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## THE ARISTOTELIANISM OF AVERROES AND THE PROBLEM OF PORPHYRY'S *ISAGOGE*

### I

Ernest Renan has stated that «les Arabes ont accepté la culture grecque telle qu'elle leur est arrivée»<sup>1</sup>. In a general sense, this statement is correct. But Renan's aphorism does not seem to apply to individual philosophers, like Ibn Ruschd, who certainly had a «choix réfléchi»<sup>2</sup>. Averroes' preference was to concentrate on Aristotle of all the Greek philosophers available to him. He wanted to be «the» commentator of «the» Philosopher for the Arabic-speaking world<sup>3</sup>. In Averroes' view, Aristotle «founded and perfected Logic, Physics and Metaphysics»<sup>4</sup>. Because of this marvelous achievement, Averroes thought that the Philosopher deserved the appellation «divine» which the ancients had given to him<sup>5</sup>. To honor the Philosopher, Averroes produced commentaries on the Aristotelian treatises which were available to him in Arabic translations<sup>6</sup>. As a matter of fact, Averroes improved upon Porphyry as an Aristotelian Commentator in the sense that, while Porphyry had provided two commentaries for certain Aristotelian treatises<sup>7</sup>, a synoptic and a systematic, he added a third, the middle commentary, for some of the works of Aristotle on which he commented<sup>8</sup>.

1. E. Renan, *Averroes et L'Averroïsme* (Paris: Calman-Levy 1852) p. 93.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Averroes' admiration for the Stagirite was characterized by Renan as «admiration superstitieuse». *Ibid.*, p. 54.

4. From Malebranche's *Recherches de la Vérité*, quoted by Renan: op. cit., p. 54.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

6. For a complete list of Averroes' commentaries see *Aristotelis Opera cum Averroes Commentariis* (Venice, 1562-1574; reprinted Frankfurt. 1962).

7. E.g., the *Categories*. Simplicius, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, hereafter abbreviated as *CAG*, vol. VII, (Berlin: G. Reimer 1907), pp. 1-2.

8. In this category belong, e.g., *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. However, for each of the nine treatises of the *Organon* (e.g., the traditional six plus the *Poetics*, the *Rhetoric*, and Porphyry's *Isagoge*), Averroes wrote a middle commentary and an epitome. On this see Herbert A. Davidson, *Averroes: Middle Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge and on*



Given the fact that Averroes wanted to be «the» Commentator of Aristotle and nothing else, it is interesting to note that he wrote commentaries on at least two philosophical treatises which are non-Aristotelian, Plato's *Republic* and Porphyry's *Isagoge*<sup>9</sup>. The reason why Averroes commented on Plato's *Republic* instead of Aristotle's *Politics*, is that the latter work, as he put it, «has not yet fallen into our hands»<sup>10</sup>. The tactics of filling the gaps of the Aristotelian corpus by substituting Platonic dialogues for the missing treatises may be questionable and certainly comes as a surprise to the modern scholar. However, for Averroes and the other Islamic philosophers, it was quite natural to do so, since they had accepted the view that Plato and Aristotle were essentially in agreement. On this matter, as in so many others, the Islamic philosophers simply followed the established Greek commentary tradition which goes back to Porphyry<sup>11</sup>. It was Porphyry who put forward and ably defended the position that the two great Greek philosophers were in essential agreement, in spite of certain appearances to the contrary<sup>12</sup>.

On the other hand, the reason why Averroes felt the need to comment on the *Isagoge* was not only that Porphyry's treatise was incorporated into the *Organon* since late antiquity and it had received the attention of previous Arabic commentators such as, e.g., al-Kindi, al-Farabi, and al-Tayyib<sup>13</sup>. As Averroes put it in the closing paragraph of his commentary: «I was led to comment upon it (*Isagoge*) by friends in Murcia, men who are keen and eager for theoretical knowledge, may God show them mercy, and were it not for them, I would not have taken the trouble for two reasons»<sup>14</sup>. Accordingly, the purpose of producing a commentary on the *Isagoge* was to satisfy his friends rather than to fill a gap in the Aristotelian corpus, as was the case with the *Republic*.

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*Aristotle's Categories* (Cambridge, Mass: The Medieval Academy of America, and Berkeley: The University of California Press 1967, p. XII. Also N. Rescher, *Studies in the History of Arabic Logic* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press 1963), p. 13.

9. *Ibid.*, p. XI. Averroes commented also on Galen, but Galen was more of a physician, than philosopher.

10. Quoted by E. I. J. Rosenthal in *Aristotle's Commentary on Plato's Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1956), p. XIII.

11. J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre* (Hildesheim: G. Olms 1964, p. 68.

12. Since Porphyry's book is lost, the arguments by which he supported this thesis remains unknown to us.

13. For a complete list of translations and commentaries on the *Isagoge* in Arabic, I refer to K. Gyekye, *Arabic Logic* (Albany: SUNY Press 1979), pp. 16-19. Also R. Walzer, «Porphyry and the Arabic Transition». *Entretiens* XII (1965), pp. 275-299.

14. Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 27.



In the remainder of this revealing closing paragraph of his commentary, Averroes proceeds to state the two reasons, for which he was unwilling to comment on Porphyry's book. In a sense, Averroes is here criticizing Porphyry and his criticism is important on at least two counts. First, because it sharply contrasts with the general acceptance and praise of the *Isagoge* by Greek, Latin, Byzantine, Armenian, Syriac, and Arabic Aristotelian commentators<sup>15</sup>. Second, because it basically differs from the criticisms advanced against Porphyry in recent times by such eminent scholars as D. Ross, E. Moody, and M. Kneale<sup>16</sup>. The purpose of this study is to critically examine the problem which Porphyry's treatise presented to Averroes in his role as «the» Commentator of Aristotle, and to compare Averroes' critical remarks with those of the above mentioned historians of philosophy. From this examination, comparison and evaluation, it will become clear that the Arabic commentator had some hard words to say in his criticism of Porphyry's book. Even so, it will be shown that Averroes did not commit the errors which have led astray, in my opinion, Porphyry's modern critics one after the other. To appreciate Averroes' position, it will be helpful to put it in perspective. This will be attempted in the following section.

## II

To the philosophers of later antiquity as well as to the Christian and Islamic intellectuals, Porphyry was known not only as the careful editor of the *Enneads* and the formidable foe of Christianity<sup>17</sup>, but also as the competent commentator of Plato and Aristotle and, above all, as the author of the famous *Isagoge*, as his work on the «quinque voces» became known in the west<sup>18</sup>. This unfortunate title, *Isagoge* or *Eisagoge*, has become the source of much confusion and unfair criticism against Porphyry who has been held responsible for the corruption of certain Aristotelian logical doctrines. Specifically, de-

15. A. Busse, in CAG, Vol. IV, p. L. Also Gyekye, op. cit., pp. 16-19 and 159.

16. W. D. Ross, *Aristotle* (London: Methuen and Company Ltd., 1949, Fifth Edition, Revised), pp. 56-57; E. Moody, *The Logic of William of Ockham* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965, Re-issued), pp. 66-117; W. & M. Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975, Reprinted with corrections), pp. 187-188.

17. Porphyry was the author of a treatise *Against the Christians* in fifteen books: See A. Huley, *Porphyry's Work Against the Christians: An Interpretation* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Press 1933), pp. 5-10.

18. Ammonius titled his commentary: *Exegesis ton Pente Phonon*, in CAG, Vol. IV part 2, p. 1, and note 1 same page.



pending on whether the *Isagoge* is taken to be an introduction to Aristotle's *Topics* or *Categories*, Porphyry has been accused either of the «muddling» of Aristotle's doctrine of predicables or the «corrupting» of Aristotle's doctrine of categories. The former accusation is advanced by Ross, the latter by Moody.

These two scholars and, more recently, Martha Kneale think that Porphyry's fundamental error was that he, intentionally or not, added «species» to the fourfold division of Aristotle's predicables so that the Aristotelian doctrine of predicables was radically altered. According to these modern critics, Porphyry's treatise deserves condemnation rather than the praise which it traditionally has received. If the claims of Porphyry's critics were legitimate, then one would be puzzled reading statements like the following: «In fact Porphyry's *Isagoge* and his elementary commentary on the *Categories* are admirable introductions to the concepts of Aristotelian logic». And «*Isagoge* was used for many centuries in the east and west as the clearest and most practical manual of Aristotelian logic»<sup>19</sup>. But are they legitimate claims? What precisely do these claims amount to and how well are they founded? Did Porphyry err in the way his critics think he did? These are questions which deserve our attention before we proceed to comparing the modern criticisms with Averroes' critical comments.

Since I have discussed in detail elsewhere<sup>20</sup> the criticism of Porphyry's book by Ross, Moody, and Kneale, I should like to state here briefly the core of their positions and the common ground which they share. The basic point, on which all three of these scholars agree, is Porphyry's alleged addition of «species» to the list of Aristotle's predicables. In this regard, Ross comments, after the enumeration of the four Aristotelian predicables, as follows:

«This is Aristotle's classification of predicables which Porphyry later muddled hopelessly by reckoning «species» as a fifth predicable. The place of species in Aristotle's account is not as one of the predicables but as the subject;...<sup>21</sup>».

Evidently, Ross' thesis rests on the assumption that the *Isagoge* was

19. A. H. Armstrong, ed., *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1967), p. 281, and De L. O'Leary: *How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs* (London 1949), pp. 26-27, respectively.

20. «Aristotle's Doctrine of Predicables and Porphyry's *Isagoge*», accepted for publication in *The Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. XXIII, no. 1 (January 1985): 15-34.

21. W. D. Ross, op. cit., p. 57.



meant to be a commentary or an introduction to the *Topics*, and that Porphyry «muddled hopelessly» the Aristotelian doctrine of Predicables by counting «species» among the predicables. But Ross' assumption is questionable. So is Moody's assumption which takes the *Isagoge* as an introduction to the *Categories*<sup>22</sup>. Because of this, Moody has many charges against Porphyry but he does repeat Ross' accusation verbatim and accepts it as valid<sup>23</sup>. Unlike Moody, M. Kneale is more cautious and states that Porphyry's book was intended as an introduction to «logic in general», not just the *Categories*<sup>24</sup>. Yet she repeats the grave charge that «In his work called *Eisagoge*, Porphyry added species as one of the heads of classification requiring explanation»<sup>25</sup>.

From the above considerations it follows that these three scholars criticized Porphyry basically for the same reason, that is, the «fifth predicable». The questions which must be raised here is whether Porphyry really misinterpreted Aristotle or his critics misunderstood Porphyry. That the latter may be the case is suggested by the fact that Porphyry had the reputation of a careful and competent commentator<sup>26</sup>. It is difficult to accept that Porphyry was not aware of the fact that Aristotle's list had only four predicables, or that he carelessly (case of Ross) or maliciously (case of Moody) altered the Aristotelian doctrine. On the other hand, to simply assert that such outstanding scholars misunderstood and unfairly criticized Porphyry would not do unless an explanation of the cause of such misunderstanding can be provided. In my judgment, there are two reasons which explain how easy it was for Porphyry and his *Eisagoge* to be misunderstood.

The first reason has to do with the title of Porphyry's book. Since *Isagoge* means introduction, the question arises as to what it does introduce. Boethius, the Latin commentator, thought that *Isagoge* was an introduction to the *Categories*<sup>27</sup>. This and the fact that *Isagoge* was listed as the first treatise of the *Organon* can easily mislead the modern scholar about Porphyry's intention in writing the treatise (case of Moody). However, to take the *Isagoge* as an introduction to the *Topics*, one should consider the content of the treatise which is apparently similar to what Aristotle had called «predicables» (case of Ross). But both of these assumptions are unjustifiable on a closer scrutiny.

22. E. Moody, op. cit., pp. 66 ff.

23. *Ibid.*

24. M. Kneale, op. cit., p. 187.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Simplicius refers to Porphyry as «the source of all good things», op. cit., p. 2.

27. *Boethii in Isagogem Commentarium*, S. Brandt, ed., (Leipzig: G. Freytag 1906), p. 15.



For one thing, a series of Greek commentators considered the *Isagoge* as an introduction to «philosophy in general»<sup>28</sup> and to «dialectical methods»<sup>29</sup> which, of course, includes Aristotle's logical treatises but goes beyond them<sup>30</sup>. For another thing, a careful reading of the opening paragraph of Porphyry's book suggests that *eisagogic* was not the book, as such, but the manner in which Porphyry was planning to treat the subject matter of this treatise, i.e., the «pente phonai» or «quinque voces»<sup>31</sup>. Actually this is the title of the book as found in Ammonius' commentary<sup>32</sup>. In the light of this, to translate the title of Porphyry's book as introduction is misleading.

The second reason why the above mentioned modern critics misunderstood Porphyry relates to the fact that none of these scholars attempted a detailed comparison and analysis of the Aristotelian and Porphyrian lists of predicables. The apparent discrepancy between Aristotle's fourfold division and Porphyry's fivefold division of predicables combined with the false assumption that the *Isagoge* was meant to be an introduction to this or that specific work of Aristotle and nothing more, proved sufficient to lead astray Porphyry's modern critics. But had Porphyry simply added species to Aristotle's predicables, he would have obtained the following incredible list: genus, definition, species, property, accident. Instead, what we find in the *Isagoge* is the list: genus, differentia, species, property, accident. Definition, which appears on the Aristotelian division, has been substituted by two predicables, differentia and species, on Porphyry's list. So it is plainly false that Porphyry added species to Aristotle's predicables, as he had repeatedly but unfairly been accused. Porphyry's accusers say nothing about differentia which as a predicable was very problematic for Aristotle himself and which Porphyry tried to accommodate by following new principles, different from the ones which Aristotle followed in his classification<sup>33</sup>. The application of Aristotle's two classifying principles, i.e., essential predication and convertible predication, do not distinguish between genus and differentia<sup>34</sup>. Yet Aristotle himself

28. Ammonius, op. cit., p. 20 ff; Elias, CAG, XVII, part 1, p. 35 ff; David, CAG XVIII, part 2, p. 83 ff.

29. To the three Porphyrian methods, *horismos*, *diairesis*, *apodeixis*, the Alexandrian commentators added *analysis*. See note No. 28 above.

30. This is so to the extent that these treatises make use of the five *phonai*.

31. In Greek and Latin these five predicables are, respectively: *genos*, *eidos*, *diaphora*, *idion*, *symbebekos*; genus, species, differentia, proprium, accident.

32. See note No. 18 above.

34. That is the reason why Aristotle in *Topics*, 101 b 18-19 had to group together the genus and the differentia in spite of their different ontological status.



considered the conclusion of these two predicables as a fallacy to be avoided<sup>35</sup> Porphyry's list tries to avoid precisely this discrepancy.

Even the preceding condensed exposition suffices to show that, Porphyry's modern critics have been rather severe and unfair in their criticisms of the *Isagoge*. Let us now turn and examine Averroes' critical remarks of the same book in order to see how they compare with the modern ones. Once again, it will be necessary for the present purposes to confine our research to Averroes' middle commentary especially the passages related to the number of predicables and the revealing last paragraph<sup>36</sup>.

### III

As I pointed out at the beginning of this paper, Averroes did not seem enthusiastic about writing a commentary on the *Isagoge*. Given his commitment to the Aristotelian corpus, his reaction seems reasonable at first glance. But, given also the long commentary tradition, Greek and Arabic, which had regarded the *Isagoge* as part of the *Organon*, it is not easy to see how Averroes could have avoided commenting on Porphyry's book. To leave it aside altogether would be definitely a radical departure from the accepted tradition. One may wonder what the Arabic philosopher would have done, had his friends in Murcia not obliged him to comment on this book. He tells us that we would not have taken the trouble simply because it was not worth taking. But his remark sounds more as a hint against al-Farabi and other Islamic commentators, who had commented enthusiastically on the *Isagoge*, rather than as a serious criticism of Porphyry's book. However, Averroes gives two reasons to explain the worthlessness of the task of commenting on the *Isagoge*. I should like to quote here Averroes reasons, analyze their content and weigh their value:

«One (reason) is that I do not consider the *Isagoge* necessary for beginning the art of logic, since its contents cannot belong to the entire art, as some imagine; for if what has been stated here in connection with the definition of the predicables is demonstrable, it belongs to the *Posterior Analytics*, while if it is generally accepted opinion, it belongs to the *Topics*. In fact Porphyry

35. *Topics*, 122 b 15-18.

36. In his middle commentary on the *Isagoge*, Averroes does not mention other predicables than those of Porphyry's list. C.E. Butterworth states that he had done so in the short commentary in the *Isagoge* as well as the short commentary on *Topics*. See *Averroes' Three Short Commentaries*, (Albany: SUNY Press 1977), p. 111.



made these statements not as definitions, but rather as explanations of the meanings of the terms in question (so that they might be understood) whenever Aristotle uses them in his book. From this point of view the *Isagoge* is not a part of logic. Al-Farabi, however, implies that it is a part of logic. This is one thing that would have dissuaded me from commenting upon the book as part of my commentary on the books of Aristotle, and the second is that what this man says in the *Isagoge* is self-explanatory»<sup>37</sup>.

I should like to begin with Averroes' second reason which is the shorter of the two and the easier to grasp. The commentator states that what Porphyry says in the *Isagoge* is «self-explanatory». This statement is correct but amounts to a praise rather than criticism of Porphyry's work. Porphyry's style is certainly clear and lucid. It has been praised by Eunapius who contrasted Porphyry's lucidity to Plotinus' profundity and obscurity<sup>38</sup>. This is especially true in the case of *Isagoge* which, as the author explains at the opening paragraph, was intended to provide a summary and classification of the five *phonai* used by the philosophers in such dialectic methods as definition, division, demonstration, etc.<sup>39</sup>. Porphyry also points out at the very beginning of his treatise that he will deal with genus, differentia, species, property, and accident in an introductory and elementary manner so that he would not bother the beginner student with such difficult subjects as the ontological status of «genera and species». So he left aside the questions whether «genera and species» exist in themselves or reside in mere concepts; whether they are corporeal, if they exist, or incorporeal; and whether they are apart from sensible things or dependent on them<sup>40</sup>. These difficult questions were debated by Platonists, Aristotelians, Stoics, and later by Medieval Christian and Arabic philosophers for centuries. Providing answers to these questions, which were left unanswered by Porphyry, was one of the reasons for writing commentaries on Porphyry's treatise as Boethius' two commentaries makes it perfectly clear<sup>41</sup>. But Averroes is correct in saying that the text of *Isagoge* as such is easy to comprehend and self-explanatory. In fact Averroes' middle commentary is a paraphrase of the Greek text with very few comments<sup>42</sup>. In this respect,

37. Davidson's translation, op. cit., p. 27.

38. *The Lives of the Sophists* (London: W. Heineman 1922), p. 456. In recent times T. Tricot has expressed similar admiration. See *Isagoge* (Paris: T. Vrin 1947), p. 7.

39. The originators of the three methods were respectively: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

40. *Isagoge*, I a 8-14.

41. See note No. 27 above.

42. Davidson, op. cit., p. XIX, mentions only six passages which are critical of



Averroes' reluctance to comment on the *Isagoge* does not mean by any means that he held the little treatise in contempt, because it confused or misrepresented Aristotelian doctrines. Rather Averroes' claim is that Porphyry's work is so lucid and so elementary that the need for a commentary does not arise.

The first reason which Averroes gives in explaining why he was unwilling to write a commentary on the *Isagoge* is more complex than the second and deserves special attention. There is a number of points which the commentator makes in this connection. He states, for instance, that he does not «consider the *Isagoge* necessary for beginning the art of logic» which implies that others considered it so. The ground on which Averroes bases his consideration is that, in his opinion, the content of *Isagoge* «cannot belong to what is common to the entire art». By art of logic he means not only the dialectic, analytic and sophistic branches of Aristotle's logic but also the rhetoric and the poetic one<sup>43</sup>. Furthermore, Averroes contends that «the *Isagoge* is not part of logic» as al-Farabi had thought, and that, therefore, commenting on this treatise should not be a part of his «commentary on the books of Aristotle»<sup>44</sup>.

My first observation in this connection, is that Averroes' criticism is based on his conception or rather misconception of «the art of logic». Certainly Aristotle would have been embarrassed by Averroes' inclusion in this «art of logic» Aristotle's *Ars Rhetorica* and *Ars Poetica*. Given his fivefold conception of the art of logic, Averroes is able to challenge al-Farabi's contention that the *Isagoge* is part of logic. But this kind of criticism is, once again, extreme to the merit or demerit of Porphyry's treatise as such. Besides, by the same reasoning Averroes would have to exclude from logic such Aristotelian treatises as, e.g., the *Categories* and the *De Interpretatione* which do not belong to any of the five branches of the art of logic as conceived by Averroes. Yet, this did not prevent Averroes from commenting on these Aristotelian treatises. Evidently the Arabic philosopher used two different criteria in judging Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories* and their qualifications as parts of logic.

The only point in Averroes' criticism which is directly related to the text of *Isagoge* is his reference to whether this treatise is «necessary for beginning the art of logic». It may be noted here that the *Isagoge* opens with a statement to the effect that knowledge about the predicables or five *phonai* is both useful (*chresimon*) and indispensable or necessary (*anangaion*) for an understanding of Aristotle's categorial doctrine and, in general, for using the various dia-

Porphyry's views. Of these only the first two are substantial.

43. *Ibid.*, p. XI.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 27.



lectical methods<sup>45</sup>. Now given that the term «necessary» has many senses, as Aristotle has pointed out<sup>46</sup>, the Greek commentators of the *Isagoge* interpreted it in the sense of «that which is of great benefit»<sup>47</sup>. In this sense, the *anangaion* and the *chresimon* are almost equivalent. However, in Averroes' view, in order for the *Isagoge* to be considered «necessary» for the art of logic, its content would have to apply to every branch of art, which is impossible. For, as Averroes put it, «if what has been stated here in connection with the definitions of the predicables is demonstrable, it belongs to the *Posterior Analytics*, while if it is generally accepted opinion it belongs to the *Topics*». In other words it cannot belong to both in the same sense. But this is begging the question. The statements of the *Isagoge* were not meant to be formal definitions which at least in the case of highest genus, is impossible<sup>48</sup>. Besides, Porphyry does not make up these explanatory statements, he simply borrows them from his predecessor, «especially the Peripatetics»<sup>49</sup>.

The important point to be emphasized here is that Averroes' reluctance to provide a commentary on the *Isagoge* has nothing to do with the merit of his doctrine of predicables. It has much to do with Averroes' conception of the «art of logic» and its parts as well as with the enthusiasm with which some of his predecessors had commented on the *Isagoge* which they considered as part of logic as the «necessary» introduction to the entire art of logic, including rhetoric and poetics. Besides, in Averroes' view, Porphyry's work being straight-forward and self-explanatory stands in no need for a commentary. It remains then to compare Averroes' critical comments with those of Porphyry's modern critics.

#### IV

Averroes had occasion to criticize and correct several points of Porphyry's statements about the nature of the five predicables and their relations to each other. For instance, regarding Porphyry's definition of genus as «that which is predicated of a number of things that differ in respect to

45. These branches of logic correspond to the five types of syllogism: the demonstrative, the dialectic, the sophistic, the rhetorical, and the poetic. *Ibid.*, p. XIV.

46. *Metaphysics*, 1015 a 20 ff.

47. *Ibid.* 23-24.

48. The Aristotelian standard definition by genus and differentia does not apply to genus generalisimum, since there is no genus higher than that which is to be defined.

49. *Isagoge* 1 a 15-16.



species, by way of stating of what it is»<sup>50</sup>, which is actually Aristotle's definition (*Topics* 102 a, 32-33), Averroes notes that this definition distinguishes genus only from the ultimate species. He also suggests that the definition of genus as formulated by al-Farabi is preferable. Al-Farabi's definition reads as follows: «the more general of two general terms that can be given in reply to the question what is this thing»<sup>51</sup>. In another occasion, Averroes remarks that Porphyry's definition of the individual term as «that which is predicable of a single thing» is applicable only to individual accidents and does not encompass the individual substances which are predicated of nothing. He goes on to suggest that, the description of the individual term should be corrected along Aristotelian lines as: «that which is not predicable of a number of things»<sup>52</sup>. In this way the contrast between individual terms is made clear and sharp<sup>53</sup>.

However, nowhere in his commentary on the *Isagoge* does Averroes criticise Porphyry for altering Aristotle's doctrine of predicables by reckoning the «species» as a fifth predicable. On this point, Averroes and Porphyry's modern critics do not agree. Yet Averroes was aware of the fact that Aristotle's list of predicables does not include «species», as is evident from his epitome of the *Topics*<sup>54</sup>. The explanation of this difference is that the Arabic philosopher, unlike Porphyry's modern critics, did not make the mistake to consider the *Isagoge* as an introduction to a specific Aristotelian treatise, but «to the science of logic»<sup>55</sup>. Interestingly enough, Averroes refers to a list of eight predicables in his epitome of the *Isagoge*<sup>56</sup>. This enlarged list includes the five predicables of Porphyry's list and the following three: definition, description, and «the statement which is neither definition nor description». Of these three predicables, definition was included in Aristotle's list, while description renders presumably Porphyry's «hypographe» which was intro-

50. Davidson, op. cit., p. 7.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 8. Also S. M. Afnan in *Avicenna* (London 1958), p. 94, states that Avicenna had found fault with Porphyry's definition of genus, but he goes on to quote as Avicenna's the definition of genus what is found in *Isagoge*, 1 a 15-16.

52. Davidson, op. cit., p. 12.

53. Aristotle states that «By universal I mean that which may naturally be predicated of many things; by individual, that which may not». *De Interpretatione*, 17 a 39-40.

54. Butterworth, op. cit., p. 52.

55. Davidson, op. cit., p. 6. Averroes opens his commentary in this way: «The intention of the present work is to explain the contents of Porphyry's introduction to the science of logic».

56. Butterworth, op. cit., pp. 42 and 111.



duced to account for cases in which a standard definition by genus and differentia was not possible, e.g., in the case of «sumum genus»<sup>57</sup>. As for «the statement which is neither definition nor description», it is not clear as to what it may refer. Butterworth's commentary is not very helpful on this point<sup>58</sup>. It is possible that the statement refers to the sixth predicable introduced by al-Kindi, that is, the proper name considered as a predicable term<sup>59</sup>.

It is also significant that Averroes, in his comments on that passage of the *Topics* where Aristotle presents the list of four predicables, tries to justify Aristotle's omission of the species, and yet he ends up with a fivefold list of predicables: definition, genus, differentia, property and accident<sup>60</sup>. This could be interpreted as evidence of Porphyry's influence on Averroes or of his conviction that differentia should be included in the list of predicables as separate from genus. At any rate, this fact clearly indicates that Averroes, unlike Ross, Moody, and Kneale, was aware of the problematic nature of the differentia considered in its function as a predicable. In this sense, Averroes was closer to Porphyry and could understand the Neoplatonist commentator of Aristotle better than the modern historians of philosophy have been able to do.

## V

In conclusion it can be said that Averroes, in his role as commentator of Aristotle, faced the problem of what to do with Porphyry's *Isagoge* which by that time had become an inseparable part of the *Organon*. Because he found the content of *Isagoge* self-explanatory, and because he did not consider it as forming part of the art of logic, as he understood it, Averroes had resolved not to waste his time commenting on Porphyry's treatise, till his friends

57. See note No. 48 above.

58. Gyekye goes so far as to criticize Porphyry not of making the species a predicate, as Ross, Moody, and Kneale have done, but of making the individual term a predicate, op. cit., p. 189. Gyekye is mistaken in his criticism because Porphyry has clearly stated that the common characteristic shared by all the predicables is that they are «predicated of many things» (*Isagoge*, 4 a 36). This rules out the individual term as a predicable.

59. Rosenthal, op. cit., p. 35, «By assigning the individual to a separate class of being this work is in fact adding a sixth 'voice' to the five 'voices' of Porphyry and this makes a significant departure from the system of the latter». This passage provides another answer to Gyekye's unsupported suggestion. See note No. 58, above.

60. Butterworth, op. cit., p. 52.



persuaded him to do otherwise. Considering the long series of Greek, Syrian, and Arabic commentators who had commented enthusiastically on this treatise, Averroes stands out as a philosopher who expressed reservations about the value of the *Isagoge* which could not serve as an introduction to logic, as understood by this Aristotelian commentator. In this sense, Averroes can be seen as a forerunner of that group of modern scholars who have advanced severe criticisms against Porphyry in our times.

Yet when Averroes' critical remarks are compared with the basic complaint underlying all modern attacks on Porphyry, that is, his consideration of the species as a fifth predicable, we see that Averroes was entirely unaware of what has vexed modern scholarship in excess. There is no hint in his commentary that Porphyry misinterpreted Aristotle by adding «species» to the lists of predicables, precisely because Averroes, unlike Porphyry's modern critics, did not view *Isagoge* as a commentary on a specific Aristotelian doctrine. For him the *Isagoge* was an unnecessary introduction to the «art of logic». In this sense Averroes was closer to the Greek commentator who had considered Porphyry's work as an introduction to philosophy in general. But, unlike Averroes, the Greek commentators had found in the *Isagoge* a useful tool for exercises in the dialectical methods. Although Averroes does not deny the utility of Porphyry's work, he cannot see it as part of logic. Nor can he accept that Aristotle, who founded and completed this discipline, would have failed to provide us with a treatise similar to *Isagoge*, if such an introductory treatise was really needed.

Taking under consideration Averroes' commitment to the Aristotelian corpus and his pathological admiration for the Stagirite, it is not difficult to understand why he did not apply the same criterion in the case of such Aristotelian treatises as the *Categories* or the *De Interpretatione* which fall outside the theory of syllogism in any of the five kinds as specified by Averroes himself. I think that Davidson is correct in his statement that Averroes' «comments reflect his different attitude to Porphyry and Aristotle... Averroes does not hesitate to call attention to mistakes he believes Porphyry made... but rather than criticizing Aristotle, he explains away the difficulties»<sup>61</sup>. However, it is to Averroes' credit that at least he did not criticize Porphyry for misinterpreting Aristotle's doctrine of predicables. In this essential point, he differs from Porphyry's modern critics.

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61. Davidson, op. cit., p. XIX.



# Ο ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΙΣΜΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΒΕΡΡΟΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΠΡΟΒΛΗΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΟΡΦΥΡΙΟΥ

## Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η

Ὁ κατ' ἐξοχήν σχολιαστής τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους, γιὰ τὸν Ἀραβικὸ κόσμον, Ἀβερρόης ἔχει ἐπίσης σχολιάσει καὶ τοῦ Πορφυρίου τὴν *Εἰσαγωγή*. Ἀντίθετα πρὸς ἄλλους Ἀραβες, Λατίνους ἢ Βυζαντινοὺς σχολιαστὲς ποὺ εἶχαν ἀφιερῶσει ἐνθουσιώδη ὑπομνήματα στὸ μικρὸ ἀλλὰ σημαντικὸ ἔργο τοῦ Νεοπλατωνικοῦ φιλοσόφου, ὁ Ἀβερρόης παίρνει καθαρὰ κριτικὴ θέση ἀπέναντι τοῦ Πορφυρίου. Ἀπὸ τὴν ἄποψη αὐτὴ ὁ Ἀβερρόης δύναται νὰ θεωρηθεῖ πρόδρομος συγχρόνων ἐρευνητῶν, ὅπως οἱ D. Ross, E. Moody καὶ M. Kneale, ποὺ ἔχουν ἀσκήσει αὐστηρὰ κριτικὴ κατὰ τοῦ Πορφυρίου, τοῦ διαφθορέα τοῦ Ἀριστοτελισμοῦ, ὅπως ἐκεῖνοι νομίζουν.

Ἡ παροῦσα μελέτη ἐρευνᾷ τὸ πρόβλημα ποὺ δημιουργήσε ἡ *Εἰσαγωγή* τοῦ Πορφυρίου γιὰ τὸν Ἀραβὰ σχολιαστὴ τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους. Τὸ συμπέρασμα στὸ ὁποῖο καταλήγει εἶναι διττό. Πρῶτον, ἐπισημαίνεται ὅτι ὁ Ἀβερρόης εἶχε εἰδικoὺς λόγους ποὺ στηρίζουν τὴν κριτικὴ καὶ δικαιολογοῦν, κατὰ τὴ γνώμη του, τὶς ἐπιφυλάξεις του ἔναντι τοῦ Πορφυρίου ὡς αὐθεντικοῦ Ἀριστοτελικοῦ ἐρμηνευτῆ. Δεύτερον, παρατηρεῖται ὅτι οἱ λόγοι γιὰ τοὺς ὁποίους ὁ Ἀβερρόης θεώρησε καλὸ νὰ ψέξει τὸν Πορφύριο δὲν συμπίπτουν μὲ ἐκείνους ποὺ ἔχει προβάλει ἡ σύγχρονη κριτικὴ.

Σὲ ἄλλη ἐργασία ἔχουμε δείξει σαφῶς ὅτι ἡ σύγχρονη κριτικὴ κατὰ τοῦ Πορφυρίου εἶναι ἐσφαλμένη καὶ ἀβάσιμη γιὰτὶ στηρίζεται σὲ παρεξήγηση τῶν προθέσεων τοῦ συγγραφέα τῆς *Εἰσαγωγῆς* καὶ σὲ παρερμηνεία τῆς θεωρίας τῶν *κατηγορουμένων* ὅπως ἀναπτύσσεται ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀριστοτέλη καὶ τὸν Νεοπλατωνιστὴ φιλόσοφο. Χωρὶς νὰ εἶναι ἀναμάρτητη καθ'αυτὴ, ἡ κριτικὴ ποὺ ἀσκεῖ ὁ Ἀβερρόης κατὰ τοῦ Πορφυρίου, ἔχει τὸ πλεονέκτημα ὅτι τουλάχιστον ἀποφεύγει τὰ σφάλματα τῶν σύγχρονων κριτικῶν.

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