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The Science of Metaphysics and Different Naming Conventions Ranging From Prote Philosophia to al-'ilm al-ilāhī: An Analysis Centered on Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī

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Abstract

Aristotle is considered to be the founding father of metaphysics. He specified the subject and scope of this science and used the names “first philosophy (prote philosophia)”, “theology” and wisdom (sophia) for it. However, there have been some changes both in the scope and naming of this science after his time. Although it is generally accepted that the subject of metaphysics is “being qua being,” there has been a confusion about the relationship between metaphysics and theology. Philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Avicenna directly studied this issue to eliminate such confusions. Different names such as first philosophy, after-physics, al-‘ilm al-ilāhī and al-ilāhiyyāt have always been used to refer to it. This study discusses why the science of metaphysics is named in different ways, mainly based on the evaluations of Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī. It also questions if there is a relationship between different names and the scope of metaphysics and the method of analysis it uses? Do different names for the same scholarly area refer to the same science in terms of the subjects, areas of study and problems addressed, or does each name refer to different content than others? To achieve its intended aims, it also refers to the epistemology of Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī.

Keywords

Islamic Philosophy, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Aristotle, Metaphysics, After-physics, al-‘ilm al-ilāhī, First philosophy

Metafizik İlmi ve Bu İlmin Farklı Şekillerde İsimlendirilmesi; Prote Philosophia’dan el-ilmü’l-ilâhiyyât’a: Ebü’l-Berekât el-Bağdâdî Merkezli Bir İnceleme

Öz

Metafizik ilminin kurucusu olarak Aristoteles kabul edilir. Aristoteles bu ilmin konusunu ve inceleme alanlarını belirlemiş ve bu ilme yönelik ilk felsefe (*prote philosophia*), teoloji ve hikmet (*sophia*) gibi isimleri kullanmıştır. Ancak sonraki dönemde bu ilmin hem konusu hem de isimlendirilmesi hakkında değişiklikler meydana geldi. Metafiziğin konusunun “varolması itibarıyla varolan” olduğu genel kabul görmekle birlikte, bu ilmin konusuyla teoloji arasındaki ilişki hakkında filozofların zihninde bir karışıklık olduğu da görülmektedir. Fârâbî ve İbn Sînâ gibi filozoflar bu karışıklıkları gidermek amacıyla doğrudan bu konuyu ele alarak incelediler. Bu ilme yönelik farklı isimlendirmeler de İslam felsefesi içerisinde hep var oldu. Metafizik ilmi için ilk felsefe denildiği gibi fizikötesi, *el-ilmü’l-ilâhî* ve *el-ilâhiyyât* ilmi gibi farklı isimlendirmeler de hep kullanıldı. Bu çalışmada metafizik ilminin niçin farklı şekillerde isimlendirildiği konusu Ebü’l-Berekât el-Bağdâdî’nin değerlendirmeleri üzerinden ele alınacaktır. Bu farklı isimlendirmelerle metafizik ilminin konusu ve inceleme yöntemi arasındaki bir ilişkinin olup olmadığı sorgulanacaktır. Aynı ilme yönelik bu farklı isimlendirmeler konu, inceleme alanı ve sorunları itibarıyla aynı ilme mi gönderme yapmaktadır, yoksa bu her bir isimlendirme diğerinden daha farklı bir içeriğe mi sahiptir? Bu çalışmada ayrıca amacı gerçekleştirmek için de ihtiyaç duyulduğu kadarıyla Ebü’l-Berekât’ın bilgi felsefesine değinilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

İslam Felsefesi, Ebü’l-Berekât el-Bağdâdî, Aristoteles, Metafizik, Fizikötesi, İlâhiyyât İlmi, İlk Felsefe

Introduction

Metaphysics, which is given different names, such as *al-'ilm al-ilāhī*, *al-ilāhiyyāt*, *mā ba'de't-tabīa'* and *el-felsefetü'l-ülâ* by Muslim philosophers, ranks first among the sciences in terms of its value and exaltation. The most prominent reasons for this are that (i) it is a science which all sciences are based on, and (ii) the first Cause, which is the loftiest in terms of existence and the reason for the existence of all other beings, is investigated by this science. These reasons show that ontology and theology are both included in metaphysics. Highlighting one of these or basing metaphysics on one of them raises questions about the nature of the subjects that this science addresses. It is known that the relationship between metaphysics and theology has been a matter of discussion, and some philosophers have reduced metaphysics to theology.

Aristotle, who was the first philosopher to consider metaphysics as a separate discipline, drew a general outline of it by elaborating on its focus and the issues it addresses. A well-known statement about the subject of metaphysics describes it as "a science (epistêmê) which investigates being qua being (to on hê on) (al-mawjūd bimā huwe mawjūd)", and this statement can be traced back to Aristotle. Despite this clear-cut statement about the subject of metaphysics, what Aristotle meant with it has been a subject of controversy across time in the history of philosophy. This is because Aristotle's book *Metaphysics* addressed issues related to both theology and ontology. In fact, Aristotle himself used different names for this science, such as the first philosophy (prote philosophia), theology (theologia) and wisdom (sophia) to highlight different subjects and issues in his works. All these add to the disputability of what the essential subject of metaphysics is and how this science should be named.

Within the Islamic thought, the scope of this science has been discussed since the earliest times and the approach that reduced metaphysics to theology has existed since then. At this point, the kalām scholarship of al-Kindī, who is also accepted as the first Muslim philosopher (d. 252/866), remains strongly evident in his approach to metaphysics. When he mentions metaphysics at the beginning of his work called *fī al-Falsafa al-ülā*, he says, "the most honourable and supreme philosophy is metaphysics (al-Falsafa al-ülā); by this I mean the First Truth, which is the root of all truths". He also portrays the true philosopher as someone with such lofty knowledge. Adopting an Aristotelian approach, al-Kindī defines knowing something as recognizing its reasons, so he considers knowing the supreme reason as the loftiest knowledge. Al-Kindī's constructing metaphysics on knowing the First Cause shows that he has a theology-oriented understanding of this science.¹ What he means by "al-illa al-ülā" in his work entitled *fī Hudūd al-Eşyā* and *Rusūmihā* is that He creates out of nothing; He is active, complementary to everything and does not move.² Al-Kindī's comments on the purpose of Aristotle in his book *Metaphysics* is quite insightful, with respect to understanding his match-up of metaphysics and theology:

"The purpose of Aristotle in his book titled *Metaphysics* (*mā ba'det'tabi'iyāt*) is to explain the things that are not intact with matter, things which are not intertwined with matter and are not identified with it even if they are intact with matter, the unity of God, His names, His being the cause and complement of every agent, His being the God of everything, His being the ruler who manages everything with His strong will and absolute wisdom".³

Al-Kindī's choice of *al-Falsafa al-Ülā* as the title of his work while mentioning the name of Aristotle's book *Mā ba'det'tabi'iyāt* is a conscious choice⁴ and reflects the relationship he established between metaphysics and theology. The association that al-Kindī established between metaphysics and theology had

¹ Ya'küb b. İshāk al-Kindī, *fī Falsafa al-Ülā. Resāil al-Kindī al-falsafi*, ed. Abdulhādī Abū Rīde (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1950), 98-101.

² See, al-Kindī, Ya'küb b. İshāk. *fī Hudūd al-Aşyā ve Rusūmihā. Resāil al-Kindī al-falsafi*. ed. Abdulhādī Abū Rīde (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1950), 165-180.

³ Ya'küb b. İshāk al-Kindī, *fī Kemmiyyet kutub Aristütālīs ve mā yahtācu ileyhi fī tahsīl al-falsafati. Resāil al-Kindī al-falsafi*. ed. Abdulhādī Abū Rīde (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1950, 363-384), 384.

⁴ Mahmut Kaya, "Mā Ba'de't-Tabīa", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2003), 44(27), 165-166.

followers in later periods as well. Âmirî (d. 381/992) categorises sciences into natural, mathematical and theological branches (sinâa'tü'l-ilâhiyyîn) and notes that the science of theology is a discipline that studies the first causes of the universe and what is the first, the only and real. This shows that he follows the example of al-Kindî in the science of theology.⁵ Harizmî's (d. 387/997) words in his work *Mefâtihu'l-'ulûm* about the science of theology are in line with al-Kindî's perspectives.⁶ It is known that some scholars in later periods (e.g., Sadreddin Konevî, d. 673/1274) maintained the perspective that reduces metaphysics to theology.

This reductionist perspective of metaphysics, which highlighted al-Kindî's theology, was also welcomed by different philosophers in later periods. However, al-Fârâbî (d. 339/950) describes this attitude as a delusion that some people had. He said that the minds of scholars were confused about metaphysics and wrote an independent treatise to solve this problem. In his short paper, which Avicenna mentions as the work that had solved the trouble he had understanding the subject of metaphysics, this philosopher of Fârâb does not discuss the background of the names of metaphysics, such as after-physics (mâ ba'de't-tabîa') and al-'ilm al-ilâhî. However, he uses these names carefully and makes references to their content.⁷ In this work, al-Fârâbî says that the focus of metaphysics (mâ ba'da't-tabîa') is the most general issues, such as absolute existence and the only one, without using the phrase "being quo being", which is commonly used in this field, and he adds that the studies on God are also carried out in this science because it is the basic knowledge of the being in the absolute sense.⁸ In this way, he makes a clear distinction between metaphysics and theology, and he explains in what respects theological issues fall within the scope of this science.

Avicenna reports al-Fârâbî's claim that scholar's minds are confused about the subject of metaphysics. In his autobiography, Avicenna also mentions a serious distress he experienced regarding the subject of Aristotle's book *Metaphysics*. It was al-Fârâbî, with his work mentioned above, who guided Avicenna out of this hopeless deadlock, which made him happy enough to make donations to the poor, due to his thankfulness when he resolved it.⁹

It is well known that Avicenna brought up the debate about the subject of this science in his book *Metaphysics*, which is the thirteenth science addressed in *al-Shifa*. The first four sections of the first chapter of this work are devoted to a discussion of the subject of this science. In these sections, he discusses not only how the subject is perceived in the philosophical tradition but also what should be the main subject in this science, in addition to whether theological issues such as God and his attributes are within the scope of this science, and how legitimate it is to investigate these issues. His purpose in doing this was to help metaphysics correct a mistake in which Aristotle and those who wrote commentaries on his works were involved and to help this science to get rid of non-metaphysical subjects¹⁰ and to protect others' minds from the dilemma he himself had experienced. In fact, the problem that Avicenna had about the purpose of Aristotle's book *Metaphysics* stems from the challenge involved in the perspective that reduced metaphysics to theology, which was adopted by al-Kindî and later philosophers who followed his path, and that he was only able to overcome this with the help of al-Fârâbî's work. The solution offered by Avicenna is based on the distinction between subject and problems in science. The subject of metaphysics is "being qua being". Theological issues such as the existence and attributes of Allah are not a subject of this science but are only among the problems examined in it. This solution he offered was quite compatible with that proposed by al-Fârâbî in his work cited

⁵ Abû al-Hasan al-Âmirî, *Kitâbu al-'Îlâm bimenâkib al-Islâm*. ed. Ahmed Abdulhâmid Gurab (Riyad: Dâr al-Asâlet li as-sekâfa ve an-nashri ve al-'Îlâm, 1988), 899.

⁶ Muhammed b. Ahmad al-Hârizmî. *Mafâtiḥ al-'ulûm*. ed. İbrâhîm Ebyârî. 2nd edition. (Bayrût: Dâr al-Kutub al-Arabî, 1989), 153-156.

⁷ Abû Nasr al-Fârâbî, *fî Agrâz al-Hakîm fî Kulli Makâlat min al-Kitâb Mavsûm bi al-Hurûf*. in *al-Samarât al-Mardiyye: fî Ba'di Risâlat al-Fârâbîyya*. ed. Friederich Dieterici (Leiden: Brill, 1890), 34-39.

⁸ al-Fârâbî, *fî Agrâz al-Hakîm fî Kulli Makâlat min al-Kitâb Mavsûm bi al-Hurûf*, 35-36.

⁹ Ibn Sînâ, *eş-Şeyh er-Reîs'in (İbn Sînâ) Hayatı (Otobiyografı)*, *İbn Sînâ: Risâleler içinde*, Notlar ve trans. Alparslan Açıkgenç - M. Hayri Kirbaçoğlu (Ankara: Kitâbiyat yay. 2004), 11-25.

¹⁰ See Ömer Mahir Alper, "Avicenna's Conception of Scope of Metaphysics: Did He Really Misunderstand Aristotle?", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 16 (2007), 85-103.

above. Despite the suggested solutions to this problem from al-Fārābī and Avicenna, the trend that identified the subject of metaphysics as God and his attributes, due to the closeness kalām and philosophy and even their intertwinement, maintained its existence in the Islamic world.¹¹

I.

As an extension of his philosophy that places knowledge in the centre, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī introduces his study of metaphysics by first defining what knowledge is. For him, knowledge is a relativity between the mind and what it knows. Relativity entails a reciprocal relationship between the knower and the known. Therefore, the primary focus of knowledge is the actual beings with which sensory perceptions directly interact. This perspective assumes that the focus of all sciences is quintessentially based on data from sensory perceptions. In other words, what all sciences examine by focusing on them as a subject is "the being", and the problem they want to address is related to the domain of beings. No science deals with a subject outside or beyond what actually exists.

All sciences examine the being, so they do not differ in terms of what they study; the difference lies in the way they examine the being. Abū al-Barakāt makes a dual distinction, as in al-Fārābī's treatise "the Aims of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*".¹² He claims that one can study the beings in terms of either their "specific aspects" or their "general aspects". Studying the specific aspects of the beings involves examining them in terms of their being material sensory bodies or non-sensory divine essence. Considering the beings as material sensory bodies involves their examination as plants and living things. An example of this would be the examination of human beings, who belong to the class of living things, in terms of their being virtuous, deficient, sick or healthy. Examining the beings through a special lens can take many different forms. Therefore, at this point, different sciences come into play. From this point of view, physics as well as disciplines such as ethics and medical science can examine the being from different aspects.¹³

As for the general examination of the beings, this is the study of being qua being. In such an examination, it is not a matter of examining the beings from a special point of view as in the sciences such as physics, ethics or medical science, but the beings are examined only in terms of their existence. It is metaphysics that studies the beings from the most global perspective, and Abū al-Barakāt notes that it is considered as an independent science by Aristotle.¹⁴ What we understand from his words is that this science had already existed before Aristotle, but it was him who determined its subject and laid down its principles. The subject of metaphysics, which investigates the beings in the most general sense, was identified as "being qua being" by its founder. Therefore, sciences are categorised based on a dual classification: those that first examine the beings with respect to their a) general aspects and b) specific aspects. While the former is metaphysics, which studies the being from a general perspective, the sciences that examine the being from a specific one differ according to the nature of the subject they address.

Although metaphysics is often accepted as the science with the widest scope among sciences, this generality is relative. Generality hereby refers to the highest level of study areas of the mind, and it emerges

¹¹ To address this issue, Sirājaddin al-Urmawī wrote a separate work called *Risāle fī al-Fark Beyne mezu'āyi al-'ilm al-divine ve al-kalām*. In this work devoted to separating metaphysics and kalām, the science of kalām is constrained with the studies on the essence of God and is positioned under the science of metaphysics, in contrast to the understanding that accepts kalām as a universal science, an idea which emerged with al-Ghazali. See Tuna Tunagöz, "Sirāceddin el-Ūrmevî'nin Risāle fī'l-Fark beyne mezu'āyi'l-'ilmī'l-ilâhî ve'l-kelâm Adlı Eseri: Eleştirel Metin ve Çeviri", *Kutadgubilig: Felsefe – Bilim Araştırmaları* 0/31 (2016), 281-304. For a review on the subject, see Tuna Tunagöz, Sirāceddin el-Ūrmevî'nin İslam Düşüncesine Yön Verecek Disiplin Arayışı: *Risāle fī'l-fark beyne mevzû'āyi'l-ilmī'l-ilâhî ve'l-kelâm Üzerine Bir İnceleme*", *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 16/1 (2016), 37-82.

¹² Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, ed. Yusuf Mahmud, 3 Volume, (Doha: Dār al-Hikmāt, 2012), 3(3)/6-7. Cf. Fārābī, "fī Agrāz al-Hakīm fī Kullī Makāleti min al-Kitābi Mevsûm bi al-Hurūf", 34-39.

¹³ Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(3)/ 6-7.

¹⁴ Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(3)/ 6-7.

with reference to the subsidiary branches of science. In this respect, the following can be said: Each of the sciences with their specific focus primarily deals with their own subjects from the most general aspect, and when the subjects get more specialized, their subsidiary branches come into play to deal with more specific issues. The same is true for the sub-branches. Accordingly, it is metaphysics that is the science with the most general focus; in other words, the science that represents the most general view of the human mind on the being.

Abū al-Barakāt presents an analysis of the science of metaphysics at the beginning of the chapter "fi'l-Hikmeti'l-ilâhiyyât" in *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*. However, unlike what Avicenna does at the beginning of the chapter al-ilâhiyyât in the work *al-Shifa*, he does not focus on the subject of this science. What lies behind this perspective of Abū al-Barakāt is the argument that "all sciences ultimately converge on studying the being," which is reflected as a key factor in his classification of sciences. Therefore, according to Abū al-Barakāt, there is no difference between the fact that what is studied actually exists in the objective realm and that it only exists in the mind. Since the mind itself is in the objective realm, what exists in this realm as well as what exists as a form in actual beings is included in the category of the beings.¹⁵

Likewise, this approach of Abū al-Barakāt could be based on the most general notions of the mind. Since the concept of being is one of the most general notions in the mind, all sciences converge on the common point they examine; that is, the being. Therefore, the focus of all sciences is what exists. This indicates that subject-based typology of sciences fails to make a clear distinction among them. For this reason, Abū al-Barakāt adopts an approach that emphasizes method-based typology rather than a topic-based one when he attempts to classify sciences and to tell them apart.¹⁶ This is also apparent in his approach to metaphysics. He states that Aristotle took into account the scope of this science when he separated metaphysics from other sciences. This tells us that metaphysics ultimately examines what exists just as other sciences do. Therefore, the main point in distinguishing this science from other sciences and identifying its scope as an independent science is not the subject it studies but how it studies this subject and its scope. When identifying the subject of metaphysics, the question of "how" or "in what aspects" is more decisive than "what". This is because the subject examined in this science is ultimately "the being" as in other sciences. The answer to the question of how much of the being is examined is "all", and the answer to the question of from what aspects it examines its subject is in terms of its "existence". Then it is clear that the science in question examines all the beings in terms of their existence. Aristotle's work *Metaphysics* already included Abū al-Barakāt's idea that all sciences ultimately deal with the being and the distinction between them is not made on the basis of their subjects but on the basis of their scope and how they go about studying their subjects. In metaphysics 4/1, the philosopher of Stagira notes that metaphysics deals with the being in a universal way, in terms of its existence, and specific sciences such as mathematics and natural sciences examine the accidents that belong to the parts of the being.¹⁷

A closer look at Abū al-Barakāt's approach to sciences and his claims would reveal that, to him, it is not very reasonable to discuss what the subject of metaphysics is. Therefore, he does not discuss what the focus of metaphysics is in this section. Therefore, the main focus of the aforementioned section is the examination of the different names given to this science. Throughout the history of Islamic philosophy and that of philosophy, different philosophers used different names, such as "after-physics (mā ba'de't-nature)", "first philosophy" and "al-'ilm al-ilāhī". As mentioned above, Aristotle himself, who was the founder of metaphysics, used different names for it. Do these different names point to conceptual richness or just matter of choice, or do they have anything to do with the nature and scope of this science along with the problems it addresses and method it uses? Abū al-Barakāt focuses on this question, which other philosophers took little interest in. As

¹⁵ Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(3)/6, 13.

¹⁶ See Abū al-Barakāt's typology of sciences. Ömer Ali Yıldırım, Ebū'l-Berekāt el-Bağdâdî'nin Bilgi Anlayışı ve İlimleri Tasnifi, *Turkish Studies: Karşılaştırmalı Dini Araştırmalar*, 12/20 (2017), 337-56. DOI Number: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.12363>.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Trans. David Ross (Global Grey ebooks. 2018), 47 (1003a, 20-30). Also see Ibn Rusd, *Aristoteles Metafizik Büyük Şerhi*, trans. Muhittin Macit (Istanbul: Litera, 2016), 3 (1) / 486-488.

far as the names given to this science is considered, while al-Kindī is contented with referring to what the name "first philosophy" implies,¹⁸ al-Fārābī uses after-physics/*mâ ba'de't-tabîa'* and al-ilāhiyyāt as other names for metaphysics in his work devoted to explaining the subject of metaphysics with great care, taking into account their content and makes an implicit reference to the background of these names.¹⁹ The last part of *al-Shifa: Metaphysics I/3* Ibn Sînâ briefly addresses the issue of naming this science. Although he never uses it until after the third chapter (instead uses the terms "first philosophy" and "al-ilāhiyyāt", "al-'ilm al-ilāhī" to refer to the science of metaphysics), he directly says that the name of this science is after-physics at the onset of his analysis about the names of metaphysics in the related chapter. He further develops the references of al-Fārābī by providing brief explanations about the names *mâ ba'de't-tabîa'* and al-'ilm al-ilāhī, which are used as the names of this science. On the other hand, Abū al-Barakāt attaches more importance to the naming of this science in his explanations about the science of metaphysics that he offered at the very beginning of *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*. He provides an evaluation of different names for this science, which ultimately focuses on the being; and he begins his evaluations with the term "after-physics".

II.

It is known that it was Andronikos of Rhodes (d. the first century B.C.), who lived in the period after Aristotle and was the eleventh teacher of Lyceum, who first used the phrase "after-physics/*tâ metâ tâ phusika*". Andronikos published Aristotle's works by classifying them and organized some notes which followed the science of physics in this classification and used the umbrella term *tâ Metâ tâ Phusikâ* to describe their place within the general classification. These notes, which are referred to as "*tâ Metâ tâ Phusika*" and are understood to have been written in a wider time frame during Aristotle's life, are Aristotle's book *Metaphysics* itself. This Greek term by Andronikos was translated into Arabic as "*mâ ba'de't-tabîa'* (after-physics)". However, the content of this term has evolved to mean something quite different from what Andronikos originally meant.

The nature of knowledge must be revealed to be able to clarify what is meant by the term "after-physics". Even though the expressions "physical" and "beyond the physical" seem to have an ontologically loaded meaning at first glance, their meaning is in fact epistemologically loaded. When we pose the questions, "What is it you call physical?" A potential response with an ontological basis could be "what actually exists with an external form". However, if a further question such as "what is meant by what actually exists in external form?" is posed, the answer will necessarily include the quality of "being perceived by the senses". This shows us that even if the external is acknowledged as an actual existence in itself, it can only be talked about by the human after the object is made to the mind. Then the content of the term "physical" is "the object of our perceptions". This can be seen more clearly in the phrase "beyond what is physical". What all these indicate is that one has to describe the nature of knowledge to understand the expression "after-physics". Abū al-Barakāt also follows such a path in his study.

According to Abū al-Barakāt, knowledge is a relativity between the knower and known.²⁰ In the Peripatetic tradition, including Avicenna, while knowledge is accepted as a mental abstraction,²¹ Abū al-Barakāt thinks differently.²² Relativity is one of the fundamental concepts of his philosophy of knowledge. He explains knowledge through this approach. Likewise, he bases "after-physics" upon it. It is essential that the basis of the "physical" should first be formed. What is meant by the physical? Relativity entails the actual existence of and mutual relations between the knower and the known. This is because the prior condition for relativity

¹⁸ al-Kindī, *fī Falsafa al-Ūlā*, 101.

¹⁹ al-Fārābī, "*fī Agrāz al-Hakīm fī Kulli Makālat min al-Kitāb Mavsūm bi al-Hurūf*", 35-36.

²⁰ Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(3)/5.

²¹ Ibn Sînâ, *Avicenna's de Anima (Arabic Text)*, ed. Fazlur Rahman (London: Oxford University Press. 1959), 48 vd; a. mlf. *İşaretler ve Tenbihler*, trans. Ali Durusoy (Istanbul: Litera yay., 2005), 110-111.

²² Ömer Ali Yıldırım, *Ebü'l-Berekât el-Bağdâdî ve Meşşâi Felsefe Bağlamında Nefis, Benlik ve Bilgi* (Istanbul: Litera, 2018), 118 vd.

is the actual existence of both parties involved in this relationship. Explaining knowledge through relativity requires saying that the first known things for the mind are actually existing ones. The means that the knower uses to access information are the sense organs. Therefore, the beings that the knower initially comes into contact with, through his sense organs, will be those who actually exist in the objective realm because there is a direct relation of relativity between the knower and the known. Then what is meant by the term "physical" is the beings that sense of perceptions first come into contact with.

A particular outcome of this theory of knowledge is that what is best known is the relativity that emerges in the form of the relationship in which it directly takes place. This is because relativity entails the actual existence of both parties. This urges us to say that the first and the best known to the mind are those that actually exist in the objective realm; that is, the physical beings. Now that the word "physical" is elucidated, we need to focus on "after-physics".

This term certainly does not refer to what ontologically exists after physical entities. Its meaning also has an epistemological reference. According to the theory which considers knowledge as relativity, what is meant by second-order and second-degree knowing includes cases in which relativity between the forms in the mind and the mind is apparent. Relativity is a relationship between the mind and the forms abstracted from the beings in the objective realm. As the mind is in contact with the abstracted form of what exists at this level, emerging information is secondary knowledge.²³ This science has been called after-physics because relativity does not occur between the agent and the thing that actually exists, but between the agent and the form perceived by the senses from the actual being.

Then the following becomes obvious: What is studied in metaphysics belongs to the realm of beings as well. However, the issues addressed are the principles, sources, conditions and qualities that are globally related to all beings rather than individual beings or the attributes they possess as a certain "thing". Therefore, the concept after-physics is definitely not a reference to a realm outside the physical one. Therefore, we can say that in an attempt to form the conceptual basis of after-physics, Abū al-Barakāt uses a criterion that we can call "being known" or "degrees of relativity," rather than an ontologically based distinction. This is because what is studied in this science ultimately belongs to the realm of the beings, so metaphysics is not the study of an absolutely unknown realm or a "beyond the being". As Abū al-Barakāt confirms, such a study of the unknown is not possible at all. He maintains that one must possess some kind of "prior knowledge" about the subject that he desires know.²⁴ Then it is not possible for a person to focus on a subject on which he has no prior knowledge. This is a view that prioritizes what exists. Trying to understand the "prior knowledge" mentioned above based on the Platonic understanding of knowledge will hardly be compatible with the epistemology of Abū al-Barakāt, who accepts knowledge as relativity. Therefore, it seems more appropriate to consider this "prior knowledge" as the concord between the subject that is desired to be known and the mental ability and capacity of the knower. In other words, according to the theory that accepts knowledge as relativity, it is not possible for the mind to know anything other than itself without the actual beings. This statement means that each piece of information has to be based on the sensory perceptions. Accordingly, the subjects addressed by metaphysics are the objects of knowledge of the human mind in a particular respect. Therefore, it is not possible to detach metaphysical knowledge from the realm of beings. To further clarify this, one could argue that there will be no metaphysical knowledge without actual beings. To put it another way, there will be no metaphysics without the science of physics. This was clearly stated by Kutbuddin al-Rāzī (d. 766/1365) in a later period. He described the science of metaphysics as "the

²³ Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(3)/5.

²⁴ Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(1)/85, 309. Krş., İbn Sînâ, II. *Analitikler: Burhan*, trans. Ömer Türker (İstanbul: Litera, 2006), 7.

examination of the state of the abstracted beings from the perspective of the body".²⁵ This statement clearly reveals what we see implicitly in Abū al-Barakāt by conceptualizing it with the term "abstract forms."

What makes metaphysics a true "science" is that it is grounded on what is physical and that it is a study of the nature of the invariable substance that are reached based on the physical. This is because this type of analysis is not purely deductive; it is based on what actually exists, and it reaches the universals by using the associations among the beings and preserves the relation it has with the physical even in its most advanced analysis. This is also the main characteristic of understanding of knowledge and metaphysics in Aristotle, who considers the knowledge of something as the knowledge of its causes.

At this stage of our analysis, the following question arises. In a theory that describes knowledge as relativity, what is known at first and the best are beings close to the senses. The beings with which the senses come into contact indirectly are the ones known in the second place. If what is meant by the concept of after-physics is second-order and second-degree known ones, then wouldn't the knowledge of metaphysics rank second in terms of informational value? However, it was accepted that metaphysics was based on evidence, and the knowledge of this science was believed to have the highest degree of accuracy. In this case, isn't there a clear incompatibility between Abū al-Barakāt's theory of knowledge and the construction of metaphysics through evidence?

To come up with an answer to this question, which seems quite justifiable at first sight, it is necessary to return to Abū al-Barakāt's theory of knowledge and focus on a different aspect of it. He classifies the act of knowing something into two: knowing the essence of something and knowing something in terms of its attributes. According to him, it is more valuable to know something with its essence and the characteristics that belong to this essence than to know it with its attributes. It is possible to express this in a different conceptual framework as follows: "it is more valuable to know something by its form, type and distinctive features than to know it by its functions and relations". However, the examples Abū al-Barakāt cited are of a nature that pushes the limits of the distinction between essence and accidents in the classical logic. This distinction tells us that knowing a person by his/her personal characteristics, knowledge, works, attitude, what path he/she follows and so forth is more valuable than knowing this person by such properties as height, weight, race and so forth.

The explanation above is exemplified Abū al-Barakāt's work: *Today, a person who knows Aristotle by his writings on knowledge and wisdom knows him better than one who lived in his period but knew him only by his sight and personality, not by the knowledge and wisdom that we know today.*²⁶ This is because the second person knows him by his visible corporeal features. These features are his accidents; they are not "the essence that forms his nature". As the first person knows him with his characteristics that directly identify him; in other words, with his personality, such information is more complete. While the second person's knowledge is no longer valid when what he knows disappears or dies, the first person's knowledge is not. So, although what is known to our senses first are actual beings, we cannot say that the knowledge of these beings is the loftiest in all respects. In other words, "to know with the sensory organs is not to know the nature of the known in the best way". This is because these features that are perceived primarily by the senses do not belong to the nature of that thing; that is, they are not "characteristics that make up its essence"; they are the features of the body. Therefore, what is meant by the expression "the best known" as mentioned in the above statement does not mean those whose nature is most fully appreciated. What is meant here is the most easily known or primarily known which follows the knowledge of one's own self; that is, corporeal properties. Since it is superior knowledge to know something with its essential characteristics, metaphysical knowledge is the most superior knowledge on which the research on the nature of all beings

²⁵ For a review on the subject, see Necmi Derin, "Kutbeddin Râzî ve Metafizik Anlayışı", *Dicle Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 11/1 (2009), 141-55.

²⁶ Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(3)/190.

ultimately depends. This is because metaphysics investigates the most general and universal things that belong directly to the nature, rather than corporeal features.

When we look again at the term "after-physics" used for this science, its meaning gets more concise. What is expressed with this term is not a classification based directly on ontology, but a reference is made to a wider area that includes Aristotle's writings on subjects other than those of physics. However, this wider area is also constrained by the principle of "examining the being with its most general features". The subjects addressed by this science are not only the primarily sensed ones but also those that rank second in terms of senses. The words of Abū al-Barakāt about this science also refer to this. We can say that this practice of naming is not based on ontological priority but is centred on human/sense-nature. Thus, one could argue that the metaphysics meant by the term after-physics is a sort of "natural" metaphysics. If we acted based on an ontological priority, as Abū al-Barakāt noted, it would be more appropriate to call the science of metaphysics as "pre-physical".²⁷ This is because those studied in this science rank higher in priority than those who have actual existence in the objective realm in terms of existence and are their founding principles. This indicates that what is behind the meaning of the term after-physics in Abū al-Barakāt's mindset is the division of the field of knowledge into two. The first is the area which is close to the senses, while the second is the one reached using the operations performed on the forms obtained through the senses. The term after-physics refers exactly to the second area.

III.

Another name used for the science of metaphysics is the "first philosophy". Although Aristotle did not use the term after-physics, the use of the term *prote philosophia* can be traced back to him. This science is called the first philosophy due to the examination of the first principles and general attributes in this science. As noted earlier, this science studies the principles that do not actually exist in the objective realm. Although these principles rank second in terms of being perceived by the senses, they come before others in terms of existence and even function as their founding reasons. This science was named as the first philosophy because it studies these initial founding principles and general attributes.²⁸ So, the term "after-physics" is related with epistemology and refers to the order of being known within the relative knowledge hierarchy, whereas the term "first philosophy" is rather based on an ontological criterion and refers to the position in the hierarchy of existence. First philosophy is a path to true wisdom as it leads to knowledge of the founding principles and reasons of existence. This is probably the reason why Aristotle highlighted this name for metaphysics. According to Aristotle, to know something is to know its reasons, and it is always more valuable to possess knowledge of the first causes than to possess that of secondary ones because this gives the knower a universal perspective.²⁹ Wisdom can only be gained by acquiring the knowledge of the first and universal causes. In addition, in al-Kindī's words, our knowledge of things would be absolute only when we know the reasons.³⁰ Therefore, it is clear that knowing God as the first reason; that is, knowing the science of metaphysics, is the necessary condition for true wisdom; it is essential for being a true philosopher. The reason why metaphysics was named as "first philosophy" is that it studies the first reasons and it helps gain the knowledge of God. As can be understood, the first philosophy refers to the theological aspects of metaphysics. In this way, one who gains a universal perspective of the beings achieves a real level of wisdom.³¹ In

²⁷ Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3 (3) / 6-7. cf. İbn Sînâ, *eş-Şifâ: Metafizik*, trans.Ömer Türker (İstanbul: Litera,2004), 2 (1)/19.

²⁸ Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(3)/7.

²⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1-4 (980a–982b).

³⁰ See Kindī, "fi Felsefeti'l-ûlâ", 98-101.

³¹ Learn more about the subject, see Mehmet Önal, "Aristoteles'in Metafizik'inde İlahiyatın Yeri ya da Felsefe ve Dinin Ortak Alanı İlahiyat", *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 30 (2013), 47-56.

Aristotle's words, the science of metaphysics, with its theological aspects,³² is in high demand and the loftiest among theoretical sciences.³³

It is noteworthy that in *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, Abū al-Barakāt hardly preferred the term "first philosophy" as a name for metaphysics. In his aforementioned work, he provides a brief explanation about the term "first philosophy" in the section devoted to the discussion of the names given to this science. He, otherwise, does not use this name, which Aristotle himself uses, as a section heading in his work. On the other hand, he uses other names both as section headings and as a name within the subject, besides providing analyses of these names. He says that this name can be accepted if it refers to the being at the beginning of an ontological hierarchy, while it cannot be accepted if what is meant is its ranking first in terms of knowing.

IV.

Another name used for this science is "al-ilāhiyyāt". We can say that "al-ilāhiyyāt" is the most commonly used name for this science in circles of Islamic philosophy. Although it is accepted that the subject of metaphysics is the "being qua being" and that it studies the beings from the most general and universal perspective, why is the name "al-ilāhiyyāt" preferred for this science and what does it refer to?

First of all, it should be noted that the word "al-ilāhiyyāt" is the plural of the word *ilāhi* (divine), and it means divine ones. Then the question can be reformulated as: What or who are meant here by "al-ilāhiyyāt"; that is, by the divine ones?

Abū al-Barakāt begins his discussion of the question above with a conceptual analysis of the word "god/*ilāh*". In this analytical process, the concept of relativity, which was previously mentioned as a notion with a key importance in the philosophy of knowledge, appears once again in a different context. This analysis is based on the idea that the word "god" is a name used in relativity. According to him, what is meant by the concept of al-ilāh in the books written by the prominent people in this science: (i) "is a relative meaning understood in relation to who or what accepts it as deity". (ii) The thing that accepts the deity as a deity imitates him in its self-acts and moves its body according to his will, wishing and guidance. For example, some students name their teachers whom they imitate as god and lord. Another proposition by Abū al-Barakāt on this issue is that the god is the invisible agent. Based on these three propositions, the following can be said: Deity has the command of and power over mankind; mankind cannot influence him, but the characterization of deity as deity occurs in relation to those who accept him as deity. It is also important that "deity" emerges in a relative sense. These explanations lead us to saying that what the thinkers, whom Abū al-Barakāt refers to as "the previous ones", meant by divine/*ilāhi* is spiritual angels, heavenly souls and minds which are separate from the matter.³⁴

When we adapt what is said about the analysis of the word "god/*ilāh*" in the last paragraph to the subjects of al-ilāhiyyāt, we encounter the following: Heavenly souls are in the position of being gods compared to human souls as it is accepted that they have effects on human souls and what happens in the world; in other words, they are agents. They are invisible agents. Therefore, they are divine beings. Similarly, with respect to empowerment, human souls consider celestial souls as their target. This shows that what is meant by the word "deity" exists in the heavenly souls. When we consider the conditions of the celestial souls in contrast with minds free from matter, we see that they are not gods for minds, and the opposite is true here. That is, minds free from matter are in a sense the deities of heavenly souls and are divine beings. For minds free from matter, there is another deity who is at a higher level than these minds. This explains why the word "god" should be used in relativity.

³² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 98 (1026a, 20-25).

³³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 186 (1064b – 5).

³⁴ Abū al-Barakāt, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(3)/13.

Now our analysis justifies the use of the plural word "al-ilâhiyyât" rather than its singular form. Therefore, what is meant by divinities in the word "al-ilâhiyyât" is wider than that, although at first glance it is understood that things related to God and his essence are studied. That is, al-ilâh, which is directly studied here, does not refer to Allah, Lord and so forth or is not God in a special sense. What is meant by the word "al-ilâh" is an absolute deity or deities. In addition, it is an agent or a principle which something accepts as a guide, which it accepts as the ultimate goal it wants to attain in its own actions, which it accepts has an effect on it and which comes into existence in line with these acceptances. However, within this wider area, the study of God as a special deity is also included because God is the "ilâh" who is accepted as the principle, cause and agent. In other words, He is the God of the gods and is truly divine as he is at the highest level of relativity. These qualities are also attributes for God.

The study of God's attributes in this science is based on the following: The overall focus of this science is "being qua being". Its secondary subject is "things that attach to being qua being". A method beginning from the most general is followed in the examination of what is attached to it as it exists. The "principle", "cause", "agent" and "purpose" are examined in this exact order. When all of these are examined in a relation of relativity, this investigation goes on to study "God in absolute sense" and finally the "God of the gods"³⁵. Within such an order, what is examined first is more general than what is done later. Although a path from the general to the specific is followed in this analysis, it is seen that the most special is the most sublime and the foremost with respect to hierarchical sublimity and "being first" in an ontological sense. Therefore, the God of the Gods is the first principle, the first cause, the first agent, and the supreme goal. Then the main purpose in this science is not to examine God and his attributes. The examination of the most general in a relation of relativity leads to such a result. In this case, the study of God is not the subject of this science, but the outcome/fruit of it. The word al-ilâhiyyât, which means the divine ones, is preferred for this science not only because those examined are effective causes, such as principle, cause, agent and goal, which are accepted as a kind of deity, but also because the supreme God, who is the first principle of all beings and who obligate them and gives existence to them is studied in this science.³⁶ According to Abū al-Barakât, the reason for this preference was that the concept of "god" had widespread use among philosophers and that they included not only the god in a narrow sense, but also included angels, spiritual beings and separate souls, including the human soul separated from the body. Avicenna notes that this science's being called al-'ilm al-ilâhī means it is being named with the most valuable thing it possesses.³⁷

As with term "after-physics", the name "al-ilâhiyyât" refers to the study of what cannot be perceived through sense organs. Therefore, the difference between these two names should be clarified. The method of examination, which is meant by the name "al-ilâhiyyât", does not start from what is special to the mind to work its way up to the general, as with the science of metaphysics. Instead, the opposite path is followed; the examination starts from the most general one goes down to the specific. Another distinction is that, as is the case with after-physics, what is studied in this science are studied in terms of their existence, rather than in terms of their relation to physical ones, and the things that are attached to them due to their existence. The most important difference between what these two names mean is that the term "after-physics" refers to a science that is a kind of "natural theology" built on mental notions derived from physics. In this respect, it can be said that the basis of this naming is knowledge/perception. The name "al-ilâhiyyât", on the other hand, refers to an ontological grounding since it begins with the most general. One of the places where this ontological approach can be seen most clearly is the content of the word al-ilâhiyyât, as stated above. As a matter of fact, in Abū al-Barakât's words, what is meant by the divine is the angels, spiritual beings and the human soul separated from the body, separate souls and God, who is the God of gods. In this case, the science of al-ilâhiyyât does not refer to an order or an epistemological sequence as seen in the metaphysical science and emphasizes a separate aspect that is different from that of others. In this naming, which we see most

³⁵ Abū al-Barakât, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(3)/12.

³⁶ Abū al-Barakât, *al-Kitāb al-Mo'tabar*, 3(3)/26.

³⁷ İbn Sînâ, *eş-Şifâ: Metafizik*, 2(1)/20.

preferred by philosophers, such as Avicenna in Islamic philosophy, metaphysical science refers to the examination of the being qua being. This necessarily turns metaphysical study into an ontological one, which is one of the corner stones of Avicenna's metaphysics.

With the conceptual analysis provided above, what is meant by al-ilāhiyyāt becomes clearer. That is, al-ilāhiyyāt studies both the being due to its existence and general subjects such as principle, cause, agent, goal, and spiritual angels and universal attributes which are attached to the being because of its existence. Because of the characteristic they carry, each of these can also be called "deity" or "lord". The attributes that are known to be examined in this science are also the most general attributes related to beings because of their existence. Descriptions such as *possible* and *necessary*, which are examined in this science, are adjectives that are attached to the beings because of their existence.

Conclusion

The preliminary source of human knowledge is sensory data. All our knowledge primarily depends on the data we gain through our sensory organs. Therefore, all our knowledge is related with what exists and the focus of all sciences is ultimately "the being". Herein exists no difference between different branches of science. The focus of metaphysics is also "the being". Branches of science differ in terms of how they go about investigating their subjects rather than what they study.

What exists is examined either from a specific or a general perspective. Metaphysics is the science that adopts the most general perspective while studying what exists. It is the science in which what exists is studied in terms of its existence.

Giving metaphysics "different names" in the history of philosophy is closely related with which aspects of its subject matter is studied and what subject among the ones it studies is highlighted. This science is called "after-physics/*mâ ba'de-tabî'a*", due to its epistemological approach to its subject matter. What humans first know are the beings that exist outside the mind and which sensory data come into direct contact with. According to Abū al-Barakāt, knowledge is a relativity, which happens between the mind and the being that it directly perceives. These are the subjects that physical sciences study. Based on the data coming from sensory perceptions in the mind, the universal forms and universal information occur in the form of relativity between the mind and the forms in it, so this information that emerges in this way is referred to as "after-physics" science. In other words, the physical sciences examine the first substance, whereas the metaphysical scientific do the second. Metaphysics offers the knowledge of the universal as it is a science interested in what we have beyond physics.

The topics addressed by the metaphysics are globally the principles of existence, its causes and agents. They precede beings close to the human senses with respect to existence. This science is called "first philosophy" not only because it investigates issues that come before others with respect to their existence and that functions as the principle, cause and agent, but also the First Cause, which is the principle of the principles, the cause of the causes and the agent of the agents, is studied based on a relation of relativity. Because metaphysics is the first philosophy, it gives us the knowledge of a special kind of being. In this respect, it is clear that the term "first philosophy" refers to the theological aspect of metaphysics.

The reason why this science is called al-ilāhiyyāt is related to the meaning that philosophers attribute to the concept of god. God is a word used in relativity and attributed to the one who accepts it as god. God is not only the invisible agent but also the being that can be accepted as a model for the acts and behaviour of a person that accept him as deity. The being with these characteristics is called the divine being. This science addresses and analyses the principle, cause and agent of all beings. Principle is a kind of deity for whom it is a principle. Similarly, cause is deity for whom it is a cause, and agent is a deity for whom it is an agent. Since the concept of deity had such a meaning and enjoyed widespread use at that time, the name "al-ilāhiyyāt", which means those who are divine, was preferred when naming this science.

A comparative look at metaphysical and divine concepts reveals the following: The subject of both sciences is what exists. While the term after-physics works bottom up in metaphysics, the notion of al-ilāhiyyāt adopts a top-down approach. Metaphysics in the after-physics sense is a kind of natural theology; metaphysics as al-ilāhiyyāt is the ontological study of the being.

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