

Studia graeco-arabica

8

2018

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 8 (2018), claims and customer service: redazione@pacineditore.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.

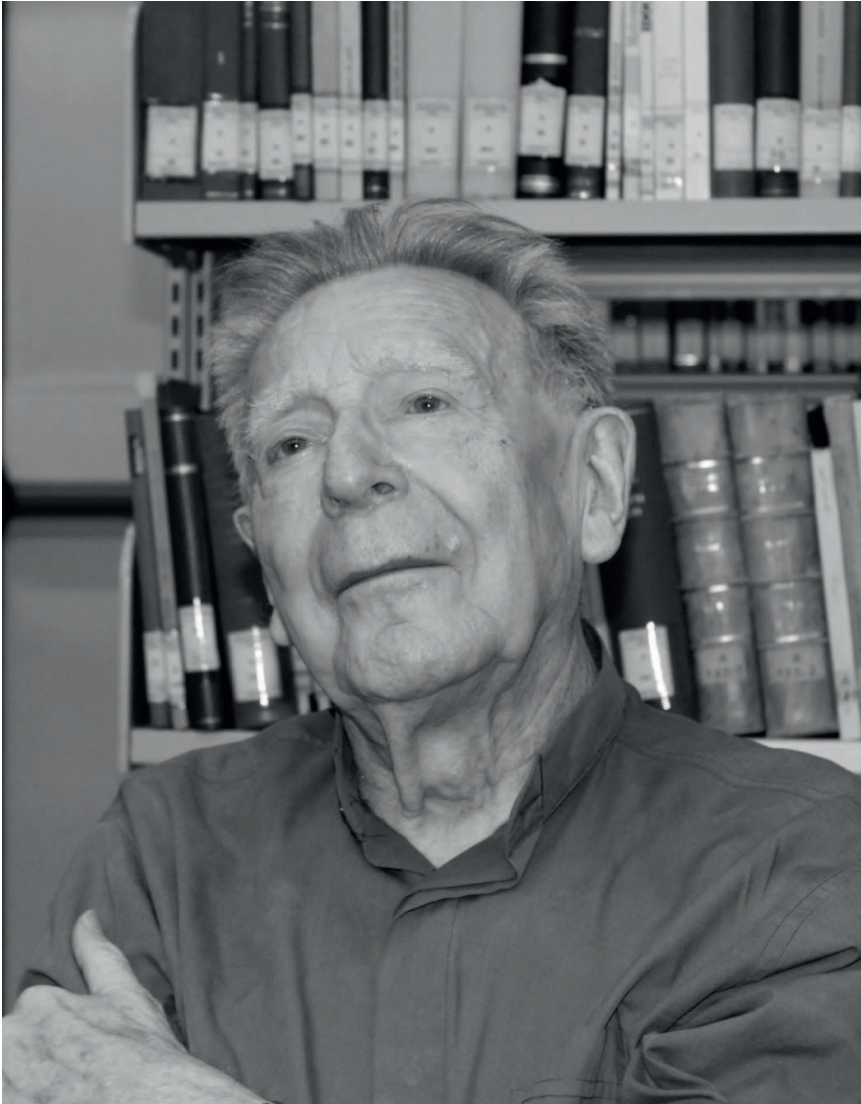


© Copyright 2017 by Industrie Grafiche Pacini Editore, Pisa.

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

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v



Maurice Borrmans MAfr. (1925-2017)

Studia graeco-arabica is most grateful to Reverend Father Valentino Cottini, former Director of the Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica, for accepting to open this volume and to Dr. Concetta Luna, Scuola Normale Superiore, for her invaluable help in driving it to publication.

Table of Contents

Valentino Cottini <i>Maurice Borrmans. Un profilo</i>	» 1
Marco Zambon “ <i>Apprendere qualcosa di sicuro</i> ” (ps. Clem. Hom. I 3, 1) <i>Verità filosofica e verità profetica nella I omelia pseudoclementina</i>	» 13
Giovanni Catapano <i>Nobilissimus philosophus paganorum / falsus philosophus: Porphyry in Augustine’s Metaphilosophy</i>	» 49
Elisa Coda <i>Divine Providence and Human Logos in Themistius Some Philosophical Sources of Discourse 6</i>	» 67
Henri Hugonnard-Roche <i>E Dio disse: “La terra produca germogli” (Gen. 1, 11) Sulla tradizione botanica siriana</i>	» 85
Ida Zilio-Grandi <i>La pazienza dell’Islam: la virtù detta ‘ṣabr’</i>	» 105
Patrizia Spallino, Mauro Mormino <i>Cuore, anima e mente Un esempio di circolarità lessicale tra tradizione islamica e cristiana</i>	» 119
Cristina D’Ancona <i>God and Intellect at the Dawn of Arabic Philosophical Thought Plotinus’ Treatise V 4[7], Aristotle’s Metaphysics and De Anima in the Age of al-Kindī</i>	» 133
Giovanni Mandolino <i>La testimonianza del patriarca nestoriano Israel di Kaškar (m. 872) sulla pseudo-Teologia di Aristotele</i>	» 153
Carmela Baffioni <i>Embryology in an Ismā‘īlī Messianic Context The Manuscript Tradition of the Iḥwān al-Ṣafā’</i>	» 167
Thérèse-Anne Druart <i>Al-Fārābī: A Philosopher Challenging Some of the Kalām’s Views on the Origin and Development of Language</i>	» 181

Khalil Samir Khalil S.J. <i>La doctrine de l'Incarnation de Yahyā ibn 'Adī à la lumière du Traité 17 Sbath</i>	» 189
Hans Daiber <i>Ethics as Likeness to God in Miskawayh An Overlooked Tradition</i>	» 195
Issam Marjani <i>Avicenne, commentaire de la Sourate al-A'lā Traduction française du texte établi à l'aide d'un 'nouveau' témoin et relevé des emprunts de Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī dans son exégèse de la sourate</i>	» 205
Emmanuel Pisani O.P. <i>Le ḥanbalisme, matrice idéologique du fondamentalisme islamique?</i>	» 233
David B. Burrell C.S.C. <i>In the Wake of Maurice Borrmans: Perceptions of Islam and Christianity</i>	» 247
Christian Jambet <i>Le problème de la certitude dans la philosophie de Subrawardī</i>	» 255
Cecilia Martini Bonadeo <i>Una parafrasi araba di Metafisica Iota Il capitolo XI del Libro sulla scienza della metafisica di 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baḡdādī</i>	» 269
Richard C. Taylor <i>Averroes and the Philosophical Account of Prophecy</i>	» 287
Concetta Luna <i>Prêcher aux philosophes et aux théologiens: quatre sermons de Gilles de Rome pour le temps pascal</i>	» 305
Gianfranco Fioravanti <i>La Questio 'utrum passionēs sive accidentia sint separabilia a subiecto' di Antonio da Parma (m. 1327)</i>	» 381
Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi <i>Le šī'isme entre exercice du pouvoir et sauvegarde de la foi Le cas d'al-Maḡlisī</i>	» 387
<i>Book Announcements and Reviews</i>	» 397
Jules Janssens <i>Marc Geoffroy. In Memoriam</i>	» 470
<i>Index of Manuscripts</i>	» 475
<i>Index of Ancient and Medieval Names</i>	» 476
<i>Index of Modern Names</i>	» 480

Al-Fārābī: A Philosopher Challenging Some of the Kalām's Views on the Origin and Development of Language

Thérèse-Anne Druart

Abstract

The Qur'ān itself pays much attention to language and theological views that see God as the language giver and humankind as originally a single Umma with a single language. Al-Fārābī, on the other hand, follows Aristotle who considers that the various languages stem from human conventions, but that all human beings have the same concepts as they have the same sensory perceptions. Al-Fārābī indirectly defeats the theological views in offering a purely naturalistic account of the origin and development of language as well as of the multiplicity of idioms. He also adds a political dimension in introducing human language givers rather than a sole divine language giver and therewith claims that controlling language ensures power.

Al-Fārābī at times indirectly distances himself from some traditional Muslim views simply by offering an alternative account stemming from an Aristotelian approach. In order to parallel and compete with the traditional Muslim account, al-Fārābī subtly develops, modifies, and enriches Aristotle's views. Such is the case in his highly sophisticated reflections on language. For him, linguistics and logic are closely allied and both develop concurrently. To understand how his account of language, its origin, and its development indirectly competes with and opposes traditional Muslim views, I shall first briefly sketch the relevant Quranic and Muslim background. Second, I shall briefly present the philosophical background. Then, I shall retrace al-Fārābī's account of language from its foundation in Aristotle's view that language is conventional to his detailed narrative of the origin and development of language, which can be found in the *Book of Letters* part II.¹ Several steps in the narrative subtly match and oppose aspects of the traditional Muslim views on language. For al-Fārābī, language is not only a fact of life and an important tool for communication and for philosophy, but its control ensures political power.

1. The Scriptural Background and Muslim Views

In 2:31, the Qur'ān unambiguously states that "He [God] taught Adam the names, all of them".² The following verses, i.e., 2 and 3, add that, at God's request, Adam subsequently taught these "names" to the angels. Yet, one may wonder to what exactly the "names" refer and whether the verse indicates that God gave the faculty of speech to human beings or whether He literally taught the whole of Arabic grammar to Adam.

¹ *Alfarabi's Book of Letters (Kitāb al-burūf)*, ed. M. Mahdi, Dar el-Machreq, Beirut 1986. Charles E. Butterworth is preparing a new edition and a full English translation. He kindly gave me a draft of this new edition and of his translation. Muhammad Ali Khalidi published an English translation of the second part in *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*, ed. M.A. Khalidi, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2005 (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy), pp. 1-26.

² *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. S. Hossein Nasr *et alii*, HarperCollins, New York 2015.

In 55:1-4, we find a more cryptic statement: “The Compassionate taught the Qur’ān; created man; taught him speech (*al-bayān*)”. *Al-bayān* may refer to the ability to speak and to express oneself, but it may also refer to the Qur’ān, as in 3:138.³ Unsurprisingly this verse will give rise to a multiplicity of interpretations. Besides, the Qur’ān itself emphasizes that it speaks in Arabic (for instance, 26:195; 43:3; and 42:7).

The dispute about the status of the Qur’ān, i.e., whether it is created or uncreated, led Muslims to reflect deeply on language, its role, and its origin. Therefore, in early Islam and at the time of al-Fārābī, interpretations of these Qur’ānic verses vary considerably among the practitioners of the traditional sciences, *Kalām*, *Tafsīr*, *Fiqh*, and grammar, but most of these Muslim scholars tend to emphasize the divine origin of language, be it construed as the ability to speak or as a literal divine teaching of Arabic to Adam.⁴ Many theologians, therefore, denied that language arises from human convention. They argued that such a claim leads to circularity, since, in order to make a convention with other human beings, one already needs to use language, which itself was supposed to be established by this convention.

Another much disputed issue was the origin of the multiplicity of languages or idioms. As Alexander Orwin reminds us, Qur’ān, 10:19 tells us “What was humankind but one single *Umma*, i.e., nation, that later came to differ?”.⁵ This could be taken to assert that originally all human beings spoke the same language, i.e., Arabic, at least if we maintain that nations are constituted by a distinct idiom and a distinct geographical location.

2. The Philosophical Background

Philosophers in Islamic lands, on the one hand, claimed that philosophy is universal and, therefore, common to all nations but, on the other hand, that languages or, more exactly, the various idioms used to learn and impart philosophy vary from nation to nation. The famous debate ca. 932 between Abū Bišr Mattā, the philosopher who argued in poor Arabic that logic is universal and, therefore, of value for any nation, and al-Sīrāfī, a young grammarian, who upheld that logic simply is Greek grammar, and, therefore, of no use to Arabic speakers and Muslims, illustrates well the difficulties facing philosophers grounded in Greek learning and interacting with well-educated Muslim elites. This debate highlights the importance of language and its use.⁶

Such philosophers were well aware of debate among the “Ancients”, i.e., the Greeks, over whether language is natural or conventional.⁷ In *De Interpretatione* 1, Aristotle had adopted the position that language, represented by “names” (as it also is in Qu. 2:31 as we saw) is conventional and so varies

³ *The Study Quran* (above, n. 2), pp. 1310-11 and n. 4.

⁴ See J. Loucel, “L’origine du langage d’après les grammairiens arabes”, *Arabica* 10 (1963), pp. 188-208, 253-81; 11 (1964), pp. 57-72, 151-87; A. Hasnaoui, “Les théories du langage dans la pensée arabo-musulmane”, in *Aristote aujourd’hui*, ed. M.A. Sinaceur, Ères, Toulouse 1988, pp. 218-40, and Th.-A. Druart, “Islam & Christianity: One Divine & Human Language or Many Human Languages”, in *The Judeo-Christian-Islamic Heritage: Philosophical & Theological Perspectives*, ed. R.C. Taylor - I.A. Omar, Marquette U.P., Milwaukee 2012, pp. 40-57.

⁵ A. Orwin, *Redefining the Muslim Community: Ethnicity, Religion, and Politics in the Thought of Alfarabi*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2017, p. 47.

⁶ See P. Adamson - A. Key, “Philosophy of Language in the Medieval Arabic Tradition”, in *Linguistic Content. New Essays on the History of Philosophy of Language*, ed. M. Cameron - R.J. Stainton, Oxford U.P., Oxford 2015, pp. 74-99, and Th.-A. Druart, “Logic and Language”, in *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, ed. R.C. Taylor - L. López-Farjeat, Routledge, London 2016, pp. 69-81.

⁷ For a survey of the views of the Ancients, see *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200-600 AD: A Sourcebook*, vol. 3: *Logic and Metaphysics*, ed. R. Sorabji, Duckworth, London 2004, pp. 213-49. Excepting the views of Christians, few philosophers spoke of any kind of divine intervention or origin.

from nation to nation, but that intelligibles or concepts are common to all people because they reflect sensory perceptions, which are common to all human beings. This view may work well for objects accessible to sensory perceptions and to which one may point, but it does not fully explain how we get words and concepts for intelligibles, which are not directly accessible to sensory perceptions, such as voluntariness, love, infinity, etc. Still less does it explain how we acquire words and concepts for immaterial realities, which sensory perception cannot reach in any way.

In Islamic lands any philosopher worth his salt needed to keep in mind the traditional religious views and their objection to Aristotle's understanding of language as conventional in order to give a plausible account not only of language and its origin, but also of the origin of the various idioms and of their development. This required going well beyond giving an account of naming concrete objects to which one can point and by simply repeating Aristotle's views.

3. *Al-Fārābī's sophisticated defense of the philosophical approach as sufficient to explain the origin and development of language as well as the multiplicity of idioms*

a. *His defense of Aristotle's claim that language is conventional but has a basis in nature*

In *De Interpretatione* 1, 16 a 2-8, Aristotle offers a realist approach to language and says:

Now spoken sounds are symbols of affections in the soul, and written marks symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs of – affections of the soul – are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses of – actual things – are also the same.⁸

In his long commentary on the *De Interpretatione*, al-Fārābī clearly sides with Aristotle's view that "names" vary from one nation to another but that all human beings have the same intelligibles or concepts, since they have, or more exactly, may have all the same sensory perceptions, even if their geographical dispersion prevents them from having access to all sense-objects. He then spells out the implication, by means of his own 'intercultural' example:

The intelligibles all human beings understand in their various languages are one and the same. The sense-objects, of which these intelligibles are intelligibles, are also common to all human beings. For regardless of what is a sense-object for an Indian, if the same thing is observed by an Arab, he will have the same grasp of it as an Indian.⁹

The realist outlook of this text firmly grounds the universality of broadly constructed Aristotelian philosophy as well as it takes into account the multiplicity of idioms.

On the question whether language is natural or conventional, al-Fārābī once again basically follows Aristotle all the while clarifying and expanding his position:

The relation of the intelligibles within the soul to the beings outside the soul is by nature. By contrast, the relation of the intelligibles to the utterances, i.e., the relation which the utterances signify, is by convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*), by imposition (*wad'*), and by plain legislation (*ṣarī'a*).¹⁰

⁸ Translation by J.L. Ackrill in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. J. Barnes, 2 vols., Princeton U.P., Princeton 1984.

⁹ *Alfarabi's Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, pp. 27.25-28.2. My translation.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27.18-20. My translation.

In *The Political Regime* or *The Principles of Beings*, and in rather cryptic fashion, al-Fārābī makes a similar claim by telling us that differences between nations come not only from natural temperaments and dispositions but also from:

A third, conventional, thing having some basis in natural things, namely, language (*lisān*, a Qur'anic term) – I mean, the idiom (*luġat*) through which expression comes about (70:6-7).¹¹

Orwin interprets the “basis in natural things” as referring to the early development of language as presented in *The Book of Letters*, which for Orwin comes about by chance. Orwin then claims that language becomes conventional when al-Fārābī introduces the language giver (*wādi' al-lisān*).¹² On the other hand, in a remarkable article on al-Fārābī's philosophy of language Nadja Germann argues that for al-Fārābī “all human beings have a certain natural disposition, a *fiṭra*, which (...) depends on the natural environment in which they happen to live, and affects their bodies, organs, and temperaments”.¹³ She relies on *The Book of Letters*, part II, 115, p. 135.6-9 and points to the use of the Qur'anic term *fiṭra* and its religious connotations. As al-Fārābī seems to merge *fiṭra* and the Aristotelian concept of nature, I read him as claiming that the ability to speak and develop language is natural to human beings, but that the whole development of language and of a particular idiom is conventional, even before the introduction of the language giver and not a result of chance. Recall that some theologians had argued that language cannot be by convention as this would imply circularity, as language would already be needed to establish the convention. Because al-Fārābī considers that similar concepts of sense-objects naturally arise in human beings before they can be voiced, he neatly solves the problem by using ostension, i.e., pointing to, a gesture rather than a sound. This leads us to focus on the second part of *The Book of Letters*, which tells us much about the origin of language and its development.¹⁴

b. The origin of language and its early development

Al-Fārābī establishes that the geographical location of a group of human beings determines the bodily constitution and dispositions that will lead this group to adopt what is ‘easier’.¹⁵ First, these prelinguistic human beings simply communicate by pointing to whatever they wish to refer. But this only works for people at a short distance from one another, who can see each other as well as the sensible object pointed to. If there is greater distance or some visual obstacle between people, then one begins to use sound to call on a particular human being in order to call his or her attention to a particular sense-object one will point to while at the same time uttering some sound. At some stage the hearer imitates the proto-speaker and uses the very same sound uttered while the proto-speaker was pointing to the sense-object. From then on, other members of the same group will use the same sound to refer to the same particular sense-object or to one similar to it, i.e., of the same species. This

¹¹ *Al-Fārābī's The Political Regime*, ed. F.M. Najjar, Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut 1964. English translation with a modification from Alfarabi, *The Political Writings*, vol. II, “Political Regime” and “Summary of Plato's *Laws*”, Translation, Notes, and Introduction by C.E. Butterworth, Cornell U.P., Ithaca NY 2011, p. 61.

¹² Orwin, *Redefining the Muslim Community* (above, n. 5), pp. 45-50.

¹³ N. Germann, “Imitation–Ambiguity–Discourse: Some Remarks on al-Fārābī's Philosophy of Language”, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 66 (2015-2016), pp. 135-66, and p. 147.

¹⁴ On this account see Th.-A. Druart, “Al-Fārābī: An Arabic Account of the Origin of Language and of Philosophical Vocabulary”, *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 84 (2011), pp. 1-17.

¹⁵ See n. 114, pp. 134-5.

establishes the distinction between proper and common names. Notice that to the traditional semantic triangle of object, concept, and word the Second Master has added an important element: a person who wishes to give a message and a person accepting to receive the message.¹⁶ Originally the proto-speakers use a simple sound or “letter”, i.e., phoneme for referring to the very same or similar object, but as there are many more sense-objects than phonemes, proto-speakers begin to combine letters to refer to sense-objects. Ostension as a gestural means of communication allows for the establishment of a pre-linguistic convention and so diffuses the theological criticism of circularity and reinforces the view that language, though requiring a natural basis, is from its very origin by convention.¹⁷

c. Whether originally there was a single Umma

The Qurʾān had spoken of a single original *Umma* or nation. Al-Fārābī indirectly opposes this view first in presenting a detailed physiological description of the organs of speech and how they function and then in claiming that due to slight physiological and dispositional differences sounds or phonemes will differ from one group to another.¹⁸ This leads to different idioms (*luḡat*, a non-Qurʾānic term) and even constitutes the first cause (*sabab*) of the differences in idiom, though what the other causes are remains unexplained.¹⁹ This appeal to physiology and dispositions opposes the Qurʾānic view of an original single *Umma*. Different groups of human beings naturally develop different idioms, and consequently, for the Second Master, there never was a single *Umma*, contrary to what the Qurʾān seems to claim.

d. There are many human language givers rather than a single divine language giver

Originally any chance person can match, in accordance with the necessities of life, some combined phonemes with a certain kind of sense-object, but then names multiply without order. As order is needed, some ruler or chief becomes a language giver for a particular group of human beings, though, we are here still operating at the level of mere “names” for sense-objects linked to necessities of life.²⁰ This language-giver clearly is a human being rather than God.

With the help of the language giver the group enriches its capacities for speech by finding words to speak not only of sense-objects but also of ‘activities’. Al-Fārābī plays with the polysemy of two Arabic words. The word for name *ism* is also used to designate a part of speech, i.e., a noun, which at the time seems to have included adjectives and pronouns. Furthermore, the word for activity or action (*fiʿl*) also designates a part of speech, i.e., a verb. The group then moves from immediate sense-objects and natural activities to activities acquired by habituation, and so by means of experience the group develops the practical arts.²¹

¹⁶ In Islamic lands philosophers were fascinated by subjectivity and self-awareness, but they rarely addressed intersubjectivity, despite their interest in political philosophy. See, for instance, J. Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy: Avicenna and Beyond*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2015. Al-Fārābī, who gives much importance to political philosophy, indirectly addresses intersubjectivity here and in some other texts. See Th.-A. Druart, “Al-Fārābī on Intersubjectivity in This Life and Hereafter”, in *Promissa nec aspera curans*, Mélanges offerts à Marie-Thérèse Urvoy, ed. G. Rahal - H.O. Luthe, Les Presses Universitaires - Institut Catholique de Toulouse, Toulouse 2017, pp. 341-54.

¹⁷ See nn. 115-16, pp. 135-36.

¹⁸ See nn. 117-18, pp. 136-37. Al-Fārābī also pays much attention to the physiological voice apparatus in his *Great Book of Music*.

¹⁹ See n. 118, p. 136.

²⁰ See n. 119, p. 137.

²¹ See n. 121, p. 138.

A rather indiscriminate multiplication of terms follows and there is still more need to organize both the utterances and their meanings. This happens in two ways: 1. There is a discovery of genera and species and their relations to organize grasp of sense-objects, i.e., a better understanding of things; and 2. a system of root meanings gives rise to organized, related, derivative meanings, thanks to prefixes, suffixes, infixes, etc. These derivations from a common root refer to the system of forms typical of Arabic.²² At this stage we have a development at both the cognitive level and linguistic levels. Then, equivocal utterances, homonyms and synonyms emerge, but we remain merely at the level of single terms.²³ Syntax finally surfaces when terms are combined. We have thus moved from isolated phonemes to arrive at terms, first limited to “names” (recall that both the Qur’ān and Aristotle had approached language by means of “names”) but later on to include verbs; and finally we have arrived at propositions and sentences, though little is said about this momentous event.²⁴ N. Germann beautifully retraces how al-Fārābī develops a parallel between linguistic and logical development that fits well with the traditional Alexandrian Aristotelian curriculum for logic.²⁵

e. Learning based on recitation

With propositions and sentences, figurative language develops and creates metaphors, metonymies, etc. Rhetoric and poetry surface and grow. There is need for further organization and meters arise, as well as euphony, additions of words, etc. Events get recorded and youngsters learn the language by reciting poetry, fables, chronicles, etc. As poems, chronicles, and the like, multiply, it becomes impossible to memorize all and so writing emerges.²⁶ Education by means of the recitation of poems and chronicles and later on by means of their reading nicely parallels the traditional Islamic elementary schooling in the *kuttāb* or Qur’ānic school.

A vocabulary for terms of second intention, i.e. words to speak of words rather than of sense-objects, slowly emerges. Native speakers speak grammatically, even if they have no grammatical knowledge. Bedouins spoke beautiful Arabic, but they may have been rather innocents of any grammatical knowledge. Reflection on proper usage, however, leads to the discovery of grammatical rules and the determination of grammatical terms.²⁷ Technical grammatical terms are preferably “transferred” from terms for sense-objects rather than freshly coined, as we have seen for “name”, which becomes “noun” in second intention, and “activity” or “action”, which becomes “verb” in second intention.²⁸

Once language is perfected and necessities easily accessible, then the art of reasoning develops: poetical and rhetorical reasoning, followed by dialectical reasoning, then by a sophistical reasoning that helps to reject false opinions and disambiguates language,²⁹ and finally by demonstration.

²² See n. 123, pp. 139-40.

²³ See nn. 124-25, p. 40.

²⁴ See n. 126, pp. 140-41.

²⁵ Germann, “Imitation–Ambiguity–Discourse” (above, n. 13), pp. 140-53.

²⁶ See nn. 130-31, pp. 143-4.

²⁷ See n. 137, p. 148.

²⁸ The same preference for “transferring” a term originally applied from a sense-object to a second intention, rather than coining a new term, mirrors what al-Fārābī says about translating philosophical terms from Greek into Arabic. On the translation of philosophical terms from one language to another, see Th.-A. Druart, “Al-Fārābī: An Arabic Account of the Origin of Language” (above, n. 14), pp. 12-13. On the importance of the notion of transfer in the whole of al-Fārābī’s philosophy, see G. de Vault d’Arcy, “La *Naqla*, étude du concept de transfert dans l’œuvre d’al-Fārābī,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 20 (2010), pp. 125-76.

²⁹ In *Sophistical Refutations* 1, 165 a 5-17, Aristotle indicates that in arguments the main source of errors is ambiguity: “It is impossible in a discussion to bring in the actual things discussed: we use their names as symbols instead of them; and

Al-Fārābī's whole general presentation of the origin and eventual step by step development of language should fit with what happens in any idiom. Perhaps one exception is what concerns the Arabic system of forms, though al-Fārābī may have thought that something similar to it, even if less sophisticated and systematic, exists in the various idioms. For instance, in English the verb 'to run' leads to the action of running, the one who runs is a 'runner' and maybe a 'runaway', and we even find, in a metaphorical sense, the adjective 'runny' for a runny nose, as well as the noun 'run' as in "a run of good luck," etc.

The first part of the narrative dealing with the proto-language by means of ostension seems based on an observation of the way young children acquire language. The role of the language giver begins to link language and political power, even if this human language giver seems a somewhat arbitrary Farabian construct substituting for God as a language or name giver. The progressive development of language from terms to propositions, followed by the combination of propositions in rhetoric and poetry, may be more influenced by the traditional order of Aristotle's logical works in the Alexandrian curriculum. The *Categories* deal with terms, the *De Interpretatione* with single propositions, and the *Analytics* with the combination of propositions in an argument. Whether this orderly development truly reflects how human beings acquire or even discover complete linguistic abilities may be more dubious. Yet, the whole narrative gives an account of many aspects of ordinary speech based on human conventions, such as the distinction between proper and common names, the need for nouns, verbs, and links of some kind (*ḥurūf*) to constitute a sentence, and even figures of speech, poetry and rhetoric.

f. Controlling language ensures power

This whole narrative is a theoretical reconstruction, but the text also includes an interesting paragraph based on a historical event concerning the development of Arabic that will be used to highlight the political importance of controlling language already hinted at in the references to the language giver.

Distances between people using the same idiom and proximity to people using another idiom lead to the corruption of the idiom. Rulers, who wish to maintain the unity of their nation, need to order and organize the nation's idiom ensuring that it is standardized and formalized. They will send grammarians to the center of the *Umma* in order to observe and record the way the idiom is best spoken. People in the desert have little contact with outsiders and so their idiom is the purest and will become the basis for the formal idiom adopted and prescribed by the ruler of the *Umma*. Al-Fārābī now abandons his usual mode of speaking of the origin and development of language in a universal way and suddenly specifically alludes to a historical fact in the development of Arabic from roughly the year 90 to 200 of the hegira, i.e., 709-816. Grammarians from Kufa and Basra in Iraq studied the language of the desert dwellers, particularly members of the tribes of Qyas, Tamīm, Assad and Tayy, in order to develop, according to al-Fārābī, a unifying formal language for the nation or empire.³⁰ As far as I know, the grammarians consulted the desert dwellers for another purpose, i.e., to understand more accurately the text of the Qur'ān, and in particular its numerous *hapax legomena*.

we suppose that what follows in the names, follows in the things as well (...). For names are finite and so is the sum-total of accounts, while things are infinite in number. Inevitably, then, the same account and a single name signify several things", transl. W.A. Pickard-Cambridge, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Germann argues in "Imitation–Ambiguity–Discourse" (above, n. 13) that an important task for the philosopher is to disambiguate language.

³⁰ See n. 135, p. 147.

Once again, al-Fārābī naturalizes a typically Islamic feature of the development of Arabic. If we take the Qurʾān literally, then the language giver is God who has power over all human beings, whereas for al-Fārābī there are many human language givers who need language to ensure their political power.

In the last section of his *Great Book of Music*, al-Fārābī, who subordinates music to texts, i.e., focuses on meaningful singing and claims that music may enhance the impact of poetry and its message, insists that rulers should pay attention to which music people listen and to which music they perform, as music may help or hinder the dissemination of the proper opinions in the ‘virtuous’ city. He even severely criticizes the music of his own time as propagating false opinions and deleterious behavior. Hence, he wishes music to fall under the control of the rulers. He argues for censoring ‘music’ and, therefore, speech.³¹

g. The perfection of philosophy and its logico-linguistic tool precedes the more particularized account of Islamic culture

The whole second section of the *Book of Letters*, which deals not only with the origin and development of language but also with the emergence of the syllogistic arts and, therefore, of philosophy ends with a remarkable sentence: “This, then, is the order in which the syllogistic arts arise in nations when they do so of their own innate gifts and natural dispositions (*fiṭar*, plural of *fiṭra*)”.³² We have returned to the natural basis for the origin and development of language, though language begins and evolves through human conventions. Of course, this sentence contrasts a natural evolution as al-Fārābī surmises it happened in Greece with what happened in the Islamic empire, where the most important syllogistic art, philosophy, and demonstration in particular, were transferred from another culture and another idiom.

Clearly al-Fārābī, when detailing the origin and development of language, carefully takes position on the theological issues and the Muslim views of his own time. He defuses the Kalām circularity argument against the Aristotelian view that language has its origin in and develops out of human conventions. He also claims that the giver or givers of language are human beings and so rejects the divine origin of language that the Qurʾān seems to emphasize. He holds that linguistic diversity and, therefore, diversity of *Ummas* are foundational and so does not follow an original singleness of *Umma*, as displayed by a literal reading of the Qurʾān. He even naturalizes the historical event of the consultation of the Bedouins which aimed at understanding the Qurʾān better. He substitutes the recitation of poetry and of chronicles for the recitation of the Qurʾān. His way of doing so is subtle. He does not overtly attack, but rather simply offers an alternative account, which he deems more universal than the one presented by the religious tradition. In the *Book of Letters* he does not hesitate to claim that “religion emerges after philosophy”.³³ He is even more blunt in *The Attainment of Happiness* in which he tells us that “according to the ancients, religion is an imitation of philosophy” and that “philosophy is prior to religion in time”.³⁴

³¹ See Th.-A. Druart, “What Does Music Have to Do with Language, Logic, and Rulership? Al-Fārābī’s Answer”, forthcoming.

³² See n. 146, p. 153, Butterworth’s translation with modifications.

³³ See n.147, p. 154.

³⁴ M. Mahdi’s translation, n.55, pp. 44-5, in *Alfarabi’s Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, transl. M. Mahdi, Revised Edition, Cornell U.P., Ithaca NY 1969.