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### *Cover*

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

*Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. Sciences of the Soul and Intellect. Part III. An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 39-41.* Edited and Translated by C. Baffioni, I.K. Poonawala. Foreword by N. El-Bizri, Oxford U.P. in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, Oxford 2017, XXIII + 378 pp., Arabic pagination pp. ٥-٢٥٤.

With this volume Carmela Baffioni and Ismail K. Poonawala offer another welcomed contribution to the knowledge of the “system of the sciences”<sup>1</sup> set in place by the Iḥwān al-Ṣafāʾ, and a particularly important one for all those interested in the transmission of philosophical texts and topics. The three parts of the corpus edited and translated in this volume – *Epistle 39, On the Quiddity of Motion*; *Epistle 40, On Cause and Effect*, and *Epistle 41, On Definitions and Descriptions* – give room also to non-philosophical issues,<sup>2</sup> but the treatment of topics like movement and rest in *Epistle 39*, causality in *Epistle 40*, and divine creation in both, touches upon crucial points in the Arabic reception of the Greek philosophical heritage. As for *Epistle 41*, its close relationship with a work by al-Kindī that bears the same title, namely *On the Definitions and Descriptions of Things*, shows, as we shall see below, that it is rooted in the works issued from the early Arabic reception of Greek philosophy that took place in the circle of al-Kindī.<sup>3</sup> Carmela Baffioni authored the edition, English translation and commentary of *Epistles 39 and 40*, and Ismail K. Poonawala edited, translated, and commented upon *Epistle 41*.

As in the case of the other parts of the corpus already published under the aegis of the Institute of Ismaili Studies at Oxford U.P., priority is given to the manuscript Istanbul, ‘Āṭif Efendi 1681,<sup>4</sup> dated 578/1182, the oldest manuscript of the *Epistles* known to date.<sup>5</sup> The philological introduction to *Epistles 39 and 40* (pp. 1-79), contains the description of the ways they are attested in the twelve manuscripts selected by the General Editors of the collection (pp. 7-44). All these twelve have been collated and their readings have been noted in the apparatus wherever they part company with ‘Āṭif Efendi 1681.<sup>6</sup>

The doctrinal introduction follows. From the outset C. Baffioni points to the ‘Aristotelian’ issues dealt with in *Epistles 39 and 40*, something that does not prevent their author (or authors) in pursuing a completely different goal with respect to Aristotle.<sup>7</sup> “Their main concern is to deny eternalism and to demonstrate a crucial issue of the encyclopaedia – creationism” (p. 82). Coupled with the interpretation of creation as emanation, this shows that the ‘Aristotelianism’ of these epistles is that of the origins of *falsafa*, with its idiosyncratic interpretation of divine causality in terms of creation out of nothing<sup>8</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> G. Endress, “The Cycle of Knowledge. Intellectual Traditions and Encyclopaedias of the Rational Sciences in Arabic-Islamic Hellenism”, in G. Endress (ed.), *Organizing Knowledge. Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2006 (Islamic Philosophy Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, 61), pp. 103-33.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistle 40* contains a long excursus on the isolated letters that feature at the beginning of some Qur’ānic suras and on the numerological developments that they may induce (pp. 232-45 of the translation).

<sup>3</sup> For a telling example see below n. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Baffioni, p. 1 n. 1, refers to *Epistles 10-14*, on logic, and 15-21, on natural sciences.

<sup>5</sup> Baffioni, “Technical Introduction to *Epistles 39 and 40*”, p. 1; Poonawala, “Technical Introduction to *Epistle 41*”, p. 249.

<sup>6</sup> Baffioni, p. 3, states that “All the MSS consulted very often share the same readings – with a unique reading sometimes offered by Atif MS. This affects the possibility of speaking of real ‘families’ and, even more, hinders us from establishing a *stemma codicum*. I have selected a certain number of cases that may at least clarify reciprocal relationships among the MSS”. These cases are charted at pp. 70-79.

<sup>7</sup> Baffioni, pp. 130-31, claims: “My emphasis on the Aristotelian character of these and other *Epistles* – the ‘natural’ ones in particular – does not mean, of course, underestimating their Neoplatonic, or better, Neoplatonizing, elements; however, scholars have spoken of these latter to such an extent that the other components have often been forgotten. Furthermore, it is difficult to deny the Aristotelian character of the natural *Epistles* that, as I have remarked, replicate even the order of the Aristotelian corpus, as found in late Antiquity”.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 6 of the *Epistle 39*, entitled “On the explanation of the rational, necessary premises that indicate that the world is innovated (*muhḍat*) and crafted (*maṣnu*)” provides a good example of this kind of ‘Aristotelianism’ *sui*

the superposition to this admittedly strange kind of Aristotelianism of the idea of the emanation from God of a hierarchy of suprasensible principles. “It is the Ikhwān’s opinion that the ‘divine’ beings (the Active Intellect, the Universal Soul, Prime Matter, and abstract forms) were originated all at once and out of nothing. Conversely, the natural beings were originated gradually, and according to a certain order over the course of time” (p. 100). *Epistle 39* lists the nine degrees of things in motion, from celestial spheres to the sublunar world, and establishes that, since everything that is moved has a mover, all these movements are induced by the Creator, who set the spheres in motion.<sup>9</sup> The epistle openly refuses eternalism and accounts for creation in emanationist terms – two features that point to the pseudepigraphical works attributed to Aristotle and issued from the circle of al-Kindī, as well as to al-Kindī’s own writings.<sup>10</sup>

All reality emanates from God as numbers emanate from unity. Emanation intermingles everywhere in these two epistles with creation, described as the supreme form of efficient causality. The pinnacle of a series of causes hierarchically arranged bottom-up, from human craftsmen to nature, the cosmic Soul, and the Agent Intellect, is God. Divine wisdom expresses itself in the making of the celestial spheres and in their perfect mathematical correspondences, but also in the wise arrangement of the sublunar world: both are open to the human knowledge of the causes, and the key to this knowledge is numerology, put on an equal footing with the science of the secret meanings of the Qur’ān. *Epistle 40* states that this science consists in the knowledge of the causes, lists the four causes (efficient, material, formal and final), and distinguishes between human efficient causality and that of the Creator: while the first needs conditions and instruments to be performed, creation does not. Then the epistle embarks on the crucial twin question of theodicy “why did God create the world after it was not” and “would it not have been possible for God to do it better”, dealing extensively with the hierarchical arrangement of the universe as a result of the wisdom of its creator.

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*generis*, in which the hylomorphic composition of everything in the universe, and of the universe as a whole, counts as the premise (*muqaddima*) of God’s efficient causality. The hidden assumption is of course that if the whole universe is composed out of matter and form, there is a Maker (*ṣāni‘*) who has crafted it. The chapter is short and is worth quoting in full, in Baffioni’s translation: “Know, O my brother (...) that [when] the wise men say ‘world’, that is an allusion to the all-encompassing sphere and to what it contains – the other spheres, the stars, the zodiac, the four elements that are fire, air, water, and earth, and their begotten beings that are the animals, plants, and minerals. And know that the all-encompassing sphere and what it contains – all the other spheres, stars, elements, and [beings] [from] them – all are bodies, of which there is no doubt among the wise men and the philosophers, because they said that a ‘body’ is a thing with length, breadth, and depth. And [when] they said ‘thing’, that is an allusion to matter, namely, to substance: and length, breadth, and depth are an allusion to the form by which matter has become a body with length, breadth, and depth” (p. 158). Cf. also, later on in the same epistle, the following passage, that shows the awareness of the difficulties implied in the transfer of the model of human efficient causality to God’s creation: “Know that the existence of the world from the Creator, praise Him, is not like the existence of a house due to a builder or like the existence of a book due to a writer” (p. 163).

<sup>9</sup> “As for their knowledge of their Lord, it [consists in the fact] that [a Friend of God] knows that every particular soul is a faculty propagated and emanating from the Universal Soul; he knows that the Universal Soul is also a faculty propagated and emanating from the Universal Intellect; he knows that the Universal Intellect is also a light emanating from the generosity of the Creator (...); he knows that the Creator (...) is the Light of lights and unadulterated Being, the source of generosity and the bestower of virtues, good deeds, and happiness, and [that] He abides forever more. (...) This is the root of the science of the Friends of God and of their knowledge of their Lord” (pp. 169-70).

<sup>10</sup> For a comprehensive account of these works – chiefly the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* and the *Book by Aristotle on the Exposition of the Pure Good* (or *Liber de causis*) – in themselves and in relationship to al-Kindī 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” held in Strasbourg, March 12-14 2004 (...), Brill, Leiden - Boston 2007 (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 107), pp. 319-50.

The eclectic nature of the compilation as well as the ways in which disparate elements coming from various philosophical and non-philosophical traditions are combined to sustain the doctrine of salvation typical of the brotherhood have been elucidated in many studies, including the volume under review. Here, as we have just seen,<sup>11</sup> Carmela Baffioni pays special attention to the Aristotelian background of *Epistles* 39 and 40, and following her lead I deem it useful to pause and observe some points of detail, that shed light on the encyclopedical ‘technique’, so to speak, adopted by the author of *Epistle* 39. From the outset he provides a synthetic account of movement that on closer inspection results from a sort of compilation of various ‘bits’ of Aristotelianism. It is difficult to determine whether the encyclopedist compiled directly out of the different sources or relied on preexistent compilations (though this second sounds more probable); but the procedure itself is interesting.

The opening sentence states that the scope of the epistle is to explain “[i] the quiddity of movements, [ii] the quantity of their species, and [iii] the directions towards which and in which the moved [things] are moved; and first we will say what motion, rest, and their true natures are” (trans. Baffioni, p. 135; Ar., pp. ٥ - ٦). To this end, an account of the opinions about movement and rest is provided.

Know, O pious and merciful brother (...), that the learned (*al-ʿulamāʿ*), the philosophers and the wise men (*al-ḥukamāʿ*) differed with regard to the quiddity of motion, of rest, and of their true natures. Among them was he who affirmed them and denied them, and said that they have neither reality nor meaning. Among them was he who said that movement only comes from a living, powerful, and autonomous [being], and he who said that it is life itself (trans. Baffioni, p. 135; Ar., p. ٦. ٢ - ٧).

As recalled by Baffioni, Alessandro Bausani thought that the allusion was to Zeno of Elea; in her turn, Baffioni points to the relevant place in Aristotle’s *Physics*, namely VI 9, where the paradoxes on movement are discussed.<sup>12</sup> Now, the sentence quoted above is better accounted for if we take into consideration not only *Physics* VI 9 and its discussion of the four arguments against the reality of movement, but also *Physics* III 2, with its general assessment of the difficulties that philosophers had to face in their attempt to grasp what movement is. In *Physics* III 2 Aristotle says that some try to define movement in one way, others in another: the doxographical stance of the passage quoted above echoes both *Physics* VI 9 and III 2, and maybe also other sources, like for instance the doxography of the pseudo-Plutarch. In this work, whose Arabic version has been edited by Hans Daiber (*K. Flūṭarḥuṣ fi l-ʿArāʾ al-ṭabiʿiya allatī taqūlu fihā al-ḥukamāʿ*), we read that Parmenides, Melissus and Zeno denied the reality of generation and corruption because they were convinced that the all reality is immobile.<sup>13</sup>

None of the passages listed above can count as the literal source of the aforementioned sentence, but all of them help to understand it: they give us an idea of the kind of sources out of which the author may have derived his account of the opinions on movement. One may further speculate that he had at his disposal a compilation where information about the Greek doctrines of movement was cast in the form of an account inspired by *Physics* III 2, and pointing to the diverse and conflicting attempts to define what movement is. This obviously does not rule out the possibility that the encyclopedist consulted one or all of these sources directly, and even more than these; but the hypothesis of a preexistent compilation sounds more plausible. Also the sources of the alternate doctrine mentioned in the account quoted above – namely the doctrine that makes movement to be real and derive from a hypostatic principle of life (the Arabic has *qāʾim*, “autonomus”

<sup>11</sup> See above n. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Baffioni, p. 135 n. 2, remarks that “Bausani mentions Zeno without any further reference” and indicates, in addition to *Physics* VI 9, also Plato, *Parmenides*, 156 C-E; S. Diwald, *Arabische Philosophie und Wissenschaft in der Enzyklopädie. Kitāb Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafāʿ. Die Lehre von Seele und Intellekt*, Harrassowitz (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz), p. 376, points to *Phys.* VI 9, 239 b 33.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. H. Daiber, *Aetius Arabus. Die Vorsokratiker in arabischer Überlieferung*, Steiner, Wiesbaden 1980 (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Veröffentlichungen der orientalischen Kommission, 33), p. 132.13-14 Ar. text, p. 133 German trans.

in Baffioni's rendition) – could be investigated in a similar way,<sup>14</sup> but let's remain in the Aristotelian camp, because another interesting example follows. This time the encyclopedist – or his source, or the source of his source – compiles out of three different Aristotelian works.

Know, O my brother (...) that motion is of two species, [a.] physical and [b.] spiritual, as we will explain later. [a.] The physical motions are of six species – [1.] generation and [2.] corruption, [3.] increase and [4.] diminution, and [5.] change and [6.] translation. We want to speak first of the movements that are [called] translation, as they are clearer and more patent to the senses. Then we will mention the other five [species], as they are finer, subtler, and more obscure. [6.] So we say that the motion that is [called] translation is of three species, [6a] rectilinear, [6b] circular, and [6c] one composed of both of them (trans. Baffioni, p. 136; Ar., p. λ.ϣ-Ϡ).

The classification of the six kinds of movement is ultimately derived from the *Categories*;<sup>15</sup> the idea that translation is the first and basic kind traces back to the *Physics*;<sup>16</sup> finally, the further subdivision of translation into the three subsets of rectilinear, circular, and composed out of them comes from the *De Caelo*.<sup>17</sup> All three works were available in Arabic at the time of the composition of the encyclopaedia; however, the hypothesis of a direct compilation made by the author of this epistle out of them seems less plausible than that of his reliance upon a preexisting account of the species of movement according to Aristotle.

To this sort of 'readers' digest' of school Aristotelianism other sources are added, issued from a different philosophical tradition: Neoplatonism.<sup>18</sup> Among the various places where the influence of the Neoplatonic adaptations of the circle of al-Kindī are evident, some are of special interest.

I have alluded before to the interpretation of the Aristotelian causality of the first principle in terms of efficient causality, and to the interpretation of the latter as if it were the same notion as 'creation out of nothing'.<sup>19</sup> An adjustment is obviously necessary to remove from the Aristotelian efficient causality the two elements that do not match 'creation', namely the preexistence of matter and the need of tools to transform matter into a given object by imparting a shape to it. All this is done in *Epistle 40* through recourse to the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, the well-known Kindian reworking of *Enneads* IV-VI.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Diwald, *Arabische Philosophie und Wissenschaft*, p. 377, points to a passage from prop. 3 of the *Liber de causis*, "And, the activity [i.e. of the soul] is animate because soul moves the first body and all natural bodies, since it is the cause of the motion of bodies and the cause of nature's activity", English trans. by R.C. Taylor in *St. Thomas Aquinas. Commentary on the Book of Causes*, translated by V.A. Guagliardo O.P. - Ch. R. Hess O.P. - R.C. Taylor, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 1996, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> *Cat.* 14, 15 a 13-14: Κινήσεως δέ ἐστὶν εἶδη ἕξ· γένεσις, φθορά, αὔξεισις, μείωσις, ἀλλοίωσις, κατὰ τὸ πῶς μεταβολή.

<sup>16</sup> *Phys.* VIII 7, 260 b 6: ἀνάγκη καὶ φορὰν αἰεὶ εἶναι πρώτην τῶν κινήσεων, a claim that features within the context of Aristotle's discussion of the circular motion of the heavens, not as a classification of the kinds of movement.

<sup>17</sup> *De Cael.* I 1, 268 b 17-18: Πᾶσα δὲ κίνησις ὅση κατὰ τὸ πῶς, ἣν καλοῦμεν φορὰν, ἢ εὐθεῖα ἢ κύκλῳ ἢ ἐκ τούτων μικτή.

<sup>18</sup> See above n. 7.

<sup>19</sup> See above, n. 8.

<sup>20</sup> The pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* is quoted after the edition: *Aflūṭīn 'inda l-'arab* nuṣūṣ ḥaqqaqahā wa-qaddama lahā 'A. Badawī, Dār al-nahḍa al-'arabiyya, Cairo 1955, 1966<sup>2</sup> (*Dirasāt Islāmiyya*, 20); the English translation is quoted after the so-called *editio maior* of Plotinus: *Plotini Opera* ediderunt P. Henry et H.-R. Schwyzer. Tomus II. *Enneades* IV-V, accedunt *Plotiniana Arabica* quae anglie vertit G. Lewis, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1959 (Museum Lessianum. Series Philosophica, 34).

ps.-Theol. Ar., X, pp.162.15-163. Badawī, trans. Lewis, p. 395	<i>Epistle 40</i> , p. Ar. pp. ١٠٢. ١١-١٠٣. ٥, trans. Baffioni, pp. 202-3
<p>ونقول إن الصناع إذا أرادوا صنعة شيء رؤوا في ذلك الشيء ومثلوا في نفوسهم مما رأوا وعينوا، وإما أن يلقوا بأبصارهم على بعض الأشياء الخارجة فيتمثلوا أعمالهم بذلك الشيء. فإذا عملوا فيما يعملونه بالأيدي وسائر الآلات. وأما الباري فإنه إذا أراد فعل شيء فإنه لا يتمثل في نفسه ولا يحتذي صنعة خارجه منه، لأنه لم يكن شيء قبل أن يبدع الأشياء، ولا يتمثل في ذاته لأن ذاته مثال كل شيء، فالمثال لا يتمثل. ولم يحتج في إبداع الأشياء إلى آلة لأنه هو علة الآلات، وهو الذي أبدعها، فلا يحتاج فيما أبدعه إلى شيء من أبداعه.</p>	<p>وكلّ صناع بشريّ يحتاج في صنعته إلى ستة أشياء حتى يتمّ صنعته: هيولى ما كالفأس والمنشار، وحركات ما. وكلّ صانع طبيعيّ يكفيه من هذه أربعة، وهي هيولى ما ومكان ما وزمان ما وحركات ما. وكلّ صانع نفسانيّ يكفيه منها آلتان، وهي هيولى ما وحركات ما. والباريء سبحانه وتعالى، غير محتاج إلى شيء منها، لأنّ فعله اختراع وصنعة إبداع لهذه الأشياء، أعني الهيولى والمكان والزمان والآلات والأدوات والحركات.</p>
<p>We say that when craftsmen wish to fashion a thing they reflect on that thing and copy what they see and contemplate within themselves. Or they cast their eyes on one of the external things and model their works on that thing. When they work they work with their hands and other instruments, whereas when the Creator wishes to make something, he does not envisage patterns within himself, nor does he imitate in his workmanship any workmanship external to him, because before he originated the things there was nothing. Nor does he envisage patterns within his being, for his being is the pattern of everything and the pattern does not envisage patterns. He does not need any instrument in the origination of things because he is the cause of instruments, it being he that originated them, and in what he originates he needs nothing of his origination.</p>	<p>Every human artisan needs in his work six things so that he [can] complete his work: a given matter; a given time; a given place; given instruments – like a hand or a foot; given tools – line an axe or a saw; and given movements. For every natural artisan, four of these [causes] are sufficient, namely a given place, a given time, and given movements. For every animal artisan two instruments are sufficient, namely, a given matter, and given movements. And the Creator, praise Him, exalted be He, has no need of any of these things, because His act is an invention and His work an origination of these things, namely, matter, place, time, tools, instruments, and movements.</p>

The passage of the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* elaborates on a sentence in the treatise *On the Intelligible Beauty*, V 8[31], 7.1-12, where Plotinus brands as absurd the literal interpretation of the demiurgy of the *Timaeus*, as if the maker of the universe were comparable to craftsmen who make use of their hands and tools (ὅπως νῦν οἱ δημιουργοὶ ποιοῦσι χερσὶ καὶ ὄργανοις χρώμενοι, lines 11-12).<sup>21</sup> Of course Plotinus is not speaking of the first principle of his universe, the One; rather, he points to the way in which the divine Intellect and the cosmic Soul operate in their capacity of intelligible causes, whose ‘production’ of effects does not imply any change whatsoever. Exactly as the Forms, these two universal and intelligible causes – Intellect and Soul – are what they are, and their effect – the visible cosmos – derive from them precisely because of this. The pseudo-*Theology* adapts the Plotinian passage to its own purposes and makes it claim that the Creator cannot operate as a craftsman. The comparison with craftsmen resurfaces, with all its details, and adapted to the flair for numbers typical of the encyclopaedia, in *Epistle 40*.

With *Epistle 41 On Definitions and Descriptions* we are once again in a Kindian milieu. As remarked by the editor Ismail K. Poonawala, “The authors of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* were undoubtedly greatly influenced

<sup>21</sup> Plotinus with an English translation by A.H. Armstrong (...) *Enneads* V. 1-9, Harvard U.P. - Heinemann, Cambridge-London 1984 (Loeb Classical Library, 444), pp. 257-9: “This All, if we agree that its being and its being what it is come to it from another, are we to think that its maker (τὸν ποιητήν) conceived earth in his own mind, with its necessary place in the centre, and then water and its place upon earth, and then the other things in their order up to heaven, then all living things, each with the sort of shapes which they have now, and their particular internal organs and outward parts, and that when he had them all arranged in his mind proceeded to his work? Planning of this sort is quite impossible – for where could the ideas of all these things come from to one who had never seen them? And if he received them from someone else he could not carry them out as craftsmen do now, using their hands and tools; for hands and feet come later”.

by the works of al-Kindī and the various translations of Greek philosophical works produced by his school” (p. 282), and this is evident in the epistle. The Technical Introduction (pp. 247-76) lists 17 manuscripts that contain the *Epistle*, two additional sources – the *K. Ġāmi‘ al-ḥikmatayn* by Nāṣir-i Khusrāw (d. ca. 1088) and a recent copy of an Ismaili anthology dating back to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> cent. (described at pp. 267-8) – and finally the modern editions. As mentioned above, in this case too preference is given to the manuscript Istanbul, ‘Āṭif Efendi 1681. The doctrinal introduction (pp. 277-308) contains a careful comparison with the Kindian epistle *On the Definitions and Descriptions of Things*, that counts as the main source of *Epistle* 41. The fact that references to the definitions listed here are interspersed in many other parts of the *Rasā’il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā’* gives a hint to the date of composition of the entire corpus:

It should be noted that most of the definitions given in this *Epistle* occur either *verbatim* or with a slight change of words throughout the text of the encyclopaedia, and very often the Iḥwān give cross-references to those occurrences in particular *Epistles*. This is one of the reasons I have argued, elsewhere, that the *Rasā’il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā’* were post-Kindī but pre-Fārābī (p. 282, n. 19).<sup>22</sup>

The close relationship between *Epistle* 41 and the Kindian one was highlighted first by S.M. Stern in 1959,<sup>23</sup> and Poonawala discusses this and other pieces in the relevant scholarship. Besides the similarities, there are differences too: in particular, *Epistle* 41 gives room to developments that do not feature in al-Kindī’s epistle. Various explanations have been proposed.

What was the original scope when it was composed by its author/s? Besides definitions and descriptions of philosophical terms and ordinary Arabic words dealing with theology, cosmology, and eschatology, did it include, for example, other sections such as numbers, geometry, colours, and flavours? Or were those sections added at a later date? If so, by whom? We can only speculate that the *Epistle* might have gone through several redactions in the hands of the élite among whom it was circulating; however, it should be stated that until more evidence comes to light, the foregoing speculation should remain, at best, tentative. (p. 286).

*Epistle* 41 contains a number of short accounts on the nature of disparate kinds of beings and meaning of terms, cast in the question-answer form “If someone asks – we say”. No special order is detectable in the definitions listed. Thus, it is completely arbitrary on my part to select one topic in the aim of giving to the reader a sense of the compilation that has been described by the editor Ismail Poonawala in the prudent way quoted above. Arbitrary as it might be, I would like to conclude this review by calling attention to the following passage:

If someone were to request: ‘What is the active intellect [*al-‘aql al-fā‘āl*]?, one would reply: ‘The first originated being [*mabda*] originated by God; it is a simple luminous substance that contains the forms of everything’ (trans. Poonawala, p. 315; Ar., p. ١٨٥ . ١-٣).

If one sides with Ismail Poonawala in placing the production of the encyclopaedia between al-Kindī and al-Fārābī, then the conclusion imposes itself that in this formative period the Agent Intellect of the *falsafa* is already installed in the place that it will hold forever – well, at least up to Averroes. This implies that the intermingling between Alexander of Aphrodisias’ Agent Intellect, the Plotinian  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  (that is, the second hypostasis after the One), and the “first created being” of Prop. 4 of the *Liber de causis* is an accomplished fact, to the point that this topic finds its natural place in a compilation like the encyclopaedia of the brotherhood.

To substantiate this statement and to examine its implications goes beyond the limits of a review, but the possibility to have access to items like this are of so great a help for the historian of philosophy, that the editors of this volume really deserve our gratitude.

Cristina D’Ancona

<sup>22</sup> As stated at p. 308, n. 92, Poonawala here refers to his 2011 edition of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Siġistānī’s *Book of the Keys to the Kingdom*.

<sup>23</sup> S.M. Stern, “Notes on al-Kindī’s *Treatise on Definitions*”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 12 (1959), pp. 32-43.

A. Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna: A Study and Edition of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī's Commentary on the Ishārāt*, Brill, Leiden 2015 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, 95), VIII + 289 pp.

A 2005 article by Ayman Shihadeh brought to light again the 12<sup>th</sup> century jurisperite Šaraf al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Mas'ūd ibn Muḥammad al-Mas'ūdī al-Marwazī (d. ca. 600/1204), the author of the treatise edited in this volume.<sup>1</sup> He was mentioned there as a scholar against whom Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) debated in his *Controversies in Transoxania*.<sup>2</sup> Together with a certain Afḍal al-Dīn 'Umar ibn 'Alī ibn Ġaylān al-Balḥī (d. ca. 590/1194),<sup>3</sup> Šaraf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī exemplifies the “anti-falsafī trend”<sup>4</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Muslim East, whose endeavour was that of criticising *falsafa* especially as voiced by Avicenna. This was done mostly in al-Ġazālī's vein, but there are other authors who raised objections against Avicenna, and whose works shed light on Šaraf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī's attitude: chiefly Muḥammad ibn 'Abdalkarīm al-Šahrastānī (d. 548/1153) and Abū l-Barakāt al-Baġdādī (d. 560/1164-5).

With the volume under review, we have the possibility to read Šaraf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī's *Investigations and Objections on the Pointers and Reminders (al-Mabāḥiṭ wa-l-Šukūk 'alā kitāb al-Išārāt wa-l-tanbīḥāt, henceforth Šukūk)*, a work that has changed to some extent Shihadeh's evaluation of al-Mas'ūdī's stance, as we shall see below. The text is edited and accompanied by a detailed commentary on selected issues, articulated into six chapters that precede the edition and stand in a sense in the place of an English translation of the *Šukūk*. The manuscripts on which the edition is based are described in Chapter 7 (pp. 169-73), where also the criteria of

<sup>1</sup> Šaraf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī did not escape the attention of Paul Kraus, to whom we owe the beginning of the modern scholarship on Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: in the seminal study “Les Controverses de Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī”, *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 19 (1937), pp. 187-214 (repr. in Id., *Alchimie, Ketzerie, Apokryphen im frühen Islam. Gesammelte Aufsätze* hrsg. u. eingeleitet von R. Brague, Olms, Hildesheim - Zürich - New York 1994), he shed light on Šaraf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī, one of the scholars against whom al-Rāzī debated in his journey to Samarqand and India: “Rāzī se plaît à mettre en lumière par des traits souvent amusants le caractère de ses interlocuteurs. (...) Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd al-Mas'ūdī, philosophe renommé de Bukhārā, se montre irrité par la moindre objection et fait preuve d'une confiance aveugle et puérile en tout ce qui a été dit ou écrit par Ghazālī” (p. 196 = p. 200 of the reprint). Šaraf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī is mentioned again apropos a controversy about astrology: see below n. 6.

<sup>2</sup> A. Shihadeh, “From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Century Development in Muslim Philosophical Theology”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15 (2005), pp. 141-79. In this article Shihadeh outlines a “post-Ghazalian milieu” in Muslim East, characterised by a critical attitude against philosophy. The latter is exemplified by an interesting passage of the *Daqā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq* by Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233). Shihadeh translates the passage directly from the manuscript Princeton, University Library, Garrett Collection, *Yahuda* 42B, and since this work to my knowledge has not yet been edited, I deem it useful to copy here the passage from Shihadeh's translation (p. 148 of the article quoted above), to give a sense of the attitude of this milieu: “The fascination of the people of our time and the scholars of our age in studying the sciences of the ancients and in borrowing from old philosophers has increased, such that it led them away from studying Legal matters and religious issues. That passion may drive one of them to frequently display his recklessness, by omitting obligations and committing prohibited things, imagining that he is one of the firmly-grounded philosophers and erudite virtuous men (although he is the most ignorant of men in what he claims and the furthest among them from knowing what it involves), and fooled by the bombastic words and strange-sounding names that he hears, such as ‘hyle’, ‘element’ (*uṣṭuqus*), ‘element’ (*unṣūr*), ‘matter’, ‘form’, ‘First Cause’ ‘Active Intellect’, Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Proclus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, etc.! The utmost of the most erudite among them is to have superficial knowledge of the words, instead of [knowing their] meanings”. On Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī see also below, n. 22.

<sup>3</sup> In the volume under review, p. 10, Shihadeh presents this theologian as a “career critic of Avicenna”, who “argues, under al-Ghazālī's influence, that traditional systematic kalām had become out of date and that the discipline must urgently revive itself by shifting its focus to the defence of the orthodox creed through the refuting of the greatest and most immediate threat it is facing at the time, namely, Avicennan philosophy. ‘For nowadays’, he writes, ‘we have no opponents other than the philosophers, who have been a source of corruption in the world’. This stance is typified by Ibn Ghaylān's most substantial extant work, *Ḥudūth al-'ālam*, which defends the doctrine of the creation of the world in time against Avicenna's arguments and refutes his doctrine of the pre-eternity of the world”.

<sup>4</sup> Shihadeh, “From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī”, p. 151.

the edition are given (pp. 173-4). The Arabic part of the volume (Chapter 8, pp. 195-289, Western pagination) contains the edition and the index of proper names. The six chapters that count as an introduction to the reading of the Arabic text are devoted to al-Maʿūdī's background, to his life and works, as well as to the main issues dealt with in the *Šukūk*: causation, possibility, the existence of God, matter and form.

Chapter 1 (pp. 7-43) contains an outline of the cultural background of and biographical information on al-Maʿūdī, with his education, his scholarly activity in Bukhara, the spread of his fame<sup>5</sup> and the return to his native Marw, where he died before 600/1204. It also contains an outline of his works on philosophy (the *Šukūk* and another commentary on a short theological writing by Avicenna, *The Exalted Homily*), on astrology,<sup>6</sup> geography and meteorology (this latter in Persian), on algebra, on medicine (in Persian), on logic, and on jurisprudence. "For sure – writes Shihadeh – there is no evidence that he belonged to any of the established schools of theology" (p. 28), but he is described by the aforementioned ibn Ġaylān al-Balḥī as "a kalām theologian who, like him, was committed to refuting Avicennan philosophy" (p. 29). The fact that Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī describes him "as a philosopher but also ascribes to him certain traits characteristic of kalām, in particular partisan bias and motivation" (p. 33) alerts the reader on the double-sided profile of this author, a "rather ambiguous thinker" in Shihadeh's account: "The perception that he has a foot in both camps appears to be reflected in the two earliest manuscript copies of the *Shukūk*, where al-Maʿūdī is given the honorific title 'the one followed by the two parties' (*muqtadā l-farīqayn*), probably a reference to (traditional Avicennan) philosophers and (counter-Avicennan) theologians" (*ibid.*).

This makes the *Šukūk* an interesting work indeed: in Shihadeh's presentation, and to some extent also at variance with the image of al-Maʿūdī as one of the key players of the "anti-*falsafī* trend" of his times,<sup>7</sup> this work does not attest another attack to Avicenna like those alluded to above;<sup>8</sup> nor is al-Maʿūdī the arrogant supporter of al-Ġazālī described by Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in the passages of the *Controversies in Transoxania* which Paul Kraus called attention to.<sup>9</sup> Rather, his attitude in the *Šukūk* mirrors, in some sense, that of Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī himself: a theologian attentive to and receptive of Avicenna's own theological and metaphysical claims.<sup>10</sup> He is a theologian, but the "doubts" he raises apropos Avicenna's *Pointers and Remainders* do not

<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, p. 18, Shihadeh remarks: "the impression we are given in al-Rāzī's *Munāzarāt* [i.e., the *Controversies in Transoxania* mentioned above] is that al-Maʿūdī was the most outstanding specialist in philosophy in Bukhara, and probably in the whole of Transoxania, and was surrounded by a circle of scholars".

<sup>6</sup> Shihadeh, p. 24, lists among Šaraf al-Dīn al-Maʿūdī's works a *Compendium on [Astrological] Interrogations*, in Persian, that might form the background of the controversy reported by Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, on which Kraus had called attention in the article quoted above, n. 1, as follows: "Chez Sharaf al-Dīn al-Maʿūdī Rāzī rencontre réunis nombre de savants de Bukhārā qui discutent âprement les questions astrologiques. Il déclare que les grands philosophes sont tous d'accord pour rejeter cette pseudo-science et qu'il n'y a aucune raison de s'émouvoir de la prédication mensongère des astrologues. En réponse à la question de Maʿūdī demandant ce qui lui permet de douter d'une science qui a déjà donné tant de résultats positifs, confirmés par l'expérience, Rāzī invoque d'abord l'opinion d'al-Fārābī qui, selon le jugement compétent d'Avicenne, est le plus grand philosophe du passé et qui a réfuté dans un traité spécial les assertions des astrologues. (...) À la réponse arrogante de Maʿūdī, Rāzī réplique en disant qu'il aurait mieux fait de ne pas venir en Transoxiane pour ne pas entendre pareille argumentation. Maʿūdī ayant cité l'autorité de Ghazālī en faveur de son opinion, Rāzī se met à démolir pièce par pièce un chapitre central du *K. al-tabāʾif*" (pp. 203-4 = 207-8 of the reprint).

<sup>7</sup> See above, n. 4.

<sup>8</sup> On the anti-Avicennan works of al-Šahrastānī cf. W. Madelung, "Aš-Šahrastānīs Streitschrift gegen Avicenna und ihre Widerlegung durch Našīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī", in *Akten des VII. Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft Göttingen, 15. bis 22. August 1974* hg. von A. Dietrich, *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Dritte Folge, Nr. 98*, 1975, pp. 250-59 (repr. in W. Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*, Variorum, London 1985, same pagination) and J. Jolivet, "La cosmologie anti-avicennienne de Šahrastānī d'après la *Lutte contre les Philosophes (Mušārāʾat al-falāsifa)*", *Medioevo* 23 (1997), pp. 441-52.

<sup>9</sup> See above, n. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Issam Marjani's contribution in this volume (see above, pp. 205-32) adds a piece of evidence to this aspect of Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's attitude towards Avicenna.

feature a refutation in al-Ġazālī's vein. It is a pity that the two 'faces' of Šaraf al-Dīn al-Ma'sūdi are not explicitly confronted to one another, but it is the great merit of this volume that of allowing the reader to form his own idea out of the reading of the *Šukūk*, instead on the basis of the admittedly not unbiased record of Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. In Shihadeh's presentation, the *Šukūk* are not a refutation of Avicenna, rather they feature a different literary genre, the "aporetic commentary".

To the identification of this kind of commentary Shihadeh devotes the first part of Chapter 2 (pp. 44-9, the entire chapter, pp. 44-85). The "aporetic commentary" (*šakk*), is something different from the "exegetical commentary" (*šarḥ*)<sup>11</sup> and belongs to a tradition exemplified in the Arab world by Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's *Doubts on Galen*<sup>12</sup> and Ibn al-Hayṭam's *Doubts on Ptolemy*.<sup>13</sup> Works of this kind differ from the refutations even in their title: the refutations are labelled as *ibtāl*, *radd*, or *naqd*, whereas "the expression *shakk* (pl. *shukūk*) denotes a problem, or objection, that tends to be relatively narrow in scope and limited in its implications. (...) The target individual and his works will always be responsible for laying the foundations of a major system within a certain field of scholarship, and will therefore have an authoritative status in the field. The author of the aporetic text is normally an insider to the field, but one who nonetheless is more or less unsatisfied with the authoritative system in question" (p. 45). An analogy obviously pops into the mind of the reader with a background in late Antique Greek philosophy: that with the genre of the ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις,<sup>14</sup> and one wonders if this is a case of sheer analogy, or of influence. There are examples of circulation in Arabic of Greek refutations, the most famous one being that of Alexander of Aphrodisias' controversy against Galen;<sup>15</sup> but the difference between *radd* and *šakk* to which Shihadeh calls attention requires further investigation, that is not pursued in this volume but which is a real desideratum. As the tiny contribution of an outsider, I would like to suggest here two lines along which such an inquiry might be carried out: on the one side, that of the reception of the commentaries on Aristotelian logic in the question-and-answer form, initiated by Porphyry<sup>16</sup> and continued by the commentators in the school of Alexandria and their Syriac imitators, as

<sup>11</sup> It is not clear to me what precisely is the difference between the 'function' and the 'scope' of a commentary that occurs in n. 1 of p. 44, when Shihadeh distinguishes his own classification from the distinction between 'problem commentaries' and 'system commentaries' made by R. Wisnowsky, "Avicennism and Exegetical Practice in the Early Commentaries on the *Ishārāt*", *Oriens* 41 (2013), pp. 349-78. Shihadeh says: "the former distinction [i.e., his own distinction] focuses on the function of a commentary, whereas the latter [i.e., Wisnowsky's] focuses primarily on scope".

<sup>12</sup> Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī ('Rhazes', d. 312/925) authored not only the *Doubts on Galen* (*Kitāb al-Šukūk 'alā Ġālīnūs*, ed. M. Muḥaqqiq with Persian, Arabic and English Introductions, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Tehran 1993 [al-Fikr al-Islāmi, 1]), but also another work, lost to us, entitled *Doubts on Proclus* (*Kitāb al-Šukūk 'alā Buruqlus*): cf. H. Daiber, "Abū Bakr al-Rāzī", in U. Rudolph - R. Würsch (eds.), *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt, Band 1. 8.-10. Jahrhundert*, Schwabe Verlag, Basel 2012 (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie begründet von Friederich Ueberweg, Völlig neubearbeitete Ausgabe hrsg. von H. Holzey), pp. 261-89, here p. 270, no. 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Šukūk 'alā Baṭlamīyūs li-l-Ḥasan ibn al-Hayṭam*, ed. 'A. Sabra - N. al-Šihābī, with an introd. by I. Madkūr, Dār al-kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo 1971, repr. 1996.

<sup>14</sup> What we usually label the *Questions* by Alexander of Aphrodisias are entitled at least in part ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις (the other part being labelled προβλήματα), as stated by Bruns in his Introduction to the 1892 edition (*Suppl. Ar.*, II); ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις is also the title of Damascius' work usually referred to as *On First Principles*, where he raises apories on Proclus' metaphysical system: *Damascius. Traité des premiers principes. I. De l'Ineffable et de l'Un. II. De la triade et de l'unifié. III. De la procession de l'unifié*, texte établi par L.G. Westerink et traduit par J. Combès, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1986, 1989, 1991 (CUF).

<sup>15</sup> N. Rescher - M.E. Marmura, *The Refutation by Alexander of Aphrodisias of Galen's Treatise on the Theory of Motion Translated from the Medieval Arabic Version*, with an Introduction, Notes, and an Edition of the Arabic Text, Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad 1965.

<sup>16</sup> Porphyry's short commentary on the *Categories κατὰ πεῦσιν καὶ ἀπόρισιν*, edited in 1887 for the *CAG* series by A. Busse (IV 1, pp. 55-142), has been edited anew by R. Bodéüs, *Porphyre. Commentaire aux Catégories d'Aristote*, Édition critique, trad. française, introduction et notes, Vrin, Paris 2008 (Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques).

highlighted by Henri Hugonnard-Roche;<sup>17</sup> on the other, that of the so-called *Eröffnung eines Abschnittes* highlighted by Gerhard Endress in the early reception of Greek works in Arabic translation,<sup>18</sup> labelled also “animation” by F.W. Zimmermann,<sup>19</sup> which might also have inspired the theological works styled in the form “if one says ... we respond”.<sup>20</sup>

Be that as it may, the scope of al-Mas‘ūdī’s work is “to record ‘puzzles’ and ‘dubitations’ that he ‘encountered’” while studying Avicenna’s *Pointers and Reminders*. (p. 51) in terms of “dispassionate philosophical enquiry” (p. 52). In Shihadeh’s presentation, Šaraf al-Dīn al-Mas‘ūdī was “conscious that the debate between traditional Avicennists and critics of Avicenna has often been hostile, and that this work may be construed as an episode in an ongoing onslaught on Avicennan philosophy”, hence his willingness to be or appear impartial. This he does by discussing the main metaphysical issues dealt with in Avicenna’s *Pointers and Reminders*.

Chapter 3 (pp. 86-108) examines the notion of causality discussed by al-Mas‘ūdī in his *Problem 9*. Shihadeh reaches the conclusion that “al-Mas‘ūdī does not espouse the occasionalist doctrine of continuous creation advocated in classical Ash‘arism and Mātūrīdism” (p. 108), thus departing from al-Ġazālī’s doctrine on this issue.

Chapter 4 (pp. 109-42) deals with Avicenna’s ontology of the possible, namely the status of created things (*Problem 10*), and contains an interesting excursus on the immortality of the human soul (*Problem 14*). Following in al-Ġazālī’s footsteps, al-Mas‘ūdī argues that “if the possibility of coming-to-be of the human soul obtains in the body before the soul comes to be, then it is conceivable for the possibility of the passing away of the soul to obtain in the body, and subsequently for the soul to pass away” (p. 138). Hence, “By **querying** the anomalous status of the human soul in Avicenna’s ontology of generable things, al-Mas‘ūdī highlights a contradiction between Avicenna’s theories of dispositional possibility and the incorruptibility, and hence immortality of the soul. Avicenna accordingly must give up one of these two doctrines. (...) It follows that the immortality of the soul too can only be established by revelation, and is not rationally demonstrable” (p. 140).

Chapter 5 (pp. 143-55) discusses al-Mas‘ūdī’s approach in *Problem 7* to the Avicennan argument for the existence of God. He engages in the discussion of the conflicting statements of Avicenna and al-Ġazālī on infinite regression. Here too al-Mas‘ūdī sides with al-Ġazālī, and in particular with the Fourth Argument in the *Tabāfut*: “since the philosophers consider the series of past occurrences beginningless, although each occurrence comes to be in time, they are not entitled to hold that a series of simultaneous causes must be finite, and correspondingly that a First Cause exists” (p. 150).

Chapter 6 (pp. 156-74) is devoted to matter and form (*Problem 1*). Shihadeh compares the Avicennan doctrine of matter with that of Abū l-Barakāt al-Baġdādī, because both feature in the *Šukūk*. For al-Mas‘ūdī

<sup>17</sup> H. Hugonnard-Roche, “La tradition gréco-syriaque des commentaires d’Aristote”, in V. Calzolari - J. Barnes (eds.), *L’œuvre de David l’Invincible et la transmission de la pensée grecque dans la tradition arménienne et syriaque. Commentaria in Aristotelem Armeniaca – Davidis Opera*, vol. I, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2009 (Philosophia Antiqua, 116), pp. 153-73, examines the relationship between the commentary on Aristotle’s *De Interpretatione* by the Syriac Proba (6<sup>th</sup> century) and the coeval Greek commentary by David the Armenian, one of the last Alexandrine commentators of Aristotle; of special interest for the present purpose is the form of apories-and-solutions that features in both works: “Les deux commentaires de Proba et David sont composés (...) selon un même schéma rhétorique, formé d’apories successives et de leurs solutions: les commentaires entiers, en effet, sont composés de modules rhétoriques de même sorte qui se succèdent” (pp. 161-2).

<sup>18</sup> G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus. Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in arabischer Übersetzung*, Imprimerie Catholique, Wiesbaden-Beirut 1973, pp. 171-4.

<sup>19</sup> F.W. Zimmermann, “Proclus Arabus Rides Again”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 4 (1994), pp. 9-51, here pp. 30-4. This “animation” characterises several texts issued from the circle of al-Kindī, and is especially prominent in the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, where the couple *wa-in qāla qā’il ... qulnā* is formulaic.

<sup>20</sup> The formula features also in the *Šukūk*, as remarked by Shihadeh, p. 57: “After an objection is submitted, the ensuing discussion sometimes proceeds in the question-and-answer dialectical mode characteristic of kalām: ‘if it is said ... (*in qīla, in qultum, in qālū*), we will say... (*qulnā*), or ‘the response is...’ (*al-jawāb*)”. I have no idea whether the formula originated in early kalām literature or in the pseudo-*Theology*: since Plotinus’ treatises were translated into Arabic around 842, and since the formula *wa-in qāla qā’il ... qulnā* is intertwined with the Greek expressions prompting the *Eröffnung eines Abschnittes*, if it was taken from kalam literature, this means that it was already in circulation in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century.

“Avicenna fails to prove that body consists of matter and form” (p. 167). To sum up, none of the main ontological and metaphysical theses of Avicenna’s *Pointers and Remainders*, in al-Mas’ūdī’s view, resists dialectical examination.

Commenting upon al-Mas’ūdī’s remark that all of his criticisms of Avicenna are grounded in al-Ġazālī’s *Tabāfut* (Arabic text, p. 273.16-17) Shihadeh remarks: “Obviously, therefore, the *Tabāfut* had a decisive effect on the metaphysical discussions in the *Shukūk* (...) The Ghazālian impact on the *Shukūk* is not confined to the specific argument reproduced or developed by al-Mas’ūdī, but informs the very ‘agenda’ of the book. (...) Although the underlying theological commitments and motives are not declared openly in any metaphysical discussions, they are unmistakable. In Sections 8 and 11, al-Mas’ūdī attacks Avicenna’s doctrine of God’s absolute simplicity, and argues instead that it is possible that He has an essence and (as Ash’arīs hold) attributes over and above His essence. In Sections 9 and 10, he criticises two prime underpinnings of the theory of the pre-eternity of the world, and champions antitheses each of which entails that the world is created in time, *ex nihilo*. (...) With its criticisms of metaphysical doctrines evidently intended to lend credence to certain widely held theological views, the *Shukūk* displays some of the hallmarks of al-Ghazālī’s critical and dialectical style of theology, which underlies the latter’s criticism of Avicennan philosophy in defence of the orthodox creed. Yet, in sharp contrast to al-Ghazālī and Ibn Ghaylān, al-Mas’ūdī undertakes his criticism of Avicennan doctrines in a much more restrained manner, nowhere declaring any religious motives nor partaking in anti-Avicennan polemic” (pp. 82-4).

What is described here is a philosophical theology in its inchoative state. As Shihadeh has it, “the metaphysical discussions of the *Shukūk* can be read as attempts to develop philosophical formulations of certain central creeds that were previously couched in the framework of kalām” (p. 84). The intention of al-Mas’ūdī seems to be to show “how Avicennan philosophy is in harmony with the teachings of revelation” (*ibid.*) – something that paves the way to the *Klerikalisierung der Wissenschaften* that has been sharply pinpointed by Endress as the dominant trend of the centuries immediately subsequent to al-Mas’ūdī’s times: “Zunächst vor der Toren der Madrasa, aber zunehmend in den Schulen selbst verbinden sie die Lehrer der Scharia *ma’qūlāt* und *manqūlāt*, gesellen sich die rationalen Wissenschaften zu den islamischen Disziplinen der Rechtschule, bildet sich eine durch Philosophie verwissenschaftlichte Theologie: Klerikalisierung der Wissenschaften und Verwissenschaftlichung der Religion wird die Grundströmung des nachmongolischen Islam”.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> “Die dreifache Ancilla. Hermeneutik und Logik im Werk des Sayfaddīn al-Āmidī”, in U. Rudolph -D. Perler (eds.), *Logik und Theologie. Das Organon im arabischen und im lateinischen Mittelalter*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2005, pp. 117-45, here p. 120. See also of the same scholar “Reading Avicenna in the madrasa: Intellectual Genealogies and Chains of Transmission of Philosophy and the Sciences in the Islamic East”, in J.M. Montgomery (ed.), *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy. From the Many to the One*. Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank, Peeters, Leuven 2006 (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 152), pp. 371-422.