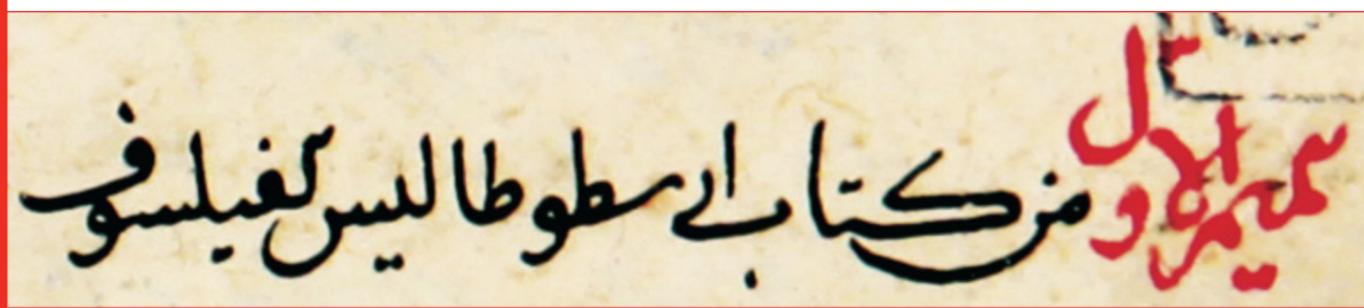
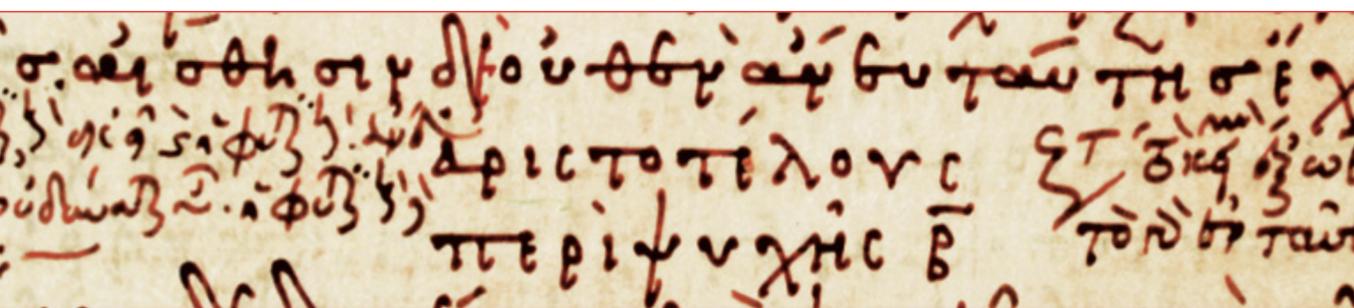


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Book Announcements & Reviews

Siglas

AU – Angela Ulacco

CDA – Cristina D’Ancona

CMB – Cecilia Martini Bonadeo

Book Announcements

R. Chiaradonna - G. Galluzzo (eds), *Universals in Ancient Philosophy*, Edizioni della Normale, Pisa 2013 (Seminari e convegni, 33), 545 pp.

It is a sad task to account for the contents of a volume which, as Riccardo Chiaradonna and Gabriele Galluzzo say in their Introduction, “is part of a large scholarly and editorial project on the problem of universals in the history of philosophy conceived and coordinated by Francesco Del Punta” (p. 21). The void left by the untimely death in December 2013 of Francesco Del Punta, one of the most distinguished scholars in the field of Medieval philosophy, will be measured also by the survey of the contents of this volume, which reflects only a small part of the scientific enterprises he gave birth to.

This collection of thirteen essays revolves around the problem of universals from the Presocratics to Neoplatonism. In doing so, the editors part company with those scholars who maintain that “there is not such a thing as the problem of universals: what we are used to calling ‘the problem of universals’ is actually a bundle of different and yet related issues, which are rather differently articulated and analysed in different historical contexts” (*Introduction*, p. 1). On the contrary, the editors are convinced not only that “universals” represent a relatively unitary problem throughout the history of philosophy, but also that such a problem is primarily an ontological and metaphysical one, instead of falling primarily within the province of epistemology: “Even though the multifaceted character of the problem of the universals should not be underestimated, there is something to be said in favour of the view that it is first of all an ontological and metaphysical issue, which has important consequences for our semantics and epistemology as well” (*Introduction*, p. 4). Hence the decision to gather papers dealing with this problem from its roots in pre-Platonic thought down to Neoplatonism, with the aim of reconstructing “the specific conceptual and historical context in which the debate over the nature of universals unfolded in Antiquity” (*ibid.*).

Most essays deal with ancient philosophy, both of the classical age and of Hellenistic times: M. Bonazzi, “Universals before Universals: Some Remarks on Plato in His Context” (pp. 23-40), F. Ademollo, “Plato’s Conception of the Forms: Some Remarks” (pp. 41-85), M. Rashed, “Plato’s Five Worlds Hypothesis (*Ti.* 55cd), Mathematics and Universals” (pp. 87-112), D. Sedley, “Plato and the One-over-Many Principle” (pp. 113-37), L.M. Castelli, “Universals, Particulars and Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Forms” (pp. 139-84); M. Mariani, “Universals in Aristotle’s Logical Works” (pp. 185-208), G. Galluzzo, “Universals in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*” (pp. 209-53); A. Bronowski, “Epicureans and Stoics on Universals” (pp. 255-97). It is well known that in the early Imperial age a renewal of interest in Plato and Aristotle gave rise to a scholastic activity of writing companions on them, monographs on specific issues, and commentaries upon their works; the issue of universals accommodates with this new scenario. R. Chiaradonna, “Alexander, Boethus and the Other Peripatetics: The Theory of Universals in the Aristotelian Commentators” (pp. 299-328) deals with it, and two papers are devoted to Neoplatonism: P. Adamson, “One of a Kind: Plotinus and Porphyry on Unique Instantiation” (pp. 329-51), and M. Griffin, “Universals, Education, and Philosophical Methodology in Later Neoplatonism” (pp. 353-80). Another paper by R. Chiaradonna deals with Galen’s account of individuals and the medical science: “Universals in Ancient Medicine” (pp. 381-23). An essay by J. Zachhuber on “Universals in the Greek Church

Fathers” (pp. 425-70) concludes this very useful collection of studies, which is enriched by a substantial bibliography.

CDA

Christoph Helmig, *Forms and Concepts. Concept Formation in the Platonic Tradition*, De Gruyter, Berlin - Boston 2012 (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina, Quellen und Studien, 5), 395 pp.

Christoph Helmig’s book is a comprehensive study of Proclus’ epistemology and concept attainment in the Platonic tradition. The volume is innovative, in that it offers the first systematic account of Proclus’ theory of concepts attainment and an original approach to the object studied. As the author suggests, the book “can be read as an attempt to accurately describe Proclus’ (and his teacher’s Syrianus) views on Plato and Aristotle and to unearth possible sources for Proclus’ theory of knowledge in the long period between the Stoics and Plotinus” (p. 9). The main thesis of the book consists in the rejection of the widespread opinion (see for instance L.P. Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists*, Cornell U. P., Ithaca 2005) that Neoplatonists substantially harmonize Plato’s with Aristotle’s theory of the acquisition of knowledge, by subordinating Aristotelian induction to Platonic recollection. Helmig aims to show that in Proclus’ epistemology induction and abstraction play no role as far as the attainment of concepts is concerned. In fact, recollection is at play already in the acquisition of basic forms of knowledge, which do not derive from sense perception. To the question formulated at the outset, ‘how comes the mind to be furnished?’ (p. 1, quoting John Locke), the author gives the answer that according to Plato and later Platonists, unlike Aristotle, the Stoics and Alexander of Aphrodisias, the mind does not need to be furnished: ‘it already contains innate universal knowledge which has to be recollected’ (p. 335). How is it, then, that Proclus in his own philosophy has use for universals ‘of later origin’? In order to understand Proclus’ epistemological theory and to answer this question, according to Helmig it is necessary to address two issues, not adequately raised in previous studies: 1) the relation between Proclus and Aristotle and 2) the status and the role of concepts in Proclus’ philosophy. In order to do so, it is necessary to rethink how Plato, Aristotle and post-Aristotelian philosophers settled the questions on knowledge attainment. This is what the author does in the first part of the book. Chapters II-IV provide an extensive introduction to the second and main part of the monograph (chapters V-VIII), centred on Proclus’ and his teacher Syrianus’ answer to the problems raised before and on the innovative aspects of their theory.

In the *Introduction* (pp. 1-12), Helmig argues that the processes of knowledge attainment in ancient philosophy can best be described by appealing to the language of concepts. Although the ancients did not have a single word for our ‘concept’, this notion makes it possible to give a more adequate explanation of the various moments implied in the process of knowledge attainment. What is a concept, then? Chapter 1 (“Concepts- (ancient) problems and solutions”, pp. 13-37) provides a set of criteria by which we can “mark off and characterize concepts” (p. 10) in ancient epistemology. The term ‘concept’ refers to an “inner-mental or inner-psyche entity that is, to a certain extent, stable, permanent, objective, shareable and universal” (p. 15). This implies that there are different kinds of concepts. Concepts can be classified according to their origin (empirically or innate) or according to their content and function (concepts that allow us to recognize objects from concepts that provide knowledge of the essence of things). Moreover, concepts are different from Platonic Forms, in so far as the latter are not mere mental entities. Chapter 2 (“Plato on learning as recollection”, pp. 39-86) is devoted to Plato’s theory of concept formation. Helmig reconstructs the

Platonic theory of recollection, arguing that there is no contradiction between the earlier (like the *Meno*) and the later dialogues (like the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus*). The chapter chiefly deals with the question whether or not recollection of innate concepts is involved in lower forms of acquiring knowledge. Helmig opposes Scott's understanding of Platonic recollection as a process operating only in 'higher learning' (D. Scott, *Recollection and Experience. Plato's Theory of learning and its successors*, Cambridge U. P., Cambridge - New York 1995). Several passages from the dialogues rather suggest, according to Helmig, that recollection is operating also in everyday conceptual thought and non-expert knowledge.

Chapter 3 ("Aristotle's reaction to Plato", pp. 87-140) aims at analyzing Aristotle's theory of formation of knowledge as a "conscious reaction to Plato's theory of innate knowledge" (p. 87). The chapter falls into three sections: Aristotle's doctrine of abstraction (*aphairesis*); the origin and nature of mathematical concepts, and the theory of universal concepts as deriving from a process of induction (*epagōgē*). Helmig suggests that neither abstraction nor induction imply a form of innate knowledge. He then addresses the problematic issues of abstraction and induction with an eye to Neoplatonic criticism of both methods. He concludes with a reconsideration of the well-known passage of *Posterior Analytics* II 19, which he interprets as a text on the attainment of universal concepts (pp. 128-40).

The most original contribution of Chapter four ("Three case studies: Alcinous, Alexander & Porphyry, and Plotinus", pp. 141-204) is probably one of Helmig's theses that is bound to generate much discussion in the scholarship. Helmig argues against the influential reading of Alcinous as a paradigmatic case of a Platonist who combines Plato's with Aristotle's theory of concept formation (p. 141). According to this view, the first step of Alcinous' theory of knowledge attainment is Aristotelian and consists in the empirical attainment of immanent forms by means of induction, whereas the second stage is Platonic and amounts to the recollection of innate Forms (see for instance D. Sedley, "Alcinous epistemology", in K.A. Algra - P.W. van der Horst - D.T. Runia (eds), *Polyhistor: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ancient Philosophy*, Brill, Leiden - New York 1996, pp. 300-12, and G. Boys-Stones, "Alcinous, Didaskalikos 4: In Defence of Dogmatism", in M. Bonazzi - V. Celluprica (eds), *L'eredità platonica: studi sul platonismo da Arcesilao a Proclo*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2005, pp. 201-34). According to Helmig, who bases his interpretation on Baltes' reading of Alcinous' theory of soul (H. Dorrie† - M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike* VI 2, Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart - Bad Cannstatt 2002, pp. 125-6), a form of unconscious recollection is already at work in the first step of the acquisition of knowledge and in the formation of doxastic reasoning.

Chapters V-VII offer a deep and detailed discussion on Proclus' and Syrianus' theory of concept formation. In chapter V ("Syrianus' and Proclus' attitude towards Aristotle", pp. 205-21) the Neoplatonic criticism of Aristotle's theories of induction and abstraction is discussed. Helmig distinguishes between abstracted universals, on the one hand, and recollected universals of later origin, on the other (*husterogenēs*). Helmig tracks down several kinds of concepts in Proclus, which correspond to different stages of recollection. The first one is represented by the *logoi* in the soul, which indeed constitute a form of innate knowledge. A second kind of recollected concepts is constituted by universals of later origin: they are images of the *logoi* in the soul and objects of *doxa*. Helmig emphasizes the role of the doxastic concepts, superior to abstracted concepts: thanks to doxastic concepts, opinion can recognize sensible objects and also judge sense perception in virtue of its access to innate knowledge (the *logoi* in the soul). Chapter VI ("The crucial role of the doxastic concepts in Proclus' epistemology", pp. 223-61) is devoted to a detailed discussion on the nature and the status of doxastic concepts. Chapter VII ("Proclus' Platonic theory of concept attainment", pp. 263-333) systematically describes Proclus' theory of recollection in its different stages. Starting from a description of the relation between soul and innate knowledge, Helmig distinguishes three elements, which he calls the "triad of recollection". They

consist in forgetting, articulation of preconceptions, and “putting forth” (*probolē*) innate knowledge. According to Helmig, the *probolē*, which he refuses to translate with ‘projection’, is an innovation of Neoplatonic philosophers. The chapter continues with a discussion of the difficult passage of Proclus’ *Commentary on the Parmenides* (*In Parm.* IV 895.24 - 896.5), which contains an exegesis of Plato’s *Parmenides* 132 B-C and should prove the crucial role of the concepts of later origin in the process of concept learning. Also according to Plato’s *Phaedrus* 249 B-C, “the formation of the *husterogenes*-concepts necessarily precedes the putting forth of the innate *logoi* of the soul” (p. 316). Finally, the chapter discusses the nature of error and the status of problematic concepts.

Chapter VIII (“Plato and Aristotle in harmony? – Some conclusions”, pp. 335-41) concludes this fascinating and very well documented book by summarising the results of Helmig’s inquiry. The author suggests a new hermeneutical approach to the much-discussed problem of the harmony (*sumphōnia*) between Plato and Aristotle in the Platonic tradition. There is no doubt that it will lead to animated debates on the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato and Aristotle.

AU

R. Hansberger - M. Afifi al-Akiti - Ch. Burnett (eds), *Medieval Arabic Thought. Essays in Honour of Fritz Zimmermann*, The Warburg Institute - Nino Aragno Editore, London - Turin 2012, (Warburg Institute Studies and Texts, 4), 247 pp.

After the preface presented by Ch. Burnett to Fritz W. Zimmermann on the occasion of his seventieth birthday and of his election for a second time to a Senior Research Fellowship at the Warburg Institute, the volume opens with an article by P. Adamson on the relation between Galen’s and al-Rāzī’s treatments of time (pp. 1-14). In 1955 S. Pines pointed out a resemblance between al-Rāzī’s theory of ‘absolute time’ as one of his ‘five eternal’ and a definition of time ascribed to Galen in the Arabic tradition as a substance which subsists in and by itself, independently of the body, and which is measured by motion, and not vice-versa, as it is in the *Timaeus*. Galen presents his views on time in his *On Demonstration* in the context of a criticism of Aristotle’s theory of time as the number of motion. Unfortunately, Galen’s work is lost and survives only fragmentarily in Greek and Arabic. Adamson analyzes a set of Greek and Arabic documents which are sources for Galen’s doctrine of time, in order to verify Pines’ hypothesis; he presents the accounts by Themistius in his paraphrase of the *Physics*, by Simplicius in his own commentary on the *Physics*, by al-Rāzī in the *Doubts about Galen*, by the Jewish philosopher Abī Sa’īd al-Mawṣilī in a letter to Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, by Ibn Bāḡḡa in his commentary on the *Physics*, and by Averroes in his *Long Commentary on the Physics*. Also the Arabic versions of two works lost in Greek are discussed: Galen’s paraphrase of the *Timaeus*, and Alexander’s *On Time*. According to Adamson, while the Greek indirect tradition on this topic focuses on Galen’s epistemic point in criticizing Aristotle (time cannot be defined in terms of anything else), in the Arabic tradition the epistemic primitiveness of time (i.e. the idea that time is ‘self-indicating’) is misunderstood as a metaphysical primitiveness, giving rise to the idea that time possesses ‘self-subsistence’. He concludes that *On Demonstration* plays a significant role in the development of al-Rāzī’s theory of the ‘five eternal’.

In the second essay (pp. 15-18) M. Afifi al-Akiti collects seven examples of al-Ġazālī’s *ḥikam* or aphorisms. An article by S. Brock follows, entitled “Some Syriac Pseudo-Platonic Curiosities” (pp. 19-26). Two short pieces are masterfully edited, which come from an intriguing monastic anthology, housed in St. Catherine of Mount Sinai (MS Sinai Syr. 14 of the ‘Old Collection’, fols 128r - 128v

and fols 131v - 132r). The first text is in the form of a series of sayings. The first two are attributed to Plato, and do not resemble anything of the various sayings attributed to Plato in Greek or elsewhere in Syriac. The second text is in the form of a narrative and has no Greek counterpart either. Finally in an appendix, Brock translates into English the Syriac pseudo-Platonic *The Instruction of Plato to his disciple*, edited by E. Sachau (1870), from the MSS London, British Library, *Add.* 14658, 14614, and 14618.

The focus of the essay by P. Crone is a passage of the *Book on Animals* where al-Ġāḥiḡ depicts al-Nazzām as arguing against the opponents of his doctrine of *kumūn* ('latency' of the properties in the infinitely divisible matter), and as defining these opponents as those who "agree with the *Ġabmīyya*, gone to *al-ġabālāt*, and professed denial of the *ṭabā'i*' and the *ḥaqā'iq*" (p. 27). Crone analyzes the figure of the Transoxanian *mawlā* Ġahm ibn Ṣafwān (d. 746) and his Muslim reformulation of the Mahāyāna Buddhism (pp. 27-39).

In "Jawhar and Dhāt in Some Medieval Arabic Philosophers" (pp. 41-52) J. Faultless tries to show through a very selective survey of the history of the two crucial technical terms *ġawhar* and *dāt* that "the Arabic philosophers working in Greek-based *falsafa* (...) had an active engagement with the Greek tradition, using semantic distinctions which do not mirror Greek terms (or Syriac ones, for that matter)" (p. 41). He refers particularly to the use of these terms in the Arabic translators, in al-Fārābī, Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, and Ibn Sīnā.

Ch. Genequand devotes his article to the refutation of Scepticism in the *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* of the mu'tazilite al-Malāḥimī al-Ḥuwārizmī, who died in 1141 (pp. 53-60). Genequand judges al-Malāḥimī's refutation a dialectic one, based on the attempt to raise the charge of self-contradiction against all the sects of Sceptics which al-Malāḥimī recognizes. According to Genequand, the arguments used show that not only the Islamic mu'tazilite rationalism is taken into account, but also the Greek debate within the Academy between the 2nd century B.C. and the 2nd century AD.

In "Mediating the Medium: The Arabic Plotinus on Vision" (pp. 61-76) R. Hansberger presents the test-case of Plotinus's discussion of the role of the transparent medium in vision to prove Zimmermann's suggestion that the Arabic adaptation of Plotinus's *Enneads* IV-VI to some extent 'aristotelianizes' Plotinus' thought. Aristotle's transparent medium (τὸ διαφανές) was rejected by Plotinus, who devoted to the theory of vision the first four chapters of *Enn.* IV.5 entitled *On Difficulties about the Soul, or On Sight*. Parts of these materials (*Enn.* IV.5.1, 1-17; 2, 33-61; 3, 1-10 and 4, 2-4) are reflected in the Arabic Plotinus in the fifth group of the fragments of the so-called "Greek Ṣayḥ" preserved in the MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Marsh* 539. R. Hansberger analyzes these passages in their Greek and Arabic tradition and demonstrates that the Greek Plotinus is adapted by Ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī to Aristotle's theory of vision. In doing so, Ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī took inspiration either from the paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima* translated within the "circle of al-Kindī", or from its underlying source, and according to a precise strategy: the Aristotelian notion of the medium is only superficially retained, whereas in essence the text remains closer to Plotinus's view.

E. Kohlberg devotes his contribution to the "Shī'ī Views of the Death of the Prophet Muḥammad" (pp. 77-86). The Shī'ī sources preserve two different accounts on the death of the Prophet Muḥammad from poison. According to the first, which is attested also in Sunnī sources, the Prophet dies of poisoned mutton given to him by a Jewish woman after the conquest of the Ḥaybar oasis in the year 628. His death from poison elevates him to the rank of martyr. In the second account, which is fiercely anti-Sunnī, the Prophet dies as a result of poison administered to him by two of his wives, 'Ā'īṣa and Ḥafṣa, the daughters of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, who are cast as "the most evil of God's creatures". Kohlberg discusses the origins and significance of these accounts.

In the subsequent article (pp. 87-97) Y. Tzvi Langermann presents an English translation of an exposition of the concept of *mayl* by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) in his commentary to Avicenna's *al-Isārāt wa-l-Tanbihāt*, edited by S. Dunya. Langermann makes a few corrections to Dunya's edition on the basis of MS Teheran, Maḡlis 11409.

In the essay "Īsā ibn 'Umayr's Ibādī Theology and Donatist Christian Thought" (pp. 99-103) W. Madelung describes the rapid spread of Ibādī sectarianism in the Maghrib under the early caliphate as related to the prevalence of Donatists among the Berber population since the 4th century AD. After the Muslim conquest, the Berbers adhered to movements of opposition to the Sunnī imperial government: some Berber tribes adhered to the Mu'tazila, known in the Maghrib as Wāšiliyya, others to the Ibādīyya, the most successful until the present, according to the teaching of Abū 'Umar 'Īsā ibn 'Umayr al-Hamdānī. 'Īsā ibn 'Umayr's theological views, which are presented by Madelung, are known through his rival Kūfan Ibādī theologian 'Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd al-Fazārī (8th century).

T. Mayer devotes a detailed article (pp. 105-34) to Muḡammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Šahraṣṭānī's refutation of Avicenna's doctrine about the eternity of the world. Al-Šahraṣṭānī (d. 1153) develops his refutation in his work *The Wrestling with the Philosophers* (*Muṣāra'at al-Falāsifa*) by focusing the absurdities involved by the notion of an infinite time. Mayer analyzes also the counter-refutation of al-Šahraṣṭānī by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī in his *Wrestlings Down of the Wrestler* (*Maṣāri' al-Muṣāri'*).

In "The Islamic Literature on Encounters between Muslim Renunciants and Christian Monks" (pp. 135-142), C. Melchert presents the development of Islamic piety in the first three centuries of Islam. In particular, thanks to an analysis of the literature on encounters between the Muslim renunciants (*zubbād*, sing. *zābid*) and the Christian monks (*ruhbān*, sing. *rāhib*), he focuses on the shift of the prevailing attitude towards Christians with respect to hostility starting from the time of the Second Civil War and especially the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705).

P.P. Pormann analyzes in his article (pp. 143-62) the translation techniques from Greek into Syriac and Arabic concerning the sixth book of Galen's *On the Faculties and Powers of Simple Drugs*, in order to show how medical Arabic evolved against the backdrop of Graeco-Arabic translation activity. We are lucky enough to have three different versions of this text: the Syriac version by Sergius of Rēsh'aynē preserved in MS London, British Library, Add. 14661; an Arabic translation produced towards the end of the 8th century by al-Biṭrīq, the father of Yuḡannā al-Biṭrīq, which is extant in MS Istanbul, Sülemaniye Kütüphanesi, Saray Ahmet III 2083; and a more recent Arabic translation which belongs to Ḥunayn's school, which is extant in a number of manuscripts. Pormann gives a detailed comparison of these three translations and adds at the end of his article a very useful synoptic table (pp. 158-62).

In "The Working Files of Rhazes: Are the *Jāmi'* and the *Hāwī* Identical?" (pp. 163-80) E. Savage-Smith analyzes the nature of Abū Bakr Muḡammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī's "working files". To these 'files' belong the extracts from earlier authors regarding diseases and therapy, together with his own clinical observations. These materials were available after his death, but in a not fully organized form. The "working files", so far identified, cover twenty-five volumes in modern printing and are entitled *al-Kitāb al-ḡāwī* (*The Comprehensive Book*). Savage-Smith wonders whether the title of this amorphous work should be *Kitāb al-Hāwī*, or rather *Ġāmi'* (*The Compilation*) or again *al-Ġāmi' al-kabīr* (*The Large Compilation*). These titles may also represent different works. Through a careful exam of the testimonies of the four scholars who had first-hand knowledge of the compilation (al-Maḡūsī, d. 994, al-Birūnī, d. after 1050, Ibn Ġumay', d. 1198, Ibn al-Bayṭār, d. 1248), from the biobibliographical literature, from al-Rāzī himself, she suggests that the term *al-Hāwī*, which al-Rāzī never used, was the term used by others to refer to what al-Rāzī himself called his *Ġāmi'*, as in *The Comprehensive Book*, or *al-Ġāmi' al-kabīr*, as in his later monographs.

In “Waiting for Philoponus” (pp. 181-96) R. Sorabji claims that the Christian Philoponus, with his *Against Proclus On the Eternity of the World*, was the first to be successful in his refutation of Proclus’s eighteen arguments for the eternity of the cosmos. Proclus died in 485, while Philoponus wrote his reply in 529. In the between period of almost fifty years, three Christians from Gaza, i.e. Aeneas of Gaza, Zacharias, and Procopius, tried to combat the pagan philosophy of Platonism, but only Philoponus was able to argue against the Neoplatonists on their own terms, quoting Christian Scripture only as an addition to the argument, and not as its focus: “it was only Philoponus who had the ability to carry the attack home into the pagan camp” (p. 181).

One of Zimmermann’s first teachers of Arabic, M. Ulmann, devotes his article, entitled *Ἀλλὰ τὴν μάχαιραν* (pp. 197-208) to collecting thirty-one Arabic sayings and proverbs which can be traced back to a Greek origin, and which allude in various ways to the silly goat uncovering herself the knife which will be used to kill her. The Greek *corpus paroemiographicum* was known in the Arabic-speaking world, and thus several situations alien from the usual topics of pre-Islamic poetry became known. The study offers a detailed analysis of each of the 31 entries related to this topic.

G.J. Van Gelder (pp. 209-20) presents an annotated translation of the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth nights of al-Tawhīdī’s *al-Imtā’ wa-l-mu’ānasa* (*Enjoyment and Geniality*) which deal with the topic of ‘coincidence’ (*ittifāq*).

In the last article of the volume (pp. 221-38) E. Wakelnig sheds light on five fragments of the hitherto lost Arabic translation of Galen’s last work *On My Own Opinions*, where Galen presented his philosophical legacy, “dealing with topics such as the createdness of the world, the essence of God and the soul, the natural heat of bodies, fevers and temperaments, the motions of brain, heart and liver and what power forms the embryo in the womb” (p. 221). These fragments survive in the so-called *Philosophy Reader* recently edited by the same author (see in this volume the review by G. Chemi, pp. 377-80), i.e., the MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Marsh* 539 mentioned above. E. Wakelnig presents a detailed comparison of the Arabic fragments with the Greek original and the Latin version of Galen’s *On My Own Opinions*. An Appendix contains the passages from Galen’s *De Usu partium* present in the *Philosophy Reader*.

This interesting and rich volume ends with the list of publications by F. Zimmermann and an index of proper names.

CMB

Reviews

L.P. Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism*, Cornell U. P., Ithaca - London 2013, 345 pp.

Secondo Gerson, il termine “platonismo” non indica soltanto l’insieme della produzione letteraria di Platone, ma una dottrina filosofica compiutamente strutturata. La domanda a prima vista capziosa “Platone era un platonico?” serve a far emergere questo aspetto sistematico e completo: “do we possess evidence that supports the view that Plato’s own philosophy was in substantial agreement with that of one or another soi-disant Platonists?” (p. 3). Il volume vuole dimostrare che una risposta positiva a questa domanda è possibile: si può provare che i platonici condivisero una visione organica presente nei dialoghi.

From Plato to Platonism è suddiviso in tre parti principali: “Plato and his readers” (pp. 1-130); “The continuing creation of Platonism” (pp. 131-224); “Plotinus: Exegete of the Platonic Revelation” (p. 225-304). Nel primo capitolo (pp. 3-33) Gerson è impegnato a determinare la natura della filosofia di Platone e il collegamento tra questa e il platonismo successivo. Il pensiero di Platone viene così definito “Ur-Platonism (UP)” (p. 9), una posizione filosofica generale che emerge per contrasto dall’insieme delle posizioni filosofiche esplicitamente rigettate nei dialoghi platonici. Gli elementi dell’UP, dunque, saranno l’antimaterialismo, l’antimeccanicismo, l’antinominalismo, l’antirelativismo e l’anticetticismo. Platone sarebbe stato impegnato a costruire un sistema filosofico alternativo a queste concezioni: l’UP si configura come “a *via negativa* to Plato’s philosophy” (p. 9).¹ l’adesione ad esso, cioè l’impegno a costruire una dottrina a partire da ciò, si configura come ciò che i platonici hanno condiviso. Di conseguenza, i disaccordi tra platonici possono essere spiegati dal fatto che l’adesione all’UP e l’elaborazione a partire da esso non determina in maniera univoca la risposta agli specifici problemi filosofici. L’UP, dunque, è secondo Gerson, una sorta di cornice teorica elaborata da Platone, la matrice dalla quale deriva il suo stesso platonismo e quello dei suoi successori.

Nel secondo (pp. 34-72) e nel terzo capitolo (pp. 73-96) Gerson, opponendosi a quanti hanno sostenuto la distinzione tra una filosofia socratica e una filosofia platonica, sostiene che tutte le dottrine attribuite a Socrate nei dialoghi sono dottrine di Platone: tutti i dialoghi sarebbero scritti occasionali, frutto delle discussioni interne all’Accademia, dietro i quali si cela una posizione filosofica generale legata all’UP. Il quarto capitolo (pp. 97-129) è dedicato ad Aristotele, considerato come la fonte migliore per la conoscenza del platonismo di Platone. Inoltre, l’intera impresa filosofica di Aristotele stesso è interpretata come un tentativo di identificare e risolvere i problemi della costruzione dell’UP.

Con il quinto capitolo (pp. 133-62) inizia la seconda parte dello studio, in cui il platonismo antico ed il medioplatonismo sono esaminati per dimostrare che gli accademici dopo Platone sono impegnati nella costruzione di una filosofia positiva a partire dagli elementi dell’UP. Nel quinto capitolo la sostituzione, da parte di Speusippo, delle forme intelligibili con gli enti matematici viene interpretata come una componente dell’UP. Nel sesto capitolo (pp. 163-78) Gerson analizza il modo in cui lo scetticismo di Arcesilao e Carneade può essere d’aiuto per comprendere il platonismo.

¹ Questa visione è già stata presentata in L. P. Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists*, Cornell U. P., Ithaca 2005, pp. 37-42.

Nel settimo capitolo (pp. 179-207) vengono presentate le dottrine dei medioplatonici Antioco di Ascalona, Plutarco di Cheronea e Alcino. L'ottavo capitolo (pp. 208-23) è dedicato a Numenio di Apamea.

I capitoli nono (pp. 227-54), decimo (pp. 255-82) e undicesimo (pp. 283-304) costituiscono la terza parte del libro e sono dedicati a Plotino. A un'esposizione generale del sistema filosofico plotiniano segue la discussione della relazione con il pensiero di Platone: Gerson pensa che sia da condividere l'opinione di Proclo secondo il quale Plotino sarebbe stato il più grande esegeta della rivelazione platonica.² Nella presentazione di Gerson, Plotino è fedele ai principi della filosofia di Platone intesa come un sistema organico di dottrine positive nate a partire dall'UP.

Chi abbia studiato uno o più aspetti della plurisecolare tradizione platonica si riconoscerà nell'idea che la filosofia platonica fosse considerata dai pensatori che si definivano platonici come un insieme organico e coerente; molti platonici, anche se non tutti, ritennero che l'adesione al platonismo comportasse la costruzione di un sistema metafisico, epistemologico ed etico che aveva il suo punto di partenza nelle dottrine elaborate da Platone stesso e, nello stesso tempo, l'adesione ad una condotta di vita. In un precedente volume, Gerson aveva già incluso anche Aristotele tra i filosofi che condivisero le assunzioni di base dell'UP.³ Il fatto di condividere una base comune non impedisce ai diversi platonici di essere in disaccordo su alcune questioni specifiche, pur rimanendo tutti seguaci della dottrina di Platone.

Una tesi storiografica così generale è piuttosto difficile da verificare; mi limiterò perciò a un'osservazione di dettaglio, che mi sembra suggerire cautela. La nota 87 relativa alla p. 158 commenta un passo del quinto capitolo nel quale Gerson sostiene che i platonici trovarono difficile spiegare in che modo sia possibile per un'anima esercitare l'intellezione e contemporaneamente altri modi di conoscenza inferiori. Poiché questa difficoltà sarebbe stata espressa più chiaramente da Aristotele che da Platone, i platonici tardi avrebbero adottato la teoria aristotelica dell'intelletto separato per risolvere la difficoltà insita nella posizione platonica. La nota che sorregge questa argomentazione è la seguente: "[...] It should be noted that the obscurity of the relation of intellect to soul is evident in the various positions regarding the immortality of the soul: Is it the entire soul that is immortal or only the rational part? Both Xenocrates and Speusippus seem to have maintained that the entire soul is in some sense immortal. See Damascius, *In Phd.* 1177, p. 124.13ff Norvin (= fr. 211 IP). This commentary is transmitted under the name of Olympiodorus". La nota 57 relativa alla p. 219 correda la discussione, nell'ottavo capitolo, dell'idea per cui gli argomenti in favore dell'immortalità dell'anima contenuti nel *Fedone* mostrerebbero che l'essere umano incarnato conoscerebbe le Forme tanto quanto l'anima disincarnata, prima di entrare in un corpo. L'ambiguità di questo ragionamento sarebbe stata la fonte di molti problemi interpretativi per i platonici: come è possibile che il soggetto di stati psichici diversi dall'intellezione, nonché di affezioni corporee (come le passioni) sia identico al puro intelletto? La nota che documenta questa difficoltà di alcuni platonici è la seguente: "See fr. 46 des Places, where Olympiodorus reports the very different views among Platonists, including Numenius, on whether the whole soul in all parts is immortal or whether less than all of the parts are immortal. [...]". Il lettore è quindi indotto a credere che nella nota 87 relativa alla p. 158 Gerson si stia riferendo ad un commento di Damascio sul *Fedone* trasmesso sotto il nome di Olimpiodoro, e che nella nota 57 relativa alla p. 219 si riferisca ad un passo tratto da un'opera di Olimpiodoro dalla

² Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, texte établi et traduit par H.D. Saffrey - L.G. Westerink, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1968-1997 (CUF), I 1, p. 6.16.

³ Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists*.

quale des Places⁴ estrasse il frammento di Numenio. Ma il passo al quale fa riferimento la seconda nota è il medesimo passo al quale fa riferimento la prima. Esso viene dal commento di Damascio al *Fedone*;⁵ il commento⁶ è stato edito da Westerink sotto il nome di Damascio,⁷ dopo che W. Norvin, nella sua edizione Teubner del 1913, lo aveva erroneamente attribuito ad Olimpiodoro.⁸ L'edizione Westerink contiene sia il commento di Damascio al *Fedone* che quello realmente composto da Olimpiodoro.

Il passo al quale Gerson fa un vago riferimento in queste note è tratto dal commento di Damascio (I § 177 Westerink): ὅτι οἱ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς λογικῆς ψυχῆς ἄχρι τῆς ἐμψύχου ἕξεως ἀπαθανατίζουσιν, ὡς Νοῦμῆνιος [...] οἱ δὲ μέχρι τῆς ἀλογίας, ὡς τῶν μὲν παλαιῶν Ξενοκράτης καὶ Σπεύσιππος.

Sembra quasi che l'autore non conosca direttamente i commenti al *Fedone* dal quale è tratto il passo al quale si riferisce: si ha l'impressione che il passo sia stato trovato o nelle edizioni dei frammenti di Speusippo e Senocrate curate da M. Isnardi Parente⁹ o nell'edizione dei frammenti di Numenio curata da É. des Places nel 1973.¹⁰ Des Places poteva basarsi solo sull'edizione Norvin, perché l'edizione Westerink non era ancora stata pubblicata; M. Isnardi Parente attribuiva il passo allo "ps. Olympiodorus", pur precisando che il testo "è un *excerptum* delle letture di Damascio dal *Fedone*" e che "Westerink pone il II volume sotto il nome di Damascio".¹¹ La confusione nella quale incorre Gerson è confermata dalla bibliografia, in cui sotto il nome di Damascio si legge: "1977. *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's 'Phaedo'*. Vol. 2, *Damascius*. Edited by L. Westerink. Amsterdam" e sotto il nome di Olimpiodoro: "1968. *Olympiodori Philosophi in Platonis Phaedonem Commentaria*. Edited by W. Norvin. Hildesheim". Non ha alcun senso nel 2013 citare il commento di Olimpiodoro nell'edizione Norvin del 1913 (ristampata nel 1968). Chi ha accesso ai commenti di Damascio nell'edizione Westerink ha accesso, nello stesso tempo, al commento di Olimpiodoro, poiché essi sono stati editi insieme.

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⁴ Numénus, *Fragments*, texte établi et traduit par É. des Places, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1973 (CUF).

⁵ L.G. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo, I Olympiodorus, II Damascius*, Verhand. d. Kon. Ned. Ak. v. Wetenschappen, Afd. Lett. N.R. 92 & 93. North-Holland Publishing Co., Amsterdam - Oxford - New York, 1976, 1977.

⁶ Più precisamente si tratta di due raccolte di note di lezioni fatte in tempi diversi.

⁷ L.G. Westerink, *Damascius. Lectures on the Philebus Wrongly Attributed to Olympiodorus*, Hakkert, Amsterdam 1982, pp. xv-xx. Un riassunto dei motivi che hanno portato a quest'attribuzione è contenuto in Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, pp. 15-17.

⁸ *Olympiodori philosophi In Platonis Phaedonem commentaria* ed. W. Norvin, Lipsiae 1913 (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), rist. Hildesheim 1968.

⁹ Speusippo, *Frammenti*, a cura di M. Isnardi Parente, Bibliopolis, Napoli 1980 (La scuola di Platone, 1); Senocrate-Ermodoro, *Frammenti*, a cura di M. Isnardi Parente, Bibliopolis, Napoli 1982 (La scuola di Platone, 3), riveduta analiticamente e aggiornata a cura di T. Dorandi, Edizioni della Scuola Normale, Pisa 2012.

¹⁰ Cf. n. 4.

¹¹ Cf. il frammento 99 in Isnardi Parente, Speusippo, *Frammenti*, pp. 105-6.

R. Arnzen, *Platonische Ideen in der arabischen Philosophie. Texte und Materialien zur Begriffsgeschichte von "Šuwar Aflātūniyya" und "Muthul Aflātūniyya"*, De Gruyter, Berlin - Boston 2011 (Scientia Graeco-Arabica, 6), VI + 463 pp.

In this book Rüdiger Arnzen addresses the question of the influence of the Platonic theory of Forms on Eastern Arabic-Islamic philosophy.¹ He narrows his focus on the labels *Šuwar Aflātūniyya* and *Muthul Aflātūniyya*, whose first occurrence in Arabic philosophy belongs to the mid-tenth century.² Arnzen aptly begins with a survey of the Greek texts out of which the Arab readers extracted their ideas about the "Platonic Forms".³ This process of assimilation, which began almost a century before the appearance of these labels, is especially relevant for Arnzen's enquiry, and this on two counts. First and foremost, the texts translated create in a sense the problem with which he is dealing, namely the fact that the theory of Forms was not known directly, from Plato himself and within the context of the dialogues. As Arnzen has it, "Die wenigen-erhaltenen Fragmente arabischer Platon-Übersetzungen oder Platon-Paraphrasen enthalten kaum Textstellen, in welchen Platon von *Ideen* spricht oder das Wort ἰδέα benutzt" (p. 5).⁴ Scholars have advanced various reasons why only a few of Plato's dialogues were translated,⁵ but for the present purpose suffice it to say that none of

¹ Both of the classical and post-classical periods: the span of time covered in this enquiry goes from the Graeco-Arabic translations which set the tone for Arabic-Islamic philosophy to Mullā Šadrā (d. 1640).

² "Bereits in der ersten Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts sind sowohl Formulierungen der Art 'die Formen, die (*oder*: deren Postulierung) Platon zugeschrieben werden (wird)' (*al-šuwaru llatī tunsabu ilā Aflātūn*) als auch der Terminus 'Platonische Formen/Ideen' (*šuwar aflātūniyya*) anzutreffen" (p. 8). This happens in al-Fārābī's *Book on the Harmonization of the Opinions of the Two Sages*, whose Farabian authorship is not accepted by some scholars: as for Arnzen's opinion on this, see below, p. 354-5.

³ The wording is in itself noteworthy: "Schon die formale Konstitution dieser Begriffe stellt ein Unikum in der arabischen Philosophie dar. Vergleichbare arabische Begriffsbildungen zentraler philosophischer Konzepte in Verbindung mit einer adjektivischen Ableitung ihre (vermeintlichen oder realen) antiken griechischen Urhebers sind meines Wissens nicht bekannt" (pp. 2-3).

⁴ With the notable exception of the first item quoted by Arnzen (p. 6), namely the two passages from Plato's *Republic* discussed below.

⁵ Translations of the *Timaeus*, *Republic*, *Laws*, *Sophist*, and the *Letters* are mentioned in the Arab bibliographies from Ibn al-Nadīm onwards. Traces of the translation of (parts of) these writings have been found; in addition, there are traces of the Arabic versions of some dialogues whose translation has left no record in the bibliographies, namely the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Symposium*. Recent surveys on the Arabic Plato include: R. Arnzen, "Arabisches Mittelalter", in C. Horn - J. Müller - J. Söder (eds), *Platon-Handbuch. Leben - Werk - Wirkung*, J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart 2009, pp. 439-46; Id., *Plato's Timaeus in the Arabic Tradition. Legend - Testimonies - Fragments*, in F. Celia - A. Ulacco (eds), *Il Timeo. Egesesi greche, arabe, latine*, PLUS, Pisa 2012 (Greco, arabo, latino. Le vie del sapere, Studi, 2), pp. 181-267; D. Gutas, "Platon. Tradition arabe", in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques*, CNRS-Éditions, Paris 2012, Va, pp. 845-63. Previous scholarship raised the problem of the paucity of the translations, especially if compared with the abundance of the sayings attributed to Plato and the doxographical records on him. According to F. Rosenthal, "On the Knowledge of Plato's Philosophy in the Islamic World", *Islamic Culture* 14 (1940), pp. 387-422 (also in *Greek Philosophy in the Arab World*. A Collection of Essays, Greath Yarmouth 1990), the main reason for this was the fact that the Arab readers were much more interested in Plato's doctrines than in the literary form of his writings. F.E. Peters, "The Origins of Islamic Platonism: The School Tradition", in P. Morewedge (ed.), *Islamic Philosophical Theology*, SUNY Press, Albany 1979 (Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science), pp. 14-45, points to the tradition of learning inherited by the Arab scholars. After having mentioned Stephen of Alexandria, the last professor in the Neoplatonic school who left the city in 616 to join the court in Constantinople, Peters presents a synthetic account which is worth reading in full: "This is the end of the *falsafah* tradition of late antiquity. Stephen, who served Heraclius, touches the chronological limits of Islam. The Arabs who followed pieced together their knowledge of that tradition from the philosophical texts available to them and from a far less easily identified set of historical perspectives. Both, however, betray their origins in a clear way: clustered around the works of Aristotle are the names of the great commentators from the Platonic school tradi-

these develops the theory of Forms and its problems, at least for the parts whose Arabic translation is known. This tallies with the fact that when dealing with this topic the *falāsifa* do not refer to Plato's dialogues: "Es spricht (...) für sich, dass die gesamte Tradition arabischer und persischer Erörterungen und Theorien Platonischer Formen und Platonischer Urbilder *keinen einzigen* Verweis auf diese Schriften oder irgendeinen anderen platonischen Dialog enthält" (p. 4). The second reason why the translations of the basic Greek texts must be taken into account is the fact that at times they entail shifts of meaning, that can account for the ways in which the theory of Forms was understood by the *falāsifa*. For this reason, a fine-grained analysis is devoted by Arnzen to the Arabic rendering of the Greek sources which refer to this topic.

First comes a couple of passages from Plato's *Republic*⁶ discovered by the late lamented David Reisman⁷ in the *Book of the Metaphysical Questions* (*K. fi Masā'il al-umūr al-ilāhiyya*) by the little known Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfīzārī (Xth century). Two passages of great philosophic importance are quoted in an almost literal translation: the first, *Resp.*, VI, 507 B 9-10, sets sense-perception against intellection, pointing to the Forms as to the objects of intellection; the second, *ibid.*, 508 E 1-3, is the well-known passage where the Idea of Good is said to be at one and the same time the cause of truth for the knowable things, and the cause of the capability the knower has to know them.⁸ Since it is impossible to determine the exact source of this quotation,⁹ one cannot say when the Arab readership became acquainted with these two crucial Platonic tenets. At any rate, one can safely say that the source of al-Isfīzārī's quotation was available by the time of al-Fārābī, who was more or less his contemporary and had himself some acquaintance with the *Republic*.¹⁰ But it is worthwhile to pause and note that both doctrines were already known and clearly referred to Plato by the time of al-Kindī, one century before al-Fārābī and al-Isfīzārī.

In a wide excursus placed at the end of the first chapter of the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, i.e. a treatise issued from the "circle of al-Kindī"¹¹ in which a selection from Plotinus' *Enneads* IV-VI is attributed to Aristotle, the latter praises Plato for having taught both doctrines:

tion at Alexandria, from Ammonius in the fifth century to Stephen in the seventh. (...) Considerable nuances can be added on this on the basis of the texts that have actually been preserved. There are, of course, Aristotle and Plato, the former in integral Arabic versions and the latter in resumé, a situation which once again points to Alexandria, where from Ammonius onward the publishing emphasis was on the Aristotelian lectures" (p. 25).

⁶ See above n. 4.

⁷ D.C. Reisman, "Plato's *Republic* in Arabic: a newly discovered passage", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2004), pp. 263-300.

⁸ Plat., *Resp.*, VI, 507 B 9-10: καὶ τὰ μὲν δὴ ὁραῖσθαι φαμεν, νοεῖσθαι δ' οὐ, τὰς δ' αὖ ἰδέας νοεῖσθαι μὲν, ὁραῖσθαι δ' οὐ, "And we say that the many beautiful things and the rest are visible but not intelligible, while the forms are intelligible but not visible"; 508 E 1-3: τοῦτο τοίνυν τὸ τὴν ἀλήθειαν παρέχον τοῖς γινωσκομένοις καὶ τῷ γινώσκοντι τὴν δύναμιν ἀποδιδόν τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέαν φάθι εἶναι, "So that what gives truth to the things known and the power to know to the knower is the form of good" (trans. Grube-Reeve, in *Plato. Complete Works* edited by J.M. Cooper, Associate Editor D.S. Hutchinson, Hackett Publishing Co., Indianapolis-Cambridge 1997, pp. 1128-9).

⁹ The quotations by al-Isfīzārī provide a *terminus ante quem*: see the useful survey of the traces left by the translation of Plato's *Republic* by Reisman, "Plato's *Republic* in Arabic", p. 264-71.

¹⁰ See Reisman, "Plato's *Republic* in Arabic", pp. 266-7 and C. Martini Bonadeo, *Al-Fārābī. L'armonia delle opinioni dei due sapienti, il divino Platone e Aristotele*, PLUS, Pisa 2018 (Greco, arabo, latino. Le vie del sapere, 3), pp. 99, 117-8, 202-3, 210-11.

¹¹ G. Endress, "The Circle of al-Kindī. Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy", in G. Endress - R. Kruk (eds), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism. Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences dedicated to H.J. Drossaert Lulofs on his ninetieth birthday*, CNWS Research, Leiden 1997, pp. 43-76.

فريد أن نبدأ نخبر عن رأي هذا المرء الفاضل الشريف في هذه الأشياء التي ذكرناها. فيقول إن أفلاطون الشريف لما رأى جُلّ الفلاسفة قد أخطؤوا في وصفهم الأنبيات، وذلك أنهم لما أرادوا معرفة الأنبيات الحقيّة طلبوها في هذا العالم الحسي، وذلك أنهم رفضوا الأشياء العقلية وأقبلوا على الحسي وحده فأرادوا أن ينالوا بالحسي جميع الأشياء الدائرة والدائمة الباقية، فلما رأهم قد ضلوا عن الطريق الذي يؤدّيهم إلى الحق والرشد واستولى عليهم الحس رثى لهم من ذلك وتفضل عليهم وأرشدهم إلى الطريق الذي يؤدّيهم إلى حقائق الأشياء ففرّق بين الحس والعقل، وبين طبيعة الأنبيات وبين الأشياء المحسوسة، وصير الأنبيات الحقيّة دائمة لا تزول عن حالها، وصير الأشياء الحسيّة دائمة واقعة تحت الكون والفساد. فلما فرغ من هذا التمييز بدأ فقال إن علة الأنبيات الحقيّة التي لا أجرام لها، والأشياء الحسيّة ذات الأجرام واحدة وهي الأنبيّة الأولى الحق، ويعني بذلك البارّي الخالق – عزّ اسمه. ثم قال إن البارّي الأول الذي هو علة الأنبيات العقلية الدائمة والأنبيات الحسيّة الدائرة، وهو الخير المحض (...).

We intend to begin by giving the view of this surpassing and sublime man on these things we have mentioned. We say that when the sublime Plato saw that the mass of the philosophers were at fault in their description of the essences, for when they wished to know about the true essences they sought them in this sensible world, because they rejected intelligible things and turned to the sensible world alone, wishing to attain by sense-perception all things, both the transitory and the eternally abiding, when he saw that they had strayed from the road that would bring them to the truth and right, and that sense-perception had won the mastery over them, he pitied them for this and was generous towards them and guided them to the road that would bring them to the truths of things. He distinguished between mind and sense-perception and between the nature of the essences and the sensible things. He established that the true essences were everlasting, not changing their state, and that the sensible things were transitory, falling under genesis and corruption. When he had completed this distinction he began by saying “The cause of the true essences, which are bodiless, and of the sensible things, which have bodies, is one and the same, and that is the first true essence”, meaning by that, the Creator, the Maker. Then he said “The first Creator, who is the cause of the everlasting intelligible essences and of the transitory sensible essences, is absolute good” (trans. Lewis).¹²

True, the Platonic Forms do not feature as such in this passage; but the two topics of the *Republic* mentioned above, namely (i) the contrast between the objects of sense-perception and those of intellectual knowledge, and (ii) the universal causality of the Good, are emphatically presented as the backbone of Plato’s position. This text reaches back to the first half of the IXth century, and everything in it suggests that the milieu in which it was composed was well acquainted with Plato’s main metaphysical tenets:¹³ otherwise such an account would have been impossible.

¹² ‘A. Badawī (ed.), *Aflūṭīn ‘inda L’-arab. Plotinus apud Arabes. Theologia Aristotelis et fragmenta quae supersunt*, Maktabat al-naḥḍa al-miṣriyya, Cairo 1955 (Dirasāt Islāmiyya, 20), pp. 25.15-26.10; English trans. in *Plotini Opera II, Enneades IV-V* ediderunt P. Henry et H.-R. Schwyzler, *Plotiniana Arabica ad codicum fidem anglice vertit G. Lewis*, Desclée de Brouwer - L’Édition Universelle, Paris-Louvain 1959 (Museum Lessianum. Series philosophica, 34), p. 231.

¹³ Cf. G. Endress, “Building the Library of Arabic Philosophy. Platonism and Aristotelianism in the Sources of al-Kindī”, in C. D’Ancona (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists. Proceedings of the Meeting of the European Science Foundation Network “Late Antiquity and Arabic Thought. Patterns in the Constitution of European Culture”*, Strasbourg, March 12-14, 2004, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2007 (Philosophia Antiqua, 107), pp. 319-50, in part. p. 328: “It is true that more of Plato’s authentic works were available in Kindī’s generation than were preserved beyond the next century (mainly through the philosophical tradition of medical authors – the tradition of Galen the Platonist)”.

Plato's doctrine is framed here against the backdrop of an overarching concern by the speaker, "Aristotle", with the issue of the harmony between his own ideas and Plato's, something that seemingly flies in the face of the awareness that the Arab readers had of Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic Forms already at an early stage of the Graeco-Arabic transmission. This criticism is documented by Arnzen (pp. 12-29). The *Metaphysics* was translated for the first time by a certain Uṣṭāṭ¹⁴ in the same milieu where "Aristotle's" fictitious exaltation of Plato was concocted,¹⁵ namely the "circle of al-Kindī". Thus, one may wonder whether or not al-Kindī and his fellow philosophers were percipient of the anti-Platonic import of Aristotle's utterances. Book *Alpha Meizon*, where Aristotle openly criticises the Platonic Forms, does not feature in the translation of the *Metaphysics* by Uṣṭāṭ, and it has been contended that this book was not available to al-Kindī and his circle.¹⁶ But even in this case¹⁷ there are other books of the *Metaphysics* in Uṣṭāṭ's translation which contain unambiguous statements against the existence of the separate Forms, and Arnzen's analysis elucidates some interesting details in the treatment of such passages.

Uṣṭāṭ's version of B 2, 997 a 34 - b 5 is a case in point. Aristotle raises the question whether or not there are other substances beyond the sensible ones, and criticises the opinion of those who posit the Forms and the intermediate realities.¹⁸ The Arabic rendering, instead, creates a tripartite set of Forms: the sensible forms, the intermediate forms, and those which differ from both. Arnzen lays emphasis on the implications of this shift: "Während Aristoteles' Kritik also zwischen drei (postulierten) Seinsbereichen unterscheidet, Ideen, τὰ μετὰ ζύ, und sinnlichen Gegenständen, denen nicht notwendigein gemeinsames Charakteristikum 'Form' zukommt (...), scheint die arabische Übersetzung von drei Arten von Form zu handeln, 'sinnlichen Formen' (*ṣuwar mahṣūsa*), 'mittleren Formen' (*ṣuwar mutawassiṭa*), und Formen,

¹⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, *K. al-Fihrist*, p. 251.27-28 Flügel = p. 312.14 Taḡaddud.

¹⁵ The Arabic version of the *Metaphysics* famously begins with *alpha elatton*, not with *Alpha Meizon*; in addition, the latter is extant in Arabic only in part (chapters 1-4 and part of chapter 5 are missing); in the unique manuscript of the Arabic *Metaphysics* known to date, this translation is attributed to Nazīf ibn Ayman (Xth century). Two main explanations have been advanced for this: either the Greek manuscript out of which the translation had been made was incomplete, or the Arab readers, baffled by the double beginning of the *Metaphysics* (and possibly misled by a scholion which seems to attribute this book to Theophrastus) decided not to translate it. For a survey of the scholarship, see C. Martini, "La tradizione araba della *Metafisica* di Aristotele. Libri α-A", in C. D'Ancona - G. Serra (eds), *Aristotele e Alessandro di Afrodisia nella tradizione araba*, Il Poligrafo, Padova 2002 (Subsidia mediaevalia patavina, 3), pp. 75-112, in part. pp. 80-4.

¹⁶ According to A. Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics in Avicenna's Kitāb al-Sifā'*. *A Milestone of Western Metaphysical Thought*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2006 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, 63), pp. 10-11, Book *Alpha Meizon* was missing in Uṣṭāṭ's translation of the *Metaphysics*; Arnzen (p. 13) sides with him.

¹⁷ According to A. Neuwirth, "Neue Materialien zur arabischen Tradition der beiden ersten *Metaphysik*-Bücher", *Die Welt der Islam* 18 (1977-78), pp. 84-100, al-Kindī was acquainted with at least two passages of Book *Alpha Meizon*, which are reflected in his treatise *Fī l-Falsafa al-ūlā*: 982 a 21 - b 10 and 983 a 24-31. Martini, "La tradizione araba della *Metafisica* di Aristotele", pp. 91-92, suggests that *Alpha Meizon*, although known to al-Kindī, was not included in the translation of the *Metaphysics* issued from his circle, precisely because of its outright criticism of Plato (the assumption here is obviously that the contents of *Alpha Meizon* were known, at least to some extent). According to Martini, the inclusion of *Alpha Meizon* might have hampered the Kindian project to promote a concordist view of Greek philosophy pivoting on the harmony between Plato and Aristotle, which has long been recognized as the hallmark of the Kindian project.

¹⁸ *Metaph.*, B 2, 997 a 34 - b 5: ἔτι δὲ πότερον τὰς αἰσθητὰς οὐσίας μόνας εἶναι φατέον ἢ καὶ παρὰ ταύτας ἄλλας, καὶ πότερον μοναχῶς ἢ πλείω γένη τετύχηκεν ὄντα τῶν οὐσιῶν, οἷον οἱ λέγοντες τὰ τε εἶδη καὶ τὰ μετὰ ζύ, περὶ ἃ τὰς μαθηματικὰς εἶναι φασι ἐπιστήμας; ὡς μὲν οὖν λέγομεν τὰ εἶδη αἰτιά τε καὶ οὐσίας εἶναι καθ' ἑαυτὰς εἴρηται ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις λόγοις περὶ αὐτῶν: "Further, must we say that sensible substances alone exist, or that there are others besides these? And are substances of one kind or are there in fact several kinds of substances, as those say who assert the existence both of the Forms and of the intermediates, with which they say the mathematical sciences deal? The sense in which we say the Forms are both causes and self-dependent substances has been explained in our first remarks about them" (trans. Ross).

die von gewissen Philosophen als von diesen beiden verschieden gesetzt werden, die auf einer Skala von Immanenz und Transzendenz voneinander zu unterscheiden sind” (p. 21).

Such a smoothing of Aristotle’s anti-Platonism, or total misunderstanding if you want, features also in passages where Aristotle openly criticises Plato. This is the case with book *Alpha Meizon*, attested (partially) in two versions which are both different from each other, and from the Greek original: one is quoted by Averroes in his Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, and was the work of a certain Nazīf ibn Ayman;¹⁹ the other is quoted by al-Šahrastānī (d. 1153) in his *Book of Religions and philosophical sects*, and its origin is unknown (p. 14). Book *Alpha Meizon* contains an exposition of Plato’s theory of Forms in a highly critical vein, but here too its Arabic rendering presents some shifts in meaning and wording, so that Aristotle’s objections are watered down into a sort of complementary account, which may coexist with Plato’s own position. In the issue at hand, Aristotle is saying that Plato – who mostly follows the lead of Pythagoras while parting company with him on some points – is convinced that there is no science of the sensible things, because of their restless change (A 6, 987 a 29 - b 1); then, Aristotle says that Socrates was the first to enquire about definitions (987 b 1-4) and that for Plato the search for definitions is possible only in the field of realities that must differ from the sensible ones, since the latter are changeable (987 b 4-7). Hence, Plato called “Ideas” those realities which the sensible things are named after. The two Arabic versions of this passage, although differently from one another, are not completely faithful to the Greek original. In Nazīf’s translation quoted by Averroes, Aristotle says that Plato called “Ideas” those things which are “one” in and by themselves, a sentence which may or may not entail a real shift in meaning, but in any case is not literal.²⁰ As for the account recorded by al-Šahrastānī, it is heavily interpretative: Aristotle says that Plato named “Ideas” the universals (*al-ašyā al-kulliyya*) and established between the sensible things and such “universals” a relationship of “participation”, a statement that cannot but water down the objections levelled against the theory of Forms. All in all, Arnzen’s conclusion is that “die arabische Überlieferung der aristotelischen Ideenkritik ein heterogenes, oft widersprüchliches Bild der platonischen Ideenlehre entfaltet” (p. 28).

On the contrary, the Arab translator of Plotinus dealt in a more satisfactory way with the theory of Forms interspersed in the *Enneads* with the properly Plotinian tenets. Even though the

¹⁹ See above n. 15.

²⁰ Aristotle says: οὗτος οὖν τὰ μὲν τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ἰδέας προσηγόρευσε (987 b 6-7) and the Arabic rendering in Nazīf’s version is: “[Plato] called Forms those things which for the existents are ‘one’ in themselves (*wa-sammā llātī biya li-l-mawǧūdātī wāhidatun bi-‘aynihā šuwaran*)”. Arnzen, p. 15 n. 26, relies on A. Bertolacci, “On the Arabic Translations of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15 (2005), pp. 241-75, in part. p. 265, n. 73, for the idea that the Arabic rendering just quoted is better explained if we suppose in the Greek model τὰ αὐτά, instead of τοιαῦτα. The Greek antecedent hypothesized by Arnzen is *τὰ μέντοι αὐτά. Attractive as this explanation may be, the existence of the variant reading *τὰ μέντοι αὐτά in the Greek manuscript on which Nazīf’s translation is based remains speculative, especially because there is no adversative particle in the Arabic sentence, which would reflect *μέντοι. It is true that *τὰ μέντοι αὐτά looks like a typical mistake of transliteration from uncials into minuscule (TA MEN TOIAYTA vs TA MENTOI AYTA) – obviously not in the Greek manuscript which served as the basis for the translation, but in its model. Still, only one thing is sure: the Arabic *wāhidatun* presupposes that *έν has been read in the Greek sentence (something that goes against *μέντοι). be this as it may, the exact form of the Greek sentence underlying the Arabic cannot be reconstructed; it might also be the case that it was the same as that quoted above (i.e. the text of both Jaeger’s and Ross’ editions; the variant readings are of no help for understanding Nazīf’s translation). As a matter of fact, this sentence is by no means a simple one: despite appearances, τοιαῦτα does not look back to the last items mentioned, i.e. the sensible things, but to ἐτέρων of 987 b 5, i.e. the realities which are different from the sensible things. My guess is that the translator might have been bewildered, and that he relied on *έν in order to obtain a meaningful sentence. The Arabic is in any case a free rendering of the contrast established by Plato, in Aristotle’s report, between sensible things and Forms.

Neoplatonic texts have been heavily adapted and much more substantially reworked if compared with Aristotle's,²¹ and even if here too the theory of Forms undergoes various changes, the outcome is more consistent than in the case of the *Metaphysics*: "Im Gegensatz zur arabischen Überlieferung der aristotelischen Ideenkritik boten die arabischen *Plotiniana* eine mehr oder weniger kohärente Doktrin hierarchisch geordneter, transzendenter und immanenter Formen" (p. 41). To disentangle the Platonic theory of Forms from Plotinus' own doctrines is not an easy task, given that the latter presents himself as an exegete of Plato (V 8[31], 4.54-55) and endorses the Platonic Forms as the unsurpassed account of the true causes of reality – whether or not modifying Plato's genuine tenets, is a question that cannot be addressed here. It is well known that Plotinus goes as far as to claim that his doctrine of the One is nothing if not Plato's own position, that he limited himself to expound (V 1[10], 8.10-14). This helps to explain why the theory of Forms omnipresent in the Arabic Plotinus is not recognised by its readers as idiosyncratic of Plato, while counting as one of the main sources for its knowledge. As Arnzen points out, here too they are labelled *suwar* (p. 32). Also, the Platonic Forms as embedded in Plotinus' philosophy undergo several adaptations. First and foremost, they are presented as principles derived from the Good by way of creation, as implied in the passage quoted above (p. 349 and n. 12), and as noted by Arnzen: "Erste Ursache dieser Hervorbringung [i.e. of the Forms], die, sofern von ewigen Formen die Rede ist, außer oder vor der Zeit und in nichtdiskursiver Form erfolgen muss, ist der Schöpfer (*al-bārī*)" (p. 33). A second difference is the arrangement of the Forms into a hierarchy of degrees. Arnzen (p. 32) points to the passage of ps.-*Theol. Arist.*, p. 58.2-7 Badawī, where the intelligible Forms (*suwar 'aqliyya*), the natural forms (*suwar tabī'iyya*) and the forms of artifacts (*suwar šinā'iyya*) are arranged into a tripartite hierarchy. It is rewarding to pause and comment upon Plotinus' sentence and its Arabic rendering.

The tripartite hierarchy singled out by Arnzen elaborates upon Plotinus' statement of the ontological superiority of the cause: καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ποιῶν πᾶν καὶ αὐτὸ κρεῖττον εἶναι δεῖ τοῦ ποιουμένου (V 8[31], 1.30-31, see below for Armstrong's translation), a sentence intended to assess not the transcendence of the first principle, but the rule – intrinsic in the Platonic theory of Forms and accepted with qualifications also by Aristotle – of the so-called "causality of the maximum".²² Plotinus is speaking of every primary principle, τὸ πρῶτον ποιῶν πᾶν, and proceeds to apply the rule to one specific case, that of beauty. As a matter of fact, he is engaged here in a move which may alert us against his proclaimed unqualified adherence to Plato: the overturning of Plato's well-known blame of figurative art in Book X of the *Republic*. Plotinus is indeed creating a tripartite hierarchy: the Forms in themselves, their imitation by natural things, and the imitation of the latter by craftsmen. However, such a hierarchy remains implicit in his passage. Its focus lies elsewhere: Plotinus' main point is in fact to counter the Gnostic refusal to admit the mimetic relationship between the sensible world and its intelligible model, and the issue at hand, i.e. beauty and the arts, paves the way to deal with the physical world as with an immense oeuvre which, like Phidias' statue of Zeus, is directly

²¹ In a nutshell, Plotinus' and Proclus' works in the Arabic versions are rearranged as for their structure, and substantially adapted as for their contents: the Neoplatonic One turns out to be not only God the Almighty, the Creator, but also the First Agent of the Aristotelian universe, and the Pure Being of the pseudo-Dionysian theology. Despite the shifts in meaning exemplified above, none of Aristotle's statements has undergone manipulations of this kind, although some adaptations have been made, as the substitution of *rūḥānī* for θεῶν in the Arabic rendering of Aristotle's *De Caelo*, as shown by G. Endress, "Platonizing Aristotle: The Concepts of 'Spiritual' (*rūḥānī*) as a Keyword of the Neoplatonic Strand in Early Arabic Aristotelianism", *Studia graeco-arabica* 2 (2012), pp. 265-79.

²² See A.C. Lloyd, "Primum in genere: the Philosophical Background", *Diotima* 4 (1976), pp. 32-36; Id., "The Principle that the Cause is Greater than its Effect", *Phronesis* 21 (1976), pp. 146-56.

issued from the contemplation of its intelligible model by the Demiurge. Be this as it may, the Arabic version expands Plotinus' implicit hierarchy into an explicit one. Plotinus limited himself to saying:

Every original maker must be in itself stronger than that which it makes; it is not lack of music which makes a man musical, but music, and music in the world of sense is made by the music prior to this world (V 8[31], 1.30-32, trans. Armstrong).

Instead, the Arabic version says:

We say, briefly and concisely, that every doer is superior to the things done and every pattern superior to the reproduction derived from it. For the musician is from music and every beautiful form is from another form prior to it and higher than it, for if it is an artistic form it is from the form in the mind and knowledge of the artist, and if it is a natural form it is from an intellectual form prior to it and worthier than it. The first, the intellectual form, is superior to the natural form, and the natural form is superior to the form in the knowledge of the artist, and the known form in the knowledge of the artist is superior to and more beautiful than the form executed: *art imitates nature* and nature imitates mind (ps.-*Theol. Arist.*, pp. 57.19-58.7 Badawī, trans. Lewis p. 277; my emphasis).

This hierarchy of three degrees of Forms – transcendent, instantiated in natural things, and artificial – goes hand in hand with another tripartition, in itself different but exhibiting the same concern with a hierarchy of levels: that which has been superposed on *Metaphysics*, B 2, 997 a 34 - b 5, as we have seen before under Arnzen's guidance.²³ It is also worth noting the presence of the saying "art imitates nature", a well-known Aristotelian tenet²⁴ which does not feature in Plotinus' passage. It may or may not come directly from Aristotle,²⁵ but the main point is that in the Kindian "metaphysics file", to borrow from Zimmermann's felicitous label,²⁶ Aristotle's wording in Book *Beta* gives a Platonic ring, and Plotinus' sentence ends with a famous Aristotelian saying. Far from being an extrinsic claim, the "harmony between Plato and Aristotle" emerges from the texts themselves as a consequence of their adaptations.

As shown by Arnzen (see above), Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic theory of Forms was quite obscured in the Arabic translations of the *Metaphysics*. However, in ways which remain for the most

²³ See above, pp. 350-1.

²⁴ Arist., *Phys.* II 2, 194 a 21-22: ἡ τέχνη μιμεῖται τὴν φύσιν. *Ibid.*, II 8, 199 a 15-17: ὅλωσ δὲ ἡ τέχνη τὰ μὲν ἐπιτελεῖ ἃ ἡ φύσις ἀδυνατεῖ ἀπεργάζεσθαι. τὰ δὲ μιμεῖται.

²⁵ The Arabic version of Aristotle's *Physics* is later than that of Plotinus' *Enneads*, but in al-Kindī's times the commentary by Philoponus was translated, partly by Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, and partly by Ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī, the translator of Plotinus (*K. al-Fibrīst*, p. 251.18-20 Flügel = p. 311.1-3 Tağaddud). This may have been a conduit for acquaintance with Aristotle's *ars imitatur naturam*, but this saying is so widespread that it may have been known also in many other ways.

²⁶ The creation of the "Skala von Immanenz und Transzendenz" of Forms described by Arnzen in the Arabic version of *Metaphysics Beta* (see above, p. 351) is in all likelihood due to the translator, Uṣṭāṭ, who worked for al-Kindī; as for the amplification of Plotinus' sentence discussed above, it is not easy to decide if it were the work of the translator or of al-Kindī himself, who is said to have "corrected" Ibn Nā'ima's translation (p. 3.7-9 Badawī). The latter is my favourite explanation, but discussing this issue would exceed the limits of this review. The label "Kindī's metaphysics file" has been created by F.W. Zimmermann, "The Origins of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*", in J. Krayer - W.F. Ryan - C.-B. Schmitt (eds), *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: the Theology and Other Texts*, The Warburg Institute, London 1986, pp. 110-240, in order to indicate "a compilation of Greek metaphysics, most probably sponsored by al-Kindī, which (...) united Uṣṭāṭh's version of the *Metaphysics* with contributions from post-Aristotelian theology by other translators and adaptors" (p. 131).

part unknown to us, these criticisms circulated in the Arabic-speaking world by the time of al-Fārābī. The latter proves to be well acquainted with them, both in his indisputably genuine works like the *Epistle on the Goals of Aristotle's Metaphysics* and in the *Harmonization of the Two Opinions of the Two Sages, Plato the Divine and Aristotle*, whose Farabian authorship has been challenged. Arnzen's analysis highlights a twofold attitude in al-Fārābī towards the theory of Forms: on the one hand, he follows Aristotle's lead in denying the existence of Forms as the separate causes of visible things; on the other, he shares in the Platonic principle that sense-perception does not meet the criteria to produce science. In his Platonizing epistemology, al-Fārābī goes as far as to claim that sensible objects are only images of true objects of science (p. 54 and n. 184, with al-Fārābī's passages), which by the same token rise to the status of intelligible *realities*. An in-depth analysis of the Farabian understanding of the theory of Forms leads to the conclusion that Aristotelian and Neoplatonic elements are intermingled in it. Al-Fārābī proves to be acquainted with Aristotle's criticisms; however, he also endorses the Neoplatonic identification of the separate Intellect with the totality of intelligible Forms. After having described (pp. 58-9) the Farabian hierarchy of Forms expounded in the *K. al-Siyāsa al-madaniyya*, which culminates in the highest degree named *ṣūrat al-ṣuwar* (the Form of Forms), Arnzen compares the latter with the Agent Intellect of the *Epistle on the Intellect*: "Al-Fārābī's Abhandlung über den Intellekt legt die Vermutung nahe, dass es sich bei der Form der Formen um den Aktiven Intellekt (*al-'aql al-fā'āl*) handelt. Anders als in den bisher betrachteten Werken zieht al-Fārābī dort die Möglichkeit in Erwägung, dass es transzendente Formen gibt, denen freilich eine separate Existenz nicht *qua* durch-sich-subsistierende Substanz, sondern nur *qua* *Intelligibilia* des Erworbenen Intellekts (*al-'aql al-mustafād, intellectus acquisitus*) eignet" (p. 60). This raises a problem of consistency. While in the *Epistle on the Goals of Aristotle's Metaphysics* al-Fārābī states that Aristotle in this work demonstrated the inanity of the Platonic separate Forms (*al-ṣuwar al-aflātūniyya*), in the *K. al-Siyāsa al-madaniyya* he posits the hierarchy of Forms mentioned above, whose pinnacle is the somehow obscure "Form of Forms"; finally, in the *Epistle on the Intellect* the "Form of Forms" coincides, in purely Neoplatonic vein, with the separate Intellect: "Die höchste Stufe der Formen wird nun, in der *Risāla Fī l-'aql*, mit dem Aktiven Intellekt identifiziert und explizit als transzendente Form beschrieben" (p. 61).

It is noteworthy, in itself and for the subsequent developments of Arabic-Islamic philosophy, that in the Farabian *Epistle on the Intellect* the Agent Intellect of the Peripatetic tradition bears also the hallmarks of the Plotinian divine νοῦς.²⁷ More germane to my argument here is to follow Arnzen's treatment of what prima facie seems to be an item of blatant inconsistency in al-Fārābī's thought. Arnzen is right, in my opinion, when he says that the presence of as different accounts as that of the inanity of the Platonic Forms on the one hand, and that of the hierarchy of Forms culminating in the Intellect, on the other, can be traced back to the systematic layout of a philosophical science which, as a whole, should be brought to harmony with the Muslim system of learning. As Arnzen has it, "Andererseits deutet alles darauf hin, dass mit der Form der Formen im *K. al-Siyāsa al-madaniyya* nach plotinischem Vorbild nichts anderes als der Aktive Intellekt der *Risāla Fī l-'aql* gemeint ist. Diese Inkonsistenz ist selbstverständlich al-Fārābī's Bemühen geschuldet, sowohl das aristotelische als auch das neuplatonische Erbe in eine systematische islamische Philosophie zu integrieren"

²⁷ The most important Neoplatonic feature that distinguishes the Farabian Agent Intellect from that of the Peripatetic tradition cannot be discussed here, having little to do with the issue of Platonic Forms. Suffice it to say that in Alexander of Aphrodisias' treatise *On the Intellect*, which is the main source of al-Fārābī, the Agent Intellect coincides with the First Principle itself; on the contrary, al-Fārābī keeps it as a subordinate separate substance, as it is in the Arabic Plotinus.

(p. 62). It is against this background that one should replace the extremely influential Farabian *Epistle on the Intellect*, and this Arnzen does neatly: “Darüber hinaus wird deutlich, dass al-Fārābī in der *Risāla Fi l-ʿaql* durchaus nicht nur *eine* Kategorie transzendenter Formen annimmt, die insgesamt und ausschließlich Formen im Aktiven Intellekt sind, sondern eine Vielzahl hierarchisch geordneter transzendenter Formen, die in dem Bereich zwischen dem Aktiven Intellekt und der niedrigsten transzendenten Form, dem Erworfenen Intellekt, lokalisiert werden” (p. 63). Arnzen’s idea that all this can be explained with the assumption of the unity of the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic legacy is surely true, although the basic inconsistency among the diverse accounts in al-Fārābī’s writings remains. In my opinion, the only way to dispose satisfactorily of the charge of inconsistency is to deepen the analysis in the direction indicated by Arnzen,²⁸ and raise the question to what extent the *Epistle on the Goals of Aristotle’s “Metaphysics”* contains al-Fārābī’s own thought, and to what extent it represents his account of the points made by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, to be eventually integrated with other views held elsewhere, either by ‘Aristotle’ himself (like in the *Theology*) or by his followers (like Alexander in his own writing *On Intellect*).²⁹

This leads me to a point in Arnzen’s treatment of al-Fārābī which is not entirely convincing. It is well known that the main reason why the Farabian authorship of the *Harmonization of the Two Opinions of the Two Sages, Plato the Divine and Aristotle* has been challenged in scholarship is the fact that the Neoplatonic *Theology of Aristotle* is accepted here as a genuine work by the First Teacher, while it does not feature as Aristotle’s work, let alone as his last word in metaphysics, in other writings by al-Fārābī. To this inconsistency an entire set of others has been added, in order to demonstrate that the *Harmonization* could hardly have been written by al-Fārābī, who either puts things differently in other works by him, or uses a different language, or even endorses different doctrines. It would lie beyond the scope of this review even to list the pros and cons, while it is appropriate to discuss the way in which Arnzen deals with the issue of consistency versus inconsistency. As for the authorship of the *Harmonization*, Arnzen seems to steer a middle course between those who include it in al-Fārābī’s early writings and those who take it as a forgery (p. 67); but it is striking that one additional reason in favour of pseudepigraphy he presents (p. 67, n. 216) is precisely that of the inconsistency between the views held in the *Harmonization* and in the Farabian works, this time on the issue of anamnesis. While it is perfectly legitimate to list this item among others for those scholars who believe that al-Fārābī is an entirely consistent author, it seems to me that the fact that anamnesis is dealt with differently in the *Harmonization* with respect to other writings should not prevent Arnzen, who has so satisfactorily dealt with the much more strident contrast about Forms, from including it among the works whose inner consistency he looks for, despite the contradictory statements held in them. At any rate, it is in the *Harmonization* that occurs for the first time the expression *al-ṣuwar wa-l-muṭul (aflātūniyya)*, and this, coupled with the influence of this writing on the early Avicennian understanding of

²⁸ Arnzen draws attention to the fact that in his logical works al-Fārābī completely discards the issue of Forms: “In al-Fārābī’s logischen und sprachphilosophischen Werken spielen diese transzendenten Formen keine Rolle” (p. 64), an attitude which is clearly inspired by Porphyry’s *Isagoge*. In a similar vein, in the *K. al-ḥuruf* the Platonic forms do not feature at all.

²⁹ This move might eventually lead to critically reconsider what seems to be the assumption with which part of the Farabian scholarship operates, namely that al-Fārābī is true to Aristotle as the latter is understood by us, after a multiseular effort to get near his thought *iuxta propria principia* (so to say), instead than to the late antique Aristotle, who incorporated a number of elements of other philosophical schools.

separate Forms,³⁰ raises this text to a major source for Arabic-Islamic thought in subsequent ages, no matter who the author was.

Predictably, the real turning point in Arnzen's narrative of the history of Platonic Forms in Islamic thought is Avicenna. An accurate description of the distinction between Forms and universals in Avicenna's thought, and an insightful survey of the changes in his various works, allows Arnzen to conclude that "Im Rahmen der Entwicklung dieser Lehre hat Ibn Sīnā die durch die arabischen *Neoplatonica* inspirierte und in einer frühen Schaffensperiode in Betracht gezogene Identifikation himmlischer Intellekte *qua* selbst-denkende Formen mit Platonischen Formen wieder verworfen. Nach der engültigen Etablierung seines philosophisches Systems stellte die platonische Ideenlehre für ihn keine ernsthafte philosophische Option mehr dar, sondern galt ihm lediglich noch als interessantes historisches Phänomen, das seinem Wesen nach ein dialektisches und sophistisches Problem darstellt" (p. 99).

Thus, the Platonic Forms fade out from the actual philosophical options, into a remote background where Aristotle disposed of them; they are superseded by and included within the Plotinian intelligible realm endorsed by the Neoplatonized Aristotle of the pseudo-*Theology*. In the early Avicennian writings like the *K. al-mabda' wa-l-ma'ād* the intelligible realm is the place where our soul comes from and strives to return to, but even in later writings, where the doctrines of the *Provenance and Destination* are no longer held, the Neoplatonic implications of the cosmic hierarchy beginning with the First Intellect and ending with the *dator formarum* are evident.

Another important point made by Arnzen is that of the influence of the unmistakable Neoplatonism of the *Harmonization* on post-Avicennian thought. It is from this writing that Abū l-Barakāt al-Baġdādī draws his account of the "world of the Intellect" (*'ālam al-'aql*); he says also that Plato expounds the doctrine of the "world of the Divinity" (*'ālam al-rubūbiyya*) and the hierarchically arranged worlds of Intellect and Soul: while it is certain that this ultimately derives from the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*,³¹ the intermediate source is in all likelihood the *Harmonization*. The section where Arnzen describes the attitude of the post-Avicennian authors towards the Platonic Forms (pp. 106-18) paves the way to the subsequent chapters, on Suhrawardī (pp. 119-50) and on the Eastern thinkers of the 13th and 14th centuries: Ibn Kammūna, Šams al-Dīn al-Šahrazūrī, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Širāzī (pp. 151-74). Then the anonymous treatise *On the Intelligible Platonic Forms, Risāla fī l-Muṭal al-'aqliyya al-aflātūniyya*, is analyzed (pp. 175-84) and translated (pp. 219-354). A major contribution in the field, this translation allows the reader to get acquainted with a unique piece of information. "Die anonyme *Abhandlung über die Platonischen noetischen Urbilder* is in vielerlei Hinsicht ein einzigartiges Dokument der spätmittelalterlichen post-suhrawardischen Auseinandersetzung mit den arabischen Konzepten von Platonischen Formen und Urbildern. Soweit wir wissen, handelt es sich bei ihr um die einzige umfassende monographische Erörterung dieser Konzepte aus dieser Epoche" (p. 213). One can only hope that the Author will continue his enquiry on the same subject taking into account the philosophical thought of the Muslim West.

Cristina D'Ancona

³⁰ Discussed by Arnzen at p. 93.

³¹ The pseudo-*Theology* bears as its subtitle "discourse on the Divinity (*qawl 'alā al-rubūbiyya*, p. 3.7 Badawī)"; the passage quoted above, p. 349 and n. 12, lies in the background of Abū l-Barakāt al-Baġdādī's attribution to Plato of the doctrine of the "world of Divinity".

D. Janos, *Method, Structure, and Development in al-Fārābī's Cosmology*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2012 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, 85), vii-433 pp.

This beautiful and rich book is the revised version of D. Janos' Ph.D. dissertation submitted to McGill University in February 2009. One of its merits is to synthesise the recent scholarship on al-Fārābī's metaphysics and cosmology, and its main point is to provide a new interpretation of his theories on the structure and essence of the heavenly world, in order to solve some problems of al-Fārābī's cosmological thinking. To this end, Janos analyses in depth a cluster of key cosmological and metaphysical concepts such as celestial substance, causation, intellection, and motion, paying attention to al-Fārābī's terminology and lexicon. He contextualises these concepts in the light of Ancient and late Antique Greek sources, combined with the Arabic sources examined against the background of the early Islamic intellectual milieu in which al-Fārābī flourished. Janos pays attention also to the role of the Ptolemaic astronomical theories in the Farabian philosophical system. "Al-Fārābī's exegetical approach was neither static nor monolithic, and it underwent various shifts in direction and perspective due to his dynamic understanding of the Greek works and factors emanating from his social and cultural environment" (p. 3). Following this textual and contextual approach, the thesis of this book is that al-Fārābī's cosmology underwent a clear evolution which falls into two main periods, characterised by his shifting from a creationist position to an eternalist one. I will discuss this assumption later.

After a concise introduction (pp. 1-9), the opening chapter, *Cosmology, the Sciences, and the Scientific Method* (pp. 11-113), places al-Fārābī in context and makes the networks of different scientific and philosophical traditions alive with respect to which he formulated his own cosmology (pp. 11-43). According to Janos, al-Fārābī inherited a dual cosmological tradition – one from the Ptolemaic astronomical treatises and one from the Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophical writings – which is testified first of all by his commentatorial and writing activities. Concerning the cosmological tradition inherited from the Ptolemaic astronomical treatises, Janos analyses the attribution to al-Fārābī of a commentary on the *Almagest*. He calls attention to the elements which al-Fārābī derives directly from the Ptolemaic texts or through the intermediary of Arabic authors and which feature in his own works, like the arrangement and order of the planets, the description of the various motions of the orbs, and the endorsement of the epicycles and eccentrics.

Concerning the philosophical tradition, it is well known that al-Fārābī's commentaries on the Aristotelian physical treatises are unfortunately lost; for this reason, even if the ancient sources make it plausible that al-Fārābī read several late Antique commentaries on Aristotle, we cannot judge with certainty the degree of his reliance on these works. In addition, many of his works in the field of physics and cosmology are lost too, except for parts of *On Changing Beings* (*Fī l-Maw ḡūdāt al-mutaḡayyira*) and the treatise *Against Philoponus* (*al-Radd' alā Yahyā al-Nahwī*), a treatise too long underestimated which has been recently considered as a key text for the understanding of al-Fārābī's argumentative strategies.

Notwithstanding this, Janos proceeds to reconstruct al-Fārābī's cosmology, starting from his emanationist treatises – the *Perfect State* (*Mabādī' āra' ahl al-madīna al-fāḡila*) and the *Principles of Beings* (*Al-siyāsa al-madaniyya* or *Mabādī' al-maw ḡūdāt*) –, but taking into account also several other works, as for example the *Book of Music* (*Kitāb al-Mūsīqā al-kabīr*) and the *Demonstration* (*Kitāb al-Burhān*) which, although not devoted to cosmological issues, contain interesting material. Janos takes into account also two astrological treatises which shed light on al-Fārābī's refutation of some aspects of astrology, thus helping to redefine the borders between astronomy and astrology: *On the Utility of the Sciences and the Crafts* (*Risāla fī Faḡilat al-'ulūm wa-l-ṣinā'āt* or *Maḡāla fī Mā yaṣiḡḡū wa-lā yaṣiḡḡū min aḡkām al-nu ḡūm*) and *On the Aspects in which Belief in Astrology is Valid* (*Maḡāla fī ḡihati allatī yaṣiḡḡū 'alayhā l-qawl fī aḡkām al-nu ḡūm*). Finally, Janos presents three other topics which are

important in al-Fārābī's cosmology: his reaction to the traditional Islamic cosmology, his attitude towards the previous Arabic philosophical tradition represented by al-Kindī and Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, and his knowledge of the Arabic astronomical tradition with its new emphasis on observation.¹

In the second part of Chapter 1 (pp. 43-84) Janos presents a careful survey of al-Fārābī's sources. More precisely, he deals with "al-Fārābī's conception of the method and epistemic foundations of astronomy, on how it may benefit the philosophical enterprise, and on how it relates to the other philosophical sciences, particularly physics and metaphysics" (pp. 43-4). According to al-Fārābī, physics studies the realm of corporeal beings, not only sublunary hylomorphic beings, but also "the heavenly bodies, that is, the orbs, stars, and planets" (p. 66). Hence, physics studies different aspect of the same subject matter of astronomy and it is from physics that astronomy derives some of its principles.² But it is metaphysics which provides the knowledge of the ultimate causes of celestial bodies, as well as the definition of their true substance: in other words, metaphysics has the primacy in the cosmological inquiry. Nevertheless, "al-Fārābī regards the relation among astronomy, physics, and metaphysics as reciprocal, rather than unilateral (...). Astronomy depends on metaphysics and physics for some of its principles, but it can in return contribute to these sciences by providing them with knowledge of certain existents with which physics and metaphysics also deal. These existents chiefly consist of the planets and orbs, and an example might be the discovery of new stars through astronomical observation, as well as the calculation of their distances, sizes, etc. In this manner, astronomy can contribute to one's knowledge of the existents subsumed under a certain genus, which may be of value to metaphysics as well. On the other hand, astronomy will not be able to explain why this particular star exists, a question which requires an aetiological account that transcends the astronomical discipline. But more significantly, astronomy may also shed light on metaphysical beings such as the separate intellects, and particularly on the question of their number. This statement might appear most surprising at first glance, given that immaterial existents do not fall within the subject matter of astronomy. Yet according to al-Fārābī and later Ibn Sīnā, who follow Aristotle directly on this point,³ the question of the number of the separate intellects or unmoved movers hinges to some extent on the number of orbs identified by the astronomical discipline" (pp. 78-9).

Finally, the last part of Chapter 1 (pp. 84-113) deals with the problem of the human capacity to know superlunary phenomena. Al-Fārābī states that human beings are predisposed to get knowledge of the heavens and that "the 'first intelligibles' that lead to such knowledge are commonly shared by all humans" (p. 91). Al-Fārābī writes, "these things can be known in two ways: either by being impressed on their souls as they really are or by being impressed on them through affinity and symbolic representation. (...) The philosophers in the city are those who know these things through demonstrations and their own insight".⁴ Hence, demonstration is the proper method of cosmological inquiry. But if demonstration is

¹ Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Mūsīqā l-kabīr*, ed. 'A.Ḥ. Ḡaṭṭās, Dār al-Katib al-'Arabī li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Naṣr, al-Qāhira 1960, p. 101, English translation by Janos, p. 58: "many of the principles of astronomy are acquired through observations by means of instruments".

² Janos (pp. 70-1) observes a striking parallel between al-Fārābī's conception of the importance of natural philosophy in astronomy and the *Introduction to the Phenomena and Concise Exposition of the Meteorology of Poseidonios* by the Stoic philosopher Geminus. Janos refers to R. Todd, "Geminus", in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques*, CNRS-Éd., III, Paris 2000, pp. 472-7. According to Todd (p. 473), both the Hebrew and the Latin translations of Geminus' *Introduction to the Phenomena* have been made from Arabic; hence, some of Geminus' works were available in Arabic at least in part.

³ Arist., *Metaph.* XII 8, 1073 b 1-1074 a 17.

⁴ R. Walzer, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Mabādi' āra' abl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, A Revised Text with Introduction, Translation and Commentary, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1985, pp. 277-9 and 146-7; English translation revised by Janos, p. 91.

the proper method for cosmology, why does the *Perfect State and the Principles of Beings* lack extensive demonstrative proofs? According to Janos, in al-Fārābī the belief in demonstration in the study of celestial bodies (as expressed in the passage above) coexists with the idea that the human inquiry into metaphysical knowledge is limited, and especially that into God, because of divine transcendence. To overcome the limits of our metaphysical knowledge, al-Fārābī proposes the use of comparison, analogy, and ‘transference’ (*naqla*) to which Janos devotes the last pages of Chapter 1.

In Chapter 2, *The Architecture of the Heavens: Intellects, Souls, and Orbs* (pp. 115-202), Janos reconstructs the basic structure of al-Fārābī’s hierarchical model of the cosmos as expounded in the “emanationist” treatises (the *Perfect State* and the *Principles of Beings*), discussing also the various physical and immaterial entities that constitute it. Janos’ analysis begins with the celestial bodies of the visible heavens – orbs, planets and stars – which al-Fārābī distinguishes conceptually, even though he does not stick to a consistent terminology. According to al-Fārābī, who follows in Aristotle’s footsteps, the celestial bodies are a sort of bodies in which each one is a unique individual in its species. Every celestial body is characterized by spherical shape, luminosity and continuous circular motion around the earth. Orbs, planets and stars consist of two principles: soul, acting like the form in the sublunary bodies, and substrate, acting like the matter. In the “emanationist” treatises, al-Fārābī omits any reference to a simple celestial matter. Concerning the spatial arrangement of the celestial bodies, Janos has the following account: “According to al-Fārābī, the heavens are divided into what he calls “groups” (sing. *jumla*, plur. *jumal*) (...). Al-Fārābī establishes a hierarchy among the various cosmic groups, and the orbs are organized in ranks (*marātib*) in a descending order of excellence. There are in total nine *jumal*, which correspond to the nine main celestial orbs inherited from Ptolemaic astronomy. The farthest, outermost orb, also called ‘the first heaven’ (*al-samā’ l-ūlā*) and ‘the first body’ (*al-jism al-awwal*), is a starless and planetless orb, which is nobler in rank than the other orbs, due to its essential proximity to the first separate intellect. This first orb surrounds all the other orbs and causes the daily rotation of the heavens from east to west. Below it is ‘the orb of the fixed stars’ (*kurat al-kawākib al-thābitah*), which is characterized by its dual motion – one being the motion of the outermost orb, the other a retrograde motion from west to east called precession – and by the fact that the stars are ‘fixed’ in their orb and hence do not change position *vis-à-vis* one another. Next are the orbs of the seven planets, whose descending order according to al-Fārābī is as follows: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury, and the moon. The orb of the moon is thus the last orb, which is closest to the earth, and whose concave surface marks the separation between the sublunary world and the heavens proper” (pp. 120-1). Then, Janos raises the question whether the nine celestial groups mentioned by al-Fārābī consist of one orb (as frequently alleged in the secondary literature) or several orbs: in other words, he wonders whether al-Fārābī’s planetary model presents an Aristotelian system of homocentric orbs, or echoes the Ptolemaic planetary devices of the eccentrics and epicycles, interpreted by al-Fārābī as corporeal entities. Janos points out that in the *Perfect State* al-Fārābī gives a simplified cosmological model, but that in the Farabian corpus many hints suggest a more complex theory: his knowledge of Ptolemy’s *Almagest* on which he is credited with a commentary and some textual references on eccentrics and epicycles, more or less obscure, which are listed and commented upon (pp. 123-5).

Celestial souls constitute part of the substance of celestial bodies; they do not exist separately from the orbs, but they are part of them and are compared to forms.⁵ Despite the fact that the souls are

⁵ Janos, pp. 177-80, discusses the problem of the separability of the form according to al-Fārābī. On the Neoplatonic background see C. D’Ancona, “Separation and the Forms. A Plotinian Approach”, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1997), pp. 367-403.

something existing in a substrate, they contemplate the higher principles and this activity makes them actual intellects. Unlike al-Kindī, al-Fārābī limits the activity of the celestial souls to a continuous, simultaneous and non-discursive intellection, without granting them sensation and imagination. The celestial souls have for him three simultaneous objects of thought: God, their proximate efficient and final cause – i.e. each different separate intellect which causes the existence of each celestial soul –, and their own essence. Janos insists on this threefold intellection of the celestial souls and suggests that the source of inspiration to al-Fārābī was proposition 3 of the *K. al-Mahḍ al-ḥayr*, an interesting suggestion on which one regrets that he does not elaborate, and which remains not entirely clear (pp. 138-42).

Above the celestial souls there are the separate intellects, ten in number, hierarchically ordered from the First according to their essential priority and posteriority. Janos specifies that these ten intellects are in turn divided into two categories with different characteristics and different functions: the first nine separate intellects (*al-ṭawānī*) and the Agent Intellect (*al-'aql al-fā'āl*). The first nine intellects are called “second” with respect to the First Cause, God, and they are secondary causes of the existence of the celestial bodies: their twofold intellection, i.e. the intellection of the First and that of their own essence, produces another intellect and an orb together with its soul, i.e. a ‘planetary system’. Hence, there are nine intellects which correspond to the nine celestial orbs, and one Agent Intellect which governs the sublunary world. Janos provides a fairly accurate description of the nine separate intellects, pointing to the hints that al-Fārābī may have found in *Metaphysics Lambda* and in its Greek commentators, especially Alexander and Simplicius,⁶ so that he came to formulate “the simplified cosmological structure of nine main orbs, the doctrine of the ensoulment of the heavens, the existence of a plurality of separate intellects responsible for causing their motion, and the attempt to reconcile Ptolemaic kinematic theories with physical and metaphysical ideas” (p. 167). Concerning the Agent Intellect, Janos emphasises its difference with respect to the nine separate intellects, a difference which arises from its being less simple if compared with them. It has, in fact, a threefold intellection: the First, all the nine separate intellects (*al-ṭawānī*) in one sweep, and its own essence.

Above the separate intellects there is the highest metaphysical entity, God. It is the First, because of its essential priority in existence. The First is one: a simple eternal substance which is constantly engaged in the act of contemplating its own essence. It is the First Cause, because of its causing the lower effects. Its mode of production of the universe is an issue at stake in contemporary scholarship on al-Fārābī: does God create the whole world *ex nihilo* all at once, or He is the cause only of one single effect, the first separate intellect?⁷ Before approaching this crucial question, Janos ends this chapter with an interesting analysis of the ontological hierarchical continuum of al-Fārābī’s cosmology from the First to the sublunary world in terms of unity and multiplicity, intellection and causality. On the one hand, intellection is the act that necessary leads to the production of similar, albeit inferior, effect; on the

⁶ Janos is aware (p. 157 and note 136 at p. 158) of the fact that Simplicius’ commentary on Aristotle’s *De Caelo* was, as far as we know, not translated into Arabic; however, he considers it to be “a promising source for understanding the philosophical roots of al-Fārābī’s cosmology”, pointing to the elements in Simplicius’ cosmology which anticipate al-Fārābī’s thought: the attempt to reconcile some aspects of the Ptolemaic astronomy with Aristotle’s cosmology, a system of eight, with some hint for a ninth starless orb beyond that of the fixed stars, the hypothetical assumption in Simplicius of a separate mover to each main orb. It seems to me that, given the absence of any direct source, such parallels are by much general; the conclusion (p. 160) that “The astronomical and metaphysical parallels outlined above strongly suggest the possibility that al-Fārābī was acquainted with the works of thinkers from Ammonian school, especially with Simplicius, who was one of its outstanding members” remains speculative.

⁷ On the Neoplatonic background of this theory with a special focus on Avicenna, one can see C. D’Ancona, “*Ex uno non fit nisi unum*. Storia e preistoria della dottrina avicenniana della Prima Intelligenza”, in E. Canone (ed.), *Per una storia del concetto di mente*, II, Olschki, Firenze 2007 (Lessico intellettuale europeo, 103), pp. 29-55.

other, it is also what enables the cosmic existents to actualize their essence and to seek the attainment of their perfection by reverting toward the prior principles. Hence, this causality is characterized by a dual orientation: a downward one (efficient causality), and an upward one (final causality), which is used to explain both the existence of the celestial entities and the perfectibility of their existence.⁸

Chapter 3, “Matter and Creation: A Shift in Paradigms?” (p. 203-32) surveys the scattered evidence on celestial matter within the debate about the creation of the world that can be found in al-Fārābī’s *corpus* and in the indirect tradition of al-Fārābī’s works, with the aim of reconstructing his views on this important cosmological question. Janos mentions the captivating hypothesis of an evolution in al-Fārābī’s thought suggested by G. Endress⁹ and uses it to explain al-Fārābī’s evolution from an Aristotelian account of the celestial substance as it appears in the *Enumeration of the Sciences* (*Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿulūm*) – where al-Fārābī refers unambiguously to the heavens as being material – to the *Perfect State*, where he denies matter to the heavens. In this work the heavens are described as a compound of form (*ṣūra*) and substrate (*mawḍūʿ*) of a special kind: the substrate resembles matter, and each celestial body can receive only a unique form: its soul. Janos states that “al-Fārābī was positively influenced by the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius, which provided him with next exegetical possibilities on the question of celestial matter”¹⁰ (p. 222), and by Philoponus’s criticism to Aristotle’s theory of aether; second, Aristotle’s aether was difficult to reconcile with the Ptolemaic theories of celestial motion; all this suggests that al-Fārābī developed to a progressive depreciation of matter.

In the second part of this chapter Janos tries to extend the developmentalist hypothesis of al-Fārābī’s thought to the question of creation versus eternal causation. “As it stands today, the Fārābīan corpus adopts two ‘paradigmatic’ interpretations concerning the origin of the material world. The first is based on the concepts of absolute creation out of nothing and on the world’s temporal finitude; the second, on the concepts of atemporal causation and the eternity of the physical universe. I use the word ‘paradigm’ in order to stress the pre-existent conceptual framework these interpretations imply, as well as to emphasize the fact that they are mutually irreconcilable and rely on fundamentally different premises” (p. 235). Some scholars¹¹ have explained this apparent contradiction by questioning al-Fārābī’s authorship of the *Harmony of Plato and Aristotle* (*Kitāb al-Ġamʿ bayna raʾyay al-ḥakīmāyyn Aflāṭūn al-ilāhī wa Aristūṭālīs*) and of *Answers to questions* (*Ġawābāt li-masāʾil suʾilāʾ anḥā*), where al-Fārābī refers to a creationist position. This is premature, having regard to “the cumulative evidence supporting their authenticity” (p. 239). However, Janos rejects the method that he calls ‘comparative’,¹² according to which the authenticity of

⁸ On the relation between the notion of assimilation to the First Principle and that of final causality see C. Martini Bonadeo, “ΩΣ ΕΡΩΜΕΝΟΝ: alcune interpretazioni di *Metaph. A 7*”, in V. Celluprica - C. D’Ancona (eds), *Aristotele e i suoi esegeti neoplatonici. Logica ed ontologia nelle interpretazioni greche e arabe. Atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, 19-20 ottobre 2001*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2004 (Elenchos. Collana di testi e studi sul pensiero antico, 40), pp. 209-43.

⁹ C. Martini-Bonadeo, *Al-Fārābī, L’armonia delle opinioni dei due saggi, il divino Platone e Aristotele*, Introduzione, testo arabo, traduzione e commento, prefazione di G. Endress, PLUS, Pisa 2008 (Greco, arabo, latino. Le vie del sapere, 3), pp. x-xi.

¹⁰ Obviously, Alexander’s commentary is lost, as it also the paraphrase by Themistius which is extant only in Hebrew and Latin. Cf. in this volume E. Coda, “Reconstructing the Text of Themistius’ Paraphrase of the *De Caelo*”, in part. pp. 4-5.

¹¹ J. Lameer, *Alfarabi and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek Theory and Islamic Practice*, Brill, Leiden 1994 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, 20); M. Rashed, “Al-Fārābī’s Lost Treatise On Changing Beings and the Possibility of a Demonstration of the Eternity of the World”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 18 (2008), pp. 19-58; Id., “On the Authorship of the Treatise *On the Harmonization of the Opinions of the Two Sages* Attributed to al-Fārābī”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 19 (2009), pp. 43-82.

¹² Followed by D. Mallet in Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *L’harmonie entre les opinions de Platon et d’Aristote. Texte arabe et Traduction*, éd. F.M. Nağğar - D.xMallet, Institut Français de Damas, Damas 1999; by G. Endress and myself in

the *Harmony of Plato and Aristotle* can be decided solely on the basis of how the particular doctrines of the *Harmony* compare to those of other Farabian works. In sum, he maintains that the explanatory potential of the developmentalist hypothesis extended to al-Fārābī's theory on creation/eternal causation is superior, given that it takes into account other important factors: chronology, intention, context.

According to this developmentalist hypothesis, during the "early Baghdad phase" (p. 261) to which belong the *Harmony of Plato and Aristotle*, the *Answers to questions*, and the treatise *Against Philoponus*¹³ al-Fārābī holds a creationist view of the universe and time out of nothing, and follows al-Kindī's harmonizing project; he has access to al-Kindī's 'metaphysics file',¹⁴ where the book *Lambda* is combined with the *Theology of Aristotle*. The *Enumeration of the Sciences* is modelled closely on the *Harmony* in phrasing, content and outlook; in it, as in the *The Aims of the Metaphysics* (*Fī aḡrād mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a*), al-Fārābī describes God as the only efficient cause of the universe, even though he posits a multiplicity of immaterial beings between God and the world. Hence these two works would represent a "later stage of al-Fārābī's creationist" (p. 265).¹⁵ Finally, during al-Fārābī's "late Baghdad and wandering phase" (p. 326) to Syria and Egypt, he reaches his final position, eternalism – in particular in the *Perfect State* and the *Principles of Beings*. In his mature works the First is the eternal cause of an atemporal – beyond eternity? – act of emanation of one single immaterial being, the first Intellect. In turn, all the nine separate intellects (*al-ṭawānī*) are the efficient causes of celestial bodies; the latter are the causes of the continuous existence of prime matter due to which all the generations and corruptions occur in the sublunary world. In presenting the nature and role of the nine separate intellects al-Fārābī is, according to Janos, deeply indebted to Proclus and even to Syrianus.¹⁶ To these separate substances a

Al-Fārābī, *L'armonia delle opinioni dei due saggi Platone il divino e Aristotele*; by C. D'Ancona, "The Origins of Islamic Philosophy", in L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge U. P., Cambridge 2010, II, pp. 869-94.

¹³ Janos follows a non-eternalist interpretation of this important writing; in the same vein, see my *Al-Fārābī, L'armonia delle opinioni dei due saggi Platone il divino e Aristotele*, pp. 190-3.

¹⁴ On the fortune of al-Kindī's 'metaphysics file' in the Muslim East after Avicenna, through the mediation of al-Fārābī, see C. Martini Bonadeo, 'Abd al-Latīf al-Baḡdādī's Philosophical Journey. From Aristotle's Metaphysics to the 'Metaphysical Science'', Brill, Leiden - Boston 2013 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Textes and Studies, 88).

¹⁵ In Janos's view, the absence/presence of several immaterial beings after the First is one of the most important doctrinal elements for demonstrating al-Fārābī's progressive removal from his creationist stage to his most mature eternalist thought. For this reason he maintains that the *Enumeration of the Sciences*, where this multiplicity is introduced, comes after the *Harmony* with its scattered references to the "corporeal and spiritual parts of the world" (p. 246; cf. Martini Bonadeo, p. 65). I am not sure that the relative chronology of these two writings can be easily established. First, the reference of the *Harmony* comes after the following passage: "He then explains that the true one is what provides oneness to all the rest of the existing things. Then he explains that the multiple is by all means after the one and that the one precedes the multiple. He then explains that every multiplicity that approaches the true one is less multiple than what is at distance from it and *vice versa*" (Alfarabi, *The Harmonization of the Two Opinions of the Two Sages: Plato the Divine and Aristotle*, in Alfarabi, *The Political Writings. Selected Aphorisms and Other Texts*, translated and annotated by Ch. Butterworth, Cornell U. P., Ithaca - London 2001, p. 156). In this passage al-Fārābī links the degree of multiplicity to the degree of approximation to the True One, in precisely the same way as, in the *Enumeration of the Sciences*, he links the degree of multiplicity to the degree of approximation to the perfection of the First. Second, in the *Harmony* al-Fārābī's intention is less to advance his own opinion than to present Aristotle's doctrine, and to ensure its harmony with that of Plato. Therefore, in the *Harmony* al-Fārābī would never have spoken clearly of the intermediate causes between God and the cosmos, as he does in the *Enumeration of the Sciences* (cf. Janos, pp. 246-7).

¹⁶ Janos suggests that Syrianus's commentary on *Metaphysics* may have contributed to shaping al-Fārābī's theory of the separate intellects and gives some examples from Syrianus's passages about books M and N. This deserves a note of caution, in my opinion: in the *Fihrist* only Book B of Syrianus' commentary is mentioned: Ibn al-Nadīm refers that he saw it in Yahyā ibn 'Adī's list of writings. I think that once again, as for Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *On Heavens*, this does not license the conclusion that "it is hardly surprising to find a continuous line of thought on this subject from him (i.e. Syrianus) to his disciple Proclus, through the Arabic translators and adaptors, to al-Fārābī himself" (p. 300).

complete demiurgic autonomy is granted: they are the efficient causes of existence no less than the First, even if they tend in a reversion movement to the First as to their own final cause. Janos adds a note of caution about the separate intellects' demiurgic autonomy, when he states: "the existence of each one of them is dependent on a higher cause" (p. 303) or again: "It is their sustained contemplation of the First, which is their main object of intellection, which enables them to exist and subsist actually qua intellectual beings, and in that sense their subsistence directly depends on It" (p. 297, n. 232).

Janos locates the *Epistle on the Intellect* (*Risāla fī 'aql*) in the third, eternalist phase of al-Fārābī's thought and underlines a passage in which we are told that every celestial body is moved by a mover (*muharrrik*) which is neither a body nor in a body, and which is the cause of the existence of the celestial body (*fa-innahū huwa sabab fī wuġūdihi*) inasmuch as it is that by virtue of which the celestial body is a substance.¹⁷ According to Janos, "this proves that this treatise goes beyond the Aristotelian cosmology exposed in Book *Lambda* in attributing efficient causality to each unmoved mover" (p. 288). Even if I agree that the *Epistle on the Intellect* goes beyond the Aristotelian cosmology, I would like to observe that a few lines later we find a statement which is clearly different from the emanationist theories held in the treatises where al-Fārābī ascribes matter to the heavens: "However, the mover of the first heaven is a principle by virtue of which two distinct things exist. One is what constitutes the substance of the first heaven, namely a corporeal substance (*ġawhar ġusmānī*) or something corporeal (*mutaġassim*). The other is the mover of the sphere of fixed stars, namely, that which itself is neither a body nor in a body. [Now, since the mover of the first heaven is a principle of two distinct things], it cannot produce both things in a single way and by a single thing in itself by virtue of which it is a substance. On the contrary, it [must produce them] by two natures, one of which is more perfect than the other, since the nature by which it produces the more perfect thing – that is, the one that is not a body nor in a body – is more perfect than the nature by which it produces a corporeal thing (*mā huwa ġusmānī*), that is, the one that is less perfect".¹⁸ In this passage the materiality of the heavens is not a matter of analogical language.

Janos himself has a caveat on this and underlines that "al-Fārābī's account of causality with respect to the First is undermined by ambiguity" (p. 292; cf. also p. 180): on the one hand, in the *Perfect State* al-Fārābī states that "the First is that from which existence is brought about (*'anhu wuġida*)",¹⁹ that "the substance of the First is a substance from which every existent emanates (*yafidu 'anhu*)",²⁰ and that "the substance of the First is also such that when the existents are derived, they are necessarily united and connected with one another".²¹ There are many other passages where the First is described as the first cause of the existence of all things. On the other hand, al-Fārābī elsewhere seems to limit the First to cause only one effect, the first separate Intellect.²²

Although the developmentalist hypothesis is fascinating, it should not be taken to extremes. There is still room for a more nuanced hypothesis: a progressive evolution of thought – according to the most standard intellectual biography of any other ancient or modern philosopher active for many decades – by an author who nevertheless remains not completely systematic, as evidenced by his statements in the *Perfect City*, probably because of the amount of exegetical material of the Greek tradition in Arabic translation which he gradually came to know and tried to systematize,

¹⁷ Al-Fārābī, *Risāla fī l-'aql*, ed. M. Bouyges, Imprimerie Catholique, Beyrouth 1938, p. 34.4-5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 34.8-35.3; English trans. in J. McGinnis - D. C. Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, Hackett Publishing Co., Indianapolis IN 2007, p. 77.

¹⁹ Al-Fārābī, *Mabādī 'arā' abl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, p. 88.11 Walzer.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94.7 Walzer.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.9 Walzer.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 100.11 Walzer.

and because of the gradual maturing of his independent thinking into its definitive form. Al-Fārābī's unsystematic aspects and the theory of his evolution are obviously not in conflict with each other.

Chapter 4, *The Aporia of the Celestial Motion*, attempts to reconstruct al-Fārābī's theory of celestial motion and describes how the Aristotelian, Neoplatonic and Ptolemaic theories interact in his theory, on the basis of the rare passages dealing with this question in his surviving works. Unfortunately, works such as the commentaries on *The Heavens*, on *Almagest*, his *Book of Stars* (*Kitāb al-nuġūm*) and *Book on the Eternal Movement of the Sphere* (*Kitāb fī anna ḥarakat al-falak sarmadiyya*) are lost. Janos has recourse also to the testimonies about al-Fārābī's cosmological doctrines that can be extracted from Ibn Sinā's treatises. It is evident that al-Fārābī's account is indebted to Ptolemy: "According to al-Fārābī, all the heavenly bodies are characterized by circular motion, the most perfect type of motion. To begin with, the ninth, outermost orb, also called the first heaven (*al-samā l-ūlā*) and the first body (*al-ġism al-awwal*), possesses a single and regular westward motion that elapses in a day and a night and that marks a complete revolution of the heaven on itself. The 'first' motion is imparted by the ninth orb to all the other orbs that are contained in it, with the result that the heaven as a whole has a common circular movement from east and west. However, these orbs and spheres also have their own particular motions. The orb of the fixed stars shares the motion of the outermost orb and also possesses a second, eastward motion proper to it, the precession. As for the other seven main planetary orbs below the orb of the fixed stars, they also participate in the general westward motion of the ninth orb, but in addition possess other particular easterly motions that distinguish them. It is these particular motions that explain the unique trajectories of the wandering planets in the firmament, namely, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury, in addition to the sun and moon" (pp. 336-7). However, the fact that each celestial body has a multiplicity of movements and a velocity specific to it depends upon the soul, intellect, inclination, matter or whatever? Janos advances a hypothetical reconstruction of al-Fārābī's view on this problem. On the basis of the emanationist treatises each celestial body, i.e. each planetary system, has a rational soul, which probably ensouled the planet of that system. In the case of the outermost orb and of the orb of the fixed stars, which are planetless, the orbs themselves are ensouled. Each rational soul allows the celestial body to contemplate its separate intellect and, since the separate intellects are described in the *Epistle on the Intellect* as movers, one may conclude that the ten separate intellects act as final causes of motion for the orbs by being each an eternal object of thought. The First too is an object of thought for the celestial souls and, on the model of the First Unmoved Mover of Aristotle's *Metaphysics Lambda*, it imparts motion as an object of love, namely as a final cause. On the other hand, from the attempt to imitate the perfection of its principles, each rational soul emanates powers (*quwan*), as in Ptolemy's *Planetary Hypotheses*, to the various corporal devices of a planetary system and in this way causes the particular motions of each planetary system. In spite of its conjectural nature, this reconstruction deserves to be taken into account for further studies. Janos' study ends with a comprehensive bibliography, an index of ancient names and terms, and two appendices. One is devoted to cosmology and the disputed question of the authorship of the three treatises *Book of Remarks* (*Kitāb al-tā liqāt*), *Fontes Quaestionum* (*'Uyūn al-masā'il*), *The Claim of the Heart* (*Al-dā āwā l-qalbiyyah*), which Janos judges spurious on the basis of their cosmological accounts. The second appendix deals with the ubiquitous concept of 'substantialisation' (*taġawhur*), which al-Fārābī uses both about the superlunary and the sublunary worlds and which he refers to the human soul, the celestial bodies, the separate intellects, and the First Principle itself.

Janos' book fills a gap in the scholarship and opens new perspectives for further studies. It shows that al-Fārābī has important things to say, and that he is a figure with whom we should engage intellectually in the present.

Cecilia Martini Bonadeo

A Philosophy Reader from the Circle of Miskawayh edited and translated by E. Wakelnig, Cambridge U. P., Cambridge 2014, 524 pp.

Elvira Wakelnig offre in questo bel volume l'edizione integrale del manoscritto Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Marsh* 539, unico testimone sinora conosciuto di una fonte molto importante per la storia della filosofia araba, ma anonima e mutila dell'inizio. Si tratta di una raccolta dossografica, di grande rilievo per conoscere i testi che hanno orientato l'attività filosofica nel mondo islamico orientale a partire dal XI s.

Il primo studioso a portare l'attenzione su questo manoscritto è stato Franz Rosenthal in un celebre studio del 1940 sulla conoscenza di Platone nel mondo arabo: Rosenthal se ne è occupato diffusamente perché il manoscritto contiene alcune citazioni tratte dalle *Leggi* e le prove platoniche dell'immortalità dell'anima.¹ In uno studio successivo, Rosenthal ha individuato numerosi estratti dal "Plotino arabo" attribuiti a un "Sapiente Greco" e ha dimostrato che essi appartengono allo stesso corpus dal quale è stata tratta la pseudo-*Teologia di Aristotele*.²

Il volume di E. Wakelnig contiene uno studio approfondito dell'intero manoscritto. Una visione d'insieme era stata fornita anche da E. Cottrell, che aveva posto la questione della natura dell'opera da esso trasmessa e ne aveva fornito una descrizione generale e una tavola dei contenuti.³ Ad una lunga introduzione (pp. 1-62), nella quale E. Wakelnig descrive il manoscritto, delinea il contesto nel quale è stata prodotta questa antologia di testi filosofici e fornisce una dettagliata tavola dei contenuti, segue l'edizione del testo arabo e la traduzione inglese a fronte (pp. 63-339). Al commento analitico dell'opera sono dedicate le pp. 341-479. Segue un'appendice (pp. 481-7) che contiene alcuni estratti del *Kitāb fī Manāfi al-á-dā*, traduzione araba del *De Usu partium* di Galeno.⁴ Quest'opera è una delle fonti utilizzate dall'anonimo autore della compilazione; ma poiché, eccetto che per il XVI libro,⁵ la traduzione araba del *De Usu partium* è ancora inedita, E. Wakelnig presenta il testo arabo e la traduzione inglese dei passi dello scritto di Galeno che il compilatore ha utilizzato per la sua antologia. Infine, il volume presenta una ricca e aggiornata bibliografia (pp. 489-510).

Nel commento al testo E. Wakelnig individua ventidue fonti certe, che elenca e sulle quali fornisce informazioni anche nell'introduzione (pp. 17-41). Per ognuna viene indicata l'edizione del testo

¹ F. Rosenthal, "On the Knowledge of Plato's Philosophy in the Islamic World", *Islamic Culture* 14 (1940), pp. 387-422, rist. in *Greek Philosophy in the Arab World. A Collection of Essays*, Variorum, Aldershot-Brookfield 1990.

² F. Rosenthal, "Aš-Šayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source", *Orientalia* 21 (1952), pp. 461-92; 22 (1953), pp. 370-400; 24 (1955), pp. 42-66; rist. in *Greek Philosophy in the Arab World*.

³ E. Cottrell, "L'Anonyme d'Oxford (Bodleian Or. *Marsh* 539): bibliothèque ou commentaire?", in C. D'Ancona (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, Proceedings of the Meeting of the European Science Foundation Network "Late Antiquity and Arabic Thought", Brill, Leiden 2007 (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 107), pp. 415-41.

⁴ *De Usu partium libri XVII* ad codicum fidem recensuit G. Helmreich, Teubner, Lipsiae 1907-1909. In quest'opera, Galeno cerca di dimostrare l'adeguatezza della struttura corporea dell'uomo alla sua natura di animale razionale. I primi due libri contengono una descrizione minuziosa della mano; il terzo, del piede e della gamba; il quarto e il quinto sono dedicati agli organi della nutrizione; il sesto e il settimo a quelli della respirazione; l'ottavo e il nono si occupano del cranio e degli organi di senso; il decimo, della vista; l'undicesimo, della faccia; il dodicesimo, delle parti comuni a faccia e collo; il tredicesimo, della colonna vertebrale; il quattordicesimo e il quindicesimo analizzano gli organi genitali; il sedicesimo è dedicato a vene, arterie e nervi; il diciassettesimo, infine, espone i principi generali della fisiologia e della filosofia galenica. Della traduzione araba di questo trattato parla Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (m. 911) nella *Lettera* sulle traduzioni delle opere di Galeno: G. Bergsträsser, "Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen", *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 17, Bd. 2 (1925); testo arabo pp. 27.13-28.15, trad. tedesca pp. 22-3.

⁵ E. Savage-Smith, *Galen on Nerves, Veins, and Arteries: A Critical Edition and Translation from the Arabic*, with notes, glossary, and an introductory essay, PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison 1969, Ann Arbor Univ. Microfilms, 1975.

greco (se si tratta di una traduzione araba di un testo greco), l'edizione del testo arabo, se esistente, e la lista dei manoscritti delle opere ancora inedite. Le indicazioni fornite sono estremamente puntuali, così come il commento al testo.

Secondo E. Wakelnig, è molto probabile che il compilatore facesse parte del circolo di Miskawayh⁶ (p. 7). Diversi elementi vanno in questa direzione: innanzitutto, Miskawayh è l'unico autore ad essere citato per nome più di una volta e tutti gli altri autori arabi che vengono citati sono o suoi predecessori, o suoi contemporanei; inoltre, un quinto del materiale presente nel manoscritto proviene da opere di Miskawayh; infine, molti dei materiali in esso contenuti sono direttamente collegati alle discussioni filosofiche che Miskawayh svolge nelle proprie opere. Tutti i passi attribuiti esplicitamente a Miskawayh derivano dal *Kitāb al-Fawz al-ašgar*.⁷ La versione alla quale il compilatore ha attinto non è però quella nella quale il *Fawz* è giunto sino a noi (p. 31). E. Wakelnig aveva già affrontato la questione in un articolo preparatorio,⁸ nel quale, mettendo a confronto il materiale tratto dal *Fawz* contenuto nel manoscritto di Oxford con il medesimo materiale contenuto in un anonimo *Kitāb al-ḥikma* conservato nel manoscritto Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, *Esad Efendi* 1933, ff. 56v1-78v15, l'autrice ha ipotizzato che esistesse una versione differente del *Fawz*, dalla quale avrebbero attinto sia l'autore della compilazione conservata nel manoscritto di Oxford che quello del *Kitāb al-ḥikma*. Le citazioni tratte dal *Fawz*, infatti, corrispondono letteralmente nelle due opere, ma sono diverse dal *Fawz* edito.⁹

Dal *Fawz* deriva anche la discussione delle prove platoniche dell'immortalità dell'anima contenuta nei ff. 52v7 - 54r5 del manoscritto di Oxford (pp. 166-71). Nel commento su questa sezione dell'opera, E. Wakelnig spiega che "the proofs for the immortality of the soul are taken from Miskawayh who, in turn, rephrases some Arabic version of Proclus' monograph on Plato's three proofs for the immortality of the soul" (p. 400). La monografia alla quale fa riferimento l'autrice è uno scritto di Proclo perduto in greco, il cui titolo è menzionato nel *K. al-Fihrist*.¹⁰ Benché lo scritto non sia stato ritrovato nemmeno in arabo, la sua utilizzazione da parte di Miskawayh suggerisce che esso sia stato tradotto.¹¹ La svolta nella storia di questo testo è rappresentata da un breve studio di L.G. Westerink,¹² il quale ha dimostrato che il perduto scritto di Proclo può essere ricostruito a partire dai capitoli 6 e 7 del *Fawz* di Miskawayh e da un passo delle *Solutiones ad Chosroem* di Prisciano Lido.¹³

⁶ Su Miskawayh (935 ca.-1030), erudito e filosofo di origine persiana, cf. M. Arkoun, *L'humanisme arabe au IV^e-X^e siècle. Miskawayh philosophe et historien*, Seconde édition revue, Vrin, Paris 1982 (Études musulmanes, 12).

⁷ *Al-Fawz al-ašgar li-Miskawayh*, ed. A. Š. Uđayma – *Le Petit Livre du Salut*, trad. française et notes par R. Arnaldez, Maison Arabe du Livre, Tunis 1987.

⁸ E. Walkenig, "A New Version of Miskawayh's *Book of Triumph*: an alternative recension of *Al-Fawz al-ašgar* or the lost *Fawz al-akbar*?", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 19 (2009), pp. 83-119.

⁹ Cf. n. 7.

¹⁰ Nel *Kitāb al-Fihrist* di Ibn al-Nadīm compare nella voce su Proclo uno scritto intitolato *Kitāb šarḥ qawl Falātūn anna al-nafs ġayr mā'ita, talāt maqālāt* (*Libro dell'esposizione della dottrina di Platone circa il fatto che l'anima è immortale, tre capitoli*): cf. *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, a cura di G. Flügel - J. Roediger - A. Müller, Vogel, Leipzig 1871-1872, p. 252.15-16.

¹¹ È anche possibile ipotizzare che Miskawayh, che era di origine persiana, abbia trovato le prove di Proclo in una versione in medio-persiano delle *Solutiones* di Prisciano Lido, di cui è ragionevole immaginare l'esistenza (anche se non ne è rimasta alcuna traccia): esse erano state scritte sicuramente in greco da Prisciano, ma forse furono tradotte in medio-persiano per Cosroe. La possibilità teorica non va esclusa, ma nel mio articolo pubblicato in questo stesso volume, pp. 125-43, espongo alcune ragioni per cui mi pare molto più probabile che sia Prisciano che Miskawayh abbiano utilizzato direttamente il perduto scritto di Proclo.

¹² L.G. Westerink, "Proclus on Plato's Three Proofs of Immortality", in *Zetesis. Album Amicorum door vrienden en collega's aangeboden aan Prof. Dr. E. de Strycker*, Nederlandsche Boekhandel, Antwerpen - Utrecht 1973, pp. 296-306.

¹³ Prisciani Lydi *Solutiones eorum de quibus dubitavit Chosroes Persarum rex* ed. I. Bywater, Reimer, Berlin 1886 (Suppl. Arist. I.2), pp. 39-104, in part. pp. 47-9.

Poco prima della parte in cui nel manoscritto di Oxford sono riportate le prove dell'immortalità dell'anima tratte da Proclo (ff. 51v7-52r6 = p. 164-5 Wakelnig), si trova una discussione della natura auto-movente dell'anima. Anche questa è tratta dal *Fawz*.¹⁴ Wakelnig commenta: "This Platonic proof for the soul being self-moving is also taken from Miskawayh, who, in the standard version of the *Fawz*, explicitly refers his readers to Plato's *Leges*". Una nota esamina i dettagli della questione: "Sweetman¹⁵ (*Fawz*, p. 135, n. 2) suggests more convincingly that this reference must be to 895 C - 896 C, whereas Arnaldez¹⁶ (*Salut*, p. 110, n. 43) assumes it is to 966 E. If the reference is only to Plato as in the *PR* [Marsh] and not explicitly to the *Leges* one may also think of *Phaedrus* 245 C-D, which is also taken up by Plotinus in *Enn.* IV 7, 9. However, this Plotinian section is not rendered in the extant Arabic *Plotiniana*". Nella versione edita del *Fawz*, per spiegare come l'anima muove se stessa si esamina il modo in cui possono essere applicati all'anima i tipi di movimento distinti nelle *Leggi*. Poiché l'essenza dell'anima è quella di essere auto-movente, essa non compie i movimenti tipici del corpo, ma si muove con il pensiero ed il ragionamento. Miskawayh cita esplicitamente le *Leggi*, riferendosi con ogni probabilità a 895 C - 896 C, come suggerisce Sweetman. Nella citazione di questo passo, come essa compare nel manoscritto di Oxford, manca la menzione esplicita delle *Leggi* e il riferimento è genericamente a Platone. Per questa ragione Wakelnig ritiene che se non avessimo il passo parallelo contenuto nel *Fawz*, si potrebbe pensare che il riferimento è non alle *Leggi*, bensì al *Fedro*. Nel *Fawz* il passo nel quale Miskawayh si riferisce esplicitamente alle *Leggi* è incluso nella terza prova platonica dell'immortalità dell'anima, tratta dal *Fedro*, 245 C - 246 A, e fondata sulla natura auto-movente dell'anima. È proprio questa sezione, benché disposta in maniera lievemente diversa quella ripresa nel manoscritto di Oxford. Che questa discussione del tipo di movimento proprio dell'anima facesse parte della monografia di Proclo è mostrato dal confronto con le *Solutiones ad Chosroem*,¹⁷ in cui compare la stessa combinazione della prova tratta dal *Fedro* con la classificazione dei tipi di movimento tratta dalle *Leggi*. A differenza di Miskawayh, Prisciano non cita espressamente le *Leggi*, ma la combinazione dei due testi platonici sulla natura auto-movente dell'anima è un tratto tipico dell'esegesi neoplatonica,¹⁸ presente nel commento al *Fedro* di Ermia¹⁹ e quindi con ogni probabilità anche nella perduta monografia di Proclo.²⁰ Dunque è necessario collegare all'ultima prova dell'immortalità dell'anima il passo che nel manoscritto di Oxford invece precede tutte le tre prove: non si sa perché l'autore della compilazione abbia suddiviso il testo in modo diverso da come esso compare nel *Fawz*, ma a mio parere è qui, nel *Fawz*, che egli ha trovato la classificazione dei tipi di movimento tratta dalle *Leggi*, già unita alla prova del *Fedro*.

Il volume di Elvira Wakelnig rende un grande servizio agli studiosi del pensiero arabo. L'attribuzione del compendio all'*entourage* di Miskawayh è senza dubbio convincente e ben motivata; l'edizione e la traduzione del manoscritto di Oxford rendono disponibile agli storici della filosofia un testo di straordinaria importanza; l'analisi, l'individuazione e l'indicazione delle fonti, infine, sono puntuali e ricche.

Germana Chemi

¹⁴ *Al-Fawz al-aşgar li-Miskawayb*, pp. 84.10-86.4 'Uđayma.

¹⁵ J.W. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology. A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions*, Part. I, Vol. I, Lutterworth Press, London 1945; rist. James Clarke & Co., Cambridge 2002, pp. 93-185.

¹⁶ Cf. sopra, n. 7.

¹⁷ Prisc. Lyd., *Solutiones eorum de quibus dubitavit Chosroes Persarum rex*, pp. 48.10-49.36 Bywater.

¹⁸ *Hermiae Alexandrini In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia*, ed. C.M. Lucarini - C. Moreschini, De Gruyter, Berlin 2012 (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), pp. 107.26-125.23.

¹⁹ Il commento di Ermia al *Fedro* è costituito da una serie di appunti presi dall'autore durante un corso di Siriano al quale aveva partecipato anche Proclo: cf. Herm. Alex., *In Plat. Phaedr. Scholia*, p. 92.6-7 Couvreur (= 96.24-26 Lucarini-Moreschini).

²⁰ Westerink, "Proclus on Plato's Three Proofs of Immortality" (cit. alla n. 12), p. 302.

J. Thiele, *Kausalität in der mu'tazilitischen Kosmologie. Das Kitāb al-Mu'attirāt wa-miftāh al-muškilāt des Zayditen al-Ḥasan ar-Raṣṣāṣ (st. 584/1188)*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2011 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, 84), xi + 155 pp., 1 - 0 v pp. Arabic Text.

Causality is famously one of the main issues between philosophy and *Kalām*.¹ Some distinctive theories of Islamic theology concerning God's causality have long been traced back to the influence of Greek philosophy: pioneer scholarship in the Graeco-Arabic field highlighted the (indirect) influence of atomism on early *Kalām*,² observing that the assumption of a universe composed of bits of reality lies in the background of the idea that the very existence of each of them continuously depends upon God's will.³ Furthermore, incorporation of some basic Aristotelian doctrines and technical terms was detected in the theological systems of the various schools of *Kalām* in its flourishing age: they feature in Mu'tazilism and are embedded even in the thought of the outspoken enemy of *falsafa* Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī.⁴ Thus, the study by J. Thiele is very welcome of a treatise on this crucial topic of both Islamic theology and Graeco-Arabic philosophy by al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣāṣ, a theologian of Zaydite allegiance⁵ who was active in Yemen in roughly the

¹ That the relationship between *Kalām* and philosophy was that of views of the world competing with one another is clearly stated by R.M. Frank, "Kalām and Philosophy, A Perspective from One Problem", in P. Morewedge (ed.), *Islamic Philosophical Theology*, SUNY Press, Albany 1979 (Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science), pp. 71-95. Frank observes that "Under any circumstances 'the science of the fundamental elements of the professed religion' of Islam contains, as in the nature of things it must, a large number of constructions and theses that have to do with philosophical problems – that explicitly or implicitly take up and elaborate positions on major philosophical questions. (...) The conflict of the *kalām* and *falsafa* arises early. We read that Abū l-Hudayl studied the works of the philosophers and that an-Nazzām, when Ja'far b. Yahyā l-Barmakī told him that he did not even know how to read Aristotle properly, began to go through the work point by point. Ibn al-Qiftī reports, in an oft cited passage, that, when invited by the wezir to carry on a discussion with a number of theologians (*ahl al-kalām*), Yahyā b. 'Adī declined saying 'they do not understand the underlying principles of what I say and I, for my part, do not understand their terminology. I fear lest I find myself in the position of [Abū Hāsim] al-Ġubbā'ī in his *Kitāb at-Taṣaffuḥ*: the work is a criticism of the teaching of [the *De Caelo* of] Aristotle and a refutation of it according to what he fancied he understood of it, but in fact he did not understand its logical foundations and consequently the refutation has no validity'. (...) The fact is that the *falsafa* and the *kalām* share a number of basic concepts inherited from common, ancient sources, and that the *kalām* rejected *falsafa* precisely because it understood quite clearly the ultimate and basic structure and meaning of Greek philosophy as represented in the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic schools, which were those that had survived" (pp. 72-4).

² S. Pines, *Beiträge zur islamischen Atomenlehre*, Hein, Berlin 1936 (English version with the title *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, The Magnes Press, Jerusalem 1987); see now A. Dhanani, *The Physical Theory of Kalām. Atoms, Space, and Void in Baṣrian Mu'tazilī Cosmology*, Brill, Leiden - New York 1994 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, 14).

³ On the atomistic views held by the early mu'tazilite thinker Ḍirār ibn 'Amr (d. 816 ca.), see J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, I-VI, De Gruyter, Berlin - New York 1991-1997, III (1992), pp. 37-44; on the developments of this theory in Abū l-Hudayl (d. 841 ca.), see *ibid.*, pp. 67-70 and 224.

⁴ The influence on the *Kalām* of John Philoponus' arguments, based both on Aristotle and Neoplatonism, has been highlighted by H.A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*, Oxford U. P., New York - Oxford 1987, esp. pp. 117-53; contemporary scholarship often conceives of the presence of elements derived from the Graeco-Arabic translations and from *falsafa* as a naturalization of philosophy in Muslim theology: a fully-fledged example of this scholarship is the book by F. Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, Oxford U. P., New York 2009. Also the *Book of the Affecting Factors* by al-Raṣṣāṣ operates with the concepts of Greek philosophy transmitted by and reworked in *falsafa*: see for instance the two main categories of the "affecting factors", i.e. substances (*ḡawābir*) and accidents (*a'rād*), described by Thiele at pp. 75-6.

⁵ The Zaydite school is a branch of the Šī'a, based in Yemen, which is named after its founder Zayd ibn 'Alī (d. 740). From its beginning as a legal doctrine vindicating the rights of the *ahl al-bayt* (i.e. the supporters of 'Alī), the school moved

same years when in the Muslim West Averroes was coming to grips with Aš'arite theology, al-Ġazālī, and *Kalām* in general.

Chapter 1 sets the scene for the little known *Book of the Affecting Factors and Key of the Unsolved Questions*, a working title which I propose for the sake of clarity, but deserves discussion as to the exact meaning of the term *mu'attir* (see below). The biography of al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās is extracted from the tiny documentation available (pp. 4-5); comparatively much more is known about his literary output, which allows Thiele to sum up his work as follows: "Raṣṣās hat ein umfangreiches Werk hinterlassen, das sich auffällig intensiv mit den Detailfragen der Theologie (*daqā'iq al-kalām*) im Bereich der Naturphilosophie befasst" (p. 5). Hence the interest in the topic of causality, with which the *Book of the Affecting Factors* deals.

Chapter 2 (pp. 8-61) counts as the philological introduction and includes the description of the manuscripts as well as the principles of the edition. Although this is not clearly stated, Thiele seems to side with those scholars who part company with the rules of philology as established by Lachmann and Maas;⁶ hence the lack of a *stemma codicum* in his edition. The manuscripts are grouped according to the variant readings: "Anhand der Textvarianten ist es möglich, mehrere Handschriftengruppen zu bilden" (p. 18). However, no list of these variant readings is given, nor are they treated as *errores coniunctivi*. So, the way in which Thiele comes to the conclusion that the text is attested in three versions (*Fassungen*), named A, B, and C (pp. 24-51), plus several "Kontaminierte Fassungen" (pp. 51-52) remains somewhat obscure. No explanation is provided of the criteria for the identification of the three *Fassungen*. Are they families of manuscripts, or different redactions?

Two manuscripts, housed in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana of Milan and attesting version A, are of the highest value for Thiele. One of them, MS Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, ar. F 177, is the most ancient dated manuscript of this work; the other, MS Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, ar. E 460, has been copied in all likelihood during the lifetime of al-Raṣṣās himself (p. 58). According to Thiele, "Der gemeinsame Hyperarchetyp beider Handschriften ist daher das älteste nachweisbare Textstadium, dessen Rekonstruktion in der Edition erstellt werden soll" (*ibid.*). I must confess that it is not entirely clear to me what "Hyperarchetyp" means: this term seems to be modelled on "hyparchetype", but most I can say it does not belong to philological terminology. At any rate, in order to posit a common source of the two manuscripts of the Ambrosiana, the relationship between them should have been analysed. This analysis is lacking in Thiele's edition. If the two manuscripts share in at least one conjunctive error, this means that they depend upon a common source which cannot be identical with the original (i.e. the text as written or dictated by al-Raṣṣās). If this common source counts as the starting point of the entire manuscript tradition, it is the archetype (*simpliciter*; no need to create a new label "Hyperarchetyp"). If, on the other hand, it proves to be impossible to ascertain the dependence of these two manuscripts upon a common source already marred with error(s), then the archetype most probably coincides with the original. In our case, the dating of the two manuscripts of the Ambrosiana, and in particular of MS ar. E 460, leans towards identifying the archetype with the original. Obviously, only the retrieval of the structure of the manuscript tradition

closer to the Mu'tazilite creed with the teaching of al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 860), especially as to the topics of God's transcendence and man's free will. See W. Madelung, "Die Šī'a. Die Zaydiyya", in H. Gätje (ed.), *Grundriß der arabischen Philologie. Band II: Literaturwissenschaft*, Reichert, Wiesbaden 1987, pp. 358-63.

⁶ Reference is given to K. Stachmann, "Neue Philologie?", in J. Heinzele (ed.), *Modernes Mittelalter. Neue Bilder einer populären Epoche*, Insel, Frankfurt - Leipzig 1994, pp. 398-427 (see p. 17, n. 24), and to J.J. Witkam, "Establishing the stemma: fact or fiction?", *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 3 (1988), pp. 88-101 (see *ibid.*, n. 25).

would permit assessing the value of the manuscripts, and by the same token would make it possible to establish the basis of the edition. And it is precisely because such a retrieval is lacking, except for a first grouping of the manuscripts, that Thiele takes as the basis of his edition the MS Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, ar. E 460, not because of its stemmatic position, but “als Leithandschrift (...) da es sich um eine Abschrift von sehr guter Qualität handelt” (p. 58). On the whole, this edition seems to be inspired by the criterion of the *codex optimus*, without any argument intrinsic to the textual tradition.

In Chapter 1, Thiele had already mentioned the contrast between the Muṭarrifiyya⁷ and the Bahšamiyya, namely the most widespread version of what one may call the scholasticism of the Mu‘tazila; in Chapter 3 (pp. 62-73), he frames his analysis of al-Raṣṣās’ position against this backdrop. While the Muṭarrifiyya depicts the laws of nature as transmitting divine causality itself, to the effect of having God’s power which produces the accidents and changes of created things, for the Bahšamiyya the “affecting factor” (*al-mu‘attir*) counts as a real cause (“entitative Ursache”, p. 65). Such causes can be classified according to various categories. This is apparent already in the treatise *On Affection and the Affecting Factor* (*K. al-Taṭir wa-l-mu‘attir*) by al-Ḥākim al-Ġuṣamī (d. 1101),⁸ which Thiele (p. 67) indicates as a source of al-Raṣṣās, and comes to the fore in the latter’s *Kitāb al-Mu‘attirāt*. This treatise classifies the various senses in which something can be an affecting factor: “cause” (*‘illa*, or *sabab*)⁹ and “agent” (*fā’il*) are instances of *mu‘attirāt*, but also “motivation” (*dā’i*) is one. The classification of the kinds of the affecting factors and the interplay of the modalities of “necessary” and “contingent” as they apply to each of them occupies Chapter 4 (pp. 74-134).

As I have said before, “affecting factor” is a working translation of *al-mu‘attir*, which Thiele prefers to keep as a technical term, because he is persuaded that “das Bewirkende”, i.e. the literal translation of the active participle of the verb *attara* (“Bewirken”), does not grasp the meaning of the term as it is used by al-Raṣṣās. In fact, as we have just seen, the latter lists among the *mu‘attirāt* also factors that do not imply any efficient causality (e.g. “motivation”). According to Thiele, “Die Problematik der Übersetzung ‘Wirkursachen’ für die in diesem Text behandelten *mu‘attirāt* besteht darin, dass das so evozierte aristotelische Modell Kausalbeziehungen in ganz anderen Kategorien beschreibt. ‘Wirkursachen’ im aristotelischen Sinne geben den Impuls, der den Anstoß für eine Bewegung gibt. Der Sammelbegriff *mu‘attirāt* ist hingegen viel weiter definiert und umfasst auch solche Ursachen, welche die Form des Seienden bestimmen, also in der aristotelischen Kausalität Formursachen sind. Deshalb wird hier die Übernahme des Begriffs *mu‘attir* als *terminus technicus* bevorzugt” (p. 75). This decision may be the right one, and I do not want to question it; but I would like to point out that both the notion and term are by no means unprecedented in the philosophical literature of that age. The notion of a kind of causality which has nothing to do with the production of events and does not

⁷ The Muṭarrifiyya is a sect within the Zaydite school, which refers to the Zaydite legal and theological doctrines as settled by al-Ḥādī (d. 911): see Madelung, “Die Šī‘a”, p. 362.

⁸ The spelling of the name of this author is different as given by Thiele and by W. Madelung, “Der Kalām. Die spätere Mu‘tazila”, in Gätje (ed.), *Grundriß der arabischen Philologie*, p. 329 (“Abū Sa‘d al-Baihaqī, bekannt als al-Ḥākim al-Ġuṣamī”), but I think this is the author Thiele points to; therefore, I have given above the date of death indicated by Madelung for al-Ḥākim al-Ġuṣamī.

⁹ The distinction between *‘illa* and *sabab* consists in that *‘illa* necessarily implies its effect while *sabab* does not; the true agent is only the second one: “Vor diesem Hintergrund ist die bahšamitische Position zu verstehen, dass Handlungen nicht durch eine *‘illa* bewirkt werden. (...) Der *sabab* kann im Gegensatz zur *‘illa* ohne das durch ihn Verursachte existieren, nämlich dann, wenn ein Hindernis vorliegt, das das Eintreten der Wirkung verhindert. Darüber hinaus unterscheiden sich beide dadurch, dass die *‘illa* ein Attribut notwendig macht, während der *sabab* eine Essenz notwendig macht” (p. 93). On this terminological issue see also p. 77, n. 9, where the idea that *‘illa* translates as “cause” is challenged.

impart movement belongs to the tradition of *falsafa* since its beginning: the Neoplatonic causality of those principles that do not operate along the lines of efficiency (e.g. Intellect with respect to our soul, or soul with respect to matter) has been rendered from the outset through the verb *aṭṭara* and its cognate forms in the texts derived from Plotinus and Proclus, and attributed to Aristotle in the formative period of *falsafa*.¹⁰ Once again, the influence of the philosophical literature seems to be even more pervasive than its recipients were ready to acknowledge, or simply were aware of.

Thiele observes that the *Book of the Affecting Factors and Key of the Unsolved Questions* counts as an attempt to build up a comprehensive theory of causality to be set against that of the *falāsifa*. In al-Raṣṣās' eyes, the philosophical account of God's action is superseded by his classification of all the modes in which something can be produced or modified – a classification which is theologically driven. “Schließlich untermauert die Kausalitätslehre ein – mit gewissen Einschränkungen – occasionalistisches Gottesbild. Gott ist demnach die Ursache einer kontingenten und nicht notwendig existierenden Welt und kann jederzeit und seinem Willen entsprechend in die Schöpfung eingreifen. Konzeptualisiert wird sie durch die Kategorie des Handelnden (*al-fā'il*) der als einziger *mu'aṭṭir* sowohl die Möglichkeit zu wirken, als auch das Bewirkte selbst verursachen kann. Dieses Gottesbild versteht sich als Gegenmodell zum philosophischen Verständnis des Göttlichen als eine notwendig und von Ewigkeit her wirkende Ursache” (p. 138). And indeed, the overall picture that emerges from this treatise is that of an effort to classify all the meanings of “active principle” within the main frame of the *Kalām*, independently of any specific allegiance to this or that school. As Thiele aptly remarks, the *Mu'tazila* (voiced here by the Bahšamiyya) shares with Aš'arite theology the idea that God's action is dictated only by free will, a theory which is set against that of the *falāsifa*: “Die hier formulierte Konzeption Gottes als Handelnder versteht sich im Kontext der zeitgenössischen Diskussion als Gegenposition zur Annahme der aristotelischen bzw. avicennischen Philosophie. Dort ist das Göttliche die ewige, notwendig wirkende und erste Ursache (*'illa* bzw. *'illat al-'ilal*) der Welt. In Übereinstimmung mit anderen theologischen Schulen betrachtete die Bahšamiyya hingegen Gott als willentlich handelnd und nicht notwendigerweise wirkend” (p. 84). However, one may observe that to define (in typically *mu'tazilite* terms) the *mu'aṭṭir* of God's action as that “attribute of the essence” of “being active” that arises directly from God's nature (*muqtaḍāt an šifatihī al-dātiyya*) equals to apply to the Koranic God the philosophical – and for that matter Neoplatonic – notion of the causality *ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐῖναι* (*bi-anniyatihī faqat*), which had been elaborated by the *falāsifa* and then handed down to Avicenna, against whom al-Raṣṣās and his school were reacting.

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¹⁰ See for instance pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, pp. 11.3; 18.16; 43.18; 52.16, 18; 66.1 Badawī, corresponding to *πάσχειν, πάθος, πάθημα* in Plotinus (the instances of *aṭṭara, aṭṭār, mu'aṭṭir* with no counterpart in Greek are much more numerous than this); see also *Liber de Causis* (i.e. the Arabic reworking of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*), p. 63.2 Bardenhewer, corresponding to Proclus' *μετέχειν*, and p. 85.5 Bardenhewer, corresponding to Proclus' *παράγειν* (here too the instances of *aṭṭara* and its derivatives with no counterpart in Greek are numerous); see also G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus. Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in arabischer Übersetzung*, Imprimerie Catholique, Wiesbaden-Beirut 1973, pp. 76, 157, 255 and 284.

C. Martini Bonadeo, *‘Abd al-Laṭīf al Baġdādī’s Philosophical Journey. From Aristotle’s Metaphysics to the “metaphysical science”*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2013 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, 88), XII + 378 pp.

Già dalle prime pagine di questa monografia, composte da una breve prefazione di Gerhard Endress e dall’*Introduzione*, si comprende subito che ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī (1162-1231) è stato uno studioso complesso, che ha rivolto il suo interesse verso vari campi, dalle scienze coraniche alla medicina, dalla filosofia all’alchimia e alla geografia; ciò rappresenta una sostanziale rettifica dell’opinione di Dimitri Gutas secondo cui ‘Abd al-Laṭīf è stato uno studioso pedante, “il cui approccio alla scienza e alla filosofia era scolastico e legalistico piuttosto che sperimentale e creativo”.¹

Il volume, diviso in tre capitoli, vuole inquadrare il filosofo nel suo contesto storico e mostrare come la filosofia greca e gli inizi della *falsafa* giochino ancora un ruolo molto importante nella dottrina metafisica dell’Islam, a cavallo fra il XII e il XIII secolo.

Il primo capitolo è interamente dedicato alla tradizione della *Metafisica* di Aristotele, sia nel mondo greco che in quello arabo. Non possiamo prescindere dalla conoscenza precisa del percorso storico che il testo greco ha avuto per poter successivamente capire il contesto in cui ‘Abd al-Laṭīf elabora il *Libro sulla scienza della Metafisica* (*Kitāb fī ‘ilm mā ba’d al-tabī‘a*): questo è il motivo per cui C. Martini Bonadeo inizia la sua opera guardando alla ricezione delle tesi aristoteliche da parte dei filosofi di età imperiale e tardo-antica, tesi che poi, così modificate, sono state tradotte in arabo.

L’esegesi della *Metafisica* durante l’età imperiale e l’età tardo-antica prende due indirizzi differenti:² da un lato troviamo Alessandro di Afrodisia – il maggior esegeta aristotelico, che si impegna a difendere l’aristotelismo dalle critiche dei platonici e degli stoici dandone un’immagine unitaria e priva di incoerenze –, di cui ad oggi possediamo il commento ai primi cinque libri della *Metafisica*. Dall’altro lato troviamo invece i neoplatonici, primo fra tutti Porfirio – la cui lettura unitaria della filosofia greca si rivelerà fondamentale per lo nascita della *falsafa* – seguito da Giamblico, Temistio, Plutarco di Atene, Siriano, Proclo, Ammonio, Damascio, Filopono, Simplicio, Olimpodoro, Elia e Davide (pp. 24-5). Di questo secondo gruppo i testi che riguardano direttamente la *Metafisica*, a noi pervenuti, sono: il commento di Siriano ai libri B, Γ, M e N; il commento ai primi sette libri (A-Z) di Ammonio (edito dal suo allievo Asclepio); un commento ai libri E e N risalente al XII secolo dello pseudo-Alessandro; l’epitome siriana e la traduzione araba del Περὶ τῆς Ἀριστοτέλους φιλοσοφίας (perduto in greco); due frammenti di Porfirio del commento al libro Λ contenuti nel commento di Simplicio al *De Caelo*; la parafrasi del libro Λ di Temistio, anch’essa perduta in greco, ma conservata parzialmente in traduzione araba; infine la duplice allusione dello pseudo-Simplicio, nel commento al *De Anima*, a un suo commento alla *Metafisica*.

Nella seconda parte del capitolo (pp. 33-45) l’autrice affronta la prima ricezione della filosofia greca nel mondo arabo, sempre concentrandosi sul testo aristotelico. L’incontro vero e proprio fra la cultura araba e la cultura greca si verifica nel 642, anno in cui gli arabi si impadroniscono di Alessandria d’Egitto, il principale centro della cultura classica. È grazie all’incontro con la scuola alessandrina se l’Islam si apre a un sapere extra-coranico ed è soprattutto durante il califfato degli ‘Abbāsidi che l’attività di traduzione prende piede principalmente a Bagdad. Le maggiori traduzioni vengono effettuate all’interno del circolo di al-Kindī, spesso da intellettuali cristiani bilingui che traducono in arabo sia dal greco che dal

¹ D. Gutas, *Pensiero greco e cultura araba*, trad. it. a c. di C. Martini, Einaudi, Torino 2002, p. 181.

² Per questa distinzione cf. P. Moraux, *D’Aristotele à Bessarion. Trois exposés sur l’histoire et la transmission de l’aristotelisme grec*, Les Presses de l’Université Laval, Québec 1970, pp. 13-40.

siriaco,³ ed è proprio all'interno di questo circolo di traduttori che si ha la piú antica traduzione della *Metafisica* in lingua araba, a opera di Uṣṭāṭ.⁴ Il testo aristotelico riscuote grande successo e viene quindi commentato all'interno del *Bayt al-ḥikma* dal matematico e astronomo di Ḥarrān Ṭābit ibn Qurra (m. 901) e tradotto dal siriano da Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn (m. 910-911). Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus (m. 940) traduce il libro *Lambda* con il commento di Alessandro – perduto in greco – e forse la parafrasi di Temistio. Martini Bonadeo ricorda che esiste un'altra traduzione araba della *Metafisica* attribuita a Naẓīf, traduttore del secolo X attivo a Bagdad. Per quanto riguarda solo il libro *Lambda* Averroè riporta altre due traduzioni: quella di Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī (893-974) e quella di Šamlī (IX s.).

A questo punto del volume l'autrice propone un'attenta panoramica sulla ricezione della *Metafisica* da parte dei maggiori filosofi che hanno preceduto 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī, a partire dall'inizio della *falsafa*, indicando sempre quali testi greci sono presenti nelle biblioteche di ogni filosofo (pp. 45-105).

L'autrice ci guida così attraverso quel lungo processo di armonizzazione fra fonti neoplatoniche e aristoteliche che ha permesso ad al-Kindī di dimostrare nella *Filosofia prima* (*Kitāb al-Kindī ilā al-Mu'tašim bi-llāh fī al-falsafa al-ūlā*) l'assoluta unicità della causa prima, difendendo il credo dell'Islam monoteista (*tawḥīd*): l'eredità aristotelica della causalità del Primo Principio (libro *Lambda*), accompagnata dagli argomenti a favore della creazione di Filopono (*De Aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*), trova il naturale completamento nelle *Enneadi* di Plotino – la cui parafrasi nel mondo arabo è conosciuta come *pseudo-Teologia di Aristotele* – e negli *Elementi di Teologia* di Proclo (*Liber de Causis* nel mondo latino). Inoltre anche le tesi di Alessandro di Afrodisia (*Quaestio* II.19), rielaborate nel mondo arabo giocano un ruolo importante nella teologia kindiana, consentendogli di elaborare una teoria della causalità del Primo Principio che non comporta né mutamento, né azione nel senso della causalità efficiente.

Al progetto metafisico di al-Kindī reagiscono pochi decenni dopo prima Ṭābit ibn Qurra e poi al-Fārābī.

Già Ṭābit ibn Qurra, attivo nel circolo di traduttori della Bagdad del IX secolo raccolti intorno a Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq e al figlio Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn, nell'*Esposizione concisa della Metafisica di Aristotele*⁵ cerca di rimanere piú fedele al testo aristotelico, depurandolo dall'onnipresente neoplatonismo kindiano, pur mantenendone però alcuni capisaldi, come per esempio l'impredicabilità della natura del Primo Principio. È però nel circolo peripatetico di Bagdad del X secolo che si inizia a delineare un Aristotele effettivamente eternalista. L'Aristotele di al-Fārābī diventa il maestro della logica e delle dimostrazioni scientifiche; la metafisica, nel *Catalogo delle scienze* (*Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*), non è piú concepita solo come teologia, ma viene inserita nel sistema delle scienze come scienza universale, filosofia prima, ontologia e teologia. L'assimilazione della *Metafisica* e di tutto il corpus aristotelico, ormai interamente conosciuto nel mondo arabo, porta al-Fārābī a dire che Aristotele ha sostenuto l'eternità del mondo, che è prodotta eternamente da un'emanazione creativa (cosmologia neoplatonica), staccandosi dalla visione tradizionale di una creazione decisa da Dio in un momento preciso.

³ Cf. G. Endress, "The Circle of al-Kindī. Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy", in G. Endress - R. Kruk (eds), *The Ancient Tradition of Christian and Islamic Hellenism. Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences dedicated to H. J. Drossaart Lulofs on his Ninetieth Birthday*, Research School CNWS, Leiden 1997, pp. 43-76.

⁴ Possiamo leggere questa traduzione grazie ad Averroè che ne fa uso nel *Commento Grande alla Metafisica* per commentare i libri B-A. Alle pagine 38 e 39 del libro di Martini Bonadeo troviamo un'utile tavola che schematizza le differenti traduzioni utilizzate da Averroè, indicando per ogni libro gli autori delle traduzioni dei lemmi, dei passaggi citati nel commento e delle traduzioni copiate a margine del ms Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, or. 2074 (cod. arab. 1692).

⁵ Per questo testo cf. D.C. Reisman - A. Bertolacci, *Ṭābit ibn Qurra's Concise Exposition of Aristotle's Metaphysics: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, in *Ṭābit ibn Qurra. Science and Philosophy in 9th century Baghdad. Ṭābit ibn Qurra (826-901)*, eds. R. Rashed - M. Rashed, De Gruyter, Berlin 2009, pp. 715-76.

Avicenna, grazie agli strumenti acquisiti studiando i testi di al-Fārābī, capisce che la *Metafisica* aristotelica contiene i principi dello studio dell'essere in quanto tale; egli tuttavia dipende dalle fonti neoplatoniche per quanto riguarda la concezione della conoscenza e della causalità proprie del Primo Principio (pseudo-*Teologia di Aristotele* e *Liber de Causis*, scritti che Avicenna ritiene aristotelici). Nella sezione della *Scienza delle cose divine* (*Ilāhiyyāt*) del *Libro della guarigione* (*Kitāb al-Šifā*) in cui Avicenna individua i tre campi di indagine della *Metafisica* – proprietà dell'esistente, cause dell'esistente, Dio – basandosi sulla organizzazione della *Metafisica* fornita da Aristotele in Γ 1-2 e in E 1, ancora una volta tradizione aristotelica e tradizione platonica vengono fuse. Le fonti a cui Avicenna attinge per descrivere il Primo Motore come la potenza che muove senza muoversi in quanto oggetto d'amore (ὤς ἐρώμενον) sono gli scritti cosmologici di Alessandro e la traduzione araba del commento a *Lambda* di Temistio. Dal Temistio arabo Avicenna dipende anche per la prerogativa del Primo Motore di essere condizione necessaria di intelligibilità dell'universo: è l'intelletto che conosce tutto il creato non a partire dalla conoscenza delle creature, ma partendo da se stesso in quanto in lui sono presenti tutte le Idee.

Il lettore deve avere una buona padronanza delle tematiche, ampiamente trattate dall'autrice, di cui si parla nel primo capitolo perché queste sono la base indispensabile per poter comprendere il pensiero di 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī, che verrà spiegato nei due capitoli successivi.

Nel secondo capitolo infatti C. Martini Bonadeo affronta con molta attenzione la formazione culturale di 'Abd al-Laṭīf attraverso lunghi estratti delle due biografie ancora esistenti del filosofo. La prima è contenuta nell'opera di Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Fonti di informazioni sulle classi dei medici* (*'Uyūn al-anbā' fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*)⁶ e riporta anche la più antica lista delle opere di 'Abd al-Laṭīf, mentre la seconda è un'autobiografia, il *Libro dei due consigli* (*Kitāb al-Naṣiḥatayn*).⁷ Grazie a questi documenti l'autrice ricostruisce il percorso formativo del filosofo, risalendo ai diversi centri culturali in cui egli ha studiato (Bagdad, Mossul, Aleppo, Damasco, Gerusalemme, Il Cairo...) e ai maestri che ha incontrato durante la sua formazione, fra cui al-Ġazālī e Maimonide.

Fra i tanti viaggi di 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī, il soggiorno al Cairo è certamente uno dei periodi più proficui: qui infatti egli studia le opere di Aristotele, dei suoi commentatori Alessandro e Temistio, e gli scritti di al-Fārābī. Grazie a quest'ultimo 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī conosce l'etica e la politica della *Repubblica* e delle *Leggi*, conosce la classificazione delle scienze dei *Topici* e della *Metafisica*, la logica aristotelica, ma soprattutto apprende il giusto metodo di indagine, la dimostrazione inconfutabile, che darà il primato alla filosofia degli antichi. L'autrice fa notare che spesso 'Abd al-Laṭīf parafrasa gli scritti di al-Fārābī e ne fa proprie alcune tesi, come per esempio l'unità della filosofia greca: entrambi i filosofi sono persuasi dell'armonia fra Platone, Aristotele e il Corano. Partendo dal presupposto che il pensiero degli antichi è più chiaro e più completo rispetto a quello dei contemporanei, 'Abd al-Laṭīf si allontana dal pensiero avicenniano – unica filosofia considerata possibile durante gli anni della formazione –, arrivando a sostenere che questo pensiero è ricco di omissioni ed errori, che poi si sono trasmessi nella cultura filosofica successiva.

Il sistema filosofico avicenniano non è esaustivo e diversi ambiti della filosofia non ricevono un'adeguata trattazione: Avicenna per esempio, secondo 'Abd al-Laṭīf, trascura il criterio

⁶ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Fonti di informazioni sulle classi dei medici* (*'Uyūn al-anbā' fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*), a cura A. Müller, al-Maṭba'a al-Wahbiyya, Il Cairo 1882, vol. 2, pp. 201-13.

⁷ Questa autobiografia è edita nella tesi di laurea di Enes Tas, *Abdüllatif el-Baġdādî'nin Kitabü'n-Nasihateyn adli eser: tabkikli neşir ve muhteva analizi*, Uludağ Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Felsefe ve Din Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı, İslam Felsefesi Bilim Dalı, Bursa 2011. Un altro testo importante per collocare l'autore nel suo contesto storico è il *Libro della relazione e del resoconto delle cose di cui sono stato testimone e gli eventi visti in terra d'Egitto* (*Kitāb al-Ifāda wa-l-ītibār fi-l-umūr al-mušābada wa-l-hawādīt al-mu'āyana bi-arḍ Miṣr*).

epistemologico aristotelico per cui bisogna partire da ciò che si conosce più facilmente e per questo motivo sbaglia, antepoendo i discorsi sull'anima alla zoologia. Inoltre Avicenna non tiene di conto dei precetti morali della filosofia pratica e non conduce la vita virtuosa dettata dalla legge etica che ogni filosofo dovrebbe seguire. Al-Bağdādī prende le distanze anche dalla dottrina metafisica avicenniana: ciò è chiaramente detto dal *faylasūf* nell'introduzione al *Libro sulla scienza della Metafisica*, quando afferma che la ragione per cui ha scritto questo trattato è proprio quella di mettere in guardia gli studenti dal perseverare negli errori contenuti nel *Libro della guarigione*.⁸

È nel terzo e ultimo capitolo, il cuore di tutto il volume, che Martini Bonadeo affronta l'analisi della principale opera di al-Bağdādī, il *Libro sulla scienza della metafisica*,⁹ che nei primi sedici capitoli presenta e discute gli argomenti della *Metafisica* aristotelica. La prima parte del capitolo (pp. 217-68) è incentrata sulla forte influenza che i testi della fase formativa della *falsafa* hanno avuto sullo sviluppo dell'opera. Ancora una volta viene utilizzata la parafrasi di *Lambda* di Temistio – conosciuta da 'Abd al-Laṭīf grazie all'*Esposizione di Lambda* di Ṭābit ibn Qurra – per risolvere il problema della conoscenza dei particolari da parte del Primo Principio e il suo rapporto con il mondo (capitolo XIII del *K. fī 'ilm*); anche 'Abd al-Laṭīf, come i suoi predecessori, arriva alla conclusione secondo cui al Primo Principio aristotelico, che nella parafrasi di Temistio è legge e ordine del mondo, appartengono i due attributi divini che si trovano nel Corano: la provvidenza e la giustizia. Ma non solo: il Primo Motore anche per al-Bağdādī è “not only the mover of things, but it is also their perfection and their final cause. And it is in its essence both principle and perfection” (p. 231). È dunque principio di movimento e perfezione a cui ogni cosa tende, è quindi causa di stabilità che conserva tutto nell'esistenza, poiché è provvidente. La divina provvidenza per 'Abd al-Laṭīf, dipendendo dall'Alessandro arabo del *De Providentia*, si esercita direttamente sui cieli e indirettamente, attraverso la mediazione dei cieli, sul mondo sublunare (capitoli XVI-XIX).

L'analisi dell'opera di 'Abd al-Laṭīf si concentra a questo punto sul compendio che l'autore fa del *Liber de Causis* e della proposizione 54 degli *Elementi di Teologia*, a proposito della differenza fra eternità e tempo (capitoli XX-XXI). Del Proclo arabo nel *Libro sulla scienza della metafisica* ritroviamo la descrizione della Causa Prima intesa come l'Uno neoplatonico, per natura semplice, inconoscibile e atemporale, e la descrizione del rapporto fra l'Uno e il molteplice. La Causa Prima, dando unità al molteplice, è causa dell'esistenza di ogni cosa, con l'unica differenza – rispetto al *Liber de Causis* – che al Primo Principio viene attribuito da 'Abd al-Laṭīf il pensiero: esso quindi è identificato con l'Intelletto Primo, ma questo non comporta alcuna duplicità perché nell'Uno è presente una perfetta coincidenza fra il soggetto pensante, l'atto del pensiero e l'oggetto pensato. Sempre nel XI capitolo il filosofo si avvale anche di parti del *De Aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* di Filopono.

⁸ Alle fine del secondo capitolo (pp. 197-208), prima che inizi quello dedicato al *Libro sulla scienza della metafisica*, troviamo una sezione dedicata all'opera enciclopedica di 'Abd al-Laṭīf al Bağdādī. C. Martini Bonadeo, comparando l'antica lista delle opere del filosofo che si trova in Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a con il ms. Bursa, Hüseyin Çelebi, 823, che contiene molti trattati di 'Abd al-Laṭīf, descrive la vastissima produzione, non solo filosofica, ma rivolta a discipline come la lessicografia, la grammatica, gli *ḥadīṭ*, il *fiqh*, la medicina, la storia, la matematica e la zoologia.

⁹ L'autrice cita da due manoscritti: Il Cairo, Dār al-kutub, *Aḥmad Ṭaymūr Pāšā Hikma* 117, pubblicato per la prima volta in P. Kraus, “Plotin chez les Arabes. Remarques sur un nouveau fragment de la paraphrase arabe des *Ennéades*”, *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 23 (1940-41), pp. 263-95, e ms. İstanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, *Carullah* 1279, pubblicato in F. Rosenthal, “Aṣ-Ṣaykh al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source”, *Orientalia* 21 (1952), pp. 461-92 e ristampato in Id., *Greek Philosophy in Arab World. A Collection of Essays*, Greath Yarmouth, 1990. Di questo trattato fino a oggi sono state edite solo le parti riguardanti i primi due libri della *Metafisica* (cap. 1), il compendio di *Lambda* (cap. 13-16), il riassunto del *Liber de Causis* (cap. 20) e la parte relativa alla pseudo-*Teologia di Aristotele* (cap. 21-24).

Che un'altra fonte del *Libro sulla scienza della metafisica* sia la pseudo-*Teologia di Aristotele* è ben visibile nei capitoli XXII, XXIII e XXIV. Come ci fa notare l'autrice, basandosi su uno studio di P. Fenton,¹⁰ il testo conosciuto da 'Abd al-Laṭīf non è quello risalente alle origini al "circolo di al-Kindī", ma è una versione piú tarda e piú lunga, composta nell'Egitto fatimide (969-1171) e rielaborata all'interno di un gruppo di intellettuali ebrei neoplatonici. È quindi molto probabile che 'Abd al-Laṭīf abbia conosciuto la versione lunga della pseudo-*Teologia* durante il suo viaggio al Cairo e su questa si sia basato per identificare la *Metafisica* come scienza della sovranità divina (*'ilm al-rubūbiyya*) che indaga la causalità propria del Primo Principio: "in it the One is presented as the First Cause and Pure Being, above eternity and time, source of unity in multiple things, superordinate to all the sensible and intelligible realities" (p. 261). Per meglio spiegare la causalità divina, 'Abd al-Laṭīf fa piú volte riferimento anche a passi del *Timeo* (cap. XXIII-XXIV).¹¹

La seconda parte del capitolo (pp. 268-93) è dedicata invece alla dipendenza di 'Abd al-Laṭīf da due opere farabiane, piú precisamente il *Catalogo delle scienze* (*Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*) e *Sugli intenti della "Metafisica" di Aristotele* (*Fī aḡrād mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a*). Questi due testi sono le fonti a cui 'Abd al-Laṭīf attinge per comprendere come deve essere condotta un'esposizione sistematica e completa della scienza della *Metafisica*: infatti, seguendo le indicazioni epistemologiche date da al-Farābī, il piano editoriale del *Libro sulla scienza della metafisica* segue una precisa tripartizione. La prima parte (capitoli I-IV) è dedicata allo studio degli enti e dei loro accidenti: questi capitoli includono la parafrasi dei libri A, α, B e Δ della *Metafisica*. Nella seconda parte (capitoli V-XII) si trova lo studio dei principi della definizione e della dimostrazione: qui 'Abd al-Laṭīf parafrasa i libri centrali della *Metafisica*, in particolare i libri Γ e Z. La terza parte (capitoli XIII-XXIV), come abbiamo visto sopra, si occupa di descrivere la gerarchia degli enti immateriali e intellegibili fino a che, risalendo in questa gerarchia, si raggiunge il Primo principio, il Dio unico e provvidente del Corano (p. 275). Dunque per 'Abd al-Laṭīf la *Metafisica* è al tempo stesso una scienza universale e divina, ontologia e teologia.

Le ultime pagine del volume sono dedicate a una lunga tabella che mostra dettagliatamente le fonti e la struttura di ogni capitolo del testo di 'Abd al-Laṭīf (pp. 293-304).

Il *Libro sulla scienza della metafisica* si rivela, in conclusione, fondamentale per ricostruire la tradizione araba della *Metafisica*, dal momento che l'aristotelismo di 'Abd al-Laṭīf al Baḡdādī è intriso di tutta la produzione della *falsafa*, primi fra tutti al-Kindī e al-Farābī. Credendo di ricercare l'autentico pensiero dell'Aristotele greco,¹² l'autore del *Libro sulla scienza della metafisica* fonde il primo principio della tradizione aristotelica con l'Uno neoplatonico di Plotino e di Proclo, con la Causa Prima dei commenti di Alessandro e di Temistio e, ovviamente, con il Dio creatore della teologia islamica.

¹⁰ Cf P. Fenton, "The Arabic and Hebrew version of *Theology of Aristotle*", in J. Kraye - W.F. Ryan - C.B. Schmitt (eds), *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages. The Theology and Other Texts*, The Warburg Institute, London 1986, pp. 241-64.

¹¹ A questo proposito Martini Bonadeo ricorda che non esiste nel mondo arabo una traduzione del *Timeo*, ma esistono l'epitome del *Timeo* di Galeno, tradotto da Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq, e alcuni passaggi della *Teoria medica nel Timeo di Galeno*, tradotti sempre da Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq e dal figlio, Ishāq. Sappiamo inoltre dal *Fibrist* che il *Timeo* era stato tradotto anche da Ibn al-Bīṭrīq. L'autrice, avvalendosi di uno studio di R. Arnzen, sostiene che i passi citati nel *Libro sulla scienza della Metafisica* non derivino da una traduzione integrale del dialogo, ma da varie fonti arabe che si occupano del *Timeo* sotto vari aspetti. Cf. R. Arnzen, "Plato's *Timaeus* in the Arabic Tradition. Legends - Testimonies - Fragments", in F. Celia - A. Ulacco (eds), *Il Timeo. Eseggesi greche, arabe, latine*, PLUS, Pisa 2011, pp. 181-267.

¹² Il testo riportato alle pp. 210-11 è esemplificativo per comprendere l'"Aristotele virtuale" che si è creato durante i secoli in cui la *falsafa* si è sviluppata. 'Abd al-Laṭīf, vedendo alcuni resti di colonne granitiche che emergono dal mare davanti ad Alessandria, crede di individuare il Peripato di Aristotele. Aristotele, non piú identificabile con il vero Aristotele storico, rappresenta ormai la figura piú autorevole e la personificazione di tutta la filosofia greca, in quanto si tratta di colui che ha fondato il paradigma del discorso razionale e un sistema coerente del mondo.

Il volume di Martini Bonadeo è un interessante strumento da utilizzare per studiare la produzione filosofica nel mondo arabo posteriore ad Avicenna e per scoprire che la trasmissione indiretta della *Metafisica* aristotelica non continua solamente in al-Andalus, per opera di Averroè, ma trova anche nell'Oriente musulmano, con 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī, "a defender or true Aristotelianism and a fierce critic of Avicenna" (p. XI). Mi sembra che il merito principale di questo testo sia quello di fare luce sulla figura ancora poco conosciuta di 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baġdādī, mostrandone la complessità del lavoro e al tempo stesso l'originalità delle teorie, che fanno della filosofia greca la base per spiegare il monoteismo islamico.

Gloria Giacomelli

H. Pasqua (ed.), *Nicolas de Cues et l'Islam*, Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie - Peeters, Louvain-la-Neuve - Leuven - Paris - Walpole (MA) 2013 (Philosophes Médiévaux, 59), pp. 202.

The proceedings of the conference held at the University of Rennes in April 2011 on the attitude of Nicholas of Cusa towards Islam are published in this volume. The papers cover the whole extent of Nicholas of Cusa's production on the problem of the relationship between Christendom and Islam, from his interest in the religion of Muḥammad to his works dealing with the Islamic question dramatically raised by the fall of Costantinople in May 1453, with an overall concern for inter-faith dialogue.

The main frame is given in the useful presentation by H. Pasqua, "Nicolas de Cues et l'Islam" (pp. 1-7). Then, an overview of Cusanus' correspondence with Juan de Segovia (1393?-1458) is offered by W.A. Euler, "L'image de l'Islam à la fin du Moyen Âge. La Correspondance entre Jean de Ségovie et Nicolas de Cues" (pp. 9-20). John of Segovia launched the idea of what we would call today an international conference, where the representatives of the various religions would have been offered the possibility to discuss about the truth of their belief: thus, Euler's article provides the reader with the main historical framework of the papers gathered in the volume. The idea of a meeting of the spokesmen of the various religions from allover the world features also in Cusanus' dialogue *De Pace fidei*, written in Summer 1453, i.e. immediately after the fall of Costantinople. Here, the conference is convened by God himself in the heavens, and the focus is on the theological ground for belief in the various religions. The viewpoint of Islam is represented by three people, an Arab, a Persian, and a Turkish; interestingly – as it has been pointed out by U. Rudolph – the German spokesman suggests that, should one want to understand properly Islam, one should turn to Avicenna's works.¹ Thus, the question of the inner meaning of the various faiths is primary for Cusanus, and that of the differences in their claims comes second: an attitude which paves the way to the well known plea for harmony expressed by the saying *una religio in rituum varietate*.²

¹ U. Rudolph, "Kann Philosophie zum Dialog der Religionen beitragen? Anmerkungen zur Koranexegese des Nikolaus von Kues", in A. Speer - L. Wegener (eds), *Wissen über Grenzen. Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, De Gruyter, Berlin - New York 2006 (Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 33), pp. 179-93, in part. p. 181.

² Nicholas of Cusa, *De Pace fidei*, in R. Klibansky - H. Bascour (eds), *Nicolai de Cusa Opera omnia (...) ad codicum fidem edita, VII. De Pace fidei cum epistula ad Ioannem de Segobia*, Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Meiner, Hamburg 1959, 1970², p. 7.10-11.

Predictably, the focus of the volume is Cusanus' interpretation of the Qur'ān, which counts for him as the core of the problem. As he says in the Prologue of the *Cribratio Alkorani*, written in 1460-61, his interest in the Muslim faith dates back to his diplomatic mission to Constantinople in 1437. Cusanus was convinced from the outset that the only way to put an end to the Muslim conquest and to the consequent destruction of the Christendom was the conversion of the Muslim *élite*, and that this might have been done only on the basis of an in-depth analysis of the Sacred Book of Islam. The Qur'ān had already been translated into Latin in the 12th century,³ but, as pointed out by Euler (p. 11), this translation was poor on several counts: the great enterprise of the trilingual Qur'ān carried out by John of Segovia with the help of the head of the Muslim community of this city was intended to provide a reliable text, ready for examination: "C'est ainsi que Jean créa sa célèbre édition trilingue du Coran. À gauche, il y avait deux colonnes avec le texte arabe entièrement vocalisé qu'Yça [i.e., the head of the Muslims of Segovia just mentioned] avait écrit en personne; à droite, on trouvait la traduction castillane, également mise par écrit de manière calligraphique et complétée par la traduction latine interlinéaire imprimée en lettres rouges. Le manuscrit ne fut malheureusement pas conservé: seule la préface est parvenue jusqu'à nous, parce que Jean l'avait envoyée séparément et accompagnée d'autres textes sur l'Islam à Enea Silvio Piccolomini" (p. 12).⁴ An in-depth knowledge of the Qur'ān is needed, in Cusanus' eyes, if the aim is that of addressing Muslims *per viam pacis et doctrinae*: Euler concludes his paper by quoting the *De Pace fidei*: "Dans ce contexte, le Cusain présente le cœur de son herméneutique du Coran: 'D'où il semble qu'il faut toujours s'efforcer de faire en sorte que ce livre, qui pour eux fait autorité, soit reconnu en notre faveur. Car nous trouvons en lui des choses qui nous sont utiles, par lesquels nous interpréterons celles qui nous sont contraires'" (p. 20). This study of the Qur'ān, openly destined to an apologetic use, forms the basis of the method of the *pia interpretatio* analysed by T. Kerger, "La *Cribratio Alkorani*: un projet de dialogue avec l'Islam" (pp. 21-34). One should be wary of approaching this 15th century debate with the assumptions of the contemporary inter-faith dialogue: the scope is to analyse the text of the Qur'ān in the light of what in it allows the reader to acknowledge the truth of the Gospel, as Cusanus himself says in the Prologue of the *Cribratio*: its scope is the *manuductio ad veritatem christianam*. After having listed and analysed the four passages of the *Cribratio* in which occurs the expression *pia interpretatio*, Kerger discusses the various translations that have been offered of it and concludes that the attempts to avoid the confessional implications of the adjective *pia* (e.g. by rendering it as "accurate" or "charitable") should not be retained: "C'est pourquoi je plaide pour rester, également en allemand, à une traduction littérale de 'pieuse interprétation' (*fromme Interpretation*), dans le sens de 'interprétation selon la Vérité (et la foi) chrétiennes', c'est-à-dire tout simplement une interprétation du texte coranique dans le sens chrétien, ou comme chrétien. Si, aujourd'hui, cette méthode de la 'pieuse interprétation' telle que l'applique Nicolas de Cues, peut nous sembler assez étrange ou inappropriée à certains endroits, pour le Cusain même, elle est en quelque sorte tout à fait normale, et, surtout, tout à fait légitime" (p. 27). The analysis of Cusanus' approach to the Qur'ān is carried out also in two papers by G. Gobillot, "La singulière clairvoyance de Nicolas de Cues à l'égard du Coran" (pp. 35-86), and Ead., "De l'Armoire Arsenal (traductions de Pierre le Vénérable - 1092-1122) à la *Cribratio Alkorani*: au sujet de quelques notions fondamentales de la théologie coranique" (pp. 105-46), where various

³ Cf. M.-Th. d'Alverny, "Deux traductions latines du Coran au Moyen Âge", *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 16 (1948), pp. 69-131.

⁴ Interestingly, Cusanus quotes the Qur'ān mostly in the Medieval translation by Robert of Ketton: Gobillot, "De l'Armoire Arsenal", p. 126 and p. 135; Federici Vescovini, "Le problème de l'attitude appropriée", pp. 149-50.

passages of the *Cribratio* are compared with some *sūras* (in part. Q 7:2-4). It is Gobillot's conviction that Cusanus' *pia interpretatio* is best approached against the background of the modern "lecture intertextuelle" of the Qur'ān (pp. 36-41): "Or il se trouve que, ce faisant, il [that is, Cusanus] met en application sans en avoir conscience, un concept spécifique du Coran lui-même qui est de ne garder des textes antérieurs que ce qui a, selon lui, valeur positive, refusant de prendre en compte leurs aspect incongrus. En conséquence, il met en pratique, à propos du Coran la méthode coranique elle-même de l'abrogation des textes antérieurs qui ne consiste nullement à les rejeter en bloc, mais à les lire selon une vision qui permet de rectifier ce qui doit l'être et de laisser totalement de côté ce qui n'a pas lieu d'être. (...) On peut avancer (...) que la pieuse interprétation de Nicolas de Cues coïncide presque complètement avec les grandes lignes de la théologie coranique dans la mesure où le Coran lui-même manifeste sa propre *pia interpretatio* à l'égard de la Bible et de nombreux textes parabibliques d'une manière qui met souvent en œuvre des méthodes et des formulations connues de la théologie chrétienne de son époque" (pp. 45-7).

The place the *Cribratio Alkorani* in the whole of Cusanus' theological production is studied by S. Gottlöber, "*Cribratio Alkorani* – Impetus for Discourse? A Case of Study" (pp. 87-104). The author argues that the *Cribratio* is "more than just another apologetic writing" (p. 91). The ideas expressed by Nicholas in his letters to John of Segovia "show explicitly what the *Cribratio* is not: First and foremost, it is not a comparative study of religion using objective criteria" (*ibid.*). This paves the ground for S. Gottlöber's claim that "the value of the work (beyond the historical) lies not so much in the specific contents but rather in the method employed" (p. 95), namely that which, on a metaphysical level, guides Nicholas towards a topic which proves crucial for him, that of the (Neoplatonic) negative theology: we do not really know what the First Cause is, and in this ignorance lies a more profound truth than in asserting that it is such or such: "We recognize in these notions without too much difficulty the fundamental thought of the *docta ignorantia*: the Good, the One, the source of all that is, is at the same time origin and *telos* without being comprehended by the *ratio*. Quite striking is the way Cusa continues: *Sed cum multae possint viae esse, quae bonae videantur, manet hesitatio, quae sit illa via vera et perfecta, quae certitudinaliter nos ducit ad cognitionem boni*. What is amazing is that Cusa includes not only Jesus and Moses but also Mohammed among those who indicate ways that lead to the one Good which is called God in all three religions" (p. 97).

G. Federici Vescovini, "Le problème de l'attitude appropriée à l'Islam de la *Paix de la foi* (1453) au *Coran tamisé* (1461) de Nicolas de Cues" (pp. 147-57) deals with the differences between the two works taking into account their different backgrounds: "(...) ce sont surtout deux circonstances externes qui ont fortement conditionné la rédaction du *Coran tamisé*: 1) la situation historique très grave pour la Chrétienté et la dure réaction de Pie II; 2) la qualité philologiquement douteuse du texte du Coran et des documents dont il se servait pour le passer au crible. (...) À cette époque, Jean de Ségovie poursuivait lui aussi le but de démontrer que le Coran n'était pas un texte révélé par Dieu, mais par la méthode philologique, en prenant l'initiative de faire une nouvelle traduction confiée à des personnes expérimentées, à savoir des vaillants traducteurs de l'arabe et d'authentiques connaisseurs de la loi coranique. Aussi, à ce qu'il paraît, c'est justement aussi à cause des erreurs contenues dans l'ouvrage que, historiquement, le but poursuivi par le *Coran tamisé* du Cusain n'a pas été atteint" (pp. 149-50).

H. Pasqua, "Le Coran et le Verbe de Dieu dans la *Cribratio Alkorani*" (pp. 159-74), focuses on Cusans' interpretation of the figure of Jesus in the Gospel and in the Qur'ān, analyzing two crucial passages of the *Cribratio Alkorani* in which Nicholas accounts for the Islamic refusal of the divinity of Christ on the grounds of the Nestorian doctrine, which was the version of the Christian doctrine known to Muḥammad. It is particularly interesting to see that in this Cusanus follows the lead of

the *Apology* attributed to the (probably fictitious) ‘Abd al-Masīh ibn Ishāq al-Kindī,⁵ which was known to him in the Medieval Latin version.⁶ “Nicolas de Cues a établi dans son premier Prologue⁷ que l’Islam se fonde sur le nestorianisme. Il s’ensuit qu’en exposant sa christologie à Mahomet II et aux musulmans, il pense s’adresser à des chrétiens victimes de l’hérésie. Rappelons que si le Cusain dans sa *Cribratio Alkorani* tient un discours défensif, il ne vise pas à réfuter le Coran mais à enseigner le christianisme authentique avec la conviction que, si les musulmans le connaissaient, non seulement ils l’accepteraient, mais ils le reconnaîtraient dans le Coran qui l’implique” (p. 171).

J.-M. Counet, “Quelques conjectures sur les rapports entre christianisme et islam à partir de la pensée de Nicolas de Cues” (pp. 175-90) deals with the philosophical background of the doctrines set forth by Nicolas of Cusa in the *Cribratio Alkorani*, taking into account Nicholas’ *De Filiatione Dei*, *De Coniecturis*, and *De Docta ignorantia*. A comparison with Thomas Aquinas’ doctrine of abstraction and intellection allows Counet to conclude that this is the background of Cusanus’ firm belief that the Qur’ān itself should suggest to Muslims to proceed towards the Gospel: “De plus, quand le Cusain déclare que le musulman et tout homme doté de raison peuvent et doivent s’élever jusqu’à la Trinité, il base sa démonstration sur l’activité intellectuelle de l’homme. (...) En considérant sa propre activité intellectuelle, et la structure ontologique qu’elle implique, l’homme peut parvenir à pressentir le mystère trinitaire et la vérité intrinsèque du christianisme” (p. 188).

This interesting volume contains also a bibliography, where one may however remark the absence of the study by Ulrich Rudolph quoted above, n. 1.

Elisa Coda

⁵ A useful dossier on this work is provided in the Introduction to the Italian translation of the *Apology*: Al-Kindī, *Apologia del Cristianesimo*. Traduzione dall’arabo, introduzione e cura di L. Bottini, Jaca Book, Milano 1998 (Biblioteca del Vicino Oriente. Patrimonio culturale arabo-cristiano, 4), pp. 11-15.

⁶ As the author remarks (p. 159 n. 1) the *Apology* had been translated into Latin for Peter of Cluny.

⁷ At p. 159, this historical *excursus* based on the *Apology* of the pseudo al-Kindī is referred to as located in the Second Prologue.

Indices

