After having endorsed —not without modifying it— Proclus' thesis of the primacy of being among the suprasensible principles (*El. th.* 138), the author of the *Liber* parts company with Proclus and makes Intellect to be the first and immediate product of the First Cause:⁸² a non-Proclean move indeed, which is inspired in all likelihood by the Arabic Plotinus. At this point, he comes back to the *Elements of theology*, but not to prop. 138, and no longer in terms of literal quotation. He takes in fact his inspiration either in prop. 177 (more likely) or in prop. 170, or again in prop. 180 —the three main places where Proclus compares the status of εἶδη when considered in the superior and inferior intellects— and maintains that in the first created Intellect the intelligible forms are wider and more universal, whereas in the intellects of lower degree they are less universal.⁸³ As a consequence of this difference in universality, the higher intellects produce stable and subsistent forms, whereas the inferior intellects produce declining

81 For the passages proving the dependence of the *Liber de Causis* upon the Arabic Plotinus on this issue, see my «La doctrine de la création 'mediante intelligentia' dans le *Liber de Causis* et dans ses sources», in *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 76 (1992), p. 209-233.

82 *Liber de Causis*, prop.4, p. 66.1-2 Bardenhewer, p. 6.14-15 Badawī: «Quod est quia omne quod ex eo sequitur causam primam est *achili* id est intelligentia completa et ultima in potentia et reliquis bonitatibus », Pattin, p. 143.54-57.

83 *Liber de Causis*, prop.4, p. 66.2-5 Bardenhewer, pp. 6.15-7.1 Badawī: «Et formae intellectibiles in ipso sunt latiores et vehementius universales. Et quod ex eo est inferius est intelligentia iterum, verumtamen est sub illa intelligentia in complemento et virtute et bonitatibus. Et non sunt formae intellectibiles in illa ita dilatatae sicut est earum latitudo in illa intelligentia», Pattin, p. 143.58-64.

forms, like souls: in fact, soul comes out *ex impressione intelligentiae secundae quae sequitur esse creatum inferius*.⁸⁴

When he claims that among the intelligibles some derive from the First Principle without any intermediation and some through a mediation, and that their "impression" in the intellectual substance which receives them creates a hierarchy (*quaedam sunt prius et posterius secundum ordinem causae et causati*), Ibn Sīnā seems to be aware of both his Neoplatonic sources: the Arabic Plotinus as for the topic of immediacy-mediation with respect to the First Principle, and the *Liber de Causis* as for the one of the hierarchy among intelligibles. Once again, Ibn Sīnā's use of his sources is remarkably free both from the viewpoint of doctrine and lexic. From the viewpoint of doctrine, both the topic of derivation *bi-lā tawassuṭ - bi-tawassuṭ al-'aql* and of the hierarchy among intelligibles are reworked according to his own ideas and needs. From the viewpoint of terminology, he endorses the idea of "impression", not the term itself (*irtisām* in Ibn Sīnā's passage, *aṭar* in the *Liber de Causis*).

Dimitri Gutas called attention to the fact that Ibn Sīnā «was born and raised in the Eastern parts of the Islamic Empire where Kindī's tradition was most flourishing (...); he pursued his "graduate" studies in the very library in which 'Āmiṅ most likely composed and probably deposited his *On the Afterlife*».⁸⁵ The latter treatise is precisely the work in which the earliest quotations from the *Liber de Causis* are found.⁸⁶ The passages analysed create a drift towards the conclusion that Ibn Sīnā was acquainted with the *Liber de Causis*, a text which was by no means ignored in his cultural context.

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84 *Liber de Causis*, prop.4[5], p. 67.4-7 Bardenhewer, p. 7.9-11 Badawī: «Intelligentiae superiores primae, quae sequuntur causam primam, imprimunt formas secundas stantes, quae non destruuntur ita ut sit necessarium iterare eas vice alia. Intelligentiae autem secundae imprimunt formas declines, separabiles, sicut est anima». As stated by Taylor, *The Liber de Causis (Kalām fī maḥd al-ḥayr)*. A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism, p. 156, the word «secundas», Pattin, p. 145.87, is a misreading whose Arabic antecedent *al-ṭānīya* was probably in the Arabic model of the Latin translator, instead of the correct *al-ṭābita*, which is in the Arabic both of Bardenhewer and Badawī editions.

85 Gutas, Aricenna and the Aristotelian Tradition (quoted above, n. 14), p. 250.

86 See above, n. 22.