Studia graeco-arabica

2017
Editorial Board
Mohammad Ali Amir Moezzi, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris
Carmela Baffioni, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli
Sebastian Brock, Oriental Institute, Oxford
Charles Burnett, The Warburg Institute, London
Hans Daiber, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt a. M.
Cristina D’Ancona, Università di Pisa
Thérèse-Anne Druart, The Catholic University of America, Washington
Gerhard Endress, Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Richard Goulet, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris
Steven Harvey, Bar-Ilan University, Jerusalem
Henri Hugonnard-Roche, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris
Remke Kruk, Universiteit Leiden
Concetta Luna, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa
Alain-Philippe Segonds (†)
Richard C. Taylor, Marquette University, Milwaukee (WI)

Staff
Cristina D’Ancona, Elisa Coda, Giulia Guidara, Issam Marjani, Cecilia Martini Bonadeo

Submissions
Submissions are invited in every area of the studies on the transmission of philosophical and scientific texts from Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and early modern times. Papers in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish are published. Prospect authors are invited to check the Guidelines on the website of the journal, and to address their proposals to the Editor in chief.

Peer Review Criteria
Studia graeco-arabica follows a double-blind peer review process. Authors should avoid putting their names in headers or footers or refer to themselves in the body or notes of the article; the title and abstract alone should appear on the first page of the submitted article. All submitted articles are read by the editorial staff. Manuscripts judged to be of potential interest to our readership are sent for formal review to at least one reviewer. Studia graeco-arabica does not release referees’ identities to authors or to other reviewers. The journal is committed to rapid editorial decisions.

Subscription orders
Information on subscription rates for the print edition of Volume 7 (2017), claims and customers service: redazione@pacinieditore.it
Web site: http://learningroads.cfs.unipi.it
Service Provider: Università di Pisa, ICT - Servizi di Rete Ateneo
ISSN 2239-012X (Online)
Registration at the law court of Pisa, 18/12, November 23, 2012.
Editor in chief Cristina D’Ancona (cristina.dancona@unipi.it)
Mailing address: Dipartimento di Civiltà e Forme del Sapere, via Pasquale Paoli 15, 56126 Pisa, Italia.

© Copyright 2017 by Industrie Grafiche Pacini Editore, Pisa.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the Publisher. The Publisher remains at the disposal of the rightholders, and is ready to make up for unintentional omissions. Studia graeco-arabica cannot be held responsible for the scientific opinions of the authors publishing in it.

Cover
Mashhad, Kitâbhâna-i Āsitân-i Quds-i Radawi 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gre 1853, f. 186v
This collection of papers has the merit of drawing attention to the Epicurean elements used more or less explicitly by Plotinus, against the background of the circulation of Epicurean texts in 2nd-3rd century Alexandria. It also highlights the connection established in the *Enneads* between Epicureanism and Gnosticism. A limit that I see is that nothing is said of the link between Epicureanism and ancient Atomism, that is also well attested in the *Enneads*. In his refutation of the atomistic theories, Plotinus does not refer necessarily to Epicureanism: his target is atomism in general, of which Epicurean physics is for him only one of the possible versions. His use of Aristotle's arguments shows that he puts Epicurus and Democritus on equal footing. Some attention is paid to this (Ninci, pp. 134-40), but the focus of the volume is primarily on ethics. This collection of essays proves nevertheless useful for those interested in Plotinus’ sources.

GG


This multi-authored volume edited by Damien Janos contains a short introduction, eleven essays in chronological order, and a bibliography. Its focus is on the philosophical inter-cultural exchanges between Christians and Muslims in the 9th-10th century Baghdad, with an eye on further developments. In the words of its editor, the volume aims “to highlight the role that the Arabic Christian philosophers played in the elaboration of the vibrant and cosmopolitan intellectual culture that flourished in medieval Baghdad” (p. 1). This role has often been studied in isolation from the development of mainstream Islamic philosophy, and this volume proposes a more dynamic approach.

Opening the volume, J.W. Watt in his “The Syriac Aristotelian Tradition and the Syro-Arabic Baghdad Philosophers” (pp. 7-43) analyses the Syriac Aristotelian tradition and the activity of the Syro-Arabic philosophers in Baghdad. This is done not from the perspective of their alleged instrumental role in transmitting the Greek texts to the subsequent Arab readership, but from that of their original philosophical agenda. Watt begins with the early, pre-Abbasid phase of Syriac philosophy and in particular from Sergius of Rešāina, the Syriac scholar who was most influential on the later tradition. A treatment of the monastic school of Qenneshre follows, then a presentation of the East Syrian patriarch Timothy I (d. 823). Watt ends his contribution examining the shared interest in Aristotelian philosophy of Christian and Muslim scholars in the 9th century through the analysis of the East Syrian Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq, and then through the work of the Baghdad Aristotelians from the 10th century onwards.

The perspective of a Christian philosophical agenda is the backdrop of the following three contributions. A. Treiger, “Palestinian Origenism and the Early History of the Maronites: In Search of the Origins of the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle*” (pp. 44-80) presents two rival working hypotheses on the theological background – either Melkite or Maronite – of ‘Abd al-Maṣūḥ al-Ḥimṣī, the Christian translator of a selection of Plotinus’ *Enneads* that forms the backbone of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*. In her “Some Observations about the Transmission of Popular Philosophy in Egyptian Monasteries after the Islamic Conquest” (pp. 81-108) U. Pietruschka presents a vivid picture of the transmission of ‘popular philosophy’ (in S. Brock’s terminology) in Egyptian monasteries, where Coptic literature, immediately before and afterwards the Islamic Conquest, was preserved. The Copto-Arabic and Ethiopic literature blossomed benefitting from Syriac manuscripts and thus preserving old translations: several examples are taken from the collections of gnomologies.
O. Varsányi’s “The Concept of ‘aql in Early Arabic Christian Theology: A Case for the Early Interaction between Philosophy and kalām” (pp. 109-34) sheds light on the use of the concept of ‘intellect’ in 9th century Arabic Christian authors such as ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī (d. ca. 840), a Nestorian theologian, Theodore Abū Qurra (d. in 820 or 825), a Melkite, and the Jacobite Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾīta al-Takrīti (d. probably soon after 830).

The editor of the volume D. Janos contributes an article on “Active Nature and other Striking features of Abū Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus’s Cosmology as Reconstructed from his Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics” (pp. 135-77). Some features of the cosmology of the Nestorian Abū Bīṣr Mattā ibn Yūnus can be derived from the notes (taʿālīq) on Aristotle’s Physics which survive in the Leiden manuscript Or. 583, and which cover books II, 3; III, 2, plus parts of books V and VII. Abū Bīṣr Mattā appears to be less a mere transmitter of ancient philosophical learning than an active protagonist of the 10th century philosophical debate in Arabic. Nature is a teleological “principle of motion and rest that is internal to physical things and responsible for bringing about their actualization” (p. 149). Nature induces motion, and applies form on the material substrate to reach a given end. Departing from Aristotle, Abū Bīṣr Mattā seems to ascribe a certain degree of rationality to nature and calls it an agent: “active nature” (al-tābīʿa al-faʿʿāla). The most interesting example of “active nature” which he uses five times is that of the animal semen (p. 151). According to Janos, Mattā’s original theory of nature has probably been shaped by a combination of Aristotle’s zoological treatises, Alexander of Aphrodisias’s works, especially the Arabic Alexander’s On the Principles of the Cosmos, and Philoponus’s Commentary on the Physics, parts of which are transmitted by the same manuscript.

The magisterial contribution by G. Endress, “Theology as a Rational Science: Aristotelian Philosophy, the Christian Trinity and Islamic Monotheism in the Thought of Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī” (pp. 221-52) is the first of four papers devoted to another protagonist of the 10th century philosophical debate: the Nestorian Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī (d. 974). Endress presents Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s philosophical project which, following the teaching of Abū Bīṣr Mattā, considers the Aristotelian science of demonstration, with its criticism of non-demonstrative procedures, as the universal criterion of rational discourse. On this basis Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī founded his epistemology, designing “a universal theology, monotheist and creationist, a theology claiming the rank of rational science, supported by apodictic proofs and refuting the claims of his critics – the theologians of the kalām – with the weapons of logic” (p. 227). In order to discuss Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s account of the first principle of his rational theology, Endress analyses the treatise On the Affirmation of the [divine] Unity, which forms also the object of O. Lizzini’s contribution (see below). In this treatise, Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī presents an implicit critique of the Muslim creed, declaring the absolute unity (al-tawḥīd) of God. The aim of the treatise is both theological (to account for God’s nature) and apologetic (to defend the Christian account of God from the charge of polytheism). To exemplify Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s logical refutation of the Muslim theologians, Endress presents Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s discussion of the favoured topoi of his Ašʿarite contemporaries. Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī wants to establish the contingentia futura against those who, invoking the prescience and omnipotence of God, deny future contingency; he refutes the human ‘acquisition’ (iktīsāb) of deeds whose origin is in reality only God, a doctrine that according to Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī leads to contradictions. Finally, Endress discusses Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s critique of atomism based on Aristotle’s Physics, which is preserved in three treatises edited by the same scholar in 1984, and in a fourth one, extant in the ms. Tehran, Madrasa-yi Marwī 19.

This treatise is edited and translated by D. Bennett and R. Wisnovsky: “A Newly Discovered Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī Treatise against Atomism” (pp. 298-311). Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī depends on Aristotle’s Physics, but the question of atomism has also theological implications: atomism was famously one of the solutions proposed by the Muslim theologians to explain God’s omnipotence and omniscience. Yaḥyā
ibn 'Adī’s arguments insist on the fact that spatial extension presupposes elementary magnitudes, with ends or extremities that can meet, get into contact, or unite. Indivisibles have no parts and no extremities that could join, thus it is impossible that they give rise to continuous magnitudes as evidently the bodies are.

As mentioned above, another study is devoted to this author, by O. Lizzini: “What Does Tawḥīd Mean? Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s Treatise on the Affirmation of the Unity of God between Philosophy and Theology” (pp. 253-80). The distinction of the two meanings of the label “unity”, namely “oneness” and “uniqueness” lies at the core of this short treatise. Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī enumerates the various meanings of the term ‘one’, and analyses the theological implications of this notion in order to obtain “a Trinitarian formulation of divine unity, which, in contrast to the absolute doctrine of Islam, reveals a relative or ‘modulated’ understanding of monotheism” (p. 257).

C. Baffioni’s chapter “Movement as ‘Discrete’: Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī as a Source for the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ?” (pp. 281-97) sheds light on the unusual representation of movement in the well-known Encyclopedia. Two passages from Epistle 7 and 11 of the Rasāʾil Iḥwān al-Ṣafāʾ are analysed, where line, surface, solid space and time are considered the species of continuum, and number and motion are given as examples of discrete quantities. In Aristotle’s Physics, motion is considered as a continuum, and continuous motion is stated to exist before all other movements; it is local, circular, perpetual and without interruption, while rectilinear motion cannot be continuous, being produced by a single motionless agent in a single moving thing, which is a dimensional magnitude. Baffioni maintains that the Iḥwān al-Ṣafāʾ departed from Aristotle probably under the influence of Ibrāhīm al-Naẓẓām (d. 835 or 845) a Muʿtazilite theologian and poet, and she wonders whether the Iḥwān al-Ṣafāʾ did also influence the much later Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī, with his idea of ‘instant’ in motion.

There are only two papers that do not concern the Arabic Christian tradition, and one is Ph. Vallat’s “Between Hellenism, Islam, and Christianity: Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and his Controversies with Contemporary Muʿtazilite Theologians as Reported by the Ashʿarite Theologian and Philosopher Fakhr al-Dīn al Rāzī” (pp. 178-220). Some years ago, M. Rashed collected from the Advanced Investigations into Theology, a nine-volume encyclopaedic theological work by Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), some fragments in which Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 925) is quoted by name. These fragments are taken from Abū Bakr al-Rāzī’s Divine Science and from one of the epistles that the latter wrote in his long controversy with Abū l-Qāsim al-Balḥi, a Muʿtazilite theologian who died in 933. Vallat collects new textual evidence (a set of 19 fragments of which he offers the translation and commentary) where Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī seems to quote Abū Bakr al-Rāzī without naming him. According to Vallat, they contain Abū Bakr’s refutation of the very idea of Quranic prophecy, and maintain that reason is self sufficient for all that ought to be known for human beings to reach salvation, a tenet that makes prophecy superfluous.

The last contribution, D. Twetten’s long article “Aristotelian Cosmology and Causality in Classical Arabic Philosophy and its Greek Background” (pp. 312-412), is devoted to the problem of how God exerts causation in creating the world in Arabic-Islamic philosophy of the classical age. Twetten traces the continuity between late ancient Greek and Arabic cosmologies: both transformed Aristotle’s unmoved mover to fit with Plato’s Timaeus and Parmenides, the crowning part of the Neoplatonic curriculum. Ammonius and Simplicius were the first to transform the prime mover into a demiurgical efficient cause of the existence of the heavens, labelled here an “onto-poietik” cause: “a cause that efficiently produces what is below it from eternity, without presupposing even matter” (p. 408). They considered the prime mover the first of the separate intellects, which is between the One and the Soul and moves the ensouled spheres. In the Christian Neoplatonism of Philoponus and of the pseudo-Dionysius the One and the prime mover were identified with God, who creates the
cosmos timelessly and without change with nothing presupposed, yet at a first moment in time. Thus the Arabic philosophers inherited two different paradigms of God’s creation. According to the first, God is the creator of a cosmos possessing a first moment in time. According to the second, God is an “onto-poietik” eternalist first cause. Twetten’s outline of the history of Arabic classical cosmology draws “a shift from the creationist ‘Aristotle’ of al-Kindi to the derivationist ‘Aristotle’ of the mature al-Farābī and the effort at getting at the true Aristotle and the true Aristotelian philosophy results, for example, not only in Maimonides’s denial of creationism to Aristotle, but also in Averroes’s denial of ontopoiesis” (p. 408).

This provoking volume draws a picture of great interest, that certainly will lead to a rethinking of the role of Christian intellectuals from the 6th to the 10th centuries in the development of Arabic-Islamic thought.

CMB


W.F. Ryan and C.B. Schmitt edited in 1982 a collection of essays entitled Pseudo-Aristotle. The Secret of Secrets. Sources and Influences (The Warburg Institute, London), and this volume resumes the task of exploring the dissemination of one of the most famous among the pseudo-Aristotelian works in early modern Europe. The three editors C. Gaullier-Bougassas, M. Bridges, and J.-Y. Tilliette open this multi-authored volume by a general introduction entitled “Cheminements culturels et métamorphoses d’un texte aussi célèbre qu’enigmatique” (pp. 5-25), where the basic information on the text is given, and the rationale behind this collection of studies is presented. The Secretum secretorum is the Latin version of the Arabic Sirr al-asrār, “une œuvre originale de la culture arabe, écrite à partir d’influences tant grecques qu’arabes, perses et indiennes” (p. 9), but allegedly recording the teaching imparted by Aristotle to his pupil Alexander in epistolary form. Both the Sirr al-asrār and its Latin version feature “un mélange, étrange à nos yeux modernes, de réflexions philosophiques, de développements scientifiques, tantôt très obscurs tantôt très concrets, et de conseils pratiques, pour une vision finalement très pragmatique du pouvoir, dont la finalité essentielle est la recherche de la toute-puissance et de la gloire” (p. 8).

Since its translation into Latin first by John of Seville (first half of the 12th century) and then by Philip of Tripoli (first half of the 13th century), this text has been widespread, as attested by more than 150 Latin manuscripts (p. 15). The focus of the present collection of essays is on the later transmission: “Notre choix a été de consacrer le présent volume aux traductions et aux adaptations en langues vernaculaires du Sirr al-asrār, et les analyses réunies élargissent le champ linguistique aux domaines allemand, anglais, écossais, tchèque, italien et espagnol (...). Pour le monde slave, elles renouvellent la réflexion sur l’influence littéraire et politique de l’adaptation russe du Secret des secrets” (pp. 21-22).

S. Williams, “Two Independent Textual Traditions? The Pseudo-Aristotelian Secret of Secrets and the Alexander Legend” (pp. 27-54) challenges G. Cary’s claim in his 1956 book on The Medieval Alexander that the Secretum secretorum was relatively unimportant on the creation of the medieval legend of Alexander. Williams collects several data from a number of manuscripts and from authors of the 14th and 15th centuries, coming to the conclusion that Cary’s statement is true only in part: “The Secret of Secrets was effectively unavailable during the crucial first stage of the Alexander’s Legend’s development in Western Europe – the twelfth and...