

Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī on Ecthesis in his First Logical Works

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Abstract

In his Persian *Treatise on Logic* and the logical section of his Arabic *Zubdat al-Asrār*, which are among his earliest philosophical works, Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī employs a method of ecthesis (*burhān al-ifrāḍ*) that closely resembles the approach of al-Fārābī and Suhrawardī. In this method, instead of assigning a hypothetical name to the instances of the subject in a particular proposition, one seeks a real and universal concept that encompasses those instances of the subject which also fall under the predicate. By identifying such a real universal concept, rather than assigning them a hypothetical designation, one arrives at a real universal proposition. For example, the proposition “Some sweet things are white” is transformed not into “Every D is white” (using a hypothetical term), but into “All sugar is white” for example. This method of ecthesis closely aligns with the approach of contemporary intuitionist logicians, who insist that to prove particular propositions, one must specify at least one concrete instance or a specific subset. However, finding such specific instances or concepts is, in most cases, significantly more difficult than employing the hypothetical designation used by Aristotle and the Peripatetics.

Keywords: Aristotle; al-Fārābī; Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna; Suhrawardī; Instance (Miṣḍāq; Concept (Maḥmū).

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