

The Category of Relation in Arabic-Islamic Philosophy

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Abstract

The main sources for the discussion of the category “relation” were Aristotle’s *Categories* and *Metaphysics*. Before their translation into Arabic in the 8th and 9th centuries, Christian theologians and in their footsteps Syriac scholars considered Aristotle’s works to be a useful tool in Christological discussions. This article analyzes the category of relation and its development in Arabic-Islamic philosophy in authors such as Kindī and his student Aḥmad Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib as-Saraḥsī, Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ghazālī, Ibn Rušd, the Sufi Ibn ‘Arabī and others.

Keywords: relation as dynamic principle; Aristotle; Alexandrian commentaries; Stoa; Neoplatonism; Arabic-Islamic authors; *Epistles of the Sincere Brethren*; Ramon Llull

Resum. *La categoria de la relació en la filosofia araboislàmica*

Les principals fonts de discussió sobre la categoria de la «relació» foren les *Categories* i la *Metafísica* d’Aristòtil. Abans de ser traduïdes a l’àrab durant els segles VIII i IX, els teòlegs cristians i els seus seguidors siris consideraren que les obres d’Aristòtil constituïen un instrument útil en les discussions cristològiques. Aquest article analitza la categoria de la relació i el seu desenvolupament en la filosofia araboislàmica en autors com Kindī i el seu deixeble Aḥmad Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib as-Saraḥsī, Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ghazālī, Ibn Rušd i el sufí Ibn ‘Arabī, entre d’altres.

Paraules clau: relació com a principi dinàmic; Aristòtil; comentaris alexandrins; Stoa; neoplatonisme; autors araboislàmics; *Epístoles dels Germans de la Puresa*; Ramon Llull

Since the 19th century, Aristotle’s category of relation has been brought into the focus of attention by linguistic philosophers and logicians. A survey of the discussions in Islamic philosophy will be interesting, because they mirror aspects which reappear in medieval and modern thought with modifications or aspects which are taken up in a selective manner with some updating and new accentuations.

Aristotle's *Categories* (ch. 7) and his *Metaphysics* (V ch. 15. 1020b26-1021b10) were the main sources for discussions about relation. The first transmitters in pre-Islamic times were Syriac scholars. Their motivation for the study of Aristotle's *Organon*, including the *Categories*, was the Christian theology of trinity, in addition to the use of dialectic in Christological discussions and later in the dialogue with Islam¹. Already Augustine in his work *De trinitate* betrays knowledge of Aristotle's *Categories*, including the chapter on relation.

With this background, the chapter on relation in the Syriac commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories* deserves our interest. We take as an example the discussion of the relatives in a *Treatise on the Categories of Aristotle, the Philosopher*, written by Sergius of Resh 'aynā' in the 5th/6th century. As in Aristotle, the related subject determines the relation and not conversely. Sergius mentions the same examples as Aristotle and adds some more from the Aristotelian commentaries, mostly Ammonius and Philoponus².

After the rise of Islam, Christian theologians became transmitters of Greek texts and thought. They took over the logical curriculum of Alexandrian philosophers in a shortening version, which included Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Aristotle's *Categories*, *De interpretatione* and *Analytica priora*, the latter mostly only until book I 7.

The earliest example in Arabic of this version is a paraphrase, written in the 8th century and attributed to Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdallāh Ibn al-Muqaffā', a famous prose-writer. He might have improved on an earlier revised Arabic translation of a Syriac handbook on Aristotle's *Organon*.

The text³ criticizes Aristotle, claiming that he was not able to give a clear definition of relation. The author furthermore explains that the so-called "fundamental" of "the substance" precedes "the relative", also called "the derivative" (*al-far*). He says that the "fundamental" of "the substance" determines "the relation"; and he adds that the relatives are "homonyma", if they have identical names and the same identities, like "humanness" – we can add: if they correlate or if there is a symmetrical relation; otherwise, they are "heteronyma".

The text attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffā' scarcely had any echo in later philosophical literature.

We can assume that before the Arabic translation of the *Categories* by Ishāq Ibn Hunain⁴ (died 910/1 A.D.) there were more channels of transmission. A slightly expanded paraphrase of the *Categories* is excerpted in the *Book of Stones* attributed to Ġābir Ibn Ḥayyān and perhaps written "decades after 800 A.D.". At the end of the chapter on quality we find a remarkable modification of Aristotle's doctrine: only genera and not particulars can be relatives and knowledge is related to the known, not to particular knowledge. The

1. Cf. Daiber (2001: 327-345).

2. Ed and transl. by Aydin (2016: 145-149 = §§ 74-79).

3. Ibn al-Muqaffā' (1978: 16-17).

4. Ed. 'Abdarrahmān Badawī, cf. Aristotle (1980: 21-76).

Ġābir-text identifies the genera with “universals” (*kullīyya*) in contrast to the particulars⁵.

In a similar manner and presumably during the same period, perhaps in the first half of the 9th century, the first great Islamic philosopher, al-Kindī, declared the relative to be something “existing without matter”. He counted it among the “connected predicates of the substance”, and argued that “fatherhood and sonship result from the relation between the one and the other, from the existence of the one through the other, (just) like the part (exists) through the whole. Both are thus in their characterization not connected with matter”⁶. Kindī and the paraphrase of the Aristotelian text in Ġābir follow the Alexandrian tradition in their specifications and deviations, as parallels in the commentaries by Olympiodorus, Ēlias and Simplicius show. These commentators consider categories in singular cases as something in the mind.

Kindī’s distinction between simple and connected “predicates of substances” is a part of the Alexandrian division between simple and connected categories. The Alexandrians differ from Aristotle, who regarded the ten categories – namely “substance”, “quantity”, “quality”, “relation”, “where”, “when”, “position”, “possession”, “action” and “passion” – as something existing absolutely. Only the first four categories, “substance”, “quantity”, “quality” and “relation”, were considered by the Alexandrians as something “simple” (*ἀπλαῖ*), and the remaining six as “connected” (*σύνθετοι*). Interestingly, this division of the categories reappears in a short summary of the categories by Kindī’s student Aḥmad Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib as-Saraḥsī (died 286/899), which until now was assumed to be lost⁷.

Like his teacher Kindī, Saraḥsī was engaged in disputes with Christians and could use his knowledge of the Aristotelian *Organon* in his arguments against the Christians, especially against the doctrine of the trinity.

The method to use Greek logic against Christian doctrine and belief continued to be a standard in the 10th century – despite some dispute between Christian and Muslim scholars about the value of logic. I refer to the discussion in 932 A.D. between the Nestorian Abū Bišr Mattā Ibn Yūnus and the Muslim scholar Abū Sa’īd as-Sīrāfi. According to the Christian Abū Bišr, logic is a universal valid vehicle of intelligible things for all nations and superior to languages, which differ among the people and require logic in their grammar. The Muslim as-Sīrāfi, however, defends language as the only access to intelligible things; against Hellenism he propagates “clear Arabic language” as revealed by God in the Qur’ān⁸.

This reminds us of the Andalusian scholar Ibn Ḥazm in the 10th/11th century⁹. His logical work *at-Taqrīb li-ḥadd al-mantiq*, “An approach to the defi-

5. Ed. Nomanul Haq (1994: 30,1-33, ult.; partly translated 230-242).

6. Kindī (1978: 370,14-371,3; in English translation 2012, 285).

7. Saraḥsī, *Muḥtaṣar (Iḥtiṣār) Kitāb Qāḥigūriyās*, ms. Aya Sofya 4855 (copied 733/1333), fol. 71r, 1-9.

8. Cf. Adamson and Key (2015).

9. Cf. Ramón Guerrero (2013: 413f.); Lameer (2013: 421-426).

nition of logic”, is written as a methodological introduction to his theology and his refutation of Christianity. As in his critique of Kindī’s metaphysics, which is mainly based on the Neoplatonism of Proclus, in his refutation of Christianity Ibn Ḥazm propagates a strict concept of God’s transcendence, of God’s *tawḥīd*.

Here, Aristotle’s concept of relation in his *Categories* becomes fundamentally important. Ibn Ḥazm mentions relation as one of the “four fundamentals”, “substance”, “quantity”, “quality” and “relation”, which in accordance with the Alexandrian and Kindian tradition appear as “simple” categories and can be “connected” with the categories “when”, “where”, “position”, “possession”, “active” and “passive”. According to Ibn Ḥazm, God’s names, his attributes, must be understood correctly as categories without relation to the created, as this would contradict God’s transcendence.

Ibn Ḥazm was aware of the existence of an asymmetrical relation between God and creation. God’s acting, hearing, seeing and living, as mentioned in the Qur’ān, do not require a correlative. These attributes are proper names of the creator, who is neither genus nor species nor bearer of accidents. Thus, the creator cannot be called one of the simple or connected categories. The expression “God is acting” has the meaning that the predicate “is acting” has a relation to God – not because God is a substance and has the accident “acting”. Simultaneously, God’s acting does not require an object. God’s independence, his *autarkeia*, became a first step in a deviation from the concept of a substance. God is not a substance with accidents, to which God’s creation is “related” (*mudāf*), because of the accidents of this substance.

Ibn Ḥazm combines his concept of logic as a tool for everyone with his ideal of striving after knowledge by everyone, as far as he has the capacity.

Here, it is helpful to draw attention to an encyclopedia, compiled shortly before Ibn Ḥazm in scholarly circles of Iraq, the so-called *Epistles of the Sincere Brethren*. In this work, logic¹⁰ is considered as the best way to truth, to God, a tool to help men to imitate God. Like the Alexandrians, the *Epistles* classified logic as “mental logic” or “mental concepts” or “forms”. Following Neoplatonic philosophy, the *Epistles* let them emanate from God into the Active Intellect, then into the Universal Soul, into prime matter and finally into the human soul. Consequently, any spoken language, the linguistic logic, mirrors this mental logic, a higher reality.

The texts which we have discussed so far mirror the Aristotelian concept of categories and Aristotle’s explanation of the category “relation”, often shaped by the Alexandrian commentators and increasingly by Neoplatonic philosophy about God’s transcendence and the emanations. This is the background for new accentuations after the first great philosopher Kindī, namely in Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rušd.

An interesting constituent of this background, and an epigone of the Aristotelian-Alexandrian tradition at the turn from the 10th to the 11th century, is

10. Edited and translated by Baffioni (2010).

the Nestorian Christian Abū l-Faraġ Ibn at-Ṭayyib in Baghdad¹¹. According to him *relativa*, which are “distant from each other”, can only be “understood” by analogy. Ibn at-Ṭayyib discusses the question: How can the form of a substance be part and not accident of what is composed of form and matter? He assumes an interdependence of form, matter and accident and illustrates this with the example of the aroma or smell of an apple, which according to him shapes the surrounding air, and the form of this shaped air will be imprinted on our senses. Ibn at-Ṭayyib declares the imprint of the air on the senses to be a “spiritual” (*rūhānī*) imprint, different from the “bodily” (*ġusmānī*) imprint of the form on the matter.

This reminds us of the Stoic discussion of relation and its transcendental aspects¹². Its echo in Neoplatonic philosophy became influential in the 10th century, in the *Epistles* of the “Brethren of Purity” and their classification of the intellect as mediator between God and human soul. The Stoics had detected the relation as a universally valid category, in which all single entities are connected in the totality of all things. Their concept of the immanence of the *pneuma*, the divine dynamic and continuous medium, is mirrored in the Stoic doctrine of the interpenetration of all substances, of the total mixture of matter and *pneuma*. This interpenetration of all substances became important for the Stoic theory of the relations of place, time and movement, as well as action and passion. Because of their universality, these relations were considered as primary structures, which were the object of the thought and perceivable in a dynamic and time-related process of realization, the *physis* in the relatives, the secondary things. In this theory of relation, the relation appears to be the form, the primary structure of different *relata*, which correspond to this form.

Traces of this Stoic concept of relation entered Islamic philosophy, namely through the mediation of Neoplatonism, in which the Stoic immanence of the divine dynamic medium, the *pneuma*, is replaced by a concept of the divine One, who as divine intellect is immanent and transcendent. Here, two aspects become important in the Islamic period: the role of reason and intellect in the reflection on the category of relation and the emanation of the divine intellect determining the concept of relation created in the human soul. We mentioned Ibn Ḥazm, the “Brethren of Purity” and Ibn at-Ṭayyib, who possibly were inspired by some Alexandrian Neoplatonizing commentators of Aristotle.

Now we shall consider the place of Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rušd between philosophical linguistic and metaphysical interpretation of the relation.

Fārābī (872-950/1 A.D.), called “the second teacher” (after Aristotle), presents — in his “Book on the Categories”,¹³ in the chapter on the relatives — the aspects of time and place, which were discussed by Aristotle separately in different places. Fārābī studied them as something referring to relation. He

11. Edition and analysis by Ferrari (2006: 251-300; analysis 81-95).

12. Löbl (1986).

13. Edition and translation by Dunlop (1957/1959). Arabic text ed. Rafīq al-‘Aġam (1985) and ed. M.T. Dānišpažūh (1987).

adds that not everything which has a kind of connection with something else can be classified as “relation”. Fārābī assumes “particles of connections”, which are “employed in relating each one (of the relatives) to the other”. He mentions the condition that “essence” (*māhiya*) and “existence” (*wuḡūd*) of the correlated things “have a certain kind of relation”. In addition, in the description (*yūṣafu*) of the relation, the names should indicate the “essence” and “existence” of both relatives. Fārābī adds chapters on the peculiarities of the relation, which should avoid confusion about the relation between two things.

With this background, we can look at the section on relation in Fārābī’s *Book of Letters*¹⁴.

The text allows the following observations:

1. The examples, which were used by Fārābī, were taken from Aristotle, the Alexandrians and from Ibn al-Muqaffā’.
2. Fārābī introduced three factors, selected from Aristotle, which according to him can only determine a relation, namely time, place and possession.
3. Farabi introduced the “particles of relation”, i.e. prepositions like “in”, as an additional indication of a real relation. In the example “Zayd in the house”, the relation between “Zayd” and “house” is described as “surrounding”.

Here, Fārābī defined relation as a “way” (*tarīq*) between two outermost points; in the case of the roof of a house, built on the ground, Fārābī speaks of “descent” from the roof and ascent from the earth. Similarly, in the example “Zayd in the house”, the relation appears to be determined by the state of “surrounding” and not by the relatives and their essences.

Fārābī’s discussion of relation bears witness to his endeavour to give a clear definition of relation and relative and the names used for both.

At the same time, Fārābī seems to be aware that the meaning of an expression is also “something that is in the mind of the listener” and that expressions might be used in an arbitrary way. The category “relation” with the aspects of place, time and possession, and its classification as a state between two outermost points, evolves to be an essential element in Fārābī’s theory of communication.¹⁵

He presupposes a concept of language, which becomes clear in his discussion of relation: language is conditional on descriptions and definitions, which are the constituents of relations between relatives; relations are correlated to time, place and possession; their linguistic tool are the so-called “particles” (*hurūf*), e.g. the preposition “in”, which in this case are not restricted to a grammatical function. They have mainly a logical function and simultaneously they create the context for descriptions and definitions and for the correct understanding of the meaning of “expressions” (*alfāz*) and thereby for communication.

14. Fārābī (1970: 85-91).

15. Diebler (2005: 286-290).

Thus, Fārābī gives a clear indication of his own standpoint in the discussion between Abū Biṣr Mattā Ibn Yūnus, a defender of logic as a universal valid vehicle of intelligible things, and the grammarian Abū Saʿīd as-Sīrāfī, a defender of language as only access to intelligible things. Fārābī favors exact descriptions and definitions in the use of categories (including relation, time, place and possession). According to him, there is an interdependency between the sensible objects, our statements and our thinking, the “intelligible”.

Fārābī and the discussions in his time about the relation of grammar and logic prepared the basis for the concept of a “mental logic” (*al-mantiq al-fikrī*), mirrored in any language, as formulated in the *Epistles* of the “Brethren of Purity”. Moreover, reason and intellect begin to rank high in the reflection on the category of relation, as we saw in Ibn Ḥazm.

Now, we turn to Ibn Sīnā (980-1037 A.D.). He was acquainted with Fārābī’s thought, but he had different accentuations. He devoted a separate discussion to the *Categories* in his encyclopedia *aṣ-Šifāʾ*, “The Healing”¹⁶. In his earlier written “Middle Compendium on Logic”,¹⁷ Ibn Sīnā mainly follows the contents of Aristotle, including moderate criticisms directed against certain traditions of Aristotle’s commentators, esp. Simplicius. At the end of the short section on the relative, he lists the 10 categories substance, quantity, quality, relative, where, when, position, possession, action and passion. He adds that the relative, according to its nature, concerns all of them. In his *aṣ-Šifāʾ*, Ibn Sīnā contrasts the category substance with the accidental categories, which are divided into quantity and quality on the one hand and relative, where, when, action, passion, position and possession on the other. The category of relatives is related to the intrinsic nature of the subject, and the six remaining categories where, when, position, possession, action and passion to something extrinsic. Ibn Sīnā discusses the relationship between a man in the house and this house: he argues that an additional word between “man” and “the house”, namely “the owner of”, creates a relationship between “man” and “house”. Here, the “intrinsic nature” of the subject “man/owner” points at the same time to something extrinsic, the “house”.

Fārābī already discussed this example: he used grammar and additional particles and distinguished between ‘the house owned by Zayd’ and ‘the house surrounding Zayd’ (= Zayd in the house). However, in Fārābī, the relationship is neither something intrinsic to the inhabitant of the house nor something extrinsic depending on the house. It is something, the expression of which is tolerated, “relying on what is in the mind (*damīr*) of the listener and relying on (the fact), that only the possession (of the house by Zayd)” (or Zayd’s habitation in the house) “can be understood from it”.

Here, we see a shift from the linguistic and logical level to the ontological. This ontological level is further developed in Ibn Sīnā’s encyclopedia “The

16. Ibn Sīnā (1959), *aṣ-Šifāʾ*, *al-Mantiq*, II: *al-maḳūlāt*.

17. Ed. Kalbarczyk (2012). Cf. Eichner (2013).

Healing”, in particular in the book on *Metaphysics*, in a chapter on relatives¹⁸. This is an elaboration of Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V 15. Ibn Sīnā declares the relation (*iḍāfa*) to be based on some “notion” (*ma‘nā*) in one of the two relatives (*muḍāfāt*), e.g. in the asymmetrical relation father-son only the father has the relation fatherhood, which Ibn Sīnā called “notion” or “description of its existence” (*wasf wuḡūdiḥī*), of its “being with respect to something else in the father”. Because of this “description”, the relative has its external existence. The “definition” (*ḥadd*) of the relative “in its existence” (*fī l-wuḡūd*) makes the relative an accident, “which has the mentioned description (i.e. fatherhood), when it is apprehended (*‘uqila*) in the intellect”.

Consequently, Ibn Sīnā distinguished between “intellectual relation” (*al-iḍāfa al-‘aqliyya*) and “existential relation” (*al-iḍāfa al-wuḡūdiyya*).

Ibn Sīnā classifies the relation between father and son as pertaining to action and passion. Both are categories referring to relation. Action and passion are an alternative rendering of cause and effect; causality appears as relation, also as God-world relationship. Here, Ibn Sīnā is followed by al-Ghazālī¹⁹. This is an elaboration of Aristotle’s denial of an infinite chain of causes in favor of the first unmoved mover, by integrating the Neoplatonic doctrine of a transcendent God and of intermediate causes, emanating from the divine First Cause. Simultaneously, the intermediate causes are ontologically inferior to the divine First Cause.

Here, relation is a causal relation between the divine necessarily existing One, and the multiplicity of the caused, of existing matter. This multiplicity can be interpreted as something determined by the categories, which shape the accidents of the substance.

After Ibn Sīnā, the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Rušd/Averroes (1126-1198 A.D.) kept to the Neoplatonic background and the ontological interpretation, combined with the Farabian-Avicennian logic of relation. Simultaneously, Ibn Rušd deviated from Ibn Sīnā in an interesting return to Aristotle. Like Aristotle, he concentrated on the *relata*, the fundamentals of any relation.

In his monograph on metaphysics, called *Epitome of Aristotle’s Metaphysics*²⁰, the category “substance” is extensively discussed by Ibn Rušd, because it is the only category that can essentially become a relative, e.g. “fatherhood and sonship” (*al-abūwa wa l-banūwa*).

However, Ibn Rušd did not confine himself to a substance-orientated concept of relation. He reveals indications of a new evaluation of relation. He says, with regard to Aristotle’s simultaneousness of two correlatives, that “both are simultaneous in being and in knowledge”; he argues that the category of relation “is something the soul introduces into the existents”, and he adds that through this relationship the two subjects of the correlated things can be con-

18. Ed. and translated by Michael E. Marmura, in Ibn Sīnā (2005: 116-123).

19. Lizzini (2013: 165-196).

20. Ibn Rušd (1958); transl. Rüdiger Arnzen (2010). This work was the basis for Salvador Gómez Nogales (1976: 302-305), supplemented by other texts.

ceptualized (*taṣawwur*) and, vice versa, the relationship of the two subjects can be conceptualized. The conceptualization is dependent on the soul.

This is further explained in Ibn Rušd's *Tahāfut at-Tahāfut*, "The Incoherence of the Incoherence", in a critique of Ghazālī's statement that "the relation and two relative things form a plurality of knowledge, and that for instance our knowledge of fatherhood is different from our knowledge of the father and the son"²¹.

According to Ghazālī²², there are three kinds of knowledge: knowledge of the essence (*dāt*) of the father, knowledge of the son and knowledge of the relation, which is enclosed (*muḍamman*) in the two preceding kinds of knowledge; they "condition each other". Ghazālī explains this with the divine "First" knowing Himself and the "individual genera" to which He has a relation as their "Principle". "Otherwise, the relation's being known to Him becomes unintelligible". Ghazālī's statement is remarkable for several reasons:

1. He considers relation as causal connection between two relatives.
2. Relation is part of an epistemological process; knowledge is the bridge between two relatives.
3. The example of the divine "principle" illustrates the causal relation between knower and known, and also between cause and effect.
4. Aristotle's classification of "knowledge" (ἐπιστήμη) as a relative — because knowledge and knowable things condition each other — appears to tend to a new evaluation of relation and the relative, which is already alluded to in Aristotle's statement "and if those things are relatives for which *being is the same as being somehow related to something*, then perhaps some answer may be found". Ghazālī did not develop this to a new concept of relation, but added to this the concept of knowledge as connecting relation.

In his critique of Ghazālī's *Incoherence of the philosophers*, Ibn Rušd did not realize the subtleties of Ghazālī's remarks and denied Ghazālī's epistemological aspects. Instead, he says: "Now, the truth is, that the relation is an attribute additional to two correlated things, from outside the soul and in the existents. However, the relation in the concepts (*al-ma'qūlāt*) is rather a state (*hāl*) than an attribute (*ṣifa*) additional to two correlated things". The following passage can be interpreted as an indication of the inexplicability of this state of fatherhood, the human knowledge (*al-'ilm al-insānī*) of which cannot reach the stage of divine eternal knowledge (*al-'ilm al-azālī*) "from the visible to the invisible" (*min aš-šāhid ilā l-ġā'ib*)²³.

To human knowledge only those existents which share the same genus or species are accessible. Ibn Rušd's declaration is, as in Ibn Sīnā, based on the Neoplatonic doctrine of the First Intellect, which "is pure act and cause.

21. Ibn Rušd (1987: 350; transl. van den Bergh, I, 211).

22. Ghazālī (2000: 105, 9-12).

23. Ibn Rušd (1987: 351, 1-4; transl. van den Bergh, I, 211).

(God's) knowledge cannot be compared to human knowledge". In accordance with the Neoplatonic system of emanations in gradations and because of the assumed dissimilarity between cause and effect, the epistemological consequence for the human conceptualization of relationship can be summarized as follows:

1. As the subject of human conceptualization (*taṣawwur*) "consists of material things (*al-umūr al-hayūlāniyya*) only", human concepts of relation are restricted to the substances and its accidents, the categories quantity, quality, relation, where, when, position, possession, action and passion.
2. The process of conceptualization is affected by the soul.
3. The imperfectness of this conceptualization is an echo of the indeterminateness of the relation between the relatives.
4. In Ibn Ruṣd, the Neoplatonic concept of indeterminate relation appears to be connected to the concept of potentiality as "a disposition (*isti'dād*) in a thing and (as) its inherent possibility (*imkān*) of existing in actuality".
5. The indeterminateness of relation and its correlation with the concept of potentiality is not developed to a clear concept of a dynamic process between relation, relatives and linguistic conceptualization.

In Ibn Ruṣd, relation appears to be something accidental to the substance and simultaneously something essential.

This ambivalence and the Neoplatonic background, which Ibn Ruṣd shares with Ibn Sina, have parallels in the younger contemporary Ibn 'Arabī, a Sufi born in Murcia in 1165 A.D. (died 1240 in Damascus) and a representative of a trend introducing philosophical elements in Sufism into the footsteps of Ghazālī, his great ideal. Ibn 'Arabī is perhaps inspired by Ibn Ruṣd's and Ibn Sina's concept of categories and their Neoplatonic idea of the emanational connection between the divine absolute being and the world of creation. This would explain why Ibn 'Arabī²⁴ related the ten divine aspects of the "Creator" to the ten Aristotelian categories applicable to "every order in the world", namely his "essence" to the "substance of the world", his "attributes" to the "accidents", his "eternity" to the "time", his "sitting on the throne" to the "place", his "names" to the "quantity", his "assent" and "indignation" to the "quality", his "word" to the "position", his "lordship" to the "relation", his "creating" to the "active", and his "response" to man's prayers to the "passive".

Moreover, this would explain why Ibn 'Arabī describes the bridge between God and the world with the Sufi term *at-tanaffus ar-rahmānī* (or *nafas ar-rahmān*) "the breath of compassion", which became a vehicle for God's words, his creatures. Within the Sufi concept of an identity of the all-permeating infinite divine power and infinite divine acting, we find the category of

24. Ibn 'Arabī (1968: II, 304,14-18; 211, 29-33) and on the equation with the divine aspects p. 435, 8-11. On the reception of the Aristotelian categories in Ibn 'Arabī cf. Gril (2005).

relation of God's sovereignty to the world and the category of "passion" (*an yanfa'ila*) of God, who answers (*al-muğṭb*) man's prayer of request.

Ibn 'Arabī's integration of the categories in a Stoic-Neoplatonic concept of an emanational connection between the divine absolute being and the world of creation through the all-permeating divine power transformed relation into a dynamic process, in which the infinite is procreated from the One.

Thus, Ibn 'Arabī gave his own answer in contemporary discussions about the question, whether and how the divine One creates multiplicity. Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rušd and in their footsteps medieval philosophers²⁵ defended the principle "Ex Uno, secundum quod unum, non nisi unum". Ibn 'Arabī *expressis verbis* denies this dictum, which he attributes to *al-ḥakīm* "the philosopher".

A younger contemporary of Ibn 'Arabī, the Sufi philosopher Ibn Sab'īn (ca. 1217-1270 A.D.), appears to have disagreed with the position of Ibn 'Arabī. In his philosophical work *Budd al-'ārif wa-'aqīdat al-muḥaqqiq*, "The escape of the knower and the belief of the seeker of truth"²⁶, he compares relation with the relation between knowledge and known or perceived: they are imperfect because of their multiplicity; they oppose the "supreme (divine) attributes" and the "unity of the (divine) attributes". Ibn Sab'īn remarks: "strictly speaking from relation only imagination (*wahm*) remains, which vanishes". Apparently, Ibn Sab'īn criticized the use of the categories in Sufi theology, especially the category relation as something ending in "imagination". Their use implies multiplicity and affects God's unity. It might be a critical allusion to the school of Ibn 'Arabī and his model al-Ghazālī to which he prefers the position of Ibn Sīnā or Ibn Rušd.

It is interesting to observe that Ibn Sab'īn's critical view of the categories is not shared by his younger contemporary Ramon Llull (1232-1315 A.D.). This Majorcan philosopher and mystic had knowledge of the Aristotelian *Organon*, of Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* and of other Arabic sources, including possibly Ibn Sab'īn. But his knowledge of Ibn Sab'īn must be denied with regard to Llull's concept of the categories, especially of relation. On the contrary, we detect parallels with the Sufi philosopher Ibn 'Arabī. We can contrast Ibn 'Arabī's category (1) "substance" *as being* "creator" or divine "essence", (2) "relation" *as being* divine "lordship" and (3) "action" *as being* act of "creating" with Llull's concept of *relatio substantialis*²⁷: Llull gives as an example the substantial relation in God existing between Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Here-with, in created things the relation corresponds, namely between form and matter. This relation *as being* form indicates multiplicity, "like the multiplicity (*pluralitas*) between father and son, between preceding (*antecedens*) and following (*consequens*)". Relation is a "coessential" (*coessentialis*) (real) relative, something that coessentially can have a relation (*referibile*) and (coessentially) is the act of relation (*referre*). Relation is a basic principle (*principium primiti-*

25. Cf. Teske (1993).

26. Ibn Sab'īn (1978: 71f).

27. Ramon Llull (1985: 108, 110, 112 and 114). Cf. Johnston (1987: 62-73).

vum) and like substance it can have coessential principles, like action and passion or quantity (*maioritas*, *minoritas*) and quality. Relation can be an accident, inferior to the substantial relation. It is a cause of accidental or substantial action (*actio*) and passion (*passio*). These few selected descriptions clearly reveal the new evaluation of relation, which in contrast to Aristotle no longer concentrates on relation as something dependent upon the substance.

With the Neoplatonizing Islamic philosophers – including the Sufi philosopher Ibn ‘Arabī – Ramon Llull shares the classification of relation as a dynamic and active principle and with Ibn ‘Arabī he shares the use of the categories as universal forms with a “naturally physical and metaphysical status”.

Ibn ‘Arabī developed a concept of categories as something applicable to the order of the world and as something mirrored in the divine aspects of the Creator. Remarkably, Ibn ‘Arabī’s divine categories “substance” = Creator, “relation” = God’s “Lordship” and “acting” = God’s act of creating, can be paralleled with Llull’s Trinitarian concept of the substantial relation, existing in God, between Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In addition, Ibn ‘Arabī’s divine categories can be paralleled with Llull’s concept of the correlatives, in which the divine attributes appear in a correlation of acting – this is in Ibn ‘Arabī God’s act of creating. Active – this is in Ibn ‘Arabī God as creator, a substance. Passive – this is in Ibn ‘Arabī God’s “Lordship”, a relation.

From this correlation results the correlation of the divine act of *intellegere*, the divine *intellectus intelligens* and the divine *objectum intellectum*.

We will not enter into more details, but it is clear that Llull did not follow the alleged Avicennian and the Averroistic thesis of “ex Uno, secundum quod unum, non nisi unum”. Similarly to Ibn ‘Arabī, he developed a relationship between God and his creation, in which the category relation received a new orientation. In this concept of relation, cause, effect and causing are correlated and relation is a dynamic process between substance, relative and *relatum*. Its integration in Llull’s Christian Trinitarian theology, in which the created world is an image of the divine Trinity, offers an interesting alternative to the Augustinian Trinitarian theology. The rehabilitation of relation from John Scottus Eriugena (c. 801-c. 877 A.D.) until Bonaventura and (in an inconsistent manner) Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century culminated in new accentuations of Ramon Llull, developed under the impression of Stoic-Neoplatonizing Islamic philosophers, especially of the Sufi Ibn ‘Arabī. Llull’s discussion of relation²⁸ forms an essential part of his contribution to logic, which recently has been said to be a “dynamization of logical predicates”²⁹.

28. Platzeck (1963) and (1964-1965: 73-81).

29. Fidora (2007: 86).

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