

THE ARABIC ARISTOTLE IN THE 10TH CENTURY BAĠDĀD: THE CASE OF YAĤYĀ IBN 'ADĪ'S COMMENTARY ON METAPH. ALPHA ELATTON

Cecilia Martini Bonadeo*

RESUMO – Neste estudo, procura-se mostrar, através de um autor cristão do século 10, como comentários às obras de Aristóteles foram continuamente feitos, desde os gregos até Averróis. Por meio de alguns textos da *Metafísica*, é possível perceber que, mesmo sem ter contato direto com o original grego, foram cotejadas pelo autor diversas traduções, tanto do grego como do siríaco. Nesses casos, tratava-se, não apenas de tradução, mas também de comentário ao texto de Aristóteles.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE – Aristóteles. *Metafísica*. Filosofia islâmica. Traduções para o árabe. Comentários.

ABSTRACT – In this study, we want to show, through the analysis of a Christian author of the 10th. century, how commentaries on the works of Aristotle were continuously made, from the Greek commentators until Averroes. Taking as an example some texts of the *Metaphysics*, we can see that, even without direct contact with the original Greek version, several translations, both from the Greek and the Syriac, were compared by the author. In those cases, it was not only a translation, but also a work of commentary on the text of Aristotle.

KEY WORDS – Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Islamic philosophy. Translations into Arabic. Commentaries.

Yahyā ibn 'Adī's Tafsīr al-Alif aṣ-ṣuġrā min kutub Aristūṭālis fī Mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabī 'a (Commentary on Alpha Elatton from Aristotle's Books in the *Metaphysics*), mentioned by al-Qiṭṭī in his Ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā' (History of Learned Men) and survived in many manuscripts, has been edited by 'A. Badawī and M. Miškāt, together with Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn's translation of Aristotle's text, which is copied in the lemmata of Yahyā ibn 'Adī's commentary.¹ Both are crucial in the still open field of studies on the Graeco-Arabic transmission of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the 10th century BaĠdād.

* Università di Padova.

¹ Yahyā ibn 'Adī's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is mentioned in Al-Qiṭṭī, *Ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā'*, ed. J. Lippert, Leipzig 1903, p. 362.20. The list of the manuscripts of this work has been given by G. Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn 'Adī, An analytical inventory*, Wiesbaden 1977, pp. 38-39. It has been edited twice by M. Miškāt, *Aristūṭālis-i ḥakīm. Naḥustūn maqāla-i Mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabī 'a mawsūm bi maqālat al-Alif aṣ-ṣuġrā tarġama -i Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn bā Yahyā b. 'Adī wa tafsīr-i Ibn-i Rushd*, Tehrān 1346/1967 (for the manuscripts on which this edition is based cf. Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn 'Adī*, cit., p. 39) and by A. Badawī, *Rasā'il falsafiyya lil-Kindī wal-Fārābī wa-Ibn Bāġġa wa-Ibn 'Adī*, Bangazi 1393/1973 (for the manuscripts on which this edition is based cf. Introduction, p. 18).

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First, they give a substantial contribution to the knowledge of the Arabic translations of Alpha Elatton and of the *Metaphysics* as a whole, as well as to the study of its circulation in the Arab-Muslim world. Second, they provide a key in the analysis of the commentaries produced on the basis of the Arabic translations of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. This is particularly important from the viewpoint of the history of Aristotelianism, in so far as it allows us to perceive the continuity² between the Greek commentaries – Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on the first five books,³ Themistius' paraphrasis of book Lambda,⁴ Syrianus' commentary on books Beta, Gamma, Mi, Ni,⁵ Ammonius' lectures on the first seven books of this treatise transcribed by Asclepius⁶ – and Averroes' Great Commentary, the *Tafsīr Mā ba'd at-ṭabī'a*.⁷

I shall devote this paper to the critical use of sources made by Yahyā ibn 'Adī in his Commentary on Alpha Elatton and I shall focus on the following items:

i.) Yahyā ibn 'Adī had at his disposal a more complete copy of Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn's translation than the one which reached us through Averroes' Great Commentary on *Metaphysics*.

ii.) He did not limit himself to comment on Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn's translation, but also quite systematically compares the quotations of other Syriac and Arabic translations, in order to get a good text. One of the translations which he mentions, an ancient Arabic one, in all likelihood can be identified with Uṣṭāṭ's version of Alpha Elatton.

In doing so, he provides us with important information about the translations which were at the disposal of the Christian and Muslims intellectuals in the melting pot of the 10th century Baḡdād, about his way to deal with the doctrinal and textual problems and, finally, about the method and style of composition which characterized the commentaries produced in his maḡlis (circle).⁸

In the 10th century Baḡdād, during the decay of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate and in the following Būyīd age,⁹ the translators were still at work: the last Greek-Arabic

² About this "continuity" see the substantial contribution offered in C. D'Ancona Costa, *Commenting on Aristotle: from Late Antiquity to the Arab Aristotelianism*, in *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter. Beiträge zu seiner Erforschung*, hrsg. von W. Geerlings – Ch. Schulze, Leiden Boston Köln 2002, pp. 201-251.

³ It is well known that Alexander's commentary on the *Metaphysics*, edited by M. Hayduck in the *CAG I* (1891) is genuine as for books *Alpha Meizon-Delta*, but spurious as for books *Epsilon-Ni*, which belong to Michael of Ephesus' work. See C. Luna, *Trois études sur la tradition des commentaires anciens à la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, (*Philosophia Antiqua* 88), Leiden 2001.

⁴ Themistii *In Aristotelis Metaphysicorum Librum L Paraphrasis Hebraice et Latine*, edited by S. Landauer, *CAG V* 5 (1903).

⁵ Syriani *In Metaphysica Commentaria*, edited by G. Kroll, *CAG VI* 1 (1902).

⁶ Asclepii *In Aristotelis Metaphysicorum Libros A-Z Commentaria*, edited by M. Hayduck, *CAG VI* 2 (1888).

⁷ Averroës, *Tafsīr Mā ba'd at-ṭabī'a*, Texte arabe inédit, établi par Maurice Bouyges, *Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum*, Beyrouth 1938-1948.

⁸ Cf. C. Martini Bonadeo, *Un commento ad Alpha Elatton 'sicut litterae sonant' nella Baḡdād del X secolo*, «*Medioevo*», XXIX (2003), pp. 69-96.

⁹ Cf. G. Endress, *An introduction to Islam*, Edinburgh 1988, pp. 122-123; about the early Būyīd Era cf. J. L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam, The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*,

translations belong to this period. These last followers of the long translation movement undertook also the revision of some of the already available Arabic translations of Greek philosophical works. In addition, an increasingly autonomous and original philosophical discussion was moving its first steps.¹⁰ In this context, we meet Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī.

Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī (Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī ibn Ḥamīd ibn Zakariyyā at-Takrītī al-Mantiqī, 893-974) is well known through the works of the ancient Arab biographers.¹¹ He belonged to a Jacobite Christian family of Takrīt, an old metropolis of the East, situated on the right bank of the Tigris to the north of Sāmarrā’, between Mauṣil and Baḡdād. Later on he moved to Baḡdād aiming at studying logic, philosophy and theology: from Ibn an-Nadīm who was in close contact with him, and from al-Qiftī, we know that in Baḡdād Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī had as his teacher the Nestorian philosopher Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus and then Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī became his teacher.¹² Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī himself summarised in a compendium the whole corpus of al-Fārābī’s works.¹³ Probably he also got in touch, for a short time, with Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā ar-Rāzī: al-Mas‘ūdī reports that Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s thought was rooted in ar-Rāzī’s metaphysical theory based on the doctrine of the “Pythagoreans” about first philosophy.¹⁴

He seems to have worked as a professional copyist and bookseller, a job he inherited from his father; in addition, he was a collector of manuscripts. Ibn an-Nadīm himself tells us that he read many books in the handwriting (bi-ḥaṭṭ) of Yaḥyā Ibn ‘Adī and that he got acquainted with many texts in the catalogue of his books, written in his own hand.¹⁵

Leiden 1986, pp. 31-102. About socio-economic distress and cultural vigor in Baḡdād cf. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, cit., p. 26-27.

¹⁰ M. Nasir Bin Omar, *Christian Translators in Medieval Islamic Baghdad: the Life and Works of Yaḥyā Ibn ‘Adī*, in *The Islamic Quarterly*, XXXIX 3 (1995), pp. 167-181.

¹¹ Through the works of the ancient bio-bibliographers and the manuscripts like Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ar. 2346 and Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, or. 583, E. Platti in *Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, théologien chrétien et philosophe arabe*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 14, Department Orientaliestiek, Leuven 1983, has reconstructed a vivid portrait of this Christian teacher, apologist and prime-order philosopher and Endress in *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, cit., wrote a complete and precious inventory of his works. The bio-bibliographers who mention Yaḥyā Ibn ‘Adī are al-Mas‘ūdī (*at-Tanbīh wa’l-Ishirāf*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Leiden 1893, p. 122.10-14), Ibn an-Nadīm (*Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, Leipzig 1871-1872, p. 264.5-14), Abū Ḥayyan at-Tawḥīdī (*al-Muqābasāt*, éd. M. Tawfiq Ḥusayn, Baḡdād 1970, 13, p. 103.2-16; 14, pp. 104.2-105.5; 48, pp. 204.9-205.12; 49, pp. 207-208; 89, p. 334.6-335.3; *Kitāb al-Imtā’ wal-mu’ānasa*, edd. A. Amīn and A. az-Zayn, ḡuz’ 1, p. 37.6-9; 2, p. 38.13-17), al-Qiftī (*Ta’ūh al-ḥukamā’*, ed. J. Lippert, Leipzig 1903, pp. 361.8-364.2), Ibn Abī Uṣaybi’a (*‘Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’*, ed. A. Müller, Cairo – Königsberg 1882, p. 235.9-28), al-Bayhaqī (*Tatimmat Ṣiwān al-Ḥikma*, ed. M. Šafī’, Lahore 1935, p. 906-11) See in Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, cit., pp.1-9, all the references to the sources.

¹² Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, cit., p. 264.5-7; ed. R. Taḡaddud, Tehrān 1971, p. 475.11-13. Al-Qiftī, *Ta’ūh al-ḥukamā’*, cit., p. 361.9-12.

¹³ Al-Bayhaqī, *Tatimmat Ṣiwān al-Ḥikma*, ed. M. Šafī’, cit., p. 90.6.

¹⁴ Al-Mas‘ūdī, *at-Tanbīh wa’l-Ishirāf*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, cit., p. 122. 10-24; ed. ‘A. I. Aṣ-Šāwī, Cairo 1938², p. 106.2-5.

¹⁵ Cf. Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, cit., pp. 6-7. In the *Fihrist* there is the following anecdote: once at Sūq al-Warrāqīn Ibn an-Nadīm criticised Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī for his copying so much. Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī replied that his patience was hardly to be marveled at. He has transcribed two copies

He became after Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus and Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī the ra'is (the chief) and the ustād (the teacher) of the maḡlis¹⁶ in Baḡdād. In this maḡlis members of different religious affiliation,¹⁷ following the teaching of Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus and Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī,¹⁸ were involved in copying and translating ancient philosophical and scientific texts as well as in editing them, as we can see in the mss Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ar. 2346¹⁹ and Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, or. 583²⁰ containing respectively Ibn Suwār's edition of the Organon and Ibn as-Samḥ's edition of the Physics. They were also involved in philosophical speculation about the problem of the relationship between philosophy and religious doctrine.²¹ They produced the last Greek-Arabic translations like books Lambda and Mi of the Metaphysics and undertook the revision of some of the already available Arabic translations of Greek philosophical works and particularly of Aristotelian works. Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'a tells us that Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī had an excellent knowledge of the technique of translation and translated from Syriac into Arabic.²²

of the aṭ-ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* which he has taken to the kings of the frontiers, and he has copied innumerable works of the *mutakallimūn*, working day at night, writing a hundred pages every day (cf. Ibn an-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 264. 8-10; ed. Taḡaddud, p. 322.20-23).

¹⁶ Cf. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, cit., pp. 6, 55-57, 103-206. One could imagine this maḡlis like an informal circle guided by a spirit of friendship in which the participants were motivated by a shared commitment to reason and a mutual interest in the sciences of the Ancients. "The school consisted of a teacher, his home, books, colleagues, pupils and occasional visitors. The teacher sometimes met with individuals or small groups [...]. On special occasions, large assemblies were convened for discussions. The teacher often dictated texts, usually adding his own comments. In discussion sessions a question was initially proposed and then theses and antitheses stated in turn. The procedure of question and answer is reminiscent ζήτηματα καὶ λύσεις of Hellenistic age".

¹⁷ There were the Christians – 'Isā ibn Zur'a (d. 1008; cf. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, cit., pp. 117-123), Ibn Suwār (d. 1017; *ibidem*, pp. 123-130), Ibn as-Samḥ (d.1027; *ibidem*, pp. 130-132) – more involved in textual studies, due to their bilingual Syriac-Arabic education, and the Muslims – Abū Sulaymān as-Siġistānī (d. 985; *ibidem*, pp. 139-165), Abū Ḥayyan at-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023; *ibidem*, pp. 213-222).

¹⁸ Unfortunately we don't know what was the exact *curriculum* of studies and the precise canon of readings in Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's school. Probably the *curriculum* was humanistic and included grammar, poetry, rhetoric, logic, ethics, politics, physics, mathematics and metaphysics: it was based on the Aristotelian classification of the sciences (cf. *Top.* VI 6, 145a15-16, *Top.* VIII 1, 157a10-11, *Metaph.* a 1, 993b20-21, *Metaph.* L 9, 1075a1-2, *Metaph.* E 1, 1025 b 18-25), but of course it was influenced by al-Fārābī's one presented in his *Ilḥṣā' al-'ulūm* (cf. Al-Fārābī, *Ilḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, ed. by 'U. Amīn, Cairo 1968, pp. 9-12) which included Arabic-Islamic sciences like *fiqh* and *kalām*.

¹⁹ Cf. Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī*, cit., p. 32-34.

²⁰ Cf. Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī*, cit., p. 35-38 and Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, cit., p. 109.

²¹ The theology-philosophy relationship in the thought of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī and in the interests of his school was object of a debate between G. Graf and A. Périer. In the opinion of Graf, Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī conceived of philosophy as the *ancilla theologiae*; on the contrary, Périer maintains that also in his theological works Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī was first a philosopher and only secondarily a *defensor fidei* in favour of the Jacobite Church. In fact, following the teaching of al-Fārābī, Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī considered the theological notions as symbols of philosophical concepts. Cf. A. Périer, *Yaḥyā Ibn 'Adī; un philosophe arabe chrétien du X^e siècle*, Paris 1920, p. 82.

²² Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'a, *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, cit., vol. I, p. 235. 12.

He is credited with the following translations of Aristotelian and related works: the Arabic version of Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥunayn's Syriac translation of the Topics together with the Commentary of Alexander of Aphrodisias on books I and V-VIII and Ammonius' Commentary on books I-IV,²³ the Arabic version of the Sophistici elenchi from the Syriac translation of Theophylus of Edessa,²⁴ the version of a Syriac translation of the Physics, book II, together with the Commentary of Alexander of Aphrodisias,²⁵ the version of Alexander's Commentary on the Meteorology,²⁶ and finally the versions of books Lambda and Mi of Aristotle's Metaphysics.²⁷ According to Ibn an-Nadīm, Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī translated book Mi of Aristotle's treatise on first philosophy and Averroes quotes in his Tafsīr the translation of book Lambda by Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī (1070a2-7).²⁸

If we give a look in the knowledge of the Aristotelian philosophy in Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's school and in the specific role played by Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī in promoting it, the picture we can desume is amazing. Aristotle's Organon, which incorporated Porphyry's Eisagoge, was well known.²⁹ From the Fihrist we learn that Abū Sulaymān as-Siġistāni al-Mantiqī had asked Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī to translate the Categories and the Commentary of Alexander on them.³⁰ From the Paris manuscript of the Organon mentioned above, we know that Ibn Suwār used Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's copy of Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥunayn's translation and Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī himself composed a Commentary on the Categories, based in part on Simplicius' one, which is cited by Ibn Suwār in his critical notes.³¹ Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī used the Commentary of his teacher Abū Biṣr Mattā ibn Yūnus on the Prior Analytics, as appears from the notes included in the Paris manuscript.³² According to a colophon of the Arabic translation of the Posterior Analytics, Ibn Suwār used for his edition the copies of the Arabic versions made by Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī and 'Īsā ibn Zur'a.³³ Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī

²³ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 249.17-21; ed. Taġaddud, pp. 309.27-310.4; al-Qiṭī, *Ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā'*, cit., pp. 36.18-37.7. Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn 'Adī. An analytical inventory*, cit, pp. 25-26, 34.

²⁴ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 249.27; ed. Taġaddud, p. 310.9; al-Qiṭī, *Ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā'*, cit., p. 37.14. Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn 'Adī. An analytical inventory*, cit, pp. 26-27 e nota 7.

²⁵ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 250.8-11; ed. Taġaddud, p. 310.19-22; al-Qiṭī, *Ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā'*, cit., p. 38.10-15. Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn 'Adī. An analytical inventory*, cit, p. 27.

²⁶ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 251.9; ed. Taġaddud, p. 309.23; al-Qiṭī, *Ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā'*, cit., p. 41.5. Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn 'Adī. An analytical inventory*, cit, p. 29.

²⁷ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 251.26; ed. Taġaddud, p. 312.13; al-Qiṭī, *Ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā'*, cit., p. 41.23. Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn 'Adī. An analytical inventory*, cit., pp. 27-28.

²⁸ Averroès, *Tafsīr Mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabī'a*, cit., p. 1463.3-8.

²⁹ Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn 'Adī. An analytical inventory*, cit., pp. 25-28, 32-34.

³⁰ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 248. 24-25; ed. Taġaddud, p. 454.9-10; al-Qiṭī, *Ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā'*, cit., p. 35.10-12.

³¹ F. E. Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus. The Oriental Translations and Commentaries on the Aristotelian Corpus*, Leiden 1968, pp. 8-10.

³² Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus*, cit., p. 16.

³³ Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus*, cit., p. 18.

wrote his own Commentary on the Topics.³⁴ He probably wrote a Commentary on the *Sophistici elenchi*.³⁵ And finally he revised the version of Poetics by Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus.³⁶

Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī revised an earlier translation of the Physics, book I.³⁷ Ibn an-Nadīm in the *Fihrist* says that Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī translated or revised the Arabic translation of Themistius’ Commentary on *De Caelo et Mundo*.³⁸ He also corrected the Arabic translation of Olympiodorus’ Commentary on *De Generatione et Corruptione* made by Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus.³⁹

Finally, al-Qiṭī notes that Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī wrote a Commentary on Alpha Elatton⁴⁰ of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*: our *Tafsīr lil-maqāla l-ūla min kitāb Aristūṭālīs al-mawsūm bi-Māṭāfūsīqā ay fi Mā ba’d at-ṭabī’a wa-hiya l-mawsūma bi-Alif aṣ-ṣuḡrā*.⁴¹

We get from the accounts of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s activity given by the biographers the impression that he was first of all a commentator and a translator of Aristotle.⁴² Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī and his pupils seem to share in the critical attitude of Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq’s circle in editing the texts of the ancient Greek philosophers, although they did not have any direct access to the Greek sources. I shall add some pieces of evidence to this claim in what follows, through an analysis of the critical use of sources made by Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī in his Commentary on Alpha Elatton.

(i)

In order to prove (1) that for his commentary Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī uses Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn’s translation of Alpha Elatton, (2) that Averroes too uses this translation in his *Great Commentary* and (3) that the translation which is survived in Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s text is more complete, I’d like to focus on two examples.

³⁴ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 264.12; ed. Taḡaddud, p. 322.24; Al-Qiṭī, *Ta’rīḥ al-ḥukamā’*, cit., p. 362.1; Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, cit., p. 34; Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus*, cit., p. 23-24.

³⁵ Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, cit., p. 34, reports Ibn Suwār’s following note: “The excellent Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī worked on a commentary of this book; I saw a large part of it – about two thirds, according to my estimate – in Syriac and Arabic. I think that he completed it, but the copy was not found among his books after his death. I have not made up my mind what to think about this matter; sometimes I suppose that he destroyed the book because he was not satisfied with it; but I am more inclined to think that it was stolen.”

³⁶ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 250.4; ed. Taḡaddud, p. 310.16; al-Qiṭī, *Ta’rīḥ al-ḥukamā’*, cit., p. 38.4. Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, cit., p. 28.

³⁷ For the accurate work on the *Physica* in Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s school see Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, cit., pp. 35-38, and P. Lettinck, *Aristotle’s Physics and its Reception in the Arabic World*, *Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus* 7, Leiden NewYork Koln 1994, pp. 4-6, 14-31 and *Appendix* 2 p. 33.

³⁸ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 250.30; ed. Taḡaddud, p. 311.13; al-Qiṭī, *Ta’rīḥ al-ḥukamā’*, cit., p. 40.3. Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, cit., pp. 29-30. This work is not survived, but it was available to Averroes.

³⁹ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, cit., ed. Flügel, p. 251.5; ed. Taḡaddud, p., 311.19; al-Qiṭī, *Ta’rīḥ al-ḥukamā’*, cit., p. 40.20; Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, cit., p. 30.

⁴⁰ Al-Qiṭī, *Ta’rīḥ al-ḥukamā’*, cit., p. 362.20; Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī*, cit., p. 38-39.

⁴¹ Cf. note 1.

⁴² Cf. E. Platti, *Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, théologien chrétien et philosophe arabe*, cit., p. 19.

See the passage in *Metaph. a* 993b 23-27:⁴³

οὐκ ἴσμεν δὲ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἄνευ τῆς αἰτίας ἱκαστον δὲ μάλιστα αὐτὸ τῶν ἄλλων καθ' ὅ και τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπάρχει τὸ συνώνυμον (οἶον τὸ πῦρ θερμότατον και γὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοις τὸ αἷτιον τοῦτο τῆς θερμότητος) ὥστε και ἀληθεύστατον τὸ τοῖς ὑστέροις τοῦ ἀληθεύειν.

In this passage Aristotle says that we do not know the truth without its cause and that a thing has a quality in a highest degree with respect to other things if the given quality belongs to others thing in virtue of it. Aristotle proposes the example of fire: it is the hottest thing, for it is the cause of the heat of all other things which are hot. Consequently, that which causes derivative truths to be true is the absolute instance of truth. The Greek text of the example of fire (993b 25-26) seen above is the following: οἶον τὸ πῦρ θερμότατον και γὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοις τὸ αἷτιον τοῦτο τῆς θερμότητος. What we find in Averroes' lemma is only the first part of this sentence, i.e.: «miṭālu dālīka n-nāru fī ḡāyati l-ḥarārati; as the fire is the hottest».⁴⁴ However, in Yahyā ibn 'Adī's text the Aristotelian passage appears in his entirety: «wa-miṭālu dālīka anna n-nāra fī ḡāyati l-ḥarārati wa-dālīka annahā hiya l-'illatu fī ḥarārati sā'iri l-ašyā'i l-ḥārati; as the fire is the hottest and it is the cause of being hot for the other hot things».⁴⁵

Another example is given by *Metaph. a* 994b 27-31:⁴⁶

ἀλλὰ μὴν και εἰ ἄπειρά γ' ἦσαν πλήθει τὰ εἶδη τῶν αἰτίων, οὐκ ἂν ἦν οὐδ' οὕτω τὸ γινώσκειν τότε γὰρ εἰδέναι οἰόμεθα ὅταν τὰ αἷτια γνωρίσωμεν τὸ δ' ἄπειρον κατὰ τὴν πρόσθεσιν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν πεπερασμένῳ διεξελθεῖν.

In this passage Aristotle is saying that “if the kinds of causes had been infinite in number, then also knowledge would have been impossible; because we think to know, only when we have ascertained the causes; but that which is infinite by addition cannot be gone through in a finite time”. The last sentence τὸ δ' ἄπειρον κατὰ τὴν πρόσθεσιν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν πεπερασμένῳ διεξελθεῖν – is translated in Averroes' lemma as follows: «wa-lā yumkinu l-mutanāhī an yaḡūza mā lā nihāyatu la-hū; it is not possible that what is infinite passes through the finite ».⁴⁷ The translation of Aristotle's passage in Yahyā ibn 'Adī's text is identical with the one used by Averroes, as for the first part of the sentence: «wa-

⁴³ Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, A revised text with introduction and commentary by D. Ross, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1924.

⁴⁴ Averroès, *Tafsīr Mā ba'd at-ṭabī'a*, cit., p.13.1.

⁴⁵ Yahyā ibn 'Adī, *Tafsīr al-Alif aš-ṣūḡiā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba'd at-ṭabī'a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 24.15-16. In Badawī's edition, the passage in Aristotle's lemma is not complete and we can find the same text we read in Averroes' lemma, but in Yahyā ibn 'Adī's commentary the lemma is quoted in its entirety (ed. Badawī, pp. 177.1, 178.1-2).

⁴⁶ Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, ed. Ross, cit.

⁴⁷ Averroès, *Tafsīr Mā ba'd at-ṭabī'a*, cit., p. 41.4.

lā yumkinu l-mutanāhī an yaǧūza mā lā nihāyatu la-hū», but also the words *κατὰ τὴν πρόσθεσιν* are translated in «‘alā ṭarīqi t-tazayyudi; in the way of addition», at variance with what happens in Averroes.⁴⁸

The two examples suggest that Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī made use of a copy of Ishāq’s translation, which was more complete than the one which Averroes had at his disposal.

(ii)

In his comments Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī cites, in quite a systematic comparison with Isḥāq’s version, other Syriac and Arabic translations. A good example of this careful attitude is his Commentary on *Metaph.* a 994a11-19.⁴⁹

τῶν γὰρ μέσων, ὧν ἐστὶ τι ἔσχατον καὶ πρότερον, ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τὸ πρότερον αἴτιον τῶν μετ’αὐτό. εἰ γὰρ εἰπεῖν ἡμᾶς δεοῖ τι τῶν τριῶν αἴτιον, τὸ πρῶτον ἐροῦμεν οὐ γὰρ δὴ τὸ γ’ ἔσχατον, οὐδενὸς γὰρ τὸ τελευταῖον ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ τὸ μέσον, ἐνὸς γὰρ (οὐθὲν δὲ διαφέρει ἐν ἡ πλείω εἶναι, οὐδ’ ἄπειρα ἢ πεπερασμένα). τῶν δ’ ἀπέριων τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον καὶ ὅλως τοῦ ἀπέριου πάντα τὰ μόρια μέσα ὁμοίως μέχρι τοῦ νῦν ὥστ’ εἴπερ μηδὲν ἐστὶ πρῶτον, ὅλως αἴτιον οὐδὲν ἐστίν.

In this passage Aristotle says that when we are speaking about a finite series in which there are intermediates, the prior element in the series must be the cause of the subsequent elements. For if we have to say which element is the cause, we should say the first; surely not the last, for the final term is the cause of none; nor even the intermediate, for it is the cause only of one. (It makes no difference whether there is one intermediate or more, nor whether they are infinite or finite in number.) Now, let’s imagine a series which is infinite: in this case, all the elements preceding the one we are considering at present are intermediates; consequently, if there is no first element, there is no cause at all.

Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī has in front of him the literal translation of Isḥāq, which grants a correct understanding of these lines⁵⁰ and in fact he has a full comprehension of the problem discussed by Aristotle, as we can see from the beginning of his Commentary:⁵¹

⁴⁸ Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, *Tafsīr al-Alif aṣ-ṣuḡrā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba’d at-ṭabī’a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 80.6-7; ed. Badawī, p. 196.9.

⁴⁹ Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, ed. Ross, cit.

⁵⁰ Cf. J. N. Mattock, *The early translations from Greek into Arabic: an experiment in comparative assessment*, Akten des Zweiten Symposium Graeco-Arabicum, Amsterdam 1989, pp. 101-102 and my *La tradizione araba dei primi due libri della Metafisica di Aristotele: Libri a -A*, in *Aristotele e Alessandro di Afrodisia nella tradizione araba*, a cura di C. D’Ancona e G. Serra, Padova 2002, pp. 75-112.

⁵¹ Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, *Tafsīr al-Alif aṣ-ṣuḡrā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba’d at-ṭabī’a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, pp. 36.14-5, 38.1-10, 40.2-17; ed. Badawī, pp. 181.1-13, 181.21-23, 182.1-13.

His aim in this section is to clarify that the causes precede by nature their effects and the causes are prior to them, and that the effects are posterior to causes. For him it will become clear by this fact that if there is nothing which is first and which has not anything prior to it, there is no cause at all and, in this case, if there is no cause, there are no effects; but it is clear and evident that the effects exist. Therefore it is necessary that the causes exist and the first exists necessarily. And since the first exists, it is clear that the causes exist before, and this is what Aristotle intended to demonstrate, and for this reason he added this explanation and said: "About intermediates, which have a last term and a term prior to them, the prior must be the cause of the later terms". So it is clear that the intermediates have a prior and a last term, if they are exactly what is intermediate between two extremes; and in the same way it is also evident that the prior is, among these three terms, the cause of the others two which follow. For this reason he says: "It is absolutely necessary that the prior is the cause of the later terms". Then he says: "When we ask which of the three is the cause?", we answer "The first"...

Then he begins to add evidence to this theory by saying: "Surely the last is not the cause, for it is the cause of none; nor even the intermediate is cause of the three terms, for it is the cause only of one of them". This is evident and he speaks clearly about it.

Then he says: "It makes no difference whether there is one intermediate or more, nor whether they are infinite or finite in number, and the parts of the things which are infinite in this way, and all the infinite parts are intermediates in this way down to that now present". It means that there is no difference, in order to the fact that is absolutely necessary that the prior is cause of the later terms, if the intermediate, between two extremes, is one, or the intermediates are more, and if they are finite in number or infinite. And he adds to his passage: "and the parts of the things which are infinite in this way", in order to distinguish the intermediates between two extremes: whether some are only causes, some are only effects, and some others causes and effects together, or whether they are only intermediates in a series, like the parts of the time, of speeches or of things like that. And then he says: "and all the infinite parts are intermediates in this way": this means that there is no difference among them, for they are intermediates and his speech "down to that now present" means up to finish with the last that is only an effect".

At this point, Yaḥyā says:⁵²

It is necessary to know that in this part of the speech which in Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn's translation begins with "It makes no difference whether there is one intermediate or more" and finishes with "down to that now present" I have found in another ancient Arabic translation this quotation: "It makes no difference

⁵² Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, *Tafsīr al-Alif aṣ-ṣuḡrā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba'd al-aṭ-ṭabī'a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 42.1-9; ed. Badawī, p. 182.14-22.

whether the first cause is one or more, nor whether the causes are finite or infinite in number, because all the parts of what is infinite are in this way, and all the parts of what is infinite are now intermediates in the same way”.

Besides I have found that the same quotation in Syriac sounds in this way: “It makes no difference for one thing to say that the causes are one or more, nor to say that they are infinite or finite and all the infinite parts and the parts of what is infinite in this way are intermediates down to that now present”.

So, Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī makes use of two additional translations: a Syriac version and an Arabic version. Ishāq’s translation is quite different from the other two especially as their respective rendering of Metaph. α.994a16.⁵³ (οὐθὲν δὲ διαφέρει ἐν ἡ πλείω εἶναι, οὐδ’ ἄπειρα ἢ πεπερασμένα).

In Ishāq’s version this line sounds as follows: «wa-lā farqa bayna an yakūna mutawassīṭun wāḥidun wa-bayna an yakūna l-mutawassīṭātu aktara min wāḥidin wa-la bayna an takūna mutanāhiyatan wa-bayna an takūna ḡayr mutanāhiyatin; it makes no difference whether there is one intermediate or more, nor whether they are infinite or finite in number ». ⁵⁴ In the other Arabic translation we find the following translation: «wa-lā ḥilāfa fī an yakūna l-‘illatu l-ūlā wāḥidatan aw kaṭīratan wa-lā fī an takūna dā nihāyatin aw lā nihāyata la-hā; it makes no difference whether the first cause is one or more, nor whether the causes are finite or infinite in number». ⁵⁵ This translation is probably Uṣṭāṭ’s one. ⁵⁶ This conclusion is suggested by the comparison between the text given by Yaḥyā and Uṣṭāṭ’s version, which is preserved in the margins of the Leiden manuscript Universiteitsbibliotheek, or. 2074 (cod. arab. 1692): «wa-lā ḥilāfa fī an yakūna l-‘illatu l-ūlā wāḥidatan aw kaṭīratan wa-lā fī an takūna dāt nihāyatin aw lā nihāyata la-hā». ⁵⁷

In his commentary Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī proves to be an experienced reader of Aristotle and makes sense of these two different translations explaining the concept of cause. It does not matter if the first cause is one or if there are more, provided that we do not understand the word “cause” in the meaning of the first cause in the four genders described by Aristotle. In fact, such a cause is prior and it is cause of everything between it and the last term. Such a cause cannot be intermediate, because nothing comes before it. But the word “cause” can be understood in the sense of an intermediate cause. Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī observes that the word “intermediate” has two different meanings: the first when we mean the intermediates in a series – like the parts of time or of a speech –, the second when we mean the intermediates which are between the first cause and the last effect. In this second

⁵³ Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, ed. Ross, cit.

⁵⁴ Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAlif aṣ-ṣuḡṡiā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba’d aṭ-ṭabi’a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 36.7-9, ed. Badawī, p. 180.17-19. Cf. Averroès, *Tafsīr Mā ba’d aṭ-ṭabi’a*, cit., p. 19.1-3.

⁵⁵ Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAlif aṣ-ṣuḡṡiā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba’d aṭ-ṭabi’a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 42.3-4, ed. Badawī, p. 182. 16-18.

⁵⁶ Cf. C. Martini, *La tradizione araba dei primi due libri della Metafisica di Aristotele: Libri a -A*, cit., p. 103.

⁵⁷ Averroès, *Tafsīr Mā ba’d aṭ-ṭabi’a*, cit., v (marginal version), p. 19.2-3.

meaning as much as the intermediate is close to the first cause, it is cause of the cause that comes after it. Later on Yahyā ibn ‘Adī concludes.⁵⁸

Then Aristotle says: “Necessarily if there is no first there is no cause at all”, because the condition of the cause is to be prior to his effects, and if there is no first there is no cause at all.⁵⁹

With this explanation, Yahyā ibn ‘Adī has recourse to another passage of Aristotle’s text strictly related with the one mentioned above, in which Aristotle explains the double meaning of “one thing comes from another”. See *Metaph.* α 994a22-24:⁶⁰

διχῶς γὰρ γίγνεται τὸδε ἐκ τοῦδε - μῆ⁶¹ ὡς τὸδε λέγεται μετὰ τὸδε, οἷον ἐξ Ἴσθμίων Ὀλύμπια, ἀλλ’ ἢ ὡς ἐκ παιδὸς ἀνὴρ μεταβάλλοντος ἢ ὡς ἐξ ὕδατος ἀήρ.

Aristotle says that the first meaning of “one thing comes from another” is in the sense in which “from” means “after”, as in the case of the calendar of the Greek games. The second meaning implies that something comes into being (with – in the case of water – or without – in the case of man – the destruction of the pre-existent thing). Yahyā ibn ‘Adī has in front of him Ishāq’s version, which presents a gap in this passage, and does not give any example for the sense of “from” as a chronological succession.⁶²

In his Commentary, he says:⁶³

⁵⁸ Yahyā ibn ‘Adī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAlif aṣ-ṣūjātā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba’d at-ṭabī’a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 44.1-3, ed. Badawī, p. 183.8-10.

⁵⁹ The discussion about the Aristotelian doctrine of causes was a pivotal theme among the *falāsifa* and in Yahyā ibn ‘Adī’s school. For example, at-Tawhīdī in the 13th record of his *Muqābasāt* records a discussion between Yahyā ibn ‘Adī and al-Badīhī on the following argument: «al-illa qabl al-ma’lūl» (cf. at-Tawhīdī, *Al-Muqābasāt*, cit., 13, p. 103; cf. E. Platti, *Yahyā ibn ‘Adī, théologien chrétien et philosophe arabe*, cit., p. 12).

⁶⁰ Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, ed. Ross, cit.

⁶¹ In A^b (*Laurentianus* 87.12 saec. XII) we find ἦ. In E¹ (*Parisinus gr.* 1853 saec. X) we find *littera erasa*. In mss. E² (*Parisinus gr.* 1853), J (*Vindobonensis phil. gr. C* saec. X *ineuntis*) and in Al¹ (*Alexandri interpretatio vel paraphrasis*) we find μῆ. Mῆ is the text accepted by Ross (*Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, ed. Ross, cit.), whereas Jaeger (*Aristotelis Metaphysica*, recognovit brevique adnotatione critica instruxit W. Jaeger, Oxonii MCMLVII) follows the reading ἦ.

⁶² Yahyā ibn ‘Adī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAlif aṣ-ṣūjātā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba’d at-ṭabī’a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 44.14-16 and note 4, ed. Badawī, p. 184.1-3. In Ishāq’s version survived in Averroës’ *Tafsīr Mā ba’d at-ṭabī’a* there is not any gap and we find: «mā yuqālu aḍ-ḍabābu min al-buḥārī». Perhaps this is a correction produced in the text by the copist; cf. Averroës, *Tafsīr Mā ba’d at-ṭabī’a*, cit., p. 23.3; cf. R. Walzer, *On the Arabic Versions of books A, a and L of Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, «Harvard Studies in Classical Philology», 63 (1958), pp. 217-231, (also in R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Oxford 1963, pp. 114-128); cf. J. N. Mattock, *The early translations from Greek into Arabic: an experiment in comparative assessment*, cit., pp. 100-101; cf. C. Martini, *La tradizione araba dei primi due libri della Metafisica di Aristotele: Libri a -A*, cit., pp. 104-107.

⁶³ Yahyā ibn ‘Adī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAlif aṣ-ṣūjātā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba’d at-ṭabī’a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 48.15-17; ed. Badawī, p. 185.6-9.

It is necessary to know that I have found, in a different Arabic translation from Ishāq's one, an integration: "like for example it is said that fog comes after the steam", whereas in a Syriac translation I have found, instead of this example, these precise words: "like the see is from the mountain". Ishāq's passage is incomplete and it needs an example.

It is worth noting that Yahyā ibn 'Adī is properly editing his text. He finds an integration of a different Arabic translation, probably Ustāṭ's version, in which the first example of the calendar of Greek games is rendered through a different image, namely, the couple fog-steam, which seems to imply a causal relation: «miṭālu mā yuqālu aḍ-ḍabābu ba'da l-buḥāri». ⁶⁴ But he has also a Syriac text, which gives a less clear example: the see from the mountain.

Yahyā ibn 'Adī explains this textual situation assuming that these two images are perfectly equivalent, because they are related to a process of condensation and aggregation after – in the chronological meaning adopted, for instance, by Empedocles and Anaxagoras – the rarefaction and the disgregation. He says: ⁶⁵

These two examples which I have mentioned, also if they are different, coincide for the reason that between the two parts of everyone of them there is a contrariety that is the condensation and the congregation after the rarefaction and the disgregation.

Let's proceed to the last example I would like to give of Yahyā ibn 'Adī's attitude to compare different translations. In his Commentary the last line of *Metaph. α.* 995a19-20⁶⁶ – καὶ εἰ μιᾶς ἐπιστήμης ἢ πλειόνων τὰ αἷτια καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς θεωρησαί ἐστιν – appears in Ishāq's literal translation as follow: «wa-hal yanbaḡī an nanzura fī 'ilalin wa-awā'ila li-'ilmin wāḥidin aw li-'ulūmin aktara min wāḥidin». ⁶⁷ In this line Aristotle is wondering whether the study of causes and principles belongs to only one science or to more.

Yahyā ibn 'Adī says: ⁶⁸

It is necessary to know that this last part can be found only in Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn's translation. I have not found it in any Syriac translation, or in any other Arabic different translation from Ishāq's one; and here it is not appropriate.

⁶⁴ Yahyā ibn 'Adī, *Tafsīr al-Alif aṣ-ṣuḡriā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabi'a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 48.15-16; ed. Badawī, p. 185.7. Cf. Ustāṭ's translation in Averroës, *Tafsīr Mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabi'a*, cit., v (marginal version), p. 23.2: «miṭla mā yuqālu aḍ-ḍabāba min al-buḥāri».

⁶⁵ Yahyā ibn 'Adī, *Tafsīr al-Alif aṣ-ṣuḡriā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabi'a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 50.1-3; ed. Badawī, p. 185.9-11.

⁶⁶ Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, ed. Ross, cit.

⁶⁷ Yahyā ibn 'Adī, *Tafsīr al-Alif aṣ-ṣuḡriā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabi'a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 98.15-16; ed. Badawī, p. 202.6-7. Cf. Averroës, *Tafsīr Mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabi'a*, cit., pp. 49.11-50.1.

⁶⁸ Yahyā ibn 'Adī, *Tafsīr al-Alif aṣ-ṣuḡriā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabi'a*, cit., ed. Miškāt, p. 100.2-4; ed. Badawī, p. 202.9-11.

In this case Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī has at his disposal this passage only in Ishāq’s version, because it is not preserved in any other Syriac or Arabic version. Could this mean that he had more than one Syriac and more than one Arabic translation? Note that in this case he is wrong in thinking that Ishāq’s version is not correct.

Conclusions

We are now in a position to draw some conclusions, both about the critical use of sources made by Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī and about the method and style of composition which characterized the commentaries produced in his school, as well as Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s way to deal with the doctrinal and textual problems.

Through Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s commentary on Alpha Elatton, we get a text of Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn’s translation which appears to be more complete than the one reflected in Averroes’ Great Commentary on the Metaphysics.

Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī in more than one case compares the quotations of other Syriac and Arabic translations in order to get a good text.

Commenting on Metaph. α 994a11-19 he uses two additional translations: a Syriac version and an Arabic one which can be identified with Uṣṭāṭ’s version of Alpha Elatton. The three translations present some differences and Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī makes an effort to make sense of this textual situation.

In the case of Metaph α 94a22-24, Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī makes an effort to establish a good text by comparing Ishāq’s version, which presents a gap, with two different translations. He uses an Arabic translation, which is probably Uṣṭāṭ’s one, and also a Syriac source.

Finally, in his Commentary of Metaph α 995a19-20 we are told that he has at his disposal this passage only in Ishāq’s version and that he has not found other Syriac or Arabic versions. This could mean that he has more than one Syriac and more than one Arabic translation.

Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī approach in editing and commenting Alpha Elatton seems to be very careful indeed. He and his pupils continued, as Platti said,⁶⁹ the critical attitude of the circle of Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq in editing the texts of the ancient Greek philosophers, although they did not have any direct access to the Greek sources.

A more complete analysis of this Commentary, both in form and philosophical contents, proves to be important in order to evaluate both the continuity and the differences in the transmission of Aristotle’s thought and particularly of Aristotle’s doctrine of causes.

From this viewpoint, Alpha Elatton counts as a preferred observatory: reconstructing its history is possible, almost without a break from Alexander to Averroes and even later, through the Greek commentaries,⁷⁰ the VIII-IXth century

⁶⁹ Platti, *Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, théologien chrétien et philosophe arabe*, cit., p. 27.

⁷⁰ Cf. notes 2 and 5.

translation of Alpha Elatton made by Uṣṭāṭ for al-Kindī,⁷¹ the IX-Xth century one made by Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn,⁷² this commentary by Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī,⁷³ the paraphrase of *Metaph. α 2* by Avicenna (*Ilāhiyyāt*, VIII, 1-3),⁷⁴ the Averroes’ Great Commentary⁷⁵ and finally the XIIIth century paraphrase by ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baḡdādī.⁷⁶ Through a comparative analysis of the stylistic correspondances and of the argumentations of these texts, it should be possible to reconstruct this important segment in the history of Aristotelianism. This does not involve only a source hunting, within the framework of a passive reception of Aristotle though among Arabs. On the contrary, such a research involves the attitude with which the Arabs faced the study of Aristotle, the focal meanings and the most original developments around which they commented Aristotle’s text and, finally, the linguistic and doctrinal adaptations which characterized the Arabic tradition of Aristotle’s doctrine of causes.

⁷¹ Uṣṭāṭ’s translation is in Averroès, *Tafsīr Mā ba’d aṭ-ṭabī’a*, cit.

⁷² Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn’s translation is edited in Averroès, *Tafsīr Mā ba’d aṭ-ṭabī’a*, cit., and in Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, *Tafsīr al-Alif aṣ-ṣūjā min kutub Aristūṭālīs fī Mā ba’d aṭ-ṭabī’a*, cit., in the two editions by Badawī and by Miškāt.

⁷³ Cf. note 1.

⁷⁴ Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifā. Al-Ilāhiyyāt* (1), texte établi et édité par G.C. Anawati et S. Zayed, Le Caire 1960; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifā. Al-Ilāhiyyāt* (2), texte établi et édité par M. Y. Moussa, S. Dunya et S. Zayed, Le Caire 1960.

⁷⁵ Averroès, *Tafsīr Mā ba’d aṭ-ṭabī’a*, cit.

⁷⁶ A. Neuwirth, *Neue Materialien zur Arabischen Tradition der beiden ersten Metaphysik Bücher, «Welt des Islams»*, 18, 1-2 (1977-78), pp. 84-100.