

The Semantic – Historical Distinction between Theology and Metaphysics in Avicenna's Philosophy¹

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Abstract

The title “metaphysics” was coined by the proponents of Lucium (the scientific- philosophical school of Aristotle) for a collection of handwritten notes which Aristotle himself called it “PROTE PHILOSOPHIA”. It has been paraphrased in two different ways; the first has had a learning aspect while the second has had a ranking one. The semantic-historical question is that whether Avicenna was on his previous position after knowing “*Aims of Aristotle's Metaphysics - Al-Farabi*” or whether he accepted this term? And if not, what term and why he has chosen instead? And finally, how would have been his point of view among other following philosophers. The answer of the questions in summary is:

The “*Aims of Aristotle's Metaphysics*” which has been written by Al-Farabi, shows that the meaning or aims of metaphysics has been vague in Bagdad school. The difference between André Nikos, who has coined that term, and Nicolaus of Damascus shows the background of this vagueness until the middle Platonism, and even shows it until the last period of Aristotle-Lucium school: André Nikos may have been coined the term metaphysics just for learning aspect while Nicolaus of Damascus applied it for the ranking priority of meaning and also the metaphysical terms.

Al-Farabi not only wanted to cast light onto the vagueness but also coined a new term to redirect to metaphysics which its result was the first philosophy division into total knowledge of God and God's Knowledge which the former refers to general things and the latter refers to Mofariqa't. Avicenna, although found his book useful in justifying Aristotle's aims, he has not yet found the term metaphysics appropriate to show the content of the first philosophy therefore, he evaluated “before physics” much better. He, however, accepted Al-Farabi's position due to the discussion over both meanings therefore, he came to the word “theology” with the summing up between Al-Farabi and his idea. He, then, applied the term instead of metaphysics while he sometimes applied “the knowledge of God” but he did not consider it as the synonym of theology.

In the history of philosophy, all philosophers, as the follower of Avicenna, applied the word theology instead of metaphysics except Bahmanyar who has used the term metaphysics instead in the majority of his work such as Al-TAhsil; the term has been approved even by his strict critics as Shahrestani and Al-GHazali applied it.

The influence of Avicenna can be seen in Thomas Aquinas work such as “*Summa theologiae*”. He, even, avoid the misunderstanding of the word by dividing it into existentialism, the first philosophy and the knowledge of God in his Averroes age of philosophy; this misunderstanding would be seen in Decart and Wolf as the effective critical philosopher of

¹ This article has been derived from a research project numbered 2202022.1.04 and entitled "Illuminationist Aspects of Sinan wisdom" which was funded by university of Tehran (Pardis-e- Farabi).

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Received: 06.08.2016

Accepted: 20.06.2017



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metaphysics where they discuss about the distinction between metaphysics and theology , or the division of metaphysics into general and specific part. This distinction, however, was the source of misunderstanding of theology as the mere knowledge of God, and still is there in the contemporary philosophical literature .

Key words

metaphysics; theology; the knowledge of God; the history of philosophy; Avicenna; eastern philosophy

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