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Yaliya Michot

Al-Fârâbî and His Influence on The Early Avicenna:
The Evidence From The *Kitâb al-Mabda' wa'l-Ma'âd*

Edited by
Fehrullah Terkan
Şenol Korkut

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Düzenleme Komitesi
Prof Dr. Hayrani Altıntaş
Yard. Doç. Dr. Gürbüz Deniz
Arş. Gör. Şenol Korkut

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Elis Yayınları
İstanbul Cad. İstanbul Çarşısı 48/81 Ulus/Ankara
Tel/faks: (0312) 341 06 90
Web: <http://www.ankaraokulu.com/elisyayinlari.html>
e-mail: elis@ankaraokulu.com

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**AL-FÂRÂBÎ AND HIS INFLUENCE ON THE EARLY AVICENNA:
THE EVIDENCE FROM THE *KITÂB AL-MABDA' WAL-MA'ÂD***

Yahya Michot*

The high esteem in which Avicenna hold al-Fârâbî is well known. In his *Autobiography*, he recalls how it was only thanks to one of al-Fârâbî's works that he was finally able to understand Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. He was at that time a youth, still living in Bukhârâ, and had already attempted the *Metaphysics* forty times.¹ Then, much later on, about a year before his death, he wrote to al-Kiyâ:

As for Abû Nasr al-Fârâbî, he ought to be very highly thought of, and not to be weighed in the same scale with the rest: he is all but the most excellent of our predecessors.²

The great debt in many fields of his philosophy that the Shaykh al-Ra'îs acknowledges, and indeed owes, to the Second Master led various ancient and modern historians of Islamic thought to speak of them both together. They however did so without paying much attention to the particular doctrines in which they differ or are opposed. Some of their writings even became mixed up with each other, as is the case for example with the *Ta'liqât*.³ In our time, al-Fârâbî is still studied by some from an essentially Avicennan viewpoint.

Nevertheless, differences do exist between the two great *faylasûfs*, which some perspicacious analysts were able to point out, Ibn Taymiyya being one of them.⁴

* Prof. Dr., Oxford Center for Islamic Studies, İngiltere.

1 See the transl. by W. E. GOHLMAN, *Life*, p. 32-35.

2 AVICENNA, *Kiyâ*, transl. GUTAS, *Avicenna*, p. 64.

3 See Y. J. MICHOT, *Tables*.

4 See for example IBN TAYMIYYA, *MRK*, vol. I, p. 180. The Damascene theologian places al-Fârâbî among the « Qarmats and philosophizers who are of the opinion that the

So, much as our understanding of al-Fârâbî would benefit from a de-avicennization of our approach to his ideas, we should give equal attention to how Avicenna sometimes moved away from his predecessor and evolved his own distinctive, personal, views that were to become « standard Avicennism ». The aim of this paper is to document and analyze two cases of such an evolution.

Recent studies have questioned the historical value of al-Jûzjânî's biography of Avicenna.⁵ As far as his testimony on the composition of the *Shifâ's Physics* and *Metaphysics* is concerned, one need not hesitate to simply call him a liar when he claims that

the Master wrote down [...] the main topics without the presence of a book or source to consult, but entirely from his memory and by heart.⁶

The same again, when he writes in his introduction to the *Shifâ'*:

I pressed him to complete *The Cure*. He voluntarily applied himself with great earnestness to its composition, and in a period of twenty days he finished *Metaphysics* and *Physics* (except the two books on Zoology and Botany) without having available any book to consult, but by relying solely upon his natural talents.⁷

A page further on, al-Jûzjânî adds:

My purpose in recounting these stories is [...] to provoke wonder for his ability to compose the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* in a period of twenty days without having access to books but by taking dictation only from his heart.⁸

Messengers did not know the truths of the divine and universal sciences—this being only known, they claim, by those of the philosophizers who know it—, who say that the specificity of prophethood is to provide images (*takhyîl*), and who consider prophethood more eminent than other [things] for the crowd (*al-jumhûr*), not for the adepts of knowledge *, whereas Avicenna is one of those who * acknowledge that the Messenger knew the truths but say that he did not expound them and rather addressed the crowd by providing images—they thus relate the providing of images to his [way of] addressing [people], not to his knowledge *.

5 See for example Y. J. MICHOT, *Vizir*, p. 53*; *Réponse*, p. 159; D. GUTAS, *Avicenna*, p. 108-110.

6 Transl. by W. E. GOHLMAN, *Life*, p. 59.

7 Transl. by D. GUTAS, *Avicenna*, p. 41.

8 Transl. by D. GUTAS, *Avicenna*, p. 43.

Well, the disciple's reports did succeed in arousing people's admiration for his master. As for their correspondance to the truth, that is another matter. To be sure, S. Van Riet was right to observe that Avicenna almost never quotes anybody else in the *Metaphysics of The Cure*, except some Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic traditions.⁹ What, however, makes it impossible to believe al-Jūzjānī is the fact that, in the *Shifā's Ilāhiyyāt*, Avicenna quotes abundantly from himself, i.e. from one of his former works. It is indeed undeniable that many pages of his *Kitāb al-mabda' wa l-ma'ād - The Provenance and Return* are reproduced more or less verbatim in *The Cure*, with some passages re-phrased more clearly, or paraphrased, or put in another perspective, or simply suppressed.¹⁰

Avicenna composed the *Shifā's Ilāhiyyāt* during his stay in Hamadhān (405/1015-415/1024); more precisely between 412/1022 and 414/1024. Having refused to serve Hamadhān's new ruler, he was at that time hiding in the house of Abū Ghālib the Druggist. As for the *Kitāb al-mabda' wa l-ma'ād*, it had been written by the young Bukhārī philosopher some ten years earlier, in approximately 403/1013, during his stay in Jurjān.¹¹ The links between the two works are so manifest and substantial that—whatever al-Jūzjānī wants us to imagine—one must conclude that Avicenna had a copy of *The Provenance and Return* in front of him when he wrote the *Metaphysics of The Cure*.

The latter *summa* includes in effect a reworked version of many pages of *al-Mabda' wa l-ma'ād*. Or, we might say, those pages often read like a sort of draft of their counterparts in the *Shifā'*. When compared to what would become the main source-book of standard Avicennism, they offer an extremely interesting insight into an earlier stage of the development of his metaphysical ideas. They are therefore of the greatest relevance to mapping out the evolution of

9 See S. VAN RIET, *Données*, p. 318-320.

10 See the correspondences identified in the footnotes of AVICENNA, *Mabda'*, transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*. For an analyse of some correspondences and changes, see D. GUTAS, *Avicenna*, p. 290-292, 312. Many pages of *Provenance* are also reused in the *Najāt*.

11 For the chronology of these works, see Y. J. MICHOT, *Destinée*, p. 6-7; D. GUTAS, *Avicenna*, p. 98-99, 106-112, 145.

his doctrine—among other things, concerning his dependence on al-Fârâbî and his gradual progression away from him. We will consider here two passages that are particularly illustrative of this.¹²

Avicenna's purpose, in Section IV of the second Treatise of the *Kitâb al-mabda' wa l-ma'âd*, is to explain

how the secondary beings come from the first caused [being], that this is due to a multiplicity that necessarily follows from its essence, and that from the first caused [being] an intelligence, a soul, and a sphere necessarily follow...¹³

Notwithstanding important changes, the text of this section corresponds to the second half of Chapter 4 of the *Shifâ', Ilâhiyyât*, Book IX.¹⁴ In the latter work as in *Provenance*, the Shaykh al-Ra'is writes at some point that

in the separated intelligences no multiplicity is possible but as I say: the caused [being] is, by its own essence, of possible existence and, by the First, of necessary existence, the necessity of its existence being due to the fact that it intelligizes—it intelligizes its own essence and it intelligizes the First, compulsorily.¹⁵

In the *Ilâhiyyât*, Avicenna then adds:

12 Let us also mention briefly two other passages showing interesting evolutions. In *Provenance* (p. 60; transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 44), one reads: « According to this, temperate heat is not a cause of the existence of the psychic faculties but is disposing matter; it is not making it exist. » In the *Ilâhiyyât* (vol. II, p. 389; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p. 457), this sentence becomes: « According to this, temperate heat is a cause of the existence of the psychic faculties but *insofar* as it is disposing matter, not making it exist. »

In *Provenance* (p. 81; transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 58), one reads: « There are here simple and separated intellects that come to be (*taḥduthu*) in (*fi*) the bodies of humans. » In the *Ilâhiyyât* (vol. II, p. 408; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p. 486), this sentence becomes: « There are here simple, separated, intellects that come to be (*taḥduthu*) with the coming to be (*ma'a ḥudūth*) of the bodies of humans and do not become corrupted but survive [death]. »

13 AVICENNA, *Mabda'*, p. 78; transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 56.

14 AVICENNA, *Shifâ', Ilâhiyyât*, vol. II, p. 405-409; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p. 481-488.

15 AVICENNA, *Shifâ', Ilâhiyyât*, vol. II, p. 405; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p. 481 = AVICENNA, *Mabda'*, p. 79; transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 56. See also AVICENNA, *Najât*, p. 313.

As far as multiplicity is concerned, there must then necessarily be (*yakūna*), in it:

[1.] the fact (*ma'nā*) that it intelligizes its own essence as [being] of possible existence in its own right (*ḥayyiz*),

[2.] its intelligizing the necessity of its existence by the First, the Intelligible by Its essence,

[3.] its intelligizing the First.¹⁶

Some ten years earlier, in the *Kitāb al-mabda' wa l-ma'ād*, that is not exactly what the philosopher had written:

As far as multiplicity is concerned, there must then necessarily occur (*yaḥdutha*), in it:

[1.] the fact (*ma'nā*) of the possibility of existence,

[2.] the fact that it intelligizes its own essence and *thereby* is a substance (*yatajawharu bi-hi*),

[3.] the fact that it intelligizes the First.¹⁷

Comparing these two passages, one is bound to notice three important changes. (a) As the situation described is supposed to be eternal, Avicenna rightly replaces, in the *Ilāhiyyāt*, the word occur (*yaḥdutha*) he had used in *Provenance* with *be* (*yakūna*): in the separated intelligences, multiplicity does not appear in time but exists eternally. (b) In *Provenance*, there is a discrepancy between the first aspect of multiplicity and the two others, as the possibility of existence is not said to be the object of an intellection. This is duly corrected in the *Ilāhiyyāt*, with all the aspects of multiplicity being then related to processes of intelligizing.¹⁸ (c) The standard Avicennan

16 AVICENNA, *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, vol. II, p. 405-406; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p. 481-482. See also AVICENNA, *Najāt*, p. 313, which corresponds here, with minor changes, to the *Shifā'*, not to *Provenance*. The parallel passage of the *Ishārāt* (p. 174) is somehow closer to the *Shifā'*.

17 AVICENNA, *Mabda'*, p. 79; transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 56.

18 The same evolution reappears further in the text. In *Provenance* (p. 79; transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 57), one reads: « As a result of the fact that it is of possible existence in itself, the existence of the corporeity of the remotest sphere follows necessarily... » In the *Ilāhiyyāt* (vol. II, p. 406-407; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p.

doctrine of the triple intellection of the supralunar beings is clearly formulated in the *Ilâhiyyât*. Some ten years earlier, in this passage of *Provenance*, that is still far from being the case. As already said, there is no mention of an intelligizing of the possibility of existence. Moreover, there is no mention of the necessity of existence by the First. Instead, Avicenna speaks of

[2.] the fact that it intelligizes its own essence and *thereby is a substance* (*yatajawharu bi-hi*).

The terms *tajawhara bi* used in this sentence of *Provenance* disappear in the parallel passage of the *Ilâhiyyât* and, according to the lexicon of the *Avicenna Latinus*, are to be found nowhere in the *Metaphysics* of the *Shifâ'*.¹⁹ By contrast, and most interestingly for our concern, they appear regularly in the pages of the *Mabâdi' ârâ' ahl al-madînat al-fâdîla* in which al-Fârâbî offers his exposition of the process of supralunar emanation:

From the First emanates the existence of the Second. This Second is also an utterly incorporeal substance, and is not in matter. *It intelligizes its own essence* and it intelligizes the First. What it intelligizes of its own essence is nothing else than its essence. As a result of its intelligizing of the First, the existence of a third [being] follows necessarily from it; and *as a result of its substantification in its specific essence* (*wa bi-mâ huwa mutajawhar bi-dhâti-hi*), the existence of the First Heaven follows necessarily from it.²⁰

483), this sentence becomes: « As a result of the nature of possibility of existence which comes to it (*al-hâsila la-hu*) [and is] encompassed in its intelligizing of its own essence, the existence of the corporeity of the remotest sphere [follows necessarily]... »

In *Provenance* (p. 82; transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 59), one reads: « As a result of the fact that it intelligizes its own essence, the soul of the sphere must necessarily come from it whereas, as a result of the fact that it has a matter (*wa bi-mâ huwa dhû mâdda*), the body of the sphere must necessarily come from it. » In the *Ilâhiyyât* (vol. II, p. 409; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p. 487-488), this sentence becomes: « As a result of the fact that it intelligizes its own essence, a sphere with its soul and its body must necessarily come from it. »

19 AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. III. Avicenna uses *tajawhur* in the titles of a section of the *Najât* and of the *Ishârât* concerning the characters of bodies; see A.-M. GOICHON, *Lexique*, p. 52, no 116.

20 AL-FÂRÂBÎ, *Ârâ'*, transl. WALZER, *al-Farabi*, p. 101 (slightly modified).

In each of the eight following stages of the emanative process, the expression « As a result of its substantification in its specific essence... » (*fa-bi-mā yatajawharu bi-hi min dhāti-hi...*) is reused by al-Fārābī to explain the origin of a new celestial sphere. And each time, this operation of self-substantification is correlated to an operation of self-intelligizing. About his eighth separated being, the Second Master writes for example:

The existence of this [being] also is not in matter. *It intelligizes its own essence* and it intelligizes the First. *As a result of its substantification in its specific essence (wa bi-mā huwa mutajawhar bi-dhāti-hi)*, the existence of the sphere of Venus follows necessarily from it; and as a result of its intelligizing of the First, the existence of a ninth [being] follows necessarily from it.²¹

There is no doubt that it is this same correlation which reappears in Avicenna's *Provenance*.²² Of course, Avicenna has already moved far away from al-Fārābī in that book, since he distinguishes three intellects rather than two. The manner in which he then continues presenting the intellectual perception that the celestial intelligence has of the necessity of its essence by the First—a process of self-substantification—nevertheless bears the unmistakable mark of the Second Master's *Views*. In the *Ilāhiyyāt*, standard Avicennism will have definitively replaced this early Fārābian Avicennism.²³

21 AL-FĀRĀBĪ, *Ārā'*, transl. WALZER, *al-Farabi*, p. 103 (slightly modified).

22 In his *Kitāb al-'aql wa l-ma'qūl*, Miskawayh also adopts the Fārābian pattern of a double intelligizing in the supralunar intelligences, but without linking to it any kind of self-substantification; see G. CUVÉLIER, *Livre*, p. 119.

23 An even earlier text than the *Kitāb al-mabda' wa l-ma'ād*, the *Hikma 'Arūḍiyya* written by Avicenna before he left Bukhārā around 391/1001, also reminds the reader of al-Fārābī. Although the number of intelligizing operations is there fixed at two, not three, the correspondence with the Second Master's *Views* is nonetheless not as explicit as with the *yatajawharu bi-hi* in the passage of *Provenance* analyzed above. Therefore, as a result of its intelligizing the First, the existence of a separated intelligence follows necessarily from it; and as a result of its intelligizing its own essence, the existence of a non separated form [which is such that], when it exists or when its matter exists, the first [and] remotest body comes to be from them both. And, similarly, from that [other] intelligence follows necessarily, for this reason itself, what follows necessarily from it, so as to finally reach a number of eternal bodies from which the generable and corruptible bodies are able to come to be. At that moment the multiplicity of matters is able to exist, as we will explain, and multiple intellects

A second illustration of Fârâbian Avicennism can be found in another section of the second Treatise of *al-Mabda' wa l-ma'âd*, namely Section V: *On the modality (kayfiyya) of the generation of what is under the sphere from the sphere.*²⁴ The philosopher introduces this section by stating that,

when the celestial orbs have attained their complete number, the existence of the elements necessarily follows from them (*lazima 'an-hâ*).²⁵

A few lines further, he makes clear what he means:

These elements have a matter which they share (*mâdda tashtari-ku fi-hâ*) and forms²⁶ by which they are diverse (*ikhtalafa*). The diversity (*ikhtilâf*) of their forms must necessarily be following²⁷ the diversity of the powers of the spheres, whereas the common character (*ittifâq*) of their matter must necessarily be following²⁸ what the spheres have in common (*ittafaqa fi-hi*). Now, the spheres have in common a nature (*tabi'a*) [consisting in] demanding circular motion. What is demanded by that nature must therefore necessarily be a principle of matter. Similarly, that in which [the spheres] differ²⁹ must necessarily be³⁰ the principle of its disposition [to have] the diverse forms.³¹

Once more notwithstanding serious changes, the text of this section of *Provenance* corresponds to a chapter of the *Shifâ', Ilâhiyyât*,

are able to exist from the last Intelligence, after the multiple matters receiving them. (*Fa-idhan bi-mâ ya'qilu al-awwala yalzamu 'an-hu wujûdu 'aqlin mu'fâraqin wa bi-mâ ya'qilu dhâta-hu wujûdu sûratin ghayri mu'fâraqatin idhâ wujudat aw wujudat mâdda-tu-hâ fa-yakûnu 'an-humâ al-jismu al-awwalu al-aqsâ. Wa ka-dhâlika yalzamu 'an dhâlika al-'aqli li-hâdhâ al-ma'nâ bi-'ayni-hi mâ lazima 'an-hu, hattâ yantahiya ilâ 'iddatin min al-aqsâmi al-abadiyyati tata'attâ an takûna 'an-hâ al-aqsâmu al-kâ'inatu al-fâsîdatu. Fa-hîna'idhin tata'attâ an tûjada, ka-mâ nashrahu, kathratu al-mawâddi fayata'attâ an yûjada min (?) al-'aqli al-akhîri 'uqûlun kathîratun ba'da al-mawâddi al-qâbilati la-hâ al-kathîrati; AVICENNA, 'Arûdiyya, fo. 83 r.)*

24 AVICENNA, *Mabda'*, p. 83; transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 59.

25 AVICENNA, *Mabda'*, p. 83; transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 59.

26 suwar mss.: sûra ed. a form. On these mss., see Y. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 4.

27 tâbi'an mss.: tâbi'atan ed.

28 tâbi'an mss.: tâbi'at^{an} ed.

29 takhtalifu mss.: yakhtalifu ed.

30 wa yakûna + mss.: li-l-mâdda ed.

31 li-l-suwar mss.: li-l-sûra ed. AVICENNA, *Mabda'*, p. 83; transl. MICHOT, *Genèse*, p. 59.

Book IX; notably *Chapter V: On the process (hāl) of generation of the elements from the first causes*,³² where the two passages just quoted reappear with new components that are far from being meaningless:

when the celestial orbs have attained their complete number, the existence of the elements necessarily follows *after* them (*lazima ba'da-hā*).³³

And a few lines further:

These elements have a matter which they share and forms by which they are diverse. The diversity of their forms must necessarily be *something to which a diversity in the states of the spheres contributes* (*mim-mā yu'īnu fī-hi ikhtilāf fī ahwāl al-aflāk*), whereas the common character (*ittifāq*) of their matter must necessarily be *something to which a common character in the states of the spheres contributes* (*mim-mā yu'īnu fī-hi ittifāq fī ahwāl al-aflāk*). Now, the spheres have in common a nature (*tabi'a*) [consisting in] demanding circular motion. What is demanded by that nature must therefore necessarily *contribute to the existence of matter* (*yu'īnu fī wujūd al-mādda*). And that in which [the spheres] differ³⁴ must necessarily be the principle of *matter's* disposition [to take] the diverse forms.³⁵

We are so used to regarding the *Shifā'* as an exposition of Avicenna's standard philosophy that we take it for granted that he must somehow have always held the views he expresses in that *summa*. The substantial changes that he introduced when, some ten years after having composed his *al-Mabda' wa l-ma'ād*, he re-used parts of it in order to write this page of the *Ilāhiyyāt* completely dispel that illusion. And the evolution they demonstrate is so fundamental that one then finds oneself wondering how the Shaykh

32 AVICENNA, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, vol. II, p. 410-412; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p. 488-492.

33 Avicenna, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, vol. II, p. 410; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p. 488. See also AVICENNA, *Najāt*, p. 316, which corresponds here to the *Shifā'*, not to *Provenance*.

34 takhtalifu: yakhtalifu ed.

35 Avicenna, *Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt*, vol. II, p. 410; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p. 488-489. See also AVICENNA, *Najāt*, p. 317, which corresponds here to the *Shifā'*, not to *Provenance*.

al-Ra'îs could ever have subscribed to the ideas expressed in these lines of *Provenance*!

It is indeed an axiom of standard Avicennism that nothing proper can come out from matter, even from the matter of heavenly bodies.³⁶ Matter is always passive and activity only derives from forms, that are superior to it by definition. So, how could the sublunar world ever be generated from the heavenly sphere as claimed in the very title of Section V of the second Treatise of *al-Mabda' wa l-ma'âd*, rather than from the « first causes »—i.e. mainly, the Active Intelligence—as rightly corrected in the title of *Ilâhiyyât*, Book IX, Chapter V? And for the same reason, in the first sentence of this *fasl*, how could the affirmation that the existence of the elements necessarily follows *from* ('*an*) the celestial orbs fail to be changed into the utterly bland statement that it « necessarily follows *after* (*ba'da*) them », i.e. that it is the normal following stage of expansion of the creative emanation?

That the spheres do not play, in the prime matter and forms of the sublunar elements, the central role attributed to them in the last passage of *Provenance* quoted above is marvellously confirmed when Avicenna, reworking that passage so as to be able to include it in the *Ilâhiyyât*, completely reorients its meaning: three times, he rephrases parts of it so as to make clear that the celestial spheres do not do anything more than contributing to, or helping in,³⁷ the apparition of the elementary world, whose real principles have a higher ontological rank than them. To consider the circular motion natural to the heavenly spheres as a « principle of matter », as stated in *Provenance*, was wrong: the true source of prime matter is the *Dator formarum* and, at the very most, such a motion *contributes to the existence of matter* (*yu'înu fî wujûd al-mâdda*). Avicenna could have added, as this idea now fits nicely with his general doctrine of what I have, in former articles,³⁸ suggested calling « dés-altération and épiphanie », that the movements of the celestial mill help the Active

36 See Y. J. MICHOT, *Destinée*, p. 57-80.

37 The medieval latin translation has *cooperetur* (twice) and *sit adiuuans*; see AVICENNA LATINUS, *Philosophia*, vol. II, p. 488-489.

38 See Y. J. MICHOT, *Dés-altération; Réponse*, p. 150-152.

Intelligence in the production of our sublunar world just as, *mutatis mutandis*, the imagination « helps »—i.e. is not an obstacle to, or becomes a partner to—the intellect, or as drawings « help » a geometer to intuit the solution of a problem, or as rituals « help » someone to pray.

As for understanding how Avicenna ever seriously held the ideas he puts forward in the corresponding page of *Provenance*, one may once again invoke the influence of al-Fārābī. At the beginning of Chapter VIII of his *Mabādi' ārā' ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍila*, the Second Master indeed writes:

From the shared nature (*al-ṭabi'at al-mushtaraka*) belonging to the [celestial bodies] necessarily follows (*lazima 'an*) the existence of the prime matter which is shared (*al-māddat al-ūlā l-mushtaraka*) by everything that is below them; and from the diversity (*ikhtilāf*) of their substances [necessarily follows] the existence of multiple bodies diverse (*mukhtalif*) in substance.³⁹

In this text as in *Provenance*, Treatise II, Section V, it is the same direct and necessary dependency of the sublunar material world on the celestial spheres which is affirmed, without any role for an Active Intelligence. As for that, which the elements have in common, and that, whereby they are diverse, whereas al-Fārābī writes:

From the shared nature (*al-ṭabi'at al-mushtaraka*) belonging to the [celestial bodies] necessarily follows (*lazima 'an*) the existence of the prime matter which is shared (*al-māddat al-ūlā l-mushtaraka*) by everything that is below them,

Avicenna writes:

These elements have a matter which they share (*mādda tashṭarīku fī-hā*) [...] The common character (*ittifāq*) of their matter must necessarily be following what the spheres have in common (*ittafaqa fī-hi*). Now, the spheres have in common a nature (*ṭabi'a*) [consisting in] demanding circular motion.

And whereas the Second Master writes:

39 AL-FĀRĀBĪ, *Ārā'*, ed. WALZER, *al-Farabi*, p. 134.

From the diversity (*ikhtilâf*) of their substances [necessarily follows] the existence of multiple bodies diverse (*mukhtalif*) in substance,

the young Shaykh al-Ra'is writes:

These elements have [...] forms by which they are diverse (*ikhtalafa*). The diversity (*ikhtilâf*) of their forms must necessarily be following the diversity of the powers of the spheres.⁴⁰

The phrasing can be different but the references to a shared prime or elementary matter on this earth, and to a common or shared nature in the heavens, are similar and the whole doctrine is fundamentally identical. In the *Ilâhiyyât*, the cosmological materialist explanation which al-Fârâbî provides of the origins of our terrestrial world and which Avicenna shares in *Provenance* will give way to the more metaphysical and spiritualist approach, favouring the tenth angelic Intelligence over the planets, which has since become the standard Avicennan doctrine on the subject.

I imagine that a detailed study, in relation to al-Fârâbî's writings, of the way Avicenna reworked other pages of the *Kitâb al-mabda' wa l-ma'âd* to integrate them in the *Shifâ's Ilâhiyyât* would confirm the process of self-de-fârâbization through which the two passages analyzed here demonstrate that he went in order to become, so to speak, really himself. A detailed study would also enable us to bet-

40 In the *Hikma 'Arûdiyya*, Avicenna had expressed himself in the following way: These changing bodies have an absolute matter which they have in common and a form by which they are diverse. The causes of their diversity are thus the diverse forms in those [heavenly] bodies whereas the cause of their having [prime matter] in common is what they [i.e. the heavenly bodies] have in common—they also move circularly (*Wa idh hâdhihi al-aqsâmu al-mutaghayyiratu la-hâ mâddatun mutlaqatun tatta'ifu fi-hâ wa sûratun takhtalifu bi-hâ fa-idhan 'ilâlu ikhtilâfi-hâ al-suwaru al-mukhtalifatu fi tilka al-aqsâmi wa 'illatu ittifâqi-hâ mâ tatta'ifu fi-hi wa hiya aydan tataharaku 'alâ al-istidârati*; AVICENNA, *'Arûdiyya*, fo. 83 v.); The concepts of matter sharing and heavenly nature are absent from this passage of the *'Arûdiyya*. Could this and the particularly Fârâbîan flavour of the pages of *Provenance* analyzed above be due to the fact that Avicenna only discovered the Second Master's *Views* when he was composing *Provenance*, and not before? In a way, the Fârâbism manifest in this work would then have been a matter of circumstances and the later evolution of Avicenna the result of a normal philosophical development rather than a deliberate process of self-de-fârâbization?

ter specify the extent and the directions of that process. Of course, for al-Fārābī as for Aristotle, the fact that the Shaykh al-Ra'is moved away from some of their views or criticised them does not mean that he ceased to recognize, even respect and revere, them as the First and the Second Masters.

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Hayrani Altıntaş
İbrahim Hakkı Aydın
Yaşar Aydınlı
Eyüp Bekiryazıcı
Ahmet Kâmil Çhan
İbrahim Çapak
Gürbüz Deniz
Ali Durusoy
Şahin Filiz
Şaban Hakkı
İsmail Hanoğlu
Dosay Kenjatay
Galiya K. Kurmangaliyeva
Zerrin Kurtoğlu
İlhan Kutluer
Mehmet Kuyurtar
Mübahat Türker Küyel
Yahya Michot
Abdulmalik N. Nisanbayev
Ayşe Sıdıka Oktay
M. Sait Reçber
Hasan Şahin
Fatih Toktaş
Osman A. Tugusakov
Ahmet Hakkı Turabi
Sadık Türker
Enver Uysal
Salih Yalın