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# TOWARDS AN INTERPRETATION OF YAḤYĀ IBN ʿADĪ'S TERMINOLOGY IN HIS THEOLOGICAL TREATISES

*By*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION[1]

Recently, the philosophical work of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī (d. 974) has been given more attention by researchers of medieval Arabic philosophy[2], sometimes still called "Islamic Philosophy"[3]. A better perception of philosophical activity in the ninth to eleventh centuries in the Near East, and particularly in Baghdad, brought us to the conclusion that not only Muslims were involved, but that interaction between Muslims, Christians and Jews was common; not only in the field of translation's, but also in philosophical questioning[4].

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1.  Paper presented at the *IX Conference on Christian Arabic Studies*, University of Malta, Valletta, Malta, July 19-21, 2012. The text edited by Stephen Menn and Robert Wisnovsky in this volume, crucial for the understanding of Ibn ʿAdī's polemical work, was however not available at that time.

2.  YAḤYĀ IBN ʿADĪ, *The Philosophical Treatises,* ed. Sabhan Khalifat, Amman, Department of Philosophy. University of Jordan, 1988. In this context, it is important to know that a newly discovered manuscript presented by Robert Wisnovsky will probably enable us now to study the complete philosophical oeuvre of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, including all the treatises mentioned by ancient bibliographies: WISNOVSKY, Robert, *New Philosophical Texts of Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī: a Supplement to Endress' Analytical Inventory.*

3.  *The School of Baghdad (4th-5th/10th-11th Cent.) and its Achievements. Mattā ibn Yūnus, Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, Ibn Zurʿa, Ibn Suwār, Ibn as-Samḥ,* (*Islamic Philosophy,* Vol. 83: *Texts and Studies*), collected and reprinted by Fuat Sezgin, Frankfurt am Main, Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 2000.

4.  PLATTI, Emilio, *Entre théologie et philosophie: Des Arabes chrétiens dans l'œuvre de Shlomo Pines (1908-1990)*; WOLFSON, Harry Austryn, III. *The Philosopher Kindī and Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī on the Trinity,* in

On the other hand, as Griffith made it clear, it is also *"certainly true that a clash of theologies characterized the relationship between Muslims and Christians in the early Islamic period, in the sense that their shared reasoning issued in radically opposed conclusions on major religious topics"*[5]. We know that Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī has been very prolific in writing polemical works and we have already a quite good knowledge of this more theological work[6]. On the other hand, little has been done to link this part of his work to the more philosophical treatises. In fact, a better insight into his theological work is now possible, and some fundamental questions concerning the interpretation of his terminology can be resolved.

We will consider, in this contribution, Yaḥyā 's definition of the Divine attributes, *ṣifāt*, in his presentation of the Trinity, but also the status of the entities united in Christ by the Union of the Divine Word with man (*ittiḥād al-Kalima bi l-insān*)[7]. For both questions, the Trinity and the Incarnation, there is the unequivocal refutation of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī's position by Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) in his *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*[8]:

> *"They say (…): We say, 'one in essence, three in attributes'* [9]*; they*[10] *should be answered that they have already clearly expressed 'true God from true God', and that he is equal to the Father in substance*[11]*. This is a clear statement showing a second substance, not an attribute".*
> *"They have combined two views, proving three substances despite their claim that they are proving one substance. There is no defense for your saying, as do Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī and others like him, that this is the same as saying 'Zayd the doctor, the accountant, the writer' and then*

The Philosophy of the Kalam, Cambridge, 1976, pp. 318-336; MOHD, Nasir B. Omar, Christian Translators in Medieval Islamic Baghdad: The Life and Works of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, in The Islamic Quarterly XXXIX/1, London, 1995.

5.   GRIFFITH, Sydney H., The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque. Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 158.

6.   PLATTI, Emilio, Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, in Christian-Muslim Relations (CMR): A Bibliographical History. Volume 2 (900-1050).

7.   Reference is made to the following editions: ABŪ ʿĪSĀ AL-WARRĀQ - YAḤYĀ IBN ʿADĪ, De l'Incarnation, éd. & trad. E. Platti (CSCO 490/Ar. 46 & CSCO 491/Ar. 47), Lovanii, Peeters, 1987; La grande polémique antinestorienne de Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī I-II, éd. & trad. E. Platti (CSCO 427&437/Ar. 36&38 and CSCO 428&438/Ar. 37&39), Lovanii, Peeters, 1981-1982; E. PLATTI, Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī. Théologien chrétien et Philosophe arabe (OLA, 14), Leuven, 1983: Discussion avec Quryāqus. Textes et Traduction, pp. 136-193 and 5*-68*.

8.   A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity. Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawab al-Sahih, ed. and transl. By Thomas F. Michel s.j., Delmar-New York, Caravan, 1984, p. 271; edition: Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala Dīn al-Masīḥ li-shaykh al-Islām… Ibn Taymiyya al-Ḥarrānī II (ed. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. Nāṣir al-Almaʿī), Riyāḍ, 2004, pp. 135-136.

9.   Ar. text: Wa idhā qultum: naḥnu naqūlu: "aḥadī al-dhāt thulāthī al-ṣifāt…".

10.  Ar. text: "qīla lakum: one would say to you…", and so the whole paragraph: "you" instead of "they", as it is the case in "There is no defense for your saying…".

11.  Ar. text: musāwin li l-Āb fī l-jawhar…

*saying ' Zayd the doctor', and 'Zayd the accountant', and 'Zayd the writer'. He holds that each of these attributes gives a definition[12] different from that of the others, and that they may describe the hypostases in this way. The hypostasis is the essence with the attribute[13], and so the essence with each attribute is a hypostasis. The hypostases thereby become three, but this example does not correspond to their teaching. Zayd here is one substance having three attributes: of medicine, accounting and writing. These are not three substances here, but each attribute offers a definition[14] which the other does not".*

*"No intelligent person says that the attribute is equal to that which is described in the substance[15], nor that the essence with this attribute is equal to the essence with the other attribute in substance".*

These three paragraphs are part of the section of Ibn Taymiyya's *Jawāb* on *The Divine Names* according to the Christians[16], the three divine hypostases. It is clear that he refers to the Christian Creed on Trinity and Incarnation (*'true God from true God'*), but also that the second part is actually a reference to Yaḥyā's *Refutation* of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq on the Trinity. For Ibn Taymiyya it is clear that Christians fail to define correctly the Trinity and the Incarnation, as they talk about three substances (*jawāhir*) in the case of the Trinity, and a second substance (*ithbāt jawhar thānī*) in the case of Christ. It is a question indeed, how Yaḥyā can make the distinction between saying "*He is one substance from three substances*" and "*He is at the same time one substance and three attributes, which are three substances*". Ibn Taymiyya refuses this distinction made by Yaḥyā. To clarify Yaḥyā's position, let us first present his terminology describing both the Union of the Divine Word with man (*ittiḥād al-Kalima bi l-insān*) and the Hypostases of the Trinity.

## 2. Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī's terminology[17]

In our presentation of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī's *Refutation* of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq on the Trinity, we mentioned how the Christian author continuously repeats the same arguments. Already in the first paragraph of his reply to Abū ʿĪsā, Yaḥyā presents the analogy with the individual Zayd, mentioned by Ibn Taymiyya, and he will repeat this approximately thirty times in this refutation alone:

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12. Ar. text: *ḥukm...*
13. Ar. text: *fa-yaqulūna al-Uqnūm huwa al-dhāt maʿa al-ṣifa...*
14. Ar. text: *ḥukm...*
15. Ar. text: *inna al-ṣifa musāwiya li l-mawṣūf fī l-jawhar...*
16. Ar. text: *"Faṣl: Qālū: wa al-thalātha asmāʾ..."* (ed. p. 130).
17. Cf. PLATTI, Emilio, *Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī and his Refutation of al-Warrāq's Treatise on the Trinity in relation to his other Works*, in *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, (eds. Samir Khalil Samir & Jørgen S. Nielsen), Leiden, Brill, 1994, pp. 172-191; ID., *La doctrine des chrétiens d'après Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq dans son Traité sur la Trinité*, in *MIDEO* 20(1991), pp. 7-30.

*"For example, we can describe Zayd as being a physician (qad naṣifu Zaydan mathalan bi-annahu ṭabībun…), and also as a geometrician (muhandis), and also as a scribe (kātib); but we cannot correctly describe each, the physician, the geometrician and the scribe, by the two others or by one of these two"*[18].

I mentioned also that Augustin Périer noticed *"how Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī constantly repeats, almost to the point of exaggeration, the analogy of the unity of the (divine) substance and the Trinity of the hypostases with the unity of the person of Zayd, who is also Zayd the physician, Zayd the geometrician and Zayd the scribe"*[19]. There is only one subject, Zayd, but we can attribute to him three qualifications really existing in him; and the same occurs with the three hypostases. From all this it becomes understandable that Ibn Taymiyya knew about Ibn ʿAdī's position on this topic and asks how it is possible to avoid the conclusion that one substance can be characterized only by three attributes (*ṣifāt*) and not three real entities (*maʿānin*), described as substances (*jawāhir*).

Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī's position is clarified in the thirteenth paragraph of his *Letter* to al-Qāsim, where the Incarnation and the Trinity are analyzed[20].

On the one hand, the Eternal Son transcends corruption and transformation; He became human without transferring away from his essence or changing his substantiality (*ṣāra insānan min ghayr intiqāl ʿan dhātihi wa-lā taghayyur ʿan jawhariyyatihi*). On the other hand, there is the substance (*jawhar*) of the human being. Both are substances (*kullu wāḥidin min hādhayni jawhar*). Christ is both, not only the Eternal Son, nor the only real entity of the human being (*maʿnā al-insān waḥdahu*). Christ is a substance constituted by both real entities (*al-jawhar al-mutaqawwam min al-Ibn al-azalī wa-maʿnā al-insān*). The conclusion is that Christ is one substance from two substances (*fa-huwa idhan jawhar min jawharayn*); but this doesn't imply that Christ is two substances (*an yakūn al-Masīḥ jawharayn*).

There is an analogy, used many times by Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī: the substance of the human being is one substance constituted by the substance of the living, the substance of the rational, and the substance of the mortal (*jawhar al-insān: wa-huwa jawhar wāḥid mutaqawwam min jawhar al-ḥayy wa-jawhar al-nāṭiq wa-jawhar al-māʾit*); which doesn't mean that the human being is three substances… The human being is one substance (*ṣāra minhā jawhar wāḥid huwa insān*).

It is the same for the Trinity: there is the substance of the Father, the substance of the Son, and the substance of the Spirit (*jawhar al-Āb wa-jawhar al-Ibn wa-jawhar*

18. Ms. Vat. Ar. 114, fol. 7v.; cf. PLATTI, *Treatise on the Trinity*, p. 182.
19. PLATTI, *Treatise on the Trinity*, p. 176.
20. *Grande polémique I*, trad. pp. 20-21; éd. pp. 26-27.

*al-Rūḥ*). These three real entities (*al-thalātha al-ma'ānī*) are indeed three substances (*jawāhir*), and their substances, their essences (*jawāhiruhā wa-dhawātuhā*) remain once they unite in the unique substance of God. The three attributes of God, the Creator (*al-Bārī'*), are each a substance, and He is characterized by these three attributes, all of them substances (*dhū ṣifāt thalāth kulluhunnā jawāhir*), while He himself is only one substance.

This is like Christ, who is one substance from two substances, not being himself two substances, but being characterized by these two attributes, both being two substances (*al-Masīḥ [huwa] jawhar wāḥid dhū ṣifatayn kiltāhumā jawharān*). Christ is characterized by two substances, in the same way the Creator is one substance; however he is characterized by three attributes, being three substances (*wuṣifa bi-ṣifāt thalāth, kulluhunna jawāhir*).

For Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, this is possible, because something can be one in subject (*wāḥid fī l-mawḍū'*), but at the same time also multiple in definition (*kathīr fī l-ḥadd*): his essence will be one, while it has many definitions (*fa-innahu dhāt wāḥida dhū ḥudūd kathīra*)[21]. In this sense, the Creator is one substance, characterized by three attributes, whose significance ("real entity": *ma'nā*) is not the same as the significances of the two others ("realities": *ma'niyay al-ākhiratayn* [sic]); the three attributes are indeed goodness, wisdom and power (*jūd, ḥikma, qudra*)[22]. According to someone's point of view, "something can also be one by definition — I mean: in his "real entity — *fī l-ma'nā*" — being one subject; as it is the case for the Creator, whose "real entity - *al-ma'nā*" is one, as He has no equal (*yūjad al-shay' wāḥid fī l-ḥadd — a'nī fī l-ma'nā — wa-wāḥid fī l-mawḍū', ka l-Bārī'..., fa-inna ma'nāhu ma'nā wāḥid wa-huwa ayḍan wāḥid lā naẓīr lahu*).

## 3. AUGUSTIN PÉRIER'S POSITION

When Augustin Périer published his thesis on Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī in 1920, he seemed deeply confused by Yaḥyā's terminology. Translating the term "*al-ma'nā*" by "notion", he could not make sense of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's arguments mentioned. This is what he wrote:

"...Unfortunately..., (Yaḥyā) is not always in accordance with himself in using some expressions (...); he uses in an almost synonymous way the terms 'notion' (ma'nan) and 'substance' (jawhar). Nature, essence, notion, definition, would be synonymous terms, and as such only 'words'; this is, indeed, pure nominalism"[23].

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21. *Grande polémique I*, trad. p. 8; éd. p. 10.
22. *Grande polémique I*, trad. p. 12; éd. p. 15-16.
23. Augustin PÉRIER, *Yaḥyā ben 'Adī, un philosophe arabe chrétien du Xe siècle*, Paris, 1920, p. 98: "...mal-heureusement, il (Yaḥyā) n'est pas, dans ses expressions, toujours d'accord avec lui-même (...); il emploie

In our research, published in 1983, after editing some of Yaḥyā's treatises, we could not accept his conclusion. It was obvious that the translation of the term "*al-maʿnā*" by "notion", was not adequate[24]. Reading Ibn Taymiyya, we understood that Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī's work had to be analyzed differently, but we were not able to find a solution. The key to understanding his arguments was not yet available, as some philosophical treatises were only discovered in Tehran at that time, but were not yet edited and analyzed.

There was in particular this objection from Ibn Taymiyya concerning "substance" and the status of the attributes (*ḥukm al-ṣifāt*), regarding the definition of "substance" repeated time and time again by Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī.

Guy Monnot, in his article on the doctrines of the Christians in the *"Moghni" of ʿAbd al-Jabbār* (d. 1025)[25], has clearly analyzed the fundamental differences between Muslim theologians and Christians in defining the concept of "*jawhar*, substance". The definition given by Christians is that a substance is "existing in itself", while for Muslims "a substance" is seen as part of the material dimension of creation. This is very clear in several polemical texts[26]. In his *Tahāfut*, Ghazālī is perfectly aware of both the position of Christians and the position of Muslims: "*Their naming the world's Creator — exalted be He above what they say — a substance, with their explanation of substance as that which does not exist in a subject (mawjūd lā fī mawḍūʿ) — that is, [as] the self-subsisting that does not need that which substantiates it (lā yaḥtāj ilā muqawwim yuqawwimuhu). They did not intend by substance, as their opponents intend, that which occupies space (al-mutaḥayyiz)*"[27].

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*d'une manière presque toujours synonyme les mots notion (maʿnan) et substance (ǧawhar). Nature, essence, notion, définition, seraient autant de mots synonymes, mais ne seraient que des mots; voilà, certes, du nominalisme le plus pur*".

24. See PLATTI, *Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī*, Leuven, 1983, p. 80-83: "*c'est la traduction équivoque de maʿnan par 'notion' qui a induit Périer en erreur. Il est clair que pour exprimer la pensée de Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, nous sommes obligés de rendre ce terme par une expression qui rend compte davantage de la réalité de l'entité visée (...). Aussi faut-il retourner à une signification plus générale du terme al-maʿnā qui se rapporte clairement à l'existant, la substance et l'accident* (note: on pourra douter de l'exactitude d'insérer l'accident dans cette catégorie, mais Ibn Taymiyya dans son *Jawāb* attaquera Yaḥyā précisément là-dessus), *et indique donc 'quelque chose d'existant' dans le sens le plus général: 'quelque chose de réellement existant*"; pour Yaḥyā, "*il est possible que le sujet soit un, alors qu'il est multiple dans la définition, parce qu'il est composé d'un certain nombre de maʿānin ('réalités entitatives'), que désignent autant de définitions*".
25. MONNOT, Guy, *Les doctrines des chrétiens dans le "Moghni" de ʿAbd al-Jabbār*, in *MIDEO* 16 (1983), pp. 13-14.
26. PLATTI, Emilio, *Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī. Réflexions à propos de questions du Kalām musulman*, in R. EBIED and H. TEULE (ed.), *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage*, Louvain, Peeters, 2004, pp. 190-192.
27. AL-GHAZĀLĪ, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (transl., introd. and annot. by Michael E. Marmura, Provo, Utah, Brigham Young University Press, 2000, p. 5, §13.

In his treatise on the things existing, *al-mawjūdāt*, Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī makes this very clear: "*The Creator... is a substance, without a body, [He is] Good, Wise and Powerful (jawād, ḥakīm, qādir)...* "[28]. This is exactly what is meant by Ghazālī and repeated time and time again in so many treatises by Ibn 'Adī: "*By substance, I mean an existent which does not exist in a subject (mawjūd mā laysa huwa fī mawḍū'); and this means that it does not need a subject to exist (laysa bi-muḥtāj fī wujūdihi ilā mawḍū')*"[29].

The question remains: how is it possible to define the hypostases as substances, — the substance being defined as subsistent by itself — as they are constituting (*mutaqawwim*) the unique substance of God?

## 4. MARWAN RASHED'S POSITION

The solution is given in a remarkable analysis by Marwan Rashed on one of the philosophical treatises written by Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, "*Fī tabyīn wujūd al-umūr al-'āmmiyya — Explanation of the existence of the communia* [30]. He analyzes Avicenna's position on universals as well as Ibn 'Adī's. His conclusions will indeed bring us very near to understanding Yaḥyā's theological texts presented in the second paragraph.

As Jean Jolivet made it clear in his article on *Philosophy in his relation with Islam until Avicenna*[31], according to Avicenna, essence in itself is independent from existence; essence has no particularity or universality, being just an essence, without a link with the spirit or the material world: "*what it is, and not that it is*", according

28. PLATTI, *Réflexions à propos de questions du Kalām musulman*, pp. 190-196 (trad. fr. du début du traité sur les *mawjūdāt* concernant le Créateur — *al-bārī*). Commentaires: Lizzini, Olga, *Critica dell'emanazione e creazione dal nulla in Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī*, in D. Righi (ed.), *La letteratura arabo-cristiana e le scienze nel periodo abbaside (750-1250 d.C.)*, Turin, Zamorani, 2008, pp. 225-244; C. Baffioni, Carmela, *Le cosidette "mawǧūdāt" in Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī*, in D. Righi (ed.), *La letteratura arabo-cristiana...*, pp. 245-271, en particulier: pp. 247-257: *Discorso sul Creatore*; les deux articles contiennent des trad. partielles en italien.

29. PLATTI, E. (éd. et trad.), *La grande polémique antinestorienne*, vol. 437, tomus 38, p. 181, l. 8-9; vol. 438, tomus 39, p. 157, l. 15; PLATTI, E., *Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, théologien chrétien et philosophe arabe: sa théologie de l'Incarnation (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 14), Leuven, Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1983, p. 105.

30. ENDRESS, Gerhard, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, pp. 67-69: n° 5.13; RASHED, Marwan, *Ibn 'Adî et Avicenne: sur les types d'existants*, in V. Celluprica et.al. (ed.), *Aristotele e I suoi esegeti Neoplatonici. Logica e ontologia nelle interpretazioni greche e arabe. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma 19-20 ottobre 2001*, Napoli, 2004 (Elencos, XL), pp. 106-171; the translation of the title of the treatise is "*Sur l'éclaircissement de l'existence des choses communes*".

31. JOLIVET, Jean, *Le déploiement de la pensée philosophique dans ses rapports avec l'Islam jusqu'à Avicenne*, in Jean JOLIVET, *L'Islam, la philosophie et les sciences*, Paris, UNESCO, 1981, p. 35-58.

to Wisnovsky[32]; and in this case, the essence will only come to existence when joined by accidents[33].

This is however not the case for Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī. In his analytical inventory, published in 1977, Gerhard Endress made it already clear that, according to Yaḥyā, "*the intellectual forms are shown to have an actual existence (wujūd bi l-fiʿl) which is independent both of their inherence in some material individual and of their conceptual representation in the soul; hence their essential being has priority (aqdam bi l-ṭaʿb) before their material and noetical existence*". Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī refutes the view that the *universals* (*al-kulliyyāt*), or *communia* (*al-umūr al-ʿāmmiyya*) exist only in the representation of the soul, and in the material individuals and their accidents[34].

In this context, Rashed, Adamson and Endress underline the importance of Yaḥyāʿs other treatise describing the three modi of existence, now also available in the newly discovered manuscript: *Maqāla fī l-buḥūth al-ʿilmiyya al-arbaʿa ʿan aṣnāf al-mawjūd al-thalātha, al-ilāhī wa l-ṭabīʿī wa l-manṭiqī — The four scientific inquiries on the three classes of being: divine, natural, and logical*[35]. Adamson concludes that, according to Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, "'*Existence (wujūd)' is an ambiguous term, which refers to different maʿānin. First, natural (ṭabīʿī) existence, which is the existence of maʿānī in matter, together with accidents. Second, logical (manṭiqī) existence, which is the existence of maʿānī formally in the soul (ṣuwaran fī ʿl-nafs). Third, essential [existence], which is [also] called 'divine (ilāhī), which is the existence of maʿānī as that which their definitions indicate*"[36]. This is also what appears clearly from the text translated by Rashed[37]. There is indeed the pure and simple existent ("*l'existant propre*"), or "*the existence of the quiddity*"; it is the pure notion, the form, independent from the two other types of existent matters, "*la chose dans sa choséité*", which is, in fact, a divine element in

32. RASHED, *Ibn ʿAdī...*, p. 111, ref. WISNOVSKY, R., *Notes on Avicenna's Concept of Thingness (šay'iyya)*, in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* X (2000), pp. 181-221, p. 193.
33. JOLIVET, *Le déploiement*, p. 55.
34. ENDRESS, *The Works...*, p. 68.
35. ENDRESS, *The Works...*, p. 67: n° 5.12: "*the divine existence is the existence of the absolute essence in virtue of his definition*".
36. ADAMSON, P., *Knowledge of Universals and Particulars in the Baghdad School*, in *Documenti e Studi sulla tradizione filosofica medieval*, XVIII (2007), pp. 141-164; EHRIG-EGGERT, Carl, *Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī on Universals and the Intellect*, in *In the Age of al-Fārābī: Arabic Philosophy in the Fourth/Tenth Century* (ed. P. Adamson), Warburg Institute Colloquia 12 (2008), pp. 51-61.
37. RASHED, *Ibn ʿAdī...*, pp. 131 et 167, text: KHALIFAT, *Treatises*, p. 154; RASHED, *Ibn ʿAdī...*, p. 112: Il y a pour Ibn ʿAdī trois types d'existants: (1) Il y a les particuliers, qui sont des notions existant dans la matière et avec des accidents particularisants, ce qu'on peut appeler "les êtres physiques"; (2) il y a les formes existant dans la représentation dans l'âme, ce qu'on peut appeler "les formes psychiques"; (3) et il y a, surtout, l'existant pur et simple, "l'existant propre", ou "l'existence de la quiddité".

neo-Platonism[38]. According to Rashed, Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī went even farther: *"C'est avec les néoplatoniciens qu'apparaît une division scolastique entre trois types d'objets, "divins", "physiques" et "psychiques"; "mais [...] alors que les néoplatoniciens ne font porter leur classification que sur les formes (εἴδη), Ibn ʿAdī propose une tripartition exhaustive des existants (mawǧūdāt)"*[39]. By including this type in the *"mawjūdāt"*, Ibn ʿAdī distances himself definitively from nominalism[40].

And so, the difference between Ibn ʿAdī and Avicenna becomes obvious. Avicenna denies that the *whatness* "la chose, dans sa choséité" is an existent entity, while Ibn ʿAdī is definitively opting for the real existence of separated notions, "un réalisme des notions séparées"[41].

Rashed concludes from the two treatises analyzed, first, that, for Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, the essential notion has a real existence, and second, that he has the tendency to "assimilate the pure notion with the forms of defined objects in the divine intellect"[42]. According to Ibn ʿAdī, the sensible is "informed", receives the forma, to become an individual, material entity. So that *"what is simply an animal"* is indeed a really existing entity[43], and is not to be confused with *"a certain animal"*.

It is becoming increasingly clearer how, for Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, a subject, a man, who is one substance, but also "white" and "a musician", can be defined by both these real entities, while what is defined by "white", and also what is defined by "a musician", are really existing entities[44]. The subject, in this case, is one, a man, but he is also defined by multiple definitions, referring to multiple real entities. And these real entities "white" and "a musician" are called "notions — *maʿānin*", or even "substances — *jawāhir*".

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38. RASHED, *Ibn ʿAdī...*, pp. 131 et 167, text.
39. RASHED, *Ibn ʿAdī...*, p. 131; l'auteur fait référence à un traité d'Ibn ʿAdī, qui maintenant a été retrouvé: *Traité des quatre recherches scientifiques sur les trois classes d'existants, divin, physique et logique*: cf. ENDRESS, p. 67, §5.12; WISNOVSKY, *New Philosophical Texts*, p. 321.
40. RASHED, *Ibn ʿAdī...*, p. 139: *"...permettant de porter le coup de grâce aux nominalistes"*, with the reference to Aristotle: *"Il est clair, en outre, que le Philosophe considère que ce que signifie toute définition d'un défini a une existence"*.
41. RASHED, *Ibn ʿAdī...*, p. 105, 118 and 122; p. 115: *"Avicenne demeure fidèle à Fārābī dans ce qui importe le plus, le déni que la chose, dans sa choséité, soit un existant"*.
42. RASHED, *Ibn ʿAdī...*, p. 142.
43. This is the reason why we didn't follow Augustin Périer's conclusions: *Yaḥyā ben ʿAdī*, p. 98; PLATTI, *Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī*, Leuven, 1983, p. 80-83.
44. See §6.3. translated by RASHED, *Ibn ʿAdī...*, p. 171: *"... ce que signifie la définition du blanc, diffère de l'existence du musicien, c'est-à-dire de ce que signifie la définition du musicien; et la chose unique, c'est-à-dire le sujet unique, comme par exemple l'homme, est l'un et l'autre ensemble, c'est-à-dire est l'existence du blanc (c'est-à-dire ce que désigne la définition du blanc) et l'existence du musicien (c'est-à-dire ce que désigne la définition du musicien). L'un, c'est-à-dire le sujet, est donc multiple, c'est-à-dire du point de vue des existences des choses qu'il est"*.

Consequently, God knows all these *ma'ānī*, all these existent *mawjūdāt*, the human being but also the quiddity of "white", what is defined by "white", and the quiddity of "a musician", what is defined by "a musician". It is God who "informs" the sensible by their forms. And this brings Yaḥyā to the conclusion that God knows the individuals, as He himself is "informing" these individualities[45].

## CONCLUSIONS

From the recent research presented by Rashed, Adamson, Ehrig-Eggert and Wisnovsky, and the newly translated or published philosophical treatises of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, it becomes obvious that we have to reconsider the interpretations put forward one century ago by Périer. Ibn 'Adī is indeed affirming clearly the real existence of the pure notions and the intellectual forms, and that brings us to a complete reevaluation of his thinking.

Both Adamson and Rashed are underlining the long way we have still to go, rereading the whole of Yaḥyā's theological and polemical work, to understand the system of his way of thinking[46]. This will surely include a new edition of the "*Petits traités*", published by Périer with only few manuscripts at his disposal[47].

On the other hand, it is also evident that we have to read Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's work in the large context of the Arabic philosophy of his time, including him in the whole of medieval Arabic philosophy; but also linking the School of Baghdad, of whom he was one of the most outstanding representatives, to the philosophical questioning of that time, from al-Kindī (d. 867) up to Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037).

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45. PLATTI, Emilio, *Les thèses des philosophes rejetées par Ghazālī; telles que les présente Yaḥyā Ibn 'Adī (m. 974)*, in *MIDEO* 30.

46. RASHED, *Ibn 'Adī...*, p. 138: "...tous les rouages de son système — ce qui nécessiterait un long détour par ses écrits théologiques".

47. *Petits traités apologétiques de Yaḥyâ Ben 'Adî*. Texte arabe et traduit en français, par Augustin Périer, Paris, Gabalda-Geutner, 1920: ms. *Par. Ar. 169*, with ref. to *Par. Ar. 173* and *Vat. ar. 127*; bibl. See: CMR II, 390-438.

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