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Master's Thesis of Jaewook Kwak

Reading *Republic* in al-Andalus as
an Aristotelian

– A Critical Reading of Averroes's
Commentary on Plato's "Republic" –

알 안달루스에서 국가를
아리스토텔레스주의자로서 읽는다는 것

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Graduate School of Humanities
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Abstract

Ibn Rushd or Averroes left only one commentary on Plato, *Commentary on Plato's "Republic."* Many studies on the commentary have focused on how themes of the *Republic* get adapted in the Islamic contexts of the commentator. Such an approach presupposes Averroes as a sincere transmitter of Plato to the Arabic audience. However, Averroes wrote the commentary as a substitute for a commentary on Aristotle's *Politics*, whose translation was absent in the Arabic world. Indeed, Aristotelian transformations manifest throughout the commentary not only in purpose but also in method and material. This study aims to define the character of Averroes's interpretation of Plato and the nature of Averroes's Aristotelianism through a joint effort of historical survey and philosophical analysis. The historical study of Averroes's predecessors will give us enough historical context. The traditions before Averroes resulted in the marginalization of Plato in favor of Aristotle. Thus, Averroes may have felt natural about his Aristotelian interpretation of Plato.

On the other hand, the philosophical analysis will identify the distinctive feature of Averroes's Aristotelianism, the supremacy of theoretical philosophy over a practical one. Such an investigation reaffirms the hegemonic influence of Aristotle on the philosophy in the Islamic world, yet also argues for pluralities of Aristotelian programs in the Islamic world. It also disillusiones the modern expectation towards Averroes as a prototype of modern enlightenment thinkers, thereby promoting further research into philosophers in the Islamic world after Averroes.

Keywords: Plato, Aristotle, Ibn Rushd, Averroes, Islam, Philosophy
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Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2. The Commentary in its Contexts	6
Chapter 3. Plato's <i>Republic</i> in Averroes's Hands.....	12
Chapter 4. Plato Without Dialectics	17
Chapter 5. <i>Republic</i> without the Idea of the Good.....	25
Chapter 6. The Predecessors of Averroes.....	42
Chapter 7. Averroes's Rationalism Reconsidered	54
Chapter 8. Conclusion.....	63
Bibliography	66
Abstract in Korean	68

Chapter 1. Introduction

This study aims to define the character of Averroes's interpretation of Plato in his *Commentary on Plato's "Republic."* The commentary has some attractive features. First, it is the only commentarial work on Plato by Averroes who primarily focused on Aristotle. One may wonder how the themes of Plato's *Republic*, which is essentially foreign to the Islamic world and different from Aristotle's, get adapted, refuted, and transformed in the alien context.

Indeed, much research have been conducted on this issue. For example, the first English translator, E.I.J. Rosenthal, and Shlomo Pines examined how Averroes arranged the relationship between the Platonic ideal city and the Muslim community, though from a different viewpoint.¹ Many have also devoted their attention to more specific themes of the *Republic*, such as music, poetry, and women, all of which have different treatments in Plato's dialogue and Muslim cultures.²

Such studies, however, presuppose that Averroes is a trustworthy transmitter of Plato to the Islamic world. This presupposition is partially correct but needs examination. For example, Averroes says he wrote a commentary on Plato's *Republic* instead of Aristotle's *Politics* because the latter was not translated into Arabic.³ It may sound odd. While *Republic* does contain material that can be

¹ See E.I.J. Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics in the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 15, no.2 (1953):246-78., and Shlomo Pines, "Notes on Averroes's Political Teaching", Chap. 6 in *Plato's Republic in the Islamic context: new perspectives on Averroes's commentary*, ed. Alexander Orwin, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2022).

² See Douglas Kries, "Music, Poetry, and Politics in Averroes's *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*" and Catarina Belo, "Averroes on Family and Property in the *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*," Chap. 5 in *Plato's Republic in the Islamic context: new perspectives on Averroes's commentary*, ed. Alexander Orwin, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2022).

³ "Commentary on Plato's "Republic," 22.

compared with *Politics*, it is never meant to be a treatise solely on the issue of political science.

Moreover, it is well known that Plato and Aristotle have very different theoretical approaches. The subsequent ambitious statement by Averroes that he will extract only demonstrative aspects of the *Republic* also makes readers acknowledge that there is something odd in this commentary since there are not many demonstrations in *Republic*. Finally, the body of the commentary displays frequent abridgment, omission, and even Aristotelian replacement or supplement of Plato's original account. Thus, this commentary is Aristotelian in its purpose, form, and content. This means that *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* cannot serve as a medium through which modern readers can learn about Plato with the help of Averroes, unlike the medieval or early modern Jewish and Christian readership.⁴

Thus, Averroes transmits Plato, albeit with Aristotelian tendencies. Understanding the character of Averroes's interpretation of Plato requires some explanation of these Aristotelian additions. And that is what this study tries to focus on. This explanation demands different answers to two questions. (1) How does Averroes achieve Aristotelian transformations of the *Republic* in his commentary? And (2) how should we understand his efforts?

In Chapters 2 to 5, we will try to answer the first question. In Chapter 2, we will briefly introduce Averroes and his commentary. In Chapter 3, before describing the Aristotelian transformations in detail, we investigate the edition of the *Republic* on

⁴ Alexander Green notes that it was through Ibn Rushd's commentary translated by Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles in 1320 that Jewish intellectual grasped the content of Platos' Republic for the first time. See Alexander Green, "Three Readings of Averroes's Commentary on Plato's "Republic" in Medieval Jewish Thought," Chap. 13 in *Plato's Republic in the Islamic context: new perspectives on Averroes's commentary*, ed. Alexander Orwin, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2022), 277. For the case in Christendom, see Michael Engel, "The Two Hebrew-into-Latin Translations of Averroes's *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*: Method, Motivation, and Context," Chap. 14 in the same anthology.

which Averroes conducted his commentarial project. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, we finally explore Aristotelian transformations of the *Republic* in method and material.

From Chapter 6, we will try to answer the second question: how should we understand Averroes's interpretation of Plato? This study first offers a historical approach. We argue that there are meaningful historical contexts that would make Averroes's choice natural. These contexts range from late Greek and Roman antiquity to Alfarabi. Of course, such a survey of the wide range would not have been possible without the enormous former research done by others, including George E. Karamanolis and Geoffrey James Moseley, to whom I am greatly indebted in this study. Karamanolis studied the history of Platonists writing commentaries on Aristotle's works.⁵ Moseley studied the transmission process of Plato into the Arabic world and offered great insight into the intellectual landscape of the Mediterranean in late antiquity.⁶

Such a historical survey will let us know that there exist historical contexts that eventually result in the marginalization of Plato and thus justify Averroes's choice in part. However, even if we supply the commentary with historical contexts, we still need to define the character of Averroes's interpretation while not taking the risk of trivializing the commentary as a banal historical instance. In Chapter 7, we try to clarify the nature of Averroes's Aristotelianism to evade this risk. We will argue that Averroes's novelty consists not in going beyond Aristotle but in going further Aristotelian. Butterworth's insight on Averroes's tendency to favor the

⁵ George E. Karamanolis, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement?: Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).

⁶ Geoffrey James Moseley, "Plato Arabus: On the Arabic Transmission of Plato's Dialogues. Texts and Studies." (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2017). <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/plato-arabus-on-arabic-transmission-platos/docview/2023036520/se-2>

theoretical part of Aristotle over the practical one will be of great help.⁷

In short, this study tries to evade both Scylla and Charybdis to define the character of Averroes's Aristotelianism in his commentary on Plato. Scylla is a tendency to view any interpretative anomalies in the commentary as Averroes's personal faults. Charybdis is a tendency to view any features of the commentary as a historical instance while evading Scylla. The total escape from both risks is achieved through a conjunction of historical survey and philosophical analysis. In other words, this study becomes distinct in connecting Butterworth's philosophical insights with later historical research to define the character of Averroes's only commentary on Plato.

Starting as a study on Averroes's understanding of Plato, this study then finishes as a study on Averroes's Aristotelianism. In this regard, this study is another instance confirming the hegemonic influence of Aristotle on the history of philosophy in the Islamic world. Yet, the study will also reveal that the question of what Aristotelianism is remains open, as shown by the contrast between Alfarabi and Averroes in Chapter 6.

Furthermore, understanding the Aristotelianism of Averroes may promote further studies into the history of philosophy in the Islamic world beyond Averroes. A deeper study of Averroes's Aristotelianism may help to disillusion the modern expectation toward Averroes. We easily equate premodern rationalism with a modern one advocating for free thinkers and scientific progress. In Chapter 7, we will see why that is not always the case. We have to expect less from Averroes and slowly follow the path the philosophy in the Islamic world took.

⁷ Charles E. Butterworth, *Philosophy, Ethics, and Virtuous Rule: A Study of Averroes' Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1986), 39.

I want to outline a few principles before concluding the introduction. Faced with incomprehensible passages or structures, one may naturally expect a hidden meaning beyond his or her grasp. This is the temptation of esoteric reading.⁸ According to this viewpoint, the author intentionally left some parts of his text incomprehensible to evade the risks of persecution by the unqualified multitude. Though it is not necessarily destined to be wrong, I would like to hold fast to an exoteric reading. This is because, as it will become apparent in later chapters, one can find sufficient answers to the commentary's anomalies by concentrating on exoteric aspects of the commentary.

I will rely on Ralph Lerner's translation of *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* because his English translation seems more respected than Rosenthal's one, while the title by Rosenthal is still more popular.⁹ For primary sources with an independent pagination method, I will cite them using such a method rather than the page number in the printed version. These include *Commentary on Plato's "Republic,"* Plato's *Stateman*, *Timaeus*, and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

⁸ Ralph Lerner, the second English translator of the commentary, left such a comment of esoteric affinity in his introduction: "I conclude that Averroes is-and deserves to be regarded as-the faithful companion of Plato," Averroes, *Averroes on Plato's "Republic."* trans. Ralph Lerner. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), xxviii. For recent work in this direction, see Joshua Parens, "Natural Perfection or Divine Fiat" in Chap. 11 in *Plato's Republic in the Islamic context: new perspectives on Averroes's commentary*, ed. Alexander Orwin. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2022

⁹ Geoffrey James Moseley, "Plato Arabus: On the Arabic Transmission of Plato's Dialogues. Texts and Studies." (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2017), 12. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/plato-arabus-on-arabic-transmission-platos/docview/2023036520/se-2>

Chapter 2 The Commentary in its Contexts

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will first present an overview of the *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* in its context. There is no doubt that the commentary is not so familiar to many readers. Moreover, readers may not be so familiar with Averroes's commentarial project. Thus, it seems fitting that we start by introducing the author, Averroes, the context of his commentarial project, and the features of the commentary in question. I will also outline the distinctive moments where the commentary goes differently from Plato's original. More substantial problems will be dealt with in the following chapters.

2.2. The Commentator and His Commentarial Project

Abu'l-Walīd Ibn Rushd(1126-1198), also known as Averroes in the Western world, was an Islamic jurist and a physician in the Almohad court, but most famous for his philosophical enterprise, including several individual treatises and a collection of commentaries on the whole works of Aristotle except *Politics*. He was born in Cordova in 1126 in an established family in Māliki jurisprudence. He, too, became a Māliki jurist and was later appointed as Cordoba's chief judge. It was not until 1169 when Averroes was introduced to the caliph, Abū Ya'qūb Yūsūf, by Ibn Ṭufayl, who was a close friend of Averroes and himself a prominent philosopher as the author of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, that his prolific philosophical career set in motion. It is said that the caliph questioned whether heaven is eternal or created in time according to philosophers, and Averroes answered with acumen only after he

recognized that the caliph questioned out of sincere philosophical interests.¹⁰

From then, he started his famous commentarial collection on the Aristotelian corpus. The collection consists of three different types of commentary; There are large ones which are called tafsīr and provide almost line-by-line analysis; there are also short ones which are called jāwami and serve as mere paraphrases or epitomes; between those two extremes, there exist middle or intermediate (sharh) ones, which does not provide line-by-line analysis but provides a more dense explanation than an epitome. It is well known that Averroes conducted his commentarial work, sometimes even using all of these three types on some of Aristotle's works, including *De Anima*, about which he left a notorious thesis of the single human intellect which later triggered a series of theological and philosophical debates across the Christendom. Through this thesis, Averroes argued that, in his view, the Aristotelian human intellect must be one and independent from individual humans. Others disagreed with this interpretation because its implications could threaten the doctrine of immortality shared across major religions of the medieval Mediterranean world.¹¹

2.3. Commentary on Plato's "Republic."

Commentary on Plato's "Republic," which survives only in Hebrew translation and subsequent ones on this Hebrew translation, is one of Averroes's commentarial collections.¹² Averroes commented on Plato's *Republic*, not on Aristotle's *Politics*

¹⁰ Majid Fakhry, *Averroes: His Life, Works, and Influence*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 2.

¹¹ For a brief review of the case in Christendom, see *Ibid.*, 161.

¹² For details about the Hebrew translation, see Alexander Green, "Three Readings of Averroes's *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* in Medieval Jewish Thought," Chap. 13 in *Plato's Republic in the Islamic context: new perspectives on Averroes's commentary*, ed. Alexander Orwin, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2022).

“since Aristotle’s book on governance has not yet fallen into our hands”¹³ So, Plato’s *Republic* was chosen as a substitute for *Politics*, whose copy was absent to Averroes and his fellow Muslims. This substitution implies at least two things. First, to Averroes, *Republic* was viewed as a text interchangeable with *Politics*. Averroes divides practical science into two parts; (1) “In the first part, the habits and volitional actions and conduct are treated generally,” so it is the more theoretical part of the practical science (2) “In the second part is made on how these habits are established in the souls,” so it is the practical part of the practical science.¹⁴ For him, the theoretical part of practical philosophy is the issue of *Nicomachean Ethics*, whereas the second, more practical part of practical philosophy is the issue of *Politics* or *Republic*. Even though one may agree with Averroes on the neat division of practical science and the correspondence of each part with different Aristotelian treatises, one may still wonder whether this distinction works with Plato’s *Republic*. It seems controversial to argue that *Republic* only or mainly covers the second part of the proposed division for practical science.

Second, the reason Averroes presents for the substitution also implies that whereas the copy of *Politics* was absent from him, the copy of *Republic* was in his hands. Certainly, if he did not have any copy of *Republic*, he would not have decided to use it as a substitute for *Politics*. However, the exact nature of this copy is highly uncertain, which we will delve into in the next chapter.

In the sense that *Commentary on Plato’s “Republic”* is a substitution for *Commentary on Aristotle’s Politics*, this commentary from the start transplants *Republic* into an alien context, the Aristotelian practical science. How would

¹³ *Commentary on Plato’s “Republic,”* 22.

¹⁴ *Commentary on Plato’s “Republic,”* 21.

Plato's original content go along with the unintended Aristotelian context? In an overview, the gap may not look that wide. *Commentary on Plato's "Republic,"* consisting of three treatises, seems to cover ten books of the original *Republic*.

The first treatise roughly covers Book 1 to Book 5 of Plato's original *Republic*. It mainly concentrates on how the ideal city proposed by Socrates in the original comes into being and structures itself. Book 1 to Book 5 of *Republic*, however, treats not only issues of the ideal city but also the controversial issue of the nature of justice. Socrates proposed the ideal city as the means to understand the nature of justice.¹⁵ The commentary presents only a brief explication of the nature of justice and omits most of its dialectical contents.¹⁶ The famous debate in Book 1 between Thrasymachus and Socrates, one of the reasons why *Republic* is famous, is not treated in any meaningful volume in *Commentary on Plato's "Republic."* Instead, *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* focuses on the scientific, demonstrative part of the *Republic*.¹⁷ This may seem unusual since Plato's *Republic* was written before Aristotle invented or discovered the system of demonstration. Thus, the focus of *Republic* cannot be something about demonstration but dialectics.

The second treatise covers how to educate guardians with virtues who were presumed to guard and rule the ideal city. This issue is present in Book 6 and Book 7 of Plato's original. While the detailed explication of the education method and

¹⁵ "Perhaps, then, there is more justice in the larger thing, and it will be easier to learn what it is. So, if you're willing, let's first find out what sort of the thing justice is in a city and afterwards look for it in the individual, observing the ways in which the smaller is similar to the larger," *Republic*, 368e-369a.

¹⁶ "This is the very justice that Plato investigated in the first book of this book and explained in the fourth book. It is nothing more than that every human in the city do the work that is his by nature in the best way that he possibly can," *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*, 23.

¹⁷ "The intention of this treatise is [to abstract] such scientific arguments attributable to Plato as are contained in the *Republic* by eliminating the dialectical arguments from it," *Commentary on Plato's "Republic,"* 21.

curriculum remains within Plato's account with frequent revisions, the more theoretical part of Books 6 and 7, especially about the idea of good, is omitted and replaced with the Aristotelian account of the nature of virtues, which one may read in *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹⁸ This is where Averroes most explicitly makes his commentary on Plato, one with a Platonic body and Aristotelian spirit. In Chapter 5, we will analyze the second treatise focusing on how Averroes juxtaposes Platonic details with Aristotelian theory.

The final one, the third treatise, may be said to treat the rest of the *Republic*. It mostly concentrates on Plato's account of non-virtuous regimes and how each form of regime degenerates into other lesser forms.¹⁹ Still, a significant omission takes place here too. Averroes reject any serious discussion on the myth present in Book 10. According to him, the myth is "of no account, for the virtues that come about from them are not true virtues."²⁰ This justification of omission, however, sounds question-begging because Plato himself would not have thought such a myth could provide genuine virtues. He must have considered the other benefit when he decided to present a myth at the end of *Republic*, his magnum opus. One may comment that the same logic for omitting the dialectics in the first treatise goes again for the myth of the afterlife in Book 10 in the third treatise. Averroes certainly wants to leave out any non-demonstrative content in *Republic*.

¹⁸ See *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a13-17, for example.

¹⁹ It is well noted by many that the account of regime changes in the final treatise refer to not only Plato's account but also to Alfarabi's. Though not in conflict with Plato's original, Farabian account adds details on so-called vile regimes. Because of this, the third treatise present more non-virtuous regimes than the original. See Ralph Lerner's comments to *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*, 81.13 and 81.22.

²⁰ *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*, 105.

2.4. Conclusion

The brief overview of the commentary above would be enough for readers to have the impression that there is much divergence from the original. Not only abridgment and omission but the shift in focus to demonstrative part and replacement also are worth attention. Yet, in which way should such a divergence be understood? Before any interpretative efforts, one may question the nature of the edition in Averroes's hands. It may be the fault of the copy upon which Averroes conducted a commentarial job, not the fault of the commentator himself. Thus, we will delve into the copy issue in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 Plato's *Republic* in Averroes's Hands.

3.1. Introduction

As we have seen, there are several distinctive features of *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* compared to the original. Those may reflect either Averroes's interpretative intention or the lasting influence of the copy on which the commentator based his commentarial project. Thus, we must answer the two following questions. Which copy did Averroes use as the reference for *Republic*? And what are the features of such a copy? We will first introduce the established hypothetical agreement on Averroes's source and how it got more materialized by Geoffrey James Moseley's research, despite some limitations. And then, we will consider its implications.

3.2. The Hypothetical Agreement on Averroes's Source

Averroes does not mention the exact source of the *Republic*. He only says that he has a copy of *Republic* in whichever form instead of *Politics*. It is almost certain that Averroes did not have access to any Arabic translation of *Republic* because no evidence of a full Arabic translation of it has been discovered yet. Still, there has been a common hypothetical agreement among scholars that Averroes must have written his commentary based on the Galenic synopsis of the *Republic*.²¹ E.I.J. Rosenthal, the first translator of the commentary in English, agrees with this hypothesis, considering that (1) there existed a translation of Galen's epitome by Hunayn b. Ishāq in the Arabic world, and (2) Averroes mentions and criticizes

²¹ For a more complete history on this issue, see Geoffrey James Moseley, "Plato Arabus: On the Arabic Transmission of Plato's Dialogues. Texts and Studies." (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2017), 173-7. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/plato-arabus-on-arabic-transmission-platos/docview/2023036520/se-2>

Galen's understanding of Plato in his commentary.²²

But it has remained hypothetical because the core material evidence, Galen's epitome with its Arabic translation, by which one can ascertain that it was the very source Averroes relied on, has too, just like the Arabic original of Averroes's commentary on *Republic*, disappeared in the course of history.

However, Moseley has argued in his dissertation on *Plato Arabus* that material evidence exists that Averroes relied on Galen's synopsis translated by Ḥunayn b. Ishāq.²³ A fragment in the *Risāla fī l-ṭibb wa-l-aḥdāt al-naḥsāniyya* by the physician Abū Sa'īd 'Ubaydallāh ibn Buḥtīshū' has some parallels with the Averroes's Commentary as shown below.²⁴

Republic	Arabic Fragment (apud b. Buḥtīshū, MS Leiden Or. 584	Averroes (trans. R. Lerner)
It [sc. excessive pleasure] makes out-of-	Excessive pleasure makes man flighty of mind	Pleasure makes man flighty (?) of mind (and)

²² Averroes, *Commentary on Plato's "Republic."* trans., eds., E.I.J. Rosenthal. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 9. For Averroes's criticism of Galen, see *Commentary of Plato's "Republic"*, 36.

²³ "Confirmation of Averroes's source, however, has been hiding in almost plain sight since at least 1973, when Felix Klein-Franke published a brief Arabic fragment corresponding to R. 402e2-403b6, accompanied by a comment of Ḥunayn's on the passage (Klein – Franke 1973). The Arabic text of this fragment and the corresponding lemma of Averroes' commentary (in the medieval Hebrew version of Samuel ben Judah) contain a pair of nearly verbatim parallels that can be explained only by positing a common Arabic source," Geoffrey James Moseley, "Plato Arabus: On the Arabic Transmission of Plato's Dialogues. Texts and Studies." (PhD diss., Yale University, 2017), 177-8. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/plato-arabus-on-arabic-transmission-platos/docview/2023036520/se-2>.

²⁴ All the translations in the table belong to Moseley's. For the original table with Greek, Arabic and Hebrew original, see *Ibid.*, 180-2. .

wits. (402e4)	(and) confused (f. 86v.2-3 (=ed. Klein-Franke, <i>Heilung</i> ε 7 ult.)	confused. (35.24-25)
Should this (sc. sexual) pleasure, then, not be added....by a lover and (his) beloved when correctly loving and being loved? (403b1-2)	It is not proper for the lover and the beloved when that one (i.e., the former) loves a correct love and this one (i.e., the latter) is loved correctly, that each one of them intermixes his situation with arousal, nor with lust (f. 86v.14-87r.1(= <i>Heilung</i> ε 7.8-10)	It is not proper for the lover and the beloved when this one (i.e., the former) loves a correct love and this one (i.e., the latter), too, is likewise loved correctly, that their love turns into pleasure. (36.1-2)

Still, his argument is not that the fragment is absolutely from Galen's summary, but that given the fact there is no likely candidate for the source of this fragment other than Galen's, it is highly plausible to say that Averroes's commentary is also based on Galenic synopsis since it has de facto parallels with the fragment that is highly likely to be derived from the Arabic translation of Galen's epitome.

Such an argument may not be an infallible one. Still, this argument strengthens the commonly accepted hypothesis that Averroes conducted his commentarial project on *Republic*, referring to the Galenic synopsis. Furthermore, if this logic is allowed, we may speculate the features of copy that was in Averroes's hands in case there exist more fragments displaying the original features of the Galenic

synopsis.²⁵ Moseley presents such fragments, including the one from the *Kitāb fī Masā'il al-umūr al-ilāhiyya* by Abū Ḥamid al-Isfīzārī.²⁶ It preserves a passage of 506d3-509b10 except for 508c8-d1 with the original dialogic form, just as the full text of Buḥtīshū does.²⁷ And there are fragments on 407d-408b, on Asclepius and his sons in '*Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā*' (a biographical dictionary of physicians) by ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a in thirteenth-century and on 363a8-b5 on the oak tree and bees in Bīrūnī's *Pharmacology*, both of which shows quite a verbatim paraphrase of the original passages.²⁸ Furthermore, *Epistle on Magic* by the mysterious encyclopedists Iḥwān al-ṣafā' also contains the myth of Gyges, which implies that some myths were not omitted in Galen's original synopsis.²⁹ Thus Moseley concludes from these fragments that "...The *Synopsis* sometimes quoted material verbatim, at least sometimes preserved dialogue form, and did not omit at least some of Plato's myths."³⁰

Therefore, divergences in the *Commentary of Plato's Republic* should not be viewed as a passive reflection of the copy's features. He intently omitted and abridged some contents of *Republic*, including the omission of the account of the idea of the Good, which must have been preserved in the Galenic original since the fragment of Buḥtīshū contains such an account.

²⁵ One may discern circular argument in this. Since there is no recognized source for *Republic* in Arabic other than the Galenic synopsis, any Arabic fragment reporting *Republic* could be deemed as derived from the Galenic synopsis. Still, unless any empirical evidence appealing to sources other than Galen's becomes available to us, it is plausible to guess that most fragments ultimately derive from the Galenic source.

²⁶ Ibid., 144.

²⁷ Ibid., 158.

²⁸ See Ibid., 199-200 for ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's fragment and 201-3 for Bīrūnī's fragment.

²⁹ Ibid., 195.

³⁰ Ibid., 204.

3.3. Conclusion.

While there has been a widespread agreement among scholars that the Galenic synopsis is the source of Averroes's commentary, it was not until Moseley's breakthrough that we obtained material evidence through which we can guess the features of the Galenic synopsis. Still, we have yet to 'demonstrate' that Averroes relied on the Galenic synopsis or that the features of the Galenic synopsis must have been identical to what has been suggested above. It is because there remains a possibility that a new fragment from a non-Galenic source may appear someday somewhere. And because we cannot be entirely sure that the features of the Galenic synopsis in Averroes' hands would be the same as we have supposed since it may have been altered, corrupted, or limited in scope, unlike the original Galenic synopsis. We have just made it very plausible that when a divergence mentioned in the earlier chapter appears in the commentary, the commentator, not the source, is more accountable for such an alteration. It may be regarded as the interpretative principle of this thesis.

Chapter 4 Plato Without Dialectics.

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we investigate one substantial instance of Aristotelian transformations in the commentary regarding the method. Dialectics plays a pivotal role as the methodology to reach the ultimate reality of this world in Plato's original. Averroes, however, marginalizes the dialectics as much as possible and intends to focus on the demonstrative part of the *Republic* as if the dialogue in question were a demonstrative treatise. It seems certain that antagonism towards the dialectics is at work here. We will first describe Averroes's antipathy towards dialectics and then find out the cause of it. In the latter part, Yehuda Halper's recent research on this issue provided insight into the hidden common ground between Averroes's *Decisive Treatise* and the commentary. Surprisingly, it turns out that Averroes's identity as a Muslim philosopher in the 12th century, in addition to being a staunch Aristotelian, plays a pivotal role in his disregarding the dialectics.

4.2. Marginalization of Dialectics in *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*

Averroes is crystal clear on his will to marginalize the dialectics from the very early stage of the commentary. At the very start, He proclaims "to abstract from the statements that are attributed to Plato about political governance that which is included in scientific statements and to eliminate the dialectical statements from it."³¹ Consequently, Averroes omits many parts of the original committed to the curriculum for the guardians that mentions dialectics in the later part of the

³¹ *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*, 21.

commentary.³² As mentioned in Chapter 1, however, such a claim does not blend well with Plato's original, given that Plato's Socrates speaks as below.

“Then isn't this at last, Glaucon, the song that dialectic sings? It is intelligible, [532] but it is imitated by the power of sight. We said that sight tries at last to look at the animals themselves, the stars themselves, and, in the end, at the sun itself. In the same way, whenever someone tries through argument and apart from all sense perceptions to find the being itself of each thing and doesn't give up until he grasps the good itself with [b] understanding itself, he reaches the end of the intelligible, just as the other reached the end of the visible. Absolutely. And what about this journey? Don't you call it dialectic? I do.”³³

This passage is quoted from Book 7 of *Republic*, in which the ideal city's curriculum for guardians and rulers is discussed. Sketching out the preparatory parts of education, such as geometry, Socrates now mentions the core part of the curriculum, the journey to the sun itself, which is the metaphor for the idea of the Good in this context. And this journey is through a series of arguments that are also called dialectic. Nowhere in this passage Socrates mentions a demonstration that ultimately presupposes the logical system of syllogisms that is only developed after Plato by Aristotle. If passages of the *Republic* themselves construe instances of dialectic, dialectics is not the same kind of method as the Aristotelian demonstration. While debate and interlocution are prevalent in dialectics, the necessary logical deduction from premises to conclusion takes a central place in a demonstration.

Even if we understand that Averroes wants to read *Republic* as an Aristotelian treatise, we may question why he had to replace the place of dialectics with demonstration despite fundamental differences between the two methods. This is

³² See Chapter 5.3 for more details.

³³ *Republic*, 531e-532a.

because Averroes aims to understand political science out of *Republic*, and science must be construed of demonstrative syllogisms for Aristotle and Averroes.

“We think we understand a thing simpliciter (and not in the sophistic fashion incidentally) whenever we think we are aware both that the explanation because of which the object is is its explanation, and that it is not possible for this to be otherwise....but we say now that we do know through demonstration. By demonstration I mean a scientific deduction; and by scientific I mean one in virtue of which, by having it, we understand something.”³⁴

To extract an Aristotelian science out of Plato’s *Republic*, one cannot but first impose Aristotelian epistemological standards on it, however alien it is to the text. Still, there may be a tension between Averroes’s Aristotelian epistemological demands for political science and Aristotle’s own. That is, dialectics remains as significant – though less than demonstration – part within the Aristotelian system, much more in practical science where Aristotle admits rigor applied for *Metaphysics* cannot stand because of the nature of the matter it treats.³⁵ When Averroes tries to read *Republic* as a treatise of the Aristotelian political science, he also reads Aristotle in his own way.

4.3. The Islamic Source of Antagonism towards the Dialectics

While Averroes’s Aristotelian stance may sufficiently explain the substitution of dialectics with demonstration, there is something more in Averroes’s attitude towards dialectics. Even for one who aims to read Plato’s *Republic* from an Aristotelian viewpoint, it seems too strong to claim “to eliminate the dialectical statements from it.”³⁶ Though such a hard-liner attitude may be thought of as

³⁴ *Posterior Analytics*, 71b10-19.

³⁵ See *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a17-b1, for example.

³⁶ *Commentary on Plato’s “Republic”*, 21.

another feature of Averroes's Aristotelianism, there is yet another factor, as Halper refers to *Decisive Treatise* as the site to find out the source of this hostility.³⁷

Decisive Treatise is one of the most important non-commentarial works of Averroes, arguing for the right to do philosophy according to Islamic law. In the treatise, Averroes presents a threefold division of humans according to their nature. According to Averroes, some people can understand truth through demonstration, while others can only approach truth through dialectics or rhetoric.

“That is because people's natures vary in excellence with respect to assent. Thus, some assent by means of demonstration; some assent by means of dialectical statements in the same way the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstration, there being nothing greater in their natures; and some assent by means of rhetorical statements, just as the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstrative statements.”³⁸

Acknowledging access to the truth through different media by different groups of people, Averroes may seem to democratize the accessibility of knowledge at first. However, it becomes apparent in later passages that it is not the case for Averroes. Rather, the threefold division justifies making the true knowledge through demonstration inaccessible for most people.

“This is why it is obligatory that interpretations be established only in books using demonstrations. For if they are in books using demonstrations, no one but those adept in demonstration will get at them. Whereas, if they are established in other than demonstrative books with poetical and rhetorical or dialectical methods used in them, as Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] does, that is an error against the Law and against the wisdom.”³⁹

³⁷ “Indeed, in general Averroes would seem to have an understanding of dialectic... based primarily on Aristotle, but highly modified by his won understanding of kalam as presented, for example, in his *Decisive Treatise*,” Yehuda Halper, “Expelling Dialectics from the Ideal State: Making the World Safe for Philosophy in Averroes's *Commentary on Plato's 'Republic'*,” Chap. 3 in *Plato's Republic in the Islamic context: new perspectives on Averroes's commentary*, ed. Alexander Orwin. ed. Alexander Orwin, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2022), 71.

³⁸ Averroes, *Decisive Treatise*, tran. Charles E. Butterworth, Brigham Young University Press, Provo, Utah, 2008, 8.

³⁹ Ibid., 21.

Thus, it is wrong for people not exercised in demonstrations to reach out for knowledge conveyed in demonstrations, and it is also wrong for people who might be exercised or not to offer such knowledge to ineligible people. The fault of philosophy accused as being blasphemous is actually the fault of accusers who cannot understand the demonstrative nature of science or of the accused who dare to claim themselves doing philosophy for which they are not eligible.⁴⁰

So, philosophers are innocent, and there is no problem with their doing philosophy only if they keep their philosophical activities within those who are capable of demonstrative reasoning. In other words, to preserve the right to philosophy, Averroes proposes a radical intellectual separation between human groups. One may not teach philosophy to those who can only understand rhetoric. Most people who can only live a good life through imaginative teachings from religion must be safeguarded from philosophical people.

However, if each intellectual group of humanity is safely kept from others, then why should anyone be so hostile to dialectics? As Halper noted, Averroes is harsher toward people of dialectics, even when separating them from others.⁴¹ This is because, to Averroes, dialecticians represent an actual threat to Muslim philosophers from Islamic theologians that are called *mutakallimūn*. Al-Ghazali is famous among them for his verdict on controversial philosophical doctrines that any Muslim who espouses such doctrine can be accused of unbelief (*kufr*) in his masterpiece, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, against which Averroes himself

⁴⁰ In a sense, Ibn Rushd goes here in line with Plato's explanation on why philosophers in actuality contribute no good to their society in Book 6, *Republic*.

⁴¹ "What about 'those adept in dialectical interpretation'? They, too, are forbidden from communicating their interpretation to the multitudes of rhetorically influenced people. Moreover, Averroes even forbids them from writing their interpretations in dialectical books! Since they are not of the demonstrative class, they cannot read demonstrative works either," Yehuda Halper, *Ibid.*, 75.

submitted his polemical work, *The Incoherence of Incoherence*.

The identification of dialecticians with Islamic theologians is not arbitrary, at least from Averroes's viewpoint, because the philosophical bait between them and he is whether there is any independent nature existing in the created world that is not at the whim of the creator. According to the theologians, there is no independent existence of nature in the created world. In that case, a demonstration is impossible because no entity can serve as a middle-term, thus the impossibility of any science.⁴² Thus there is a reason for Averroes to be harsher toward dialecticians – theologians than people of rhetoric since the former presents a threat to philosophy's very possibility.

Above is the case in the *Decisive Treatise*. In *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, the situation is slightly different. The commentary introduces another threefold division of human nature: people of poetic, rhetoric, and demonstration.⁴³ Halper notes that dialectics appear only in the middle of the discussion about guardians' education.⁴⁴ This is because guardians must learn dialectics to advance their philosophical reasoning.⁴⁵ As Halper notes, Averroes suddenly recognizes the role he imparted to the dialectics in his other commentarial projects.⁴⁶ Would this sudden reappearance contradict Averroes's harsh verdict on the dialectics in the

⁴² Yehuda Halper, *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴³ *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*, 25.

⁴⁴ Yehuda Halper, *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁵ "Yet, when it comes to the guardians, he suggests that making demonstrations is in fact the end goal of their education, even if most of them will not make it there. That is, dialectics is part of the training process for philosophers and accordingly philosophy students who have gained proficiency in the opinions disseminated by poetics and rhetoric may be urged to turn to dialectics to prepare themselves for philosophy," Yehuda Halper, *Ibid.*, 79. As we will see in Chapter 5, however, dialectics disappears in the part of the second treatise where the curriculum of the guardians is yet again discussed.

⁴⁶ "The importance of dialectics for philosophical training is emphasized at the opening of Averroes's Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Topics," Yehuda Halper, *Ibid.*, 79.

Decisive Treatise? Only partially, since dialectics is still not allowed to be introduced to the multitude, even in the commentary. Though it is unclear why a subsection of poetics is added alongside rhetoric, dialectics is only allowed as a stopgap for philosophy learning guardians.

A few things to note about Averroes's understanding of dialectics in the *Decisive Treatise* and *Commentary on Plato's "Republic."* First, one may argue that he failed to distinguish dialecticians from sophists because of his uncompromising Aristotelian stance. Halper comes near to this opinion when he says, "I think it quite likely that the sophists he has in mind are mutakallimūn, whose arguments he had earlier called sophistic, and that their thought, which he says is ruining wisdom, is dialectics."⁴⁷ The only common feature between the two is that they do not rely on demonstration. However, since only the demonstration enjoys the privilege of science from Averroes's viewpoint, the difference between them can easily be neglected. They both are unscientific. This hasty identification, however, becomes problematic in Plato's context, where dialectics is the key to theoretical perfection, and in Aristotle's original context, where dialectics plays a different role from sophistry.⁴⁸ Sophistry may ruin the possibility of any genuine science, but that may not apply to dialectics.

Second, Averroes still fails to remove every residue of dialectics from his commentary. While he erased the existence of dialectics in the curriculum in the second treatise, he left a partial role in dialectics in the first treatise. The reason for this unnatural reinstatement is yet unclear. Perhaps Averroes cannot rule out the

⁴⁷ Yehuda Halper, *Ibid.*, 84. However, his article does not address the identification of sophistry and dialectics.

⁴⁸ It is unusual that a faithful commentator of Aristotle who has left a commentarial work also on Aristotle's *Topics* where Aristotle pays much attention to the role of dialectics in intellectual activities, suddenly exhibits uncompromising antagonism toward dialectics in other works.

educational role of dialectics acknowledged in both Plato's original and his other commentarial projects. The obscure division between dialectics and sophistry may also be the reason for the oscillation. Had he distinguished the division between sophistry and dialectics much more firmly, he could have entrusted a more positive role of training to dialectics while condemning the disastrous potential of sophistry.

4.4. Conclusion

We have thus clarified that when Averroes claims "to abstract from the statements that are attributed to Plato about political governance that which is included in scientific statements and to eliminate the dialectical statements from it," he intends to do something more than paraphrasing the commentary.⁴⁹ Averroes intends to read *Republic* as an Aristotelian treatise for political science. To read it so, he must impose Aristotelian epistemological standards on *Republic*, even though dialectics which is quite different from demonstration, plays a pivotal role. Yet the explicit antagonism toward dialectics can also be explained by Averroes's antagonism toward his dialectician, Muslim theologians whose philosophical standpoint conflicts with Averroes's own. Thus, Averroes's antagonism toward dialectics displays a specific Aristotelian epistemological stance and also his real struggle with his fellow Muslims due to his Aristotelianism.

⁴⁹ *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*, 21.

Chapter 5 *Republic* without the Idea of the Good

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we investigated the Aristotelian transformation regarding the method of commentary. We will now focus on how Aristotelian transformations unfold regarding the material of the *Republic*. The second treatise, where the Idea of Good loses its original place, is the best example for us. First, we will review the first part of the second treatise that roughly corresponds to *Republic* 484a-497. Averroes clarifies a philosopher's nature and presents a list of qualities that must accompany him or her, showing more Aristotelian or Farabian influences. In the next section, we will focus on the middle part of the treatise, where the idea of the Good in the original is most explicitly written out. Instead, the Aristotelian account of the ultimate human end takes place. We will argue why Averroes's account there can be labeled as Aristotelian and also discuss whether such an account can make sense in Plato's philosophy in general. In the last section, we will treat the end part of the treatise on the simile of the cave and the guardian's curriculum, which corresponds to Book 7 of the *Republic*. While many details align with Plato's original account, without the idea of the Good in its place, they lose their ontological rigor. To conclude, the strategy of the second treatise, supplementing Books 6 and 7 of *Republic* with Aristotelian resources, turns out to be bleaching the original's colors.

5.2. The Nature and Qualities of a Philosopher (*Republic*, 484-497)

In the second treatise, Averroes treats two questions after the argument in the earlier treatise that the ideal city is only possible if the philosopher is the king: (1)

What is the philosopher's nature? (2) How should he or she be educated?

For Averroes, the philosopher is "the one who longs for knowledge of what is and inquiry into its nature apart from matter."⁵⁰ Interestingly, theoretical expertise in an absolute sense also requires practical perfection for Averroes. This is because, for him, to know something requires being able to teach the very thing.⁵¹ A philosopher can teach the few through demonstrative argument, that is, by his theoretical perfection. To teach the multitude, however, he needs persuasion and poetics that require practical expertise.

This is slightly different from Plato's account of a philosopher's nature in Book 6. Socrates says, "What else but the one that's next in order? Since those who can grasp what is always the same in all respects are philosophers, while those who are not able to do so and who wander among the many things that vary in every sort of way are not philosophers, which of the two should be the leaders in a city?"⁵² Here, the nature of a philosopher seems a little more committed to the theory of forms in that the formula for a form, that is, "what is always the same in all respects" appears.

Moreover, the requirement of teaching the multitude is absent in the original. Perhaps Averroes added this requirement to emphasize the synonymy of "philosopher," "king," "lawgiver," and even "imam" more.⁵³ They all require perfection of both kinds to perform their role of governing or legislating in each city. This stress of synonymy provides another reason why a philosopher should

⁵⁰ *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*, 60.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Republic*, Book 6, 484b

⁵³ *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*, 61.

be a king. One may say that the idea of philosopher-king that is only suggested in Plato's original with irony and a certain distance is advocated sincerely as a doctrine. On this point, Averroes certainly shares the legacy of Alfarabi, the author of *Attainment of Happiness*, who also argues for the synonymity of those terms, and the vision of a true philosopher who enjoys both theoretical and practical perfections.⁵⁴

In the simile of the cave, Plato also argues that the truly learned one must go back and guide the people there. Thus, Averroes may be interpreted closer to what Plato intended. The problem is, as we will see in the next section, Averroes's commentary lacks the part where the philosopher from the cave goes back into the cave.

The list of qualities required for a philosopher also presents another instance of Farabian influence on Averroes. This seems close to Plato's original, but a close reading reveals a Farabian addition. The list below encompasses all the qualities argued by each. I have written certain qualities in bold that are absent in Plato's original list.

The Qualities Required to be a True Philosopher⁵⁵

	Plato	Alfarabi(The Virtuous City)	Alfarabi(Attainment of Happiness)	Averroes
1	The love of knowledge	The physical integrity	Intellectual Competence	To be fond of

⁵⁴ Alfarabi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. by Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 46-47.

⁵⁵ I have relied much on reconstructing the list into the chart on Rosalie Helena de Souza Pereira, "The Essential Qualities of the Ruler in Averroes's *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*", Chap. 10 in *Plato's Republic in the Islamic context: new perspectives on Averroes's commentary*, ed. Alexander Orwin, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2022), 220-4.

	(485b)			science
2	Faithful to the totality of knowledge(485b)	The acute intelligence	A good memory	To be retentive
3	Freedom from falsehood(485c-d)	An excellent memory	The love of truth and justice	To love learning
4	Moderate, not a lover of money(485e)	A wise and penetrating spirit	To be moderate about what he wants	To love truth and hate falsehood
5	Magnanimous(486a-b)	Eloquence	To disdain appetites, money, and like	To despise the sensual desires
6	Courageous(486b)	To love learning and be good at it	To have nobility of spirit	To not be a lover of money
7	Good Memory(486c-d)	To not be avid in sensual pleasures	To be pious	To be of enlarged thought
8		To have the greatness of soul	To favor righteous things	To be courageous
9		To shun all worldly goods	To have a law-abiding spirit	To be disposed toward virtues
10		To naturally love justice	To be firm in his/her religion	To be eloquent
11		To have a firm will		

Averroes added eloquence to Plato's original list, following Alfarabi. Most of the

other qualities in Averroes's list are common in other lists. However, Pereira has noted that the exact formulation of the first quality, that is, "he be disposed of by nature to the study of the theoretical sciences. This will be if, by his natural disposition, he can recognize what is essential and distinguish it from what is accidental" echoes "the auspices of Aristotelian philosophy."⁵⁶ We may say that Averroes is repeating his previous tactics here. He first paraphrases Plato's statement about theoretical commitment in a much more Aristotelian way. And he also emphasizes the aspects regarding the realization of the idea of the philosopher-king.

To conclude, the second treatise's beginning part reflects the original. The explication of a philosopher's nature is followed by the list of the qualities required for him/her and then by explanations of why philosophers are of no use to their city, as in the *Republic*. Yet, the Aristotelian and Farabian influence also seems manifest. We will see in the next chapter what will result from a combination of such influences, which is the trivialization of Plato's account of the Idea of the Good.

5.3. The Human End in the Place of the Idea of the Good

"Aren't these virtues, then, the most important things? he asked. Is there anything even more important than justice and the other virtues we discussed. There is something more important. However, even for the virtues themselves, it isn't enough to look at a mere sketch, as we did before, while neglecting the most complete account."⁵⁷

In Books 6 to 7, Plato's Socrates moves into the account of the famous Idea of

⁵⁶ Rosalie Helena de Souza Pereira, "The Essential Qualities of the Ruler in Averroes's *Commentary on Plato's 'Republic'*", Chap. 10 in *Plato's Republic in the Islamic context: new perspectives on Averroes's commentary*, ed. Alexander Orwin, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2022), 230.

⁵⁷ Plato, *Republic*, 504c.

the Good. When Averroes says we must understand “what end this kind of humans strives for in their governance” before proceeding to how to educate the guardians of the ideal city, one may expect Averroes will propose the Idea of the Good as such end, following Plato in *Republic* 504c. Things, however, go differently in Averroes’s commentary as below.

We say: Since man is one of the natural beings, there necessarily must be some end for the sake of which he exists. For every natural being has an end, as has been explained in physics—all the more so man, who is the most noble of them. Since the city is necessary for man’s existence, he can attain this end only inasmuch as he is part of a city. It is evident that this end, inasmuch as it pertains to one (15) being, is necessarily one. [This will be] either [a] in kind—so that it belongs to each and every one of the people, as far as number is concerned, this being what we see of the end, which whether sufficiently or insufficiently, is one in number; or [b] in relationship—i.e., if many perfections are for the sake of one perfection and some of them for the sake of others—for this is one in that the many things by it are [made] one.⁵⁸

For Averroes, that a human has its end is so natural because they are a natural being, and a natural being presupposes its end. So, as the perfect natural being, humans have their ends too. And since they are also socio-political beings, their ends can only be attained within their community. Averroes supposes there must be only one end for humans or one most superior end that other ends serve. Why should there not be multiple human ends? If there are numerous human ends, there will be various human perfections. In this case, it is possible to think of a community consisting of self-sufficient citizens, each imbued with different kinds of perfection. There is a logical leap from the existence of multiple human ends to the presence of a community where all its members enjoy various perfections. A community can exist where only some members enjoy different perfections, even if there are diverse human ends. However, the sheer possibility of such a self-

⁵⁸ *Commentary on Plato’s “Republic”*, 66.

sufficient community threatens the idea of attaining the human end impossible.

For him, it belongs to the very definition of human communities that must consist of more than two ranks: the ruling and the ruled. The division of ranks should correspond to the division of virtues—the more virtuous lords over the less virtuous. Suppose there are multiple human ends, and each member attains perfection differently in kind. In that case, there must be one rank in the community, which contradicts the very definition of the human community. Since humans can attain their ends only in their community, the existence of such a community is identical to the annulment of the existence of a human community, making it impossible for any human being to achieve their end, which is something Nature would not allow.

So, there must be one supreme human end that other ends serve. Averroes lists possible candidates for such a human end, including self-preservation, money, pleasure, and the will of God. For Averroes, however, a physicist is more trustworthy than the multitude and theologians for knowing what the end is for each being in that they investigate the teleological aspect of nature. The insight of the physicist that a human is a composite of body and soul, and the hierarchy between the two guides Averroes's search for the human end. In Aristotelian science, a substance is composed of matter and form, and it is for the sake of the form that matter exists. Likewise, in Aristotelian psychology, a human being is a composite of body and soul; the soul takes the role of what form takes regarding the matter. For the soul's sake, the body exists, not the opposite.

So, the human end must be found concerning its soul, especially its most humane one, because, according to Aristotelian psychology, humans share some common psychic aspects with plants and animals. It is manifest that the rational

soul is the most human part of the human soul, not allowed for other natural beings, including plants and animals. This is the sole uniqueness of the human being and its end; perfection depends on this part. Thus, the human end can be “an activity of the rational soul that is in accord with what is required by virtue.”⁵⁹ And it must be a theoretical activity of the rational soul, not the practical one. The practical is like the matter. And the theoretical is like the form for Averroes. Again, “Whatever exists for the sake of what is preferable is more choiceworthy than whatever exists because of necessity.”⁶⁰

There is no doubt that what Averroes presents before us in the middle of the second treatise is a very Aristotelian account one can find in *Nicomachean Ethics*, not in Plato’s *Republic*. Details aside, Aristotle’s functional and teleological understanding of human happiness and the human hand almost parallels his most famous commentator’s account.

“Presumably, to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude, and a clearer account of what it is still desired. This might be given, if we could first ascertain the function of man. For just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or [25] any artist, and, in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the ‘well’ is thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function. Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none? Is he naturally functionless? Or as eye, hand, foot, [30] and in general each of the parts evidently has a function, may one lay it down that man similarly has a function apart from all these? What, then can this be? Life seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man.”⁶¹

Thus, as in Averroes, Aristotle needs to identify the human’s function regarding the human end and happiness. Furthermore, it must be specific to humankind. The universal feature common to various biological groups cannot account for the

⁵⁹ *Commentary on Plato’s “Republic”*, 68.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶¹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b22-1098a1

human's essence in Aristotle's sense.

“if this is the case, [and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, human good turns out to be an activity of the soul in conformity with excellence, and if there are more than one excellence, in conformity with the best and most complete.”⁶²

Such goodness specific to humankind must be sought concerning the activity of the soul, especially the rational part of the soul. And since better is better, it must be the best activity of the rational soul. Averroes and Aristotle are in strong accord here, which is not unlikely because Averroes had known *Nicomachean Ethics* well enough to write a commentary on it.⁶³ Even Averroes's logical problem, noted by Butterworth, that he implicitly assumes that “the chain of perfections is limited so that the relation of some perfections existing for others must terminate in one which is desired only for itself and not because it leads to another” seems to have root in its Aristotelian source.⁶⁴

The problem is that this highly correct Aristotelian account appears instead of the one about the Idea of the Good. One may suppose that the Galenic synopsis in Averroes's hands was damaged or corrupted on this point, so Averroes had to supplement or correct it with Aristotelian assistance.⁶⁵ But such a hypothesis implies that Averroes felt nothing wrong with supplementing the corrupt

⁶² *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a13-17.

⁶³ See Steven Harvey & Frédérique Woerther, “Averroes' Middle Commentary on Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*,” *Oriens*, 42 (2014): 254-287, doi:10.1163/18778372-04201009.

⁶⁴ Charles E. Butterworth, *Philosophy, Ethics, and Virtuous Rule: A Study of Averroes' Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1986), 54.

⁶⁵ We have seen the Galenic synopsis probably had the Idea of the Good part. However, that does not insure whether the copy of the Galenic synopsis in the Averroes's hands contained it without any damage.

manuscript with an external source, whose source he surely knew was not Plato, rather than just leaving the commentary within his limitations.

Still, Averroes may have believed that he was not supplementing or correcting Book 6 with Aristotelian resources but that this Aristotelian account is also Plato's doctrine. The latter, unlike the former, needs to be refuted with certain assumptions about what is Plato's doctrine in general. He may have hit the right point with the wrong arrow: Is not "an activity of the rational soul that is in accord with what is required by virtue" the happiness in Plato's philosophy too? Is it not the human end Plato argues for?

I think one can easily agree with the statement that, for Plato, what is most important for human life is developing his/her rational capabilities and following rational principles in a general sense. After all, it's Plato's Socrates in *Theaetetus* who argues that "That is why a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like God as possible; and a man becomes like God when he becomes just and pious, with understanding."⁶⁶

Even if Plato agreed with Aristotle that rational activity is almost essential to human beings, he might not have agreed with Aristotle regarding the method. For Aristotle, finding out the end of a being is through the method of division that presupposes his classification of entities by genera and species. Thus, Plato did not employ Aristotle's more specific and strict classification of entities and may not have agreed with it, making rationality a more common feature between human beings and non-human animals. Odd passages in the *Statesman* and *Timaeus* may help us to reflect on this matter.

⁶⁶ Plato, *Theaetetus*, 176a-b.

VISITOR: Well then, if, with so much leisure available to them, and so much opportunity to get together in conversation not only with human [c] beings but also with animals—if the nurslings of Cronus used all these advantages to do philosophy, talking both with animals and with each other, and inquiring from all sorts of creatures whether any one of them had some capacity of its own that enabled it to see better in some way than the rest with respect to the gathering of wisdom, the judgment is easy, that those who lived then were far, far more fortunate than those who live now.⁶⁷

This is a rare instance in which Plato's narrator advocates that animals can help pursue philosophy. If the importance of rational faculty were unique to humans, there would be no need to mention animals. Of course, this passage is, at best, hypothetical. This only appears as a criterion for judging the happiness of the people in Cronos's era compared to that of the people in the historical era. Still, this counterfactual hypothesis can perform its hypothetical role only if that one believes such an imagination can be meaningful. In other words, one who strictly denies partaking of animals in rationality has no reason to present a hypothetical case where animals can contribute to the study of philosophy unless in a pejorative sense, which is not the case here.

“As for birds, as a kind, they are the products of a transformation. They grow feathers instead of hair. They descended from innocent but simpleminded men, [e] men who studied the heavenly bodies but in their naiveté believed that the most reliable proofs concerning them could be based upon visual observation. Land animals in the wild, moreover, came from men who had no tincture of philosophy and who made no study of the universe whatsoever because they no longer made use of the revolutions in their heads but instead followed the lead of the parts of the soul that reside in the chest. As a consequence of these ways of theirs, they carried their forelimbs and their heads dragging towards the ground, like towards like. The tops of their heads became elongated and took all sorts of shapes, depending on the particular way the revolutions were squeezed together from lack of use.”⁶⁸

In this passage from *Timaeus*, the origin of animal kinds is identified with the

⁶⁷ Plato, *Statesman*, 272b-c.

⁶⁸ Plato, *Timaeus*, 91e-92a.

metempsychosis cycle of humans. The less one exercises rational faculty, the lower his biological destination in the next life will be. This passage is ambiguous. First, it assumes humans' superiority in rational affairs. If not, one cannot be a human in the next life. However, this passage can also be interpreted as showing the difference in rationality between humans and animals as a matter of degree than of kind. Rationality is, for humans, something one loses or gains.

Still, the fact of ambiguity present in Plato's works is not favorable to Averroes's position. After all, Averroes must justify his erasure of the Idea of the Good. Even if he argues for the compatibility of the Aristotelian account with Plato's philosophy, the presence of passages that can be interpreted against Averroes's position is a sure obstacle to him. Plato probably agrees with Averroes that human life can gain meaning through adherence to rational principles. However, that does not guarantee that Plato would agree with Averroes on using the Aristotelian division method by specific differences.

5.4. The Curriculum of the Guardians (*Republic*, Book 7)

The long Aristotelian digression on the human end was initially presented to identify the goal of education before proceeding to the actual curriculum of the guardians. So, since the digression has ended, Averroes follows Plato in describing the curriculum in Book 7. Though the general outline of Averroes's explication goes in line with Plato's, minor Aristotelian revisions also appear here. Due to the erasure of the Idea of the Good, the remaining details also lose their original rigor.

For Averroes, theoretical perfection, the supreme among others, can only be

actualized through will and choice.⁶⁹ Thus, the question of how to exercise will and choice to achieve theoretical perfection naturally blooms. So, the natural context for the guardians' curriculum is ready.

Yet the discussion on the curriculum is preceded by the simile of the cave as in the case of Plato's original. One locked in a cave and entertained by the surrounding shadows or imitated images can only face the true form of reality once he comes out of the cave and trains his or her optical ability until he or she finally sees the sun, which is the symbol for the Idea of the Good in Plato's original simile. There is this contrast between appearance and the true form in this simile and a strong emphasis on the step-by-step nature of the education required to achieve the total growth of the intellect, allowing one to face the Idea of the Good. Averroes goes along with Plato except in two moments. As Averroes has erased the Idea of the Good from the last part of the second treatise, the ontological commitment of the simile disappears. Moreover, the theme of return in the original simile that one must return to the cave and care for the people there after learning all the things outside the cave is not preserved in Averroes.⁷⁰ The source of this omission is not known yet. Thus, only the emphasis on the step-by-step nature of education remains.

He asserts this thought only because the art of logic was nonexistent in his time. But as it now exists, it is proper that they begin their study with the art of logic; after that | going on to arithmetic, then to geometry, then to astronomy, then to music, then to optics, then to mechanics, then to physics, then to metaphysics. However, the ancients were divided over whether it was obligatory to (5) begin with the art of logic or with the art of mathematics. Some asserted that logic was instituted only so as to strengthen the intellect and preserve it from error—the necessity for this arising out of the profound sciences, like

69 *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*, 73.

70 Plato, *Republic*, 516e

physics and metaphysics. As for the mathematical sciences, there is no need in them for logic owing to their easiness and their little entanglement with matter. Even if this were as they say and logic were not necessary for the learning of the mathematical sciences, their learning—if it came after knowledge of it [sc., logic]—would undoubtedly be better. And since we seek only the best in the study [to be done by] this kind of humans, it is fitting that they begin with the art of logic.⁷¹

Above is Averroes's account for the Platonic curriculum. One may witness many similarities and differences between Averroes's and the original. At first, it is for both the same to start with Arithmetic. Yet, there are some variances in their justification for this way of beginning. For Averroes, starting from Arithmetic is because of its "ease of study" and its "freedom from matter."⁷² While Plato may agree with this aspect, he has another reason to start with Arithmetic. "The soul would then be puzzled, would look for an answer, would stir up its understanding, and would ask what the one itself is. And so this would be among the subjects that lead the soul and turn it around towards the study of that which is."⁷³ In Plato's choice of order in the curriculum, there is an explicit principle that one must choose something that would prompt the students upward toward the more abstract issue than before.

Furthermore, there are at least two Aristotelian additions to the curriculum. After reporting Plato's order, Averroes argues for the primacy of logic. Would Plato, too, have started with logic if he had *Prior Analytics* and other *Organons* in his hands? Possibly, he may have welcomed the conceptual progress in formal logic after him. Plausibly, however, he may have thought issues of logic, in general, had better be studied with dialectics, whose place is replaced by metaphysics in Averroes's

71 *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*, 76-77.

72 *Ibid.*, 75.

73 *Republic*, 524e.

formulation. Thus, this is the second Aristotelian addition to the curriculum, replacing dialectics with metaphysics. Dialectics, which appeared provisionally in the first treatise as the intermediate stage in education, now wholly vanishes in the curriculum.⁷⁴

According to Averroes, candidates for guardianship must learn horsemanship from sixteen or seventeen to twenty. I think this may be an allusion to Socrates' comment that "the children were to be led into war on horseback as observer" because while Plato also prescribed this time of age for physical training, he does not specify the content of it as horsemanship.⁷⁵ On this point, Averroes may allude to a hadith from the Prophet that swimming, archery, and horse riding must be taught to children. The details after this are similar. He or she of the guardianship must start philosophical training in twenty to thirty, then take responsibility for public services from thirty-five to fifty. If he or she has proven excellence, he/she may take the rulership of the city starting from fifty to the time when he/she gets too weak to account for it.⁷⁶

After their retirement, guardians are assumed to be sent to the Isle of the Blessed, both in Plato and Averroes. Interestingly, at this point, Averroes mentions the existence of the Idea of the Good.

"When they are too weak to do this on account of age, they return— as

⁷⁴ See, *Commentary on Plato's "Republic,"* 29, "The arguments by which the citizens are disciplined are, as we have said, either about scientific things or about practical things. These arguments are of two kinds: demonstrative arguments, [and those that are] dialectical, rhetorical, and poetical. The poetical arguments are more particularly for the youths. If, when they grow up, some one of them is fit to move on to a [higher] stage of learning, he [sc., the ruler] brings that about in him, to the point that one of them arises who has it in his nature to learn the demonstrative arguments. They are the wise. He who does not have this in his nature remains at the stage beyond which there is no possibility in his nature for him to pass. This would be either at [the stage of] the dialectical arguments or at the two ways common to the instruction of the multitude..."

⁷⁵ *Republic*, 537a.

⁷⁶ *Commentary on Plato's "Republic,"* 77-78.

Plato says—to the Isles of the Blessed. [By the “Isles of the Blessed,” he means, according to what I think, the inquiry concerning the form [idea] of the good in whose existence he believed. If there is someone who believes that there is a good for a man that exists for itself, he will believe that the exercise of the other virtues hinders him from speculation on this. That is why, according to what I think, Plato asserts that at the end of their lives they isolate [themselves] for speculation upon that good.”⁷⁷

This is a rare instance in the *Commentary on Plato's “Republic,”* which admits the Idea of the Good. However, the concept that served in Book 7 of the original as the guiding principle for all education and intellectual inquiry is now presented in its degraded form as some personal conviction that is worth studying only in time of private leisure.

5.5. Conclusion

The rest of the second treatise reiterates how one may actualize the ideal city in this world, just like Book 7's later part. Because it is a bland summary, I think it is better to conclude this chapter at this point. The second treatise generally stays within Plato's account but reveals an Aristotelian transformation in some crucial moments. Most serious transformations result from erasing the Idea of the Good in the last part. Thus, the simile of the cave loses its ontological commitment to the Idea of the Good and becomes more of an emphasis on the stepwise nature of education. The sudden appearance of the Idea of the Good at the last stage of the guardians' life does no better than presenting it as some personal conviction.

Besides the consequences, the erasure of the Idea of the Good itself is also hardly justifiable in Plato's viewpoint. As we have seen, there is no guarantee that Plato would have agreed with Aristotle on the method of arguing for the essential

⁷⁷ Ibid., 78.

value of rationality in human life, even if Plato did agree on the value of rationality in human affairs.

Also, there is a more implicit pattern of paraphrasing Plato into more Aristotelian formulas. Averroes's paraphrases can be more readily read as Aristotelian statements, even though they can still be interpreted as Platonic ones.

In short, it can be concluded that the commentator's Aristotelian revisions to Book 6 and Book 7 of *Republic* result in transferring Plato's thought experiment into Aristotelian political science by making it bland, excluding the original account of the Idea of the Good. One may wonder whether Books 6 and 7 of *Republic* benefit from such revisions at all.

Chapter 6. The Predecessors of Averroes

6.1. Introduction

As we have seen, even though the *Commentary on Plato's Republic* later served as a medium through which Jewish or Christian readers gained access to Plato's work, it was not so faithful to Plato's original purpose, method, and content. This chapter looks for ways to make sense of such an irony. Rather than just a particular case of misinterpretation, *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* seems to reflect a long-term trend in the history of reading Plato and Aristotle. In the first section, we look for Averroes's ancient predecessors who initiated such a trend. In the second section, we will examine Alfarabi's case, who is the near predecessor of Averroes, and the source to which Averroes frequently refer in the commentary.

6.2. The Ancient Predecessors of Averroes

For modern readers, *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* is hardly helpful material for learning more about Plato unless one is more interested in how some themes of *Republic* are adapted in Islamic contexts. Yet, searching for why it is so may be helpful for a better understanding of the history of reading Plato and Aristotle. If the copy is not accountable for the divergences in the commentary, as we have seen in Chapter 2, the viewpoint Averroes inherited from his predecessors may be accountable for them. The source of such a viewpoint that one can argue for Plato's doctrines using Aristotle's seems not wholly Islamic. Instead, at least two currents in late antiquity helped to form it. First, Platonists were searching for Plato's doctrines in Aristotle's works. Second, in much later periods, various trends were intertwined to result in the marginalization of Plato in reading Plato and

Aristotle.

Karamanolis reports that Platonists wrote essential commentaries on Aristotle after AD 300.⁷⁸ Such commentaries were not refuting Aristotle. Instead, they believed that “his philosophy, if properly studied, a prerequisite for, and conducive to, an understanding of Plato’s thought.”⁷⁹ But why? Because Platonists sought Plato’s doctrines.⁸⁰ In a sense, “Plato’s doctrines” sounds almost oxymoron. Plato’s dialogues are highly resistant to easy systematization. Then, why did these Platonists seek Plato’s doctrines in Aristotle? Karamanolis mentions the competitor factor, the Hellenistic schools: For these schools, philosophy is the system of doctrines.⁸¹ So, it became very natural for some Platonists to come up with the idea that there are doctrines in Plato’s dialogues to compete with these new philosophical competitors. And one primary strategy to find the doctrines of Plato was “by relying on the statements of philosophers who were indebted to Plato’s thought.”⁸² And therefore, they approached Aristotle. He was the most prominent student of Plato. He shares some core tenets of philosophy with Plato, though with serious divergences, and he left a group of non-aporetic works.⁸³ Furthermore, the Stoics also blamed Aristotle as if he were in the same camp as Plato.⁸⁴

A *petitio principii* appears here, however. To use Aristotle in whatever way to reconstruct or discover Plato’s doctrines, one still has to know in part what Plato’s

⁷⁸ George E. Karamanolis, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement?: Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 2006), 1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

doctrines are in general.⁸⁵ In other words, there is no guarantee that all Platonists agree with each other on what Plato's doctrines are. Some may value this, yet others may value that. Consequently, the way of using Aristotle varies among such Platonists.

The contrast between Antiochus of Ascalon and Plutarch could be a good example of the shared mood and different views among Platonists. Antiochus of Ascalon(c.130-68 BC) was a man who stood against the prevalent current of skeptical reading of Plato.⁸⁶ While espousing dogmatist reading of Plato, Antiochus seems to have allied with Aristotle, according to Cicero's report in his *Academica*.

“At first, as I said, there was a single system though it had two names since there was no difference between the Peripatetics and the original Old Academy. In my view, Aristotle excelled in intellectual ingenuity. Still, both schools drew from the same source, and both made the same classification of things to be desired and to be avoided.” by Antiochean Varro.⁸⁷

For Antiochus, there exists no substantial difference between Plato and Aristotle. But what was the main tenet shared among them, or at least regarded as so by Antiochus? Ethical issues were most important to him.⁸⁸ Against the Stoics, who argued for the monistic arrangement of human souls and the utter devaluation of external goods and human passions, Plato and Aristotle maintained their stance for a more wholesome approach to what is a good human life.⁸⁹ However, in allying Plato with Aristotle on moral psychology, Antiochus cannot but neglect those

⁸⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁷ From, Cicero, *Acad.* 1. 17-18 in Ibid., 51.

⁸⁸ “... for Antiochus, the essential criterion for judging one's Platonist identity is not dogmatism but a certain kind of dogmatism which essentially concerns ethics” Ibid., 59.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 78.

aspects of Plato that do not go along well with Aristotle. The two are not quite identical in the structure of a human soul and in what virtue is.⁹⁰

Plutarch is in line with Antiochus in that he advocates a common front between Plato and Aristotle against the Stoics in moral psychology. For Plutarch, human passions play an important role in attaining virtues, as Plato or Aristotle maintains.⁹¹ Recognizing various divergences between the two, however, Plutarch takes pains to get the two much closer. Plutarch seems to interpret Aristotle to agree with the soul's separability from the body.⁹² Furthermore, Plutarch argues that the Aristotelian intellect is essentially the Platonic soul.⁹³ However, Plutarch diverges from Antiochus in that he adheres to the aporetic nature of Plato's philosophy.⁹⁴ For Plutarch, the aporetic method can go along with doctrines. The fact that Plutarch is reported to have written eight books on Aristotle's *Topics* may serve as supporting evidence of Plutarch's favor toward the aporetic method since *Topics* is a treatise on various dialectical discussions., though none of Plutarch's works on *Topics* survives until now.⁹⁵ In a sense, this contrast between Plutarch and Antiochus on the value of the aporetic method mirrors that of Alfarabi and Averroes.

So, Platonists in late antiquity had many reasons to come close to Aristotle and appropriated much from Aristotle. Yet there was no uniform doctrine on what

⁹⁰ In short, Plato seems to espouse a tripartite division of the soul, while Aristotle argues for the bipartite division of the soul with the independent Intellect.

⁹¹ Ibid., 116.

⁹² Ibid., 112.

⁹³ Ibid., 114.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 85.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 86.

determines Plato's doctrine and how to utilize Aristotle's legacy to find the doctrine. The most manifest common tenet among Platonists in favor of Aristotle was that they were against the Hellenistic schools of philosophy. Aristotelians were on the same side as Platonists on this issue. For Peripatetics, Plato's work was both the starting point and origin of Aristotle's philosophy, and some knowledge of Plato was required to understand it.⁹⁶ However, the Peripatetics differed from Platonists in maintaining that Aristotle constituted progress over Plato.⁹⁷

The latter triumphed in historical reality. As we have seen in Chapter 2, Plato's dialogues were hardly translated into Arabic, and the existence of a complete translation of any dialogue is beyond expectation. Had Platonists maintained an appeal to later readers, such an outcome is not have been likely to expect. Moseley suggests three possible factors that eventually led to this almost non-transmission of Plato and the reversal of the trend: Christian hostility, Aristotle-centric progressivism, and the harmony of Plato and Aristotle.⁹⁸

Moseley reports many hostile appraisals of Plato by Christian writers, including chronographers, poets, and even intellectuals.⁹⁹ For them, Plato was one of a figure who represented the bygone Hellenic era, superseded by now-Christian triumph.¹⁰⁰ Plato's texts were treated with a sneer rather than a critique, "just as those who treat (people's) bodies prepare beneficial drugs from venomous animals, throwing away

⁹⁶ Ibid., 36.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁹⁸ Geoffrey James Moseley, "Plato Arabus: On the Arabic Transmission of Plato's Dialogues. Texts and Studies." (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2017), 361. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/plato-arabus-on-arabic-transmission-platos/docview/2023036520/se-2>

⁹⁹ Ibid., 361-2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

some parts of the vipers but boiling other parts.”¹⁰¹ Such a hostile attitude of writers may have helped sparse transmission of Plato into Syriac, for example. Even if there was any serious reading of Plato in Syriac communities, it might have been imbued with Christian prejudices or filtered stereotypes, such as viewing Plato as a general moral teacher or a monastic ascetic.¹⁰²

Moseley also mentions a prevalent ideology of ‘Aristotle-centric Progressivism’ as one of the factors for the fragmentary transmission of Plato into Syriac and Arabic communities, which holds the history of philosophy finally completed with Aristotle, ‘the seal of the philosophers(hātām al-ḥukamā’).”¹⁰³ This ideology seems to have developed in the late Alexandrian school tradition.¹⁰⁴ But why it became prominent in later periods? Moseley suspects the cultural-political imperative to distance itself from the anti-Christian Athenian tradition or the practical imperative to focus on Aristotelian sciences.¹⁰⁵ The East Syrian, a Paul the Persian(Būlus al-fārisī, Paulus Persa), for example, remarks in an introduction to the philosophy of Aristotle to Anushirvan that “...Aristotle collected the dispersed parts of philosophy, combined each part with what was comfortable to it, and placed it in its [appropriate] place so that he produced from it a complete course of treatment[šifā] by means of which the souls are cured of the diseases of ignorance.”¹⁰⁶ Moseley presents another comment by the sixth-century West Syrian physician and translator Sergius of Resh ‘aynā that Aristotle assembled “the

¹⁰¹ Thdt. Cur. I. 127, quoted by Siniosoglou 2008, 22-3 in Moseley, 364.

¹⁰² Ibid., 366. Moseley mentions a forthcoming article by Yuri Arzhanov about the Syriac reception of Platos’ Republic, which is also not faithful to the original Republic.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 267.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 368.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 369-70.

parts of philosophy as well as ‘all knowledge in its entirety.’”¹⁰⁷

The last factor Moseley mentions is the theme of the ‘Harmony of Plato and Aristotle’ in its new form. The harmony of Plato and Aristotle is not a new theme. As we have seen above, many Greek or Roman writers like Antiochus and Plutarch espoused this theme on behalf of the Platonist camp. In the Abbasid period, however, the theme of harmony served a different purpose with ‘Aristotle-centric Progressivism,’ that is, “to make Plato safe (in fact, safely irrelevant) for an Aristotelian curriculum.”¹⁰⁸ For example, the author of (ps.-)Farabian *Harmony of the Opinions of the Two Sages* accuses Plato of lacking sufficient abilities, his arguments of mere ‘signs and indications’ of Aristotelian demonstration.¹⁰⁹

Thus, we had an overview of the ancient predecessors of Averroes. Averroes was one of many to argue for the essential agreement between Plato and Aristotle in a broad sense. Many Platonists in late antiquity, though acknowledging the divergences between the two, approached Aristotle to find a way to reconstruct what they believed to be Plato’s doctrine. However, the history of later periods unfolded unexpectedly to the point that none of such people wanted, that is, the marginalization of Plato. Without any reversal in the middle, it is plausible to suppose that Averroes inherited from these predecessors the theme of harmony between Plato and Aristotle while marginalizing Plato’s distinctive features. To conclude in such a way, however, one must review Alfarabi’s position on the issue, who is the near predecessor of Averroes.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 374.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 376.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 377.

6.2. The Influence of Alfarabi

In this section, we examine how Alfarabi, the near predecessor of Averroes, understands the relationship between Plato and Aristotle. It is certain that Averroes also relied on Alfarabi when he wrote his commentary. Lerner notes that the mention of eloquence as a requirement for a philosopher in the second treatise is from Alfarabi, not Plato.¹¹⁰ Lerner also notes that the account of timocracy and the vile city in the third treatise echoes many parts of Alfarabi's various works.¹¹¹

Among Alfarabi's spacious collection, we will mainly look at the *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* along with *the Attainment of Happiness*. In *Attainment of Happiness*, Alfarabi presents an Aristotelian program of achieving ultimate human happiness through theoretical perfection. Not mentioning why ultimate human happiness should be achieved through theoretical perfection, Alfarabi tries to prove that there is theoretical perfection and that it is possible for a man to achieve it. Interestingly, Alfarabi says that his Aristotelian program for human happiness was "handed down to us by the Greeks from Plato and Aristotle only."¹¹² But they have not given him "an account of the ways to it and of the ways to re-establish it when it becomes confused or extinct." Alfarabi must restore their philosophies in

¹¹⁰ In Commentary on Plato's "Republic", 62.16, Lerner says "Averroes has made this a leading theme in his Decisive Treatise. Plato's several enumerations of the qualities necessary in a philosopher or guardian or tyrant make no mention of eloquence. (Compare Republic 485a-487a, as well as 374e-376c, and Laws 709e-710c.) But this does appear in Farabi's enumeration in *Virtuous City*, 59.21, 59.5-6 (Dieterici tr., pp. 95, 94). See also Farabi, *Attainment*, 44.6-13 (MPP, pp. 79 f.); and Maimonides, *Guide*, I 34 (41a) (Pines tr., p. 78)."

¹¹¹ Ibid., 81.13. "Averroes' account of timocracy, which continues to 82.20, closely resembles Farabi's in *Political Regime*, 89.14-94.4 (MPP, pp. 43-46). See also *Virtuous City*, 62.10-14 (Dieterici tr., p. 99). Ibid., 82.22, "Averroes' account, which continues to 83.15, elaborates upon Farabi's discussion of the vile city in *Political Regime*, 88.14-89.6 (MPP, p. 43). See also *Virtuous City*, 62.6-8 (Dieterici tr., p. 98)."

¹¹² Alfarabi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001).⁴⁹

order.¹¹³ That is why after *Attainment of Happiness*, Alfarabi presents an epitome of Plato's philosophy, *The Philosophy of Plato*, and Aristotle's philosophy, *The Philosophy of Aristotle*.

Alfarabi is among the many who share the themes of 'Aristotle-centric Progressivism' and 'The Harmony of Plato and Aristotle.' He views Plato and Aristotle as having shared the same philosophical goal. At the same time, he awards a higher status to Aristotle. Contrasting dialectics with demonstration, the latter is more perfect regarding the matter of certainty. There is no distinction between the dialectics of Plato and Aristotle and their respective differences in their philosophical project.

“Although the training investigation[dialectics] does not move immediately to find the truth, by it man is nevertheless on the way to truth; and it is more to be feared that he might err at this stage than when he goes beyond the training art to the use of demonstration. For man does not err, or hardly ever errs, when using demonstrations.”¹¹⁴

Yet one may discern a more subtle difference from Averroes here. Alfarabi seems to approve of a more positive epistemological role of dialectics than Averroes. It is true that Averroes, too, entrusts a provisional role to dialectics within the curriculum of guardians. However, the general attitude of Alfarabi towards the dialectics remains different from Averroes's.

“Then, after that [about sophistry], he inquired into the investigations of the dialecticians and into the dialectical investigation, whether or not it leads man to that knowledge, and whether or not it is adequate for supplying it. He explained that it is extremely valuable for arriving at that knowledge; indeed, frequently, it is impossible to come to that knowledge until the thing is investigated dialectically. It does not supply that knowledge from the outset, however. No, in order to attain that knowledge, another faculty is needed along with, and in addition to, the faculty for dialectical exercise. That is to be found in his book known as the

¹¹³ Ibid., 50.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 88.

Parmenides (meaning compassion).”¹¹⁵

Here Alfarabi does not argue that dialectics per se is important but rightfully summarizes that it is pivotal in the context of Plato’s philosophical project. Still, the fact that he could recognize the importance of the dialectics within Plato’s original marks a small yet definitive difference between Alfarabi from Averroes. Also, Alfarabi attributes a fairer status to the dialectics within the Aristotelian system. For example, in the context of natural science, Alfarabi does mention dialectics’ role in such a scientific activity.

“These, then, are the subjects of natural science. He takes the evident premises regarding these things and first uses the dialectical methods to investigate them up to that point in the investigation of each of them at which the dialectical faculty can proceed no further.”¹¹⁶

The more acute distinction between dialectics and sophistry, whose lack in the *Commentary of Plato’s Republic* was questioned in Chapter 2, is also visible in Alfarabi’s summary.

“He[Aristotle] called the art that leads to error- with which he supplied the investigator so that the interlocutor might exercise it against him to prevent him from using the arguments of the training art – *sophistry*. ”¹¹⁷

“For this art of sophistry indeed contradicts the art of dialectic – that is, the training art – and obstructs it from performing its functions, which are the way to truth and to certainty.”¹¹⁸

I do not think Averroes at some moment was ignorant of the distinction between dialectics and sophistry, unlike Alfarabi, because he was also a faithful commentator of Aristotle’s other logical works. Perhaps the real problem with Averroes is the emotive value he placed on dialectics in the context of

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 57.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 98.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 89.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 91.

commentating on Plato. He may be excused because he never had access to Platonic dialogues fully translated into Arabic. Still, Alfarabi, too, had limited access to Plato's philosophical project, just like Averroes. Probably he had relied on almost the same source, the Galenic synopsis. A brief overview of *The Philosophy of Plato* reveals that Alfarabi's summary of Platonic dialogues is mostly misleading or sometimes significantly incorrect. For example, when he mentions *Theaetetus*, he fails to recognize its aporetic character and instead claims that Plato had found what knowledge is in the dialogue.¹¹⁹ In short, the accessibility was not the reason for Alfarabi's more nuanced evaluation of dialectics, and thus Plato.

Though not in the *Philosophy of Aristotle and Plato*, however, there is one peculiar feature of Alfarabi on Plato that is absent in Averroes. In some of his original treatises, including *Political regime*, Alfarabi envisions a form of ideal governance of this created world. When Alfarabi talks about the human political realm and especially about "the different categories of the ignorant city," it is apparent that Alfarabi is appropriating almost the same conceptual resources from the Galenic synopsis, just like Averroes does in his commentary.¹²⁰ However, unlike Averroes's, Alfarabi's ideal city is heavy with Neoplatonic terms regarding the supra-lunar realm. The hierarchy of principles and the theme of emanation appear to ground the cosmological background of the ideal city.¹²¹ One may say

¹¹⁹ "Then, after that, he investigated what this knowledge is and its distinguishing mark, until he found what it is, its distinguishing mark, its character, and that it is knowledge of the substance of each of the beings: this knowledge is the final perfection of man and the highest perfection he can possess. This is to be found in his book that he called the *Theaetetus* (meaning voluntary)," Alfarabi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. by Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 54.

¹²⁰ Alfarabi. "Political Regime," Chap. 1 in *The Political Writings: "Political Regime" and "Summary of Plato's Laws"*. trans. Charles E. Butterworth. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press).

¹²¹ Ibid.

that it is Alfarabi's innovation to syncretize the Platonic ideal city with Neoplatonic cosmology. In our context, this implies that when Averroes replaced Plato's account in the commentary, he could have appropriated other resources than the Aristotelian one. Interestingly, supplementing the limited Platonic account with Neoplatonic resources, which were more easily accessible to Averroes, remained the road not taken.

6.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, we looked for predecessors of Averroes to understand the historical background in making Plato Aristotelian. While Alfarabi is the source to whom Averroes explicitly refers, Antiochus and Plutarch construe instances of historical currents that finally result in the marginalization of Plato that Averroes uncritically accepted. However, while giving a sense of Averroes's interpretation of the *Republic* in historical contexts, such a historical survey may risk trivializing it as just an insignificant historical instance. Yet it would be too much exaggeration to say Averroes accepts tradition before him wholly uncritically. As we have seen, while referring much to Alfarabi, Averroes has his distinct antagonism towards dialectics and Neoplatonic resources. In the next chapter, we will investigate how to determine the exact character of Averroes's Aristotelianism.

Chapter 7. Averroes's Rationalism Reconsidered

7.1. Introduction

It is like challenging Scylla and Charybdis to make sense of Averroes's Aristotelian interpretation of Plato's *Republic*. One may want to view it as a personal error, but it would risk disregarding the whole commentary. Our study put the most effort against this Scylla. Examining historical currents in the history of reading Plato and Aristotle and predecessors before Averroes reveals rich historical backgrounds from which Averroes's commentarial endeavor on Plato gains a meaningful sense. However, this approach risks getting too closer to Charybdis, trivializing it as a banal historical instance. Against both dangers, we must now define the exact character of Averroes's Aristotelianism displayed through the commentary in this chapter. Unexpectedly, it will allow us to refute one of the modern myths about Averroes.

7.1. The Character of Averroes's Aristotelianism

The *Commentary for Plato's "Republic"* is far from a faithful explication of Plato's original. Notwithstanding the change in focus, abridgment, and omission, replacing Plato's accounts with Aristotelian ones looks especially unusual to modern readers. This fact itself does not devalue the commentary because it still supplies interesting adaptations of foreign themes of the *Republic* in Islamic contexts from Averroes' viewpoint. However, the purview of the essay is not about the adaptations but why the commentary became so.

We have seen in Chapter 2 that the copy of the *Republic* available to Averroes is not likely to account for the Aristotelian transformation of the *Republic* in purpose,

form, and content. Compared with other fragments that seem to share a common source, the Galenic synopsis translated by Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, the copy that was at the hands of Averroes, must have been more faithful to the original in that it sometimes contained verbatim duplication of the dialogue in its dialogic form, the mention of the idea of the Good, and the important passages about many myths in the *Republic*. Thus, many Aristotelian transformations, into which we delved in Chapters 4 and 5, are more likely to be accounted for by Averroes himself.

Then, what is the exact Averroes' 'fault' that is accountable for such interpretative transformations? Rather than accusing Averroes of personal errors, we have tried to make sense of his misleading reading in broader contexts of the history of reading Plato and Aristotle. A kind of path dependency may have played a role in resulting in the Aristotelian reading of Plato's *Republic*.

As we have seen in Chapter 6, precedents existed for Averroes though he was plausibly unaware of them except for Alfarabi. First, Platonists, faced with a rivalry against the Hellenistic schools in late antiquity, had to systemize Plato's doctrines. In contrast, Plato had not left an authoritative comment on his conclusions. With varying degrees, many Platonists utilized Aristotle's arguments in reconstructing what they thought to be Plato's doctrines. Since the part of Plato that each thought to be essential to him was different from the other, there existed no uniform doctrine on Plato's doctrines. For example, Antiochus and Plutarch maintained the essential affinity between Plato and Aristotle on issues such as ethics and moral psychology. Still, each differed in their view of Plato's aporetic method. Unlike Antiochus, Plutarch retained his favor toward the aporetic nature of Plato's dialogues.

On the other hand, the Peripatetics approached Plato, thinking in opposition to

Platonists that Aristotle constituted progress over Plato. The historical reality shows that the latter gained hegemony among intellectuals with unexpected cultural turns. The Christian antipathy towards anything Hellenic, including Plato, the Aristotle-centric progressivism in understanding the history of philosophy, and the reversed theme of the harmony between Plato and Aristotle culminated in the marginalization of Plato in reading Plato and Aristotle, and de facto non-transmission of Plato in Syriac or Arabic communities.

From this point, it can be quickly concluded that Averroes, along with his near predecessor Alfarabi, was among faithful adherents of the tradition formed in late antiquity or early medieval period. Indeed, Alfarabi, in his *Attainment of Happiness*, envisions Aristotelian theoretical perfection as the key to the ultimate human happiness and argues that it is the common theme between Plato and Aristotle. His *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* shows certain Aristotle-centric progressivism with countless misleading remarks on Plato. Given that Averroes utilizes much of Alfarabi's works in writing the commentary, we may conclude that Averroes followed sincerely in his predecessors' footsteps.

However, as we have seen in Chapter 6, there are some significant differences between Alfarabi and Averroes. First, Alfarabi does not seem to share the same negative emotive appraisal of dialectics as Averroes. As we have seen in Chapter 4, the devaluation of dialectics and its role in Plato's philosophy construe one of the key transformations in the commentary. This feature is comprehensible only in the context of the rivalry of Averroes with the Islamic theologians. Second, Alfarabi, in his original treatises, attempts a Neoplatonic supplement or amalgamation of Platonic contents. Even though there is a difference in contexts between an original treatise and a commentary, this feature is absent in Averroes.

What can be concluded from the discussions above is that Averroes is not just an adherent to Aristotelian tradition but a stringent, almost uncompromising Aristotelian. His difference does not lie in that he was creative or innovative in utilizing practices before him. On the contrary, his uniqueness consists of his adamant devotion to Aristotelian supremacy, unrivaled even by Alfarabi, daring to perfect Plato's *Republic* with his Aristotelian convictions while rejecting any Neoplatonic addition, which was quite prevalent among medieval Islamic philosophers. For Averroes, Aristotle is the seal of the philosophers at the very literal level.

In a sense, Averroes is also beyond even Aristotle himself about the supremacy of Aristotelian theoretical sciences. As Butterworth has noted, the basic premise throughout the commentary seems to be that "it is possible to use demonstrative reasoning concerning practical matters."¹²² It is awkward from a Platonic viewpoint, but also in Aristotle's own eyes because Aristotle says in *Nicomachean Ethics* as below.

"And we must also remember what has [25] been said before, and not look for precision in all things alike, but in each class of things such precision as accords with the subject matter, and so much as is appropriate to the inquiry. For a carpenter and a geometer look for right angles in [30] different ways; the former does so in so far as the right angle is useful for his work, while the latter inquires what it is or what sort of thing it is; for he is a spectator of the truth. We must act in the same way, then, in all other matters as well, that our main task may not be subordinated to minor questions. Nor must we demand the [1098b1] cause in all matters alike; it is enough in some cases that the fact be well established, as in the case of the first principles; the fact is a primary thing or first principle."¹²³

In this passage above, Aristotle espoused a pluralism in methodology depending

¹²² Charles E. Butterworth, *Philosophy, Ethics, and Virtuous Rule: A Study of Averroes' Commentary on Plato's "Republic"* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1986), 39.

¹²³ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a17-b1

on the subject matter of specific sciences. While Aristotle is for the possibility of a demonstrative science in a more theoretical matter, he may not be for the possibility of a demonstrative practical philosophy, which Averroes dreams of. Butterworth has commented, “It seems as though Averroes recognizes the merit of Plato’s teaching as long as it is in accord with Aristotle’s and opts for Aristotle’s when there is discord between the two. Nonetheless, many of his suggestions about the relationship between theory and practice show that he shares Plato’s opinion about the need for and the possibility of theory guiding practice.”¹²⁴ I would instead like to say that there is a less straight distinction between theory and practice in Plato than in Aristotle. Still, I agree with Butterworth that Averroes’s Aristotelianism sometimes goes beyond Aristotle himself. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Averroes’s firm stance may have been intensified by his experience as a Muslim Aristotelian against Muslim theologians who try to demolish the possibility of any Aristotelian science.

Confirming that Averroes did not restrain his Aristotelian devotion even in a commentary on Plato may help us reappraise the degree of his Aristotelian attitude, though not in kind. Furthermore, this reappraisal in degree may contribute to the critique of contemporary readings or myths of Averroes among various discourses about Islam. Sharif Islam has acutely coined the term “Ibn Rushd Syndrome” to denote a tendency among Muslims and non-Muslims, that is, considering the non-transmission of Averroes into the later Islamic world as an exemplary case for the cause of the decline of the Islamic world in the modern era.¹²⁵ Had Muslims, for

¹²⁴ Charles E. Butterworth, *Philosophy, Ethics, and Virtuous Rule: A Study of Averroes’ Commentary on Plato’s “Republic”* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1986), 39.

¹²⁵ Islam, Sharif, *The Ibn Rushd Syndrome: In Search of Rational Muslim* (July 10, 2018).1-2.

example, read Averroes and retained their rational attitude, the West could not have shamed the Islamic world with scientific and technological advances. This sentiment is aged and has circulated in intellectual and popular circles, as Muslim activist Ameer Ali and novelist Salman Rushdie say below.

“What is the link between this short history of free thinking in Islam and current violent reactions to challenges? It is, in fact, in the demise of free thinking that one sees the birth of blind faith, and when faith is based solely on imitating the past meticulously, uncritically, and passionately, that faith breeds ignorance and the mind of the faithful stagnates to become a repository of outdated facts and information...”¹²⁶

“Is it not time to raise the banner of Averroes to carry it forward? Is it not time to say that, in our era, his ideas suit everyone, the beggar as well as the prince?”¹²⁷

Interestingly, in both comments, Averroes’ rationalism is associated with an almost Kantian definition of enlightenment that stresses individual accountability for free thinking.¹²⁸ Islam notes that these comments “involve excessive, anachronistic and ahistorical emphasis on rationality.”¹²⁹ One may agree with their eagerness for freedom and discontent with contemporary affairs around the Islamic world. Still, it remains doubtful whether such comments assume an appropriate relationship between theory and society.

Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3211293> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3211293>

¹²⁶ Ameer Ali, “The Closing of the Muslim Mind.” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 27 (2007): 446. In Sharif Islam, “The Ibn Rushd Syndrome: In Search of Rational Muslim” SSRN(July 10, 2018):16

¹²⁷ Salman Rushdie, *Le Monde*, 16 Oct 1997. In Sharif Islam, “The Ibn Rushd Syndrome: In Search of Rational Muslim” SSRN(July 10, 2018): 19.

¹²⁸ “Enlightenment is the human being’s emergence from his self-incurred minority. Minority is inability to make use of one’s own understanding without direction from another. This minority is *self-incurred* when its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another,” Immanuel Kant, “An answer to the question: What is enlightenment? (1784)”, trans. Mary J. Gregor in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11.

¹²⁹ Sharif Islam, “The Ibn Rushd Syndrome: In Search of Rational Muslim” SSRN(July 10, 2018): 3.

Basic historical errors need to be mentioned. Averroes did indeed suffer oppression on account of his philosophical activity.¹³⁰ But, before marking it as a sign of the Islamic world's intellectual decline, one should consider the possibility that it may have been more of the result of the competition at court for royal patronage. Furthermore, the non-transmission of Averroes in the later Islamic world has more to do with the decline and demise of Muslim hegemony in medieval Spain rather than a decline in intellectual activities in the Islamic world. Muslims in other parts of the Islamic world continued to read and write philosophy other than Averroes.¹³¹

Also, what we have seen through reading Averroes' commentary on Plato seems to prove highly unlikely that such an association of the Averroistic rationalism with the Kantian concept of enlightenment. Averroes indeed set a high value on human reason. Otherwise, he would not have argued for the right to do philosophy. In this sense, Averroes is certainly a rationalist. But for Averroes, what can be achieved through human reason is in a perfective state, thanks to Aristotle's divine contribution to human sciences.¹³² With the preexistence of the seal of the philosophers, to be rational is not a matter of free thinking on an individual level but of correct adherence to Aristotelian accomplishments, even if it allows some degree of difference in opinions. Furthermore, even this imitating Aristotle is not

¹³⁰ Majid Fakhry, *Averroes: His Life, Works, and Influence*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 2.

¹³¹ For an introduction on this issue, see Peter Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World : A history of philosophy without any gaps, Volume 3*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

¹³² In his commentary on physics, Averroes is more explicit on this issue. "He completed, because none of those who followed him, to the present (i.e. a period of fifteen hundred years), added anything, nor did any of them find an error of any import in his words. That such excellence should inhere in a single individual is wondrous, and out of the ordinary; and when this disposition is found in a single human being, [that human being] is worthy of being (called) divine rather than human." [*Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis. Quartum volume; Aristotelis de physico auditu libri octo cum Averrois Cordubensis variis in eosdem commentariis*, Venice, 1562, f. 4 from Moseley, 387-8.

permitted for every human since, as we have seen in Chapter 4, studying philosophy is only allowed for people of a specific intellectual class, namely demonstrative ones. In sum, Averroes' rationalism can hardly perform the roles many people assign him.

People may be more interested in the Averroist tradition in Latin Christendom that is usually said to be succeeded by the Enlightenment. I would not argue against the importance of Averroist thinkers in the Western Enlightenment, which is beyond the purview of the paper. What I see problematic is that such a counterfactual expectation of Averroes and Averroist tradition helps to make intellectual activities by other philosophers in the Islamic world after Averroes invisible.

7.3. Conclusion

We mentioned Scylla and Charybdis in the introduction of this chapter. One who is eager to evade the danger of trivializing the commentary as a personal error risks falling into the danger of trivializing it as a banal historical instance. There is no way to deny that Averroes sincerely followed the tradition before him that resulted in the marginalization of Plato in reading classical philosophy. Yet Averroes's distinctive character is a difference in degree, not in kind from tradition. Averroes has a more adamant Aristotelianism, and this Aristotelianism is the one that awards supremacy to the theoretical philosophy of Aristotle over the practical part. In this respect, Averroes is still a rationalist, yet significantly different from the modern rationalist type. Averroes is not an advocate of free thinkers in a modern sense. He is also not a believer in scientific progress. Instead, science remains perfected by Aristotle. This conclusion may disappoint modern expectations toward Averroes,

but it can also encourage an adventure beyond the classical period of philosophy in the Islamic world.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

Faced with Averroes's Aristotelian interpretation of Plato in *Commentary on Plato's "Republic,"* this study tried to answer the following two questions: (1) How deep and broad this Aristotelian transformation is? (2) How could we understand such transformations? In Chapter 2, we found that the purpose of the *Republic* is changed into a source of demonstrative political science. In Chapter 4, we noticed the devaluation of dialectics that is the backbone of the original. Through a survey of the commentary's material in Chapter 5, we could conclude that there is a serious abridgment, omission, and replacement.

The climax of such transformation was the replacement in the middle of the second treatise of the Idea of the Good with the Aristotelian account of the human end. This replacement is compatible with other parts of Plato's philosophy only in a controversial sense and weakens other explanations in the second treatise of the commentary.

The Aristotelian transformation of the *Republic* in purpose, form, and content gains a sense in historical contexts of reading Plato and Aristotle. With their rivalry against the Hellenistic schools, Ancient Platonists had already approached Aristotle to reconstruct what they believed to be Plato's system. At the same time, Peripatetics regarded Plato's works from which Aristotle constituted progress. The latter eventually triumphed with the advent of Christianity and the reversal of the trend. The theme of harmony between the two that would mean the primacy of Plato for Platonists instead became a tendency to marginalize Plato and thus hinder its transmission into Syriac and Arabic communities. It is no wonder Alfarabi, one of the inheritors of the trend, shares Aristotle-centric progressivism.

As we have seen, however, Averroistic Aristotelianism is more than a sincere

observance of the tradition in degree. Averroes is much more stringent Aristotelian in that he has no remorse in using Aristotelian sources, even in his commentary on Plato, while refusing any Neoplatonic resources. Furthermore, he is more Aristotelian than Aristotle in believing in the possibility of demonstrative political science. As Butterworth notes, Averroes sometimes becomes a Platonist unintentionally in that he blurs the more apparent Aristotelian distinction between theory and practice.

Confirming the hegemonic position of Aristotle in the history of Islamic philosophy, it also shows that the exact form of Aristotelianism was not the same among Muslim philosophers. Furthermore, it also helps debunk the myth of Averroes as the road not taken for the Islamic civilization. People readily associate Averroes's rationalism with an image of modern enlightenment. However, Averroes's rationalism is more a matter of adherence to the perfected science, that is, of Aristotle.

In retrospect, starting from just one piece of Averroes's collection, this study came to treat Averroes's Aristotelianism in general. This study would have benefitted much if conducted with a much broader comparison with other parts of Averroes's collection since Averroes had left a vast range of commentarial legacy in many parts of Aristotelianism.

I hope this study will help anyone researching the history of reading Plato and Aristotle, especially in the Islamic world. This research seems to have at least two more advantages in that it may show how studying late antiquity may help Islamic Studies when it comes to studying classical Islamic philosophers, including Averroes and Alfarabi. Their distinct and incomprehensible features may have their origin in late antiquity and, though looking at the other context does not solve the

problem itself, may provide one with useful resources.

Also, by refuting the Ibn Rushd Syndrome, we may have shown the necessity of studying post-classical philosophers in the Islamic world. Ungrounded expectations toward Averroes strengthen the ignorance about them, and this ignorance again strengthens these ungrounded expectations toward Averroes as the road not taken for the Islamic civilization. Understanding the true nature and the limitation of Averroes's Aristotelianism may help one to escape this myth.

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Abstract

이븐 루쉬드, 즉 아베로에스의 『플라톤의 국가에 대한 주석』은 중세 이슬람 세계에서 흔하지 않은 플라톤의 대화편 『국가』에 대한 아베로에스의 주석이라는 점에서 주목할 만하다. 많은 연구가 플라톤이 자신의 대화편에서 제시한 소재와 주제들이 이슬람 세계라는 다른 맥락에서 어떻게 수용되고 비판받는지를 다루어 왔다. 그렇지만, 아리스토텔레스의 『정치학』 원고의 부재로 대신 쓰인 『플라톤의 국가에 대한 주석』이 과연 얼마나 플라톤의 원전에 충실한지 의문을 가질 수 있다. 주석에 대한 개관은 아베로에스의 『플라톤의 국가에 대한 주석』이 실상 목적, 형식, 내용 모두에 있어 아리스토텔레스적 변형을 피하고 있음을 확인해준다. 플라톤의 『국가』는 단지 정치학의 교재로 이해될 수 없는 성격의 고전인 데 반해 아베로에스는 이를 아리스토텔레스적인 정치학, 즉 삼단논법에 따른 증명에 입각한 정치철학을 발견할 근원으로 이해한다. 아베로에스가 의도적으로 감행하는 변증술에 대한 평가절하는 『국가』의 중추를 뒤흔든다. 아울러 좋음의 이데아에 대한 설명을 누락하는 데서 절정에 이르는 『국가』에 대한 아리스토텔레스적 축약, 생략, 그리고 대체는 이 주석이 플라톤의 『국가』의 철두철미한 아리스토텔레스적 변형임을 보여준다. 이 논문에서는 우선 이러한 아리스토텔레스적 변동이 어떻게 일어나는지를 확인한 후, 이러한 변동을 어떻게 이해해야 하는지 탐구할 것이다. 아베로에스가 의존하는 전승사에 대한 검토는 이러한 변동이

단지 개인적인 오류가 아니라 플라톤과 아리스토텔레스 해석사에 뿌리 깊은 전통 중 하나에서 비롯된 것이면서도, 아베로에스 자신의 강경한 아리스토텔레스주의를 반영한 것이기도 함을 확인해줄 것이다. 『국가』 주석에서 엿보이는 이런 아베로에스의 아리스토텔레스주의에 대한 검토는 이슬람 세계에서 아리스토텔레스주의의 중요성을 다시 한번 확인하는 가운데, 근대에 발흥한 이븐 루쉬드에 대한 물역사적 신화를 재검토할 기회를 제공한다.