Studia graeco-arabica

9

2019

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

Submissions
Submissions are invited in every area of the studies on the trasmission 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 9 (2019), claims and customer service: redazione@pacinieditore.it

Web site: http://learningroads.cfs.unipi.it/sga
Service Provider: Università di Pisa, ICT - Servizi di Rete Ateneo

ISSN 2281-2687
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.

Italian Scientific Journals Ranking: A (ANVUR, Classe A)
Indexing and Abstracting; ERIH PLUS (SCH ESF); Index Islamicus (Brill Bibliographies); Scopus (Elsevier)

© Copyright 2019 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, Kitābḫāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḍawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

D.N. Hasse, *Success and Suppression. Arabic Sciences and Philosophy in the Renaissance*, Harvard U.P., Cambridge (Mass.) - London 2016 (I Tatti Studies in Italian Renaissance History), XVIII + 660 pp.

The topic of a 2013 collection of studies,[1] Arabic philosophy in the Renaissance is amplified in this volume to include Arabic scientific works broadly speaking. D.N. Hasse deals with Renaissance as with the "crucial period in which the West began to disconnect from its Arabic sources" (p. xii), and this idea inspires the title with its interplay of "success" and "suppression". "Success" stands here for the multifarious debt that the Renaissance has to Arabic science and philosophy, and "suppression" for the refusal to acknowledge it. In Hasse's opinion, this interplay characterises Western culture from the Renaissance onwards. On the one hand, "the Renaissance reception of Arabic authors was not a decrepit leftover from the Middle Ages, but a very active and intellectually challenging endeavor of its own kind" (p. 299).[2] On the other, Arabic science was in the Renaissance the object of a "conscious opposition to scientific theories for nonscientific reasons" (p. 300), an attitude that is labelled "suppression" because "The polemics against Arabic traditions in the West were not purely rhetorical. They influenced the scientific discussion and formed part of a struggle for basic beliefs, ideological concepts, Christian orthodoxy, intellectual leadership, personal glory, printing success, university reforms, and academic positions. As a result, the discussion of medical, philosophical, and astrological theories was significantly strained by nonscientific interests. The course of the sciences was changed by these attitudes – a development that was accompanied by gains and losses. The term suppression implies that these losses were the result of conscious actions, and one may doubt that suppression of Arabic traditions existed in the Renaissance. But it did." (*ibid*.). To sum up the main thesis of the book with the author's words, "Renaissance opposition to Arabic traditions in philosophy and the sciences was motivated by an amalgam of scientific arguments, mere partisanship, and outright ideology. (...) The *ad fontes* idea in itself was not yet provocative, but many humanist scientists claimed more than that (...). As modern historians, we have gotten accustomed to a positive image of the Renaissance idea of a return to the ancients because we recognize its productivity. But we tend to overlook the violent, disastrous, and reactionary elements that the idea also implies" (pp. 311-12). This impact is detailed as follows: "The entry of humanism into the history of Arabic sciences in Europe was not a mere side-episode of history, but a dramatic intervention. (...) The humanist movement was not at all inimical to Arabic sciences as such. We have seen many examples of humanist scholars who contributed to the flourishing of Arabic sciences and philosophy in the Renaissance. Moreover, and very notably, humanists did not oppose Arabic sciences because they were Oriental or because they originated from Islamic culture. Rather, they opposed them partly for scientific reasons, partly as a result of ideological beliefs in linguistic purism and in Greek superiority, and partly because Arabic authors were an obstacle – an obstacle to the humanist's project of renewing Europe through Greece and Rome" (pp. 313-14).

This position is argued for in two parts that are comprised of three chapters each, plus an Appendix. Part I, "The Presence of Arabic Traditions" (pp. 3-133), opens with an "Introduction. Editions and Curricula" (pp. 3-27), devoted to providing examples for the fact that "on the eve of the Renaissance, Arabic culture was a source culture of equal rank with the Greek and the Roman",

---

[1] A. Akasoy - G. Giglioni (eds.), *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, Springer, Dordrecht - Heidelberg - New York - London 2013 (International Archives of the History of Ideas, 211).

[2] As detailed at p. 196, with n. 98 (p. 490), the idea here criticised is Renan's, who in *Averroès et l'averroïsme* had described the Paduan Averroism as mere survival of Scholasticism.

© Copyright 2019 Pacini Editore

a situation that "aroused the protest of humanist scholars" (p. 4). These were essentially based on the topic of the defective nature of those scientific works that could not be traced back to a Greek source, or were transmitted by translators having no Greek. In the eyes of the humanist scholars mentioned in this chapter, it was essentially the ignorance of Greek that hampered Arab writers – and for that matter also the Latins who relied on Arabic-to-Latin translations – from getting access to Greek science in its adamant clarity. As an example of this attitude, Hasse quotes the statement of the physician Girolamo Donzellini,[3] that he labels "a humanist manifesto". After complaining that medical science sank into oblivion, Donzellini "states very clearly what rescued medicine from this situation: the Renaissance study of languages, *linguarum peritia*" (p. 7).

Since this topic resurfaces in other parts of the volume, let's pause to comment that the attitude to blame the translations from Arabic as inaccurate was by no means unprecedented. It is well known that in the Middle Ages Roger Bacon championed the same view.[4] His protests against the Toledan and Sicilian translators contain a great deal of unjust criticism, as has been noticed time and again,[5]

---

[3] In a letter of dedication, written in 1563, this scholar claims: "When the science of medicine was transported from the Greeks to the Arabs it was shripwrecked (*naufragium fecit*), and when the Latins received it from the Arabs, they were very unproductively involved in it for a long time. God, finally, having mercy on our fate, brought the sciences back to light, together with the competence in languages, and also illuminated this divine science (i.e., medicine): a number of men were awakened, who taught the sciences from the clear sources of the Greek", trans. by Hasse, p. 7; the Latin text is made available at pp. 414-15.

[4] In Chapter XXV of the *Opus tertium*, entitled *De linguis seu de utilitate grammaticae*, Roger Bacon emphasises the importance of the study of Greek; as a consequence, he severely criticises the Latin translations widespread in the universities of his age: "(...) multa fuerunt male translata, et praecipue de philosophia. Nam oportet quod translator sciat scientiam quam vult transferre et sciat duas linguas, a qua et in quam transfert. (...) Alii vero qui infinita quasi converterunt in latinum ut Girardus Cremonensis, Michael Scotus, Aluredus Anglicus, Hermannus Alemannus, et translator Manfredi nuper a domino rege Carolo devicti; hi praesumpserunt innumerabilia transferre, sed nec scientias nec linguas sciverunt, etiam non latinum; et ideo isti male et pessime transtulerunt, et conturbaverunt totam philosophiam per perversitatem translationis, et maxime libri Aristotelis sunt destructi per hoc, qui tamen aestimantur in philosophia tenere principium" (*Opus tertium*, XXV, 91-92 Brewer). On the background of this attack stands Roger's overall criticism of the teaching methods in the universities, especially in Paris – a topic on which sheds light J. Hackett, "Roger Bacon and the Reception of Aristotle in the Thirteenth Century: An Introduction to His Criticism of Averroes", in L. Honnefelder - R. Wood - M. Dreyer - M.A. Aris (eds.), *Albertus Magnus und die Anfänge der Aristoteles-Rezeption im lateinischen Mittelalter. Von Richardus Rufus bis zu Franciscus de Mayronis*, Aschendorff, Münster 2005 (Subsidia Albertina, 1), pp. 217-47.

[5] First L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science During the First Thirteen Centuries of our Era*, I-VIII, McMillian & Co., London - New York 1923-1958, vol. II (1923), p. 633, had observed that Roger Bacon himself was not exempt from mistakes in his approach to Aristotle; then S.D. Wingate, *The Medieval Latin Versions of the Aristotelian Scientific Corpus, with Special Reference to the Biological Works*, The Courier Press, London 1931, pp. 112-19, called attention on Bacon's "misstatements". The reasons why Bacon's criticisms of his fellow-scientists were not unbiased, and even unjust, have been detailed later on by P. Bourgain, "Le sens de la langue et des langues chez Roger Bacon", in G. Contamine (ed.), *Traduction et traducteurs au Moyen Age.* Actes du colloque international du CNRS organisé à Paris, Institut de recherche d'histoire des textes, les 26-28 mai 1986, CNRS Éditions, Paris 1989 (Documents, études et répertoires publiés par l'IRHT), pp. 317-29, and by R. Lemay, "Roger Bacon's Attitude Toward the Latin Translations and Translators of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century", in J. Hackett (ed.), *Roger Bacon and the Sciences. Commemorative Essays*, Brill, Leiden - New York - Köln 1997 (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 57), pp. 25-47, where the reasons for Roger Bacon's "intemperate denunciations of the Latin translations" (p. 26) are explored. Especially related to the present topic is the claim in Bacon's *Compendium studii philosophiae*, p. 469 Brewer: "Quicumque vult gloriari de scientia Aristotelis, oportet quod eam addiscat in lingua propria et nativa", on which Lemay calls attention at pp. 43-4, not without commenting that "This was clearly an impractical counsel, which he did not follow himself for sure". For a general assessment of Roger Bacon's stance see now J.M. Gázquez, *The Attitude of the Medieval Latin Translators Towards the Arabic Sciences*, SISMEL - Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2016 (Micrologus' Library, 75), pp. 143-6.

but for the sake of the present discussion it is interesting to remark how similar the two scholars are – Roger Bacon, the Oxford Franciscan of the 13th century, and Girolamo Donzellini, the Italian physician of the 16th – in elevating Greek science, and the genuine meaning of Aristotle's treatises in the case of Bacon, to the rank of an archetypical source of knowledge, closed off to all those who did not master Greek.

Back to the Renaissance: Hasse's first chapter contains a very useful survey of the printed editions of the Arabic authors, chiefly Averroes, and of the university curricula in the three disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and astronomy. "The printing history of Arabic authors is impressive. Some Arabic authors, in particular Averroes, Avicenna, Mesue, and Rhazes, were printed again and again in the great printing locations Venice, Lyon, and Basel. (...) The demand for such editions must have been considerable, and it is clear that the distribution of Arabic sciences in Latin Europe reached its high point in the sixteenth century, especially in the three disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and astrology" (p. 26).

Chapter 2, "Bio-Bibliography: A Canon of Learned Men" (pp. 28-68), deals with the "image that Renaissance biographers created of famous and influential Arabic people" (p. 28), and concentrates on Avicenna, Averroes, and 'Albumasar', i.e. the astrologer Abū Maʿšar al-Balḫī (d. 866). We learn from this chapter that the *Supplementum chronicarum* penned by the Augustinian friar and medical scholar Jacopo Filippo Foresti (d. 1520) was the first bio-bibliography of learned men[6] to include Arabic authors. We also learn of a series of later chronicles that give room to biographical information on these authors. Another literary genre started listing Arabic scholars in the 16th century: the catalogues of famous men. Hasse presents Symphorien Champier's 1506 catalogue of physicians and Leo Africanus' *De Viribus quibusdam illustribus apud Arabes*, which "contains in rough chronological order twenty-eight lives of Arabic scholars, plus five biographies of Hebrew scholars at the end" (p. 47), and offers a very interesting example of first-hand information on Arabic learning – Leo Africanus was a Spaniard born from a Muslim family[7] – combined with the Latin tradition. Then Hasse moves to the *Bibliotheca universalis*, written in 1545 by the professor of Greek Konrad Gesner, and to Bernardino Baldi's *Le vite de' matematici*, written between 1587 and 1596. "The overall image of Arabic authors created in the Renaissance is Hispanicizing: in many Renaissance sources, the Arabic scientists were all declared Andalusians – partly as a result of Spanish pride, and partly because Arabic authors were thought to come from the country where they had been translated from Arabic" (p. 67).

In Chapter 3, "Philology: Translators' Programs and Techniques" (pp. 69-133), the "many Arabic-Latin and Hebrew-Latin translation efforts, which began in the 1480s" come to the fore, and the chapter documents the outcome of this process also by means of a table (pp. 72-75). "The results of these efforts are impressive: nineteen commentaries of Averroes were translated for the first time, in addition to the sixteen commentaries translated in the Middle Ages, and six new versions of Avicenna's *Canon* or parts of it were produced. And apart from these major projects, there were other important translation enterprises, such as translations of Alpetragius's *De Motibus caelorum*, Alhazen's *De Mundo et coelo*, and Avicenna's short philosophical tracts. Many of these

---

[6] Hasse (p. 30) aptly remarks the influence on the rise of this literary genre of the Latin translation of Diogenes Laertius, which is reflected in the treatise *Liber de vita et moribus philosophorum* attributed to Walter Burley. In addition to the studies quoted, see also T. Dorandi, "La *versio latina antiqua* di Diogene Laerzio e la sua recezione nel Medioevo occidentale: il *Compendium moralium notabilium* di Geremia da Montagnone e il *Liber de vita et moribus philosophorum* dello pseudo-Burleo", *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 10 (1999), pp. 371-96.

[7] His real name was al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Wazzān al-Zayyātī. Biographical information on this "fascinating figure, a wanderer between cultural worlds" is provided at pp. 45-6.

Latin translations, and the Averroes translations in particular, were produced from Hebrew versions. The Renaissance Hebrew-Latin translators thus relied on the previous work done by the Arabic translators of the Middle Ages" (p. 69).

This is typically the case of Moses Alatino's translation from Hebrew of the paraphrase that Themistius devoted, in the 4th century AD, to Aristotle's *De Caelo* – a translation on which I deem it useful to add some information, taken from Elisa Coda's article on an earlier issue of this journal, because Alatino does not feature in Hasse's volume. This is a pity, in consideration of the fact that Alatino wrote two dedicatory letters where he declared his intentions and method,[8] showing full awareness of humanist ideals and of the challenges the translator had to face when working on a translation of a translation.

As we learn from Coda's article, the Jewish physician and scholar Moses Alatino (1529-1605) translated Themistius' paraphrase (lost in Greek) from the (extant) Hebrew version made in the Middle Ages out of an Arabic version (lost). To recap the various reasons of interest of the literary history of Themistius' In *De Caelo* would go beyond the limits of this review, but Alatino's dedicatory letters are a case in point for the topic of Hasse's book. Educated in a humanist context, Alatino wanted to put at the disposal of a science-oriented readership the exposition of a crucial and difficult Aristotelian treatise – the *De Caelo* – by a commentator – Themistius – whose competence and clarity had earned him the praise of Ermolao Barbaro Jr.. As detailed by Coda, it did not take long for Alatino to realise that Themistius' paraphrase, although available in Hebrew – a language he mastered perfectly – was far from being easy to translate: his reflections on what it implies to translate from a translation, as well as his conscious refusal of the ideal of elegance that dominated the earlier versions of Themistius' paraphrases by Ermolao Barbaro Jr.,[9] are really

[8] E. Coda, "Breve nota su una traduzione ebraico-latina umanistica: Mosé Alatino (1529-1606) traduttore di Temistio", *Studia graeco-arabica* 6 (2016), pp. 187-210.

[9] The two prefatory letters where Alatino explains himself on these topics are translated into Italian by Coda, "Breve nota su una traduzione ebraico-latina umanistica", pp. 203-6. A passage from the second letter, addressed by Alatino to his students, is germane to our discussion: "Given that the paraphrase was translated from Greek into Arabic in Averroes' times, then again from Arabic into Hebrew, no wonder that these repeated translations produced some errors, thus generating unclear and difficult sentences. (...). Pay attention, now, to the steps I performed in preparing my own translation. First of all, following as closely as possible the similar sentence in Aristotle's passage, I realised that parts that were before extremely confused and unclear became understandable; I thus realised that other parts had lost their clarity due to the change in the order of the words. This happens chiefly because both languages, Hebrew and Arabic, share common features because of the affinity of many words and names, while differing in this, that Hebrew is concise, short, distinct, with each word bearing multiple meanings; Arabic, on the contrary, is the reverse, and each language has its own style. Another difference consists in that Hebrew has a diction which is short, while Arabic's is long; the same names, and countless words are pronounced in different ways in the two languages. I thus realised that for this reason, as a consequence of the transformation of the sentence, some passages had become obscure and difficult to understand, but once understood, which means put in the right order, they become clear again. There were, in addition, sentences that were redundant in Hebrew, but once re-translated into Arabic, they became completely clear: in order to get the sound text, they had to be eliminated. Finally, I translated into Latin words that [in the Hebrew text] had been left in Arabic, since they have their synonymous in Greek; on the other hand, it was from the context that I understood the real meaning of other words. All in all, in the entire book only one or two words remain not translated and have no explanation in Latin. As for the rest of the discourse, I have tried my best to translate, as far as possible, word for word; if this proved impossible, I concentrated on the meaning of the discourse and I preserved the sentence as it stood. I did not play to my heart's content: my aim was to translate Themistius into Latin, not to compete with the supremely learned and sophisticated Ermolaus. As a matter of fact, it is not easy to adornate with such a refined style and polished words those topics that are in and by themselves demanding and difficult: sure, one should pay attention not to render them in a rough, barbarian language; but they are beautiful and

interesting, and Moses Alatino should be taken into account in future research on the topic of Hasse's volume.[10]

The examples of the translations from both Arabic and Hebrew of Averroes' Preface to Book XII of the *Metaphysics*, Avicenna's *Canon*, Averroes' *Colliget*, and of the pharmacological fourfold treatise by 'Mesue' (Yuḥannā ibn Māsawayh, d. 857) testify for the "involvement of humanists in the Latin transmission of Arabic works in the Renaissance" (p. 123). Hasse concludes that "the Renaissance translation movement is clearly influenced by the new humanist attitudes towards the text" (p. 130).

If Part I thus documents "success", Part II, "Greek versus Arabs" (pp. 137-315) is devoted to argue for "suppression". It opens with Chapter 4, "*Materia medica*. Humanists on Laxatives" (pp. 137-78), that sets the stage for the ensuing discussion by pointing to the "anti-Arabic and pro-humanist" turn (p. 137) of medical Humanism – something that features chiefly in the works of a 16th century German physician, Leonhart Fuchs.

Chapter 5, "Philosophy. Averroes' Partisans and Enemies" (pp. 179-247) explores the ways in which Averroes' authority as a commentator of Aristotle progressively declined. It is Hasse's conviction that this happened chiefly under the pressure of the Church, not because of the increasing influence of the Greek-to-Latin translations of the late Antique commentaries that accompanied the growing interest to read Aristotle in Greek, that is one of the most evident hallmarks of the Renaissance. Focussing chiefly on Averroes' doctrine of the unicity of intellect, Hasse raises the question "whether the reception of the unicity thesis was impeded or promoted by nonphilosophical motives" (p. 180). The philosophical issue of the individual or common, hence separate, nature of our faculty to intelligise was debated, as is well known, chiefly in the seventies of the 13th century; also it is well known that Thomas Aquinas, in his *De Unitate intellectus*, argued against Averroes' doctrine of a super-individual faculty of intelligising shared by all men: Thomas contrasted with each other Averroes' doctrine and Aristotle's *De Anima*, corroborated in his eyes by the exegeses of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius. On the contrary, one of the typical topics of Paduan Averroism was the defence of Averroes' vision of the Aristotelian doctrine of the soul. Against the backdrop of the great interest in and esteem for Averroes' commentaries, that materialised in the editorial activities of the 15th and 16th centuries in Padua and Venice, the reception of Averroes' unicity thesis suffers, in Hasse's opinion, from a series of nonphilosophical biases. "But the Renaissance image of Averroes was much determined also by the many enemies he had found among humanists, theologians, Church officials, and even Aristotelian philosophers. (...) The humanist disdain for Averroes reaches back to Francesco Petrarca, who repeatedly attacked Averroes in his letters and invectives for being in conflict with Christian faith. (...) The two anti-Averroist themes of irreligion and bad style remained standard among humanist authors; another motive was Averroes's ignorance of Greek" (p. 182). In this vein, the 1481 translation of Themistius' paraphrases by Ermolao Barbaro prompted the spread

brilliant in themselves, and if embellished with supernumerary frills, they are spoiled. Therefore, I decided to exchange with Themistius without too much elegance, rather than wandering here and there with Cicero". See below, n. 12, for the passage of Ermolao Barbaro here alluded to by Alatino, and Coda's in-depth discussion of the two models of translation in the article quoted above.

[10] Also the translation by Moses Finzi of Themistius' paraphrase of *Book XII* of the *Metaphysics* is worthy to be mentioned; as we learn from Coda, "Breve nota su una traduzione ebraico-latina umanistica", p. 187, n. 15, Finzi's translation was published in Venice in 1558 under the title *Themistii Peripatetici lucidissimi paraphrasis in duodecimum librum Aristotelis de prima philosophia*.

of the idea that Averroes' position was dependent upon Greek sources often misunderstood, due to his ignorance of Greek.[11]

Shortly after Ermolao Barbaro's translations of Themistius, with their declared humanist attitude,[12] Girolamo Donati translated Alexander of Aphrodisias' own *De Anima*,[13] and Giovanni Fasolo translated the commentary of the ps.-Simplicius on Aristotle's *De Anima*. One might think that all this both reflected and contributed to creating a powerful impulse toward the Greek commentaries in the endeavour to understand Aristotle, and this is indeed a widespread position in scholarship. But this is a myth for Hasse: "It is time to abandon a myth about Averroes' influence in the Renaissance that has found some distribution in the past decades – that the Arabic commentary tradition and Averroes in particular were supplanted by the Greek commentators in the Renaissance. In a series of studies, Charles Lohr, Edward Mahoney, and Eckhard Kessler have unearthed the influence of the Greek commentators, building on the earlier research by Bruno Nardi, Paul O. Kristeller, and others. In their enthusiasm about the rebirth of the Greek commentators they overemphasized their influence in one respect: it did not lead the replacement of either Averroes the philosopher or Averroes the commentator. It is true that Vernia and Nifo claimed to have abandoned Averroes because they had read the Greek commentators on Aristotle in Greek. But, as we have seen, the Greek turn advocated by Vernia and Nifo was also a means to cover up another cause of their shift, the pressure of orthodoxy. The new position adopted by the two philosophers owes little to the Greek commentators and very much to Thomas Aquinas's *De Unitate intellectus*" (p. 243). In sum, the Church condemnations of all those who maintained the mortality of the human soul, and chiefly the Fifth Lateran Council of 1513, stand in Hasse's view for the main motive of the decline of interest in Averroes as a commentator of Aristotle: despite its "success" among many Renaissance thinkers, the unicity thesis was bound to "suppression". What Hasse calls "the fiction of a Greek turn"[14] had in his opinion "a second purpose: it helps to

---

[11] Hasse quotes from a 1485 letter by Ermolao Barbaro, claiming that "if you compare his writings with those of the Greeks, you will find that, word for word, they are stolen from Alexander, Themistius, and Simplicius": p. 183, the Latin text, p. 483. Note that for Ermolao Barbaro, as well as for other Renaissance authors mentioned in this chapter, this commentary on the *De Anima* is genuinely by Simplicius. It is recognised today by most scholars as not genuine, hence the attribution to a "pseudo-Simplicius". Also for Hasse the commentary is by Simplicius (cf. for instance pp. 220-2).

[12] Coda, "Breve nota su una traduzione ebraico-latina umanistica", p. 198, quotes and translates into Italian Ermolao Barbaro's *Preface*, where the intention is announced to re-write in Latin Themistius' beautiful Greek prose. Coda also discusses Alatino's conscious distancing from this model: see above, n. 9.

[13] Not, as Hasse has it, p. 198, "Alexander of Aphrodisias's commentary, book 1", but Alexander's own *De Anima* (Alexander's commentary is lost), which was sometimes designated in the past as *De Anima* I to keep it distinct from that collection of short treatises – today labelled "*Mantissa*"– whose title in the manuscripts is Περὶ ψυχῆς β (= *De Anima liber alter*). Cf. Alexandri Aphrodisiensis *Praeter commentaria scripta minora. De Anima cum Mantissa* (...) edidit I. Bruns, Reimer, Berlin 1897 (Supplementum Aristotelicum, II), Praefatio, p. XIV: "Latinam interpretationem ediderunt De Anima libri Hieronymus Donatus, patricius venetus, primum 1502, alterius De Anima libri Angelus Caninus Anglariensis, 1555, uterque Venetiis ("the Latin version [i.e., of Alexander's *De Anima* and of the *Mantissa*] was published first by the Venitian aristocratic Girolamo Donati in the year 1502, whereas the second book *On the Soul* was published in the year 1555 by Angelo Canini, who was born in Anghiari; both were published in Venice").

[14] "Nifo's Greek turn against Averroes in *De Intellectu* is a fiction created by Nifo himself in 1508, when he fashioned himself as a torchbearer of Greek Aristotelianism. In view of his earlier remark that he postponed the publication of the *De Intellectu* because of charges of heresy, it is very likely that Nifo's story of the Greek turn is meant to cover up the most important factor in his early intellectual biography: the pressure of orthodoxy" (p. 214). Hasse recaps his point as follows: "Modern scholars have often been too impressed by the humanist polemics against Arabic authors and by their dramatic call for a return to the Greeks" (p. 299).

cover up the more important cause of the changing attitude toward Averroes, which is pressure from the Church" (p. 302).

Chapter 6, "Astrology. Ptolemy against the Arabs" (pp. 248-92) describes in detail the Renaissance ideal of a "Ptolemaic reform of astrology" (p. 290); according to Hasse, "the humanist preference for Ptolemy triggered productive transformations of the science of astrology. But on some issues, the same preference blinded the followers of Ptolemy to the strenghts of Arabic doctrines. (...) In these cases, the advocation of a return to Ptolemy is mainly motivated by a biased belief in the superiority of Greek science and of Ptolemy in particular" (p. 291).

Chapter 7 contains the "Conclusion" (pp. 293-315). As for philosophy, "The critics of Averroes were much more justified in criticizing the reliability of Averroes's commentaries in general as a guide to understanding Aristotle, especially if Averroes is compared with the Greek commentators on Aristotle. Humanist scholars with knowledge of Greek, such as Juan Luis Vives, were able to compare the Greek texts of Aristotle and the ancient commentators with the Arabic-Latin tradition. They were the first to see that the accumulated errors of transmission and translation from Greek into Arabic, sometimes via Syriac, severely impaired the reliability of Averroes's commentary as a guide to the text of Aristotle. The transmission into the Latin world added further problems. Averroes, with his enormous expertise as an Aristotelian scholar, was able to circumvent a good number of textual distortions, especially in vocabulary, but he often fell victim to the many small corruptions of syntax that distort Aristotle's argumentation, such as when Averroes reads 'we' instead of 'he', that is, Plato, as Vives points out. (...) The humanist opposition to Averroes, then, was based on a mixture of good intuition and mere ideology. This helps to explain the mixed reception of Averroes in the Renaissance: he was admired, for instance, by Zabarella, as the greatest expert on Aristotelian philosophy, but lost his dominating position as an expert on Aristotle's very text because of his distance from the Greek text" (pp. 309-10).

The Appendix, entitled "The Availability of Arabic Authors in Latin Editions of the Renaissance" (pp. 317-407) consists of very useful list of all the printed editions of the forty-four Arabic authors known to the Latin readership before 1700. The 114 editions of Averroes and the 78 editions of Avicenna are telling in and by themselves, but physicians, astronomers/astrologers, and other scientists are numerous as well.

At the beginning of his research, Hasse explains that his overall understanding of the circulation and reception of works by Arabic authors is based on a selection of sources that discards "anonymous, theological, grammatical, or litterary works; it thus leaves out, for example, the translators of the Neoplatonic *Theologia* of Pseudo-Aristotle, and the translators of the Quran" (p. 71). My guess is that to take the Renaissance fortuna of the pseudo-*Theology* into account[15] is, on the contrary, instructive: it sheds light on an aspect of the *ad fontes* ideal that is germane to Hasse's argument in this book. The increasing awareness on the part of the humanist editors of Aristotle's corpus that the *Theology* had no chances to be by Aristotle reveals that the same attitude to check the reliability of the Medieval sources that is (justly) praised by Hasse in the field of biographies[16] is at work in the

[15] My main source for this is the outstanding study by J. Kraye, "The pseudo-Aristotelian *Theology* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe", in J. Kraye - W.F. Ryan - C.B. Schmitt (eds.), *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages. The Theology and Other Texts*, The Warburg Institute, London 1986, pp. 265-86.

[16] "Renaissance biographers are at their best when they set out to refute errors: as when Schedel argues against Avicenna's correspondence with Augustine, Gesner insists on keeping the three 'Johns' apart, and Baldi mounts arguments against dating Albumasar's flourishing to the sixth century on the basis of relative chronology" (p. 65). The mention of the "three 'Johns' " alludes to the fact that Konrad Gesner was able to disambiguate the three *Ioannes* often confused in

admittedly more important field of Aristotelian philosophy. The judgment on the pseudo-*Theology* advanced by Pierre de la Ramée (d. 1572) was surely not biased in favour of Aristotle: his aversion for Aristotle is outspoken, but he knows the Aristotelian works and their commentators very well,[17] and it is for this reason that he does not hesitate to reject Aristotle's authorship. After enumerating the parts of the corpus, Pierre de la Ramée writes:

> Etenim praeter superiores libros, Aristoteles alios quatuordecim conscripsit, non illos dico Arabis nescio cuius, editos Aristotelis nomine, sed eos qui graece inter graeca Aristotelis opera leguntur (...).[18]
> Also, in addition to the books mentioned above, Aristotle composed fourteen further books, I mean, not those which, issued from an unknown Arabic author, have been published under Aristotle's name, but those which can be read in Greek, within the context of Aristotle's Greek works (...).[19]

Jill Kraye lists the perplexities of other scholars between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, from Pierre de la Ramée to Isaac Casaubon, as follows:

> The Portuguese Jesuit Pedro Fonseca stated in his 1577 commentary on the *Metaphysics* that there were those who believed the *Theology* was written by Aristotle (...). Fonseca, however, declared that he was not convinced by these arguments. Nor did Giambattista Crispo believe that the *Theology* was authentic. He remarked in 1594 that the discrepancy between the doctrines in the *Theology* and those found in all Aristotle's other works was obvious (...). Even those with strong motivation to believe in the authenticity of the *Theology* recognized that its authorship was too controversial for them to cite the work as Aristotelian. Muzio Pansa, in his *De Osculo ethnicae et Christianae philosophiae* (1601), argued that the *Theology* was the most convincing proof of his thesis that the notion of God found in Aristotle was in agreement with the Old and New Testaments. (...) But Pansa knew that the genuineness of the work had been attacked by Ramus and others; therefore, he reluctantly decided that 'pro astruenda Aristotelis cum nostris concordia, testimonia ex eo hic adducere recusamus'. Isaac Casaubon, one of the greatest classical scholars of the period, also turned his formidable critical powers to the problem of the authenticity of the *Theology*. In his unpublished notebooks or *Adversaria*, he briefly described the work and then stated categorically: *Sane rudem esse philosophiae Aristotelis et orationis illius ac viae docendi oportet, cui poterit persuaderi hoc opus esse illius. Omnia diversa, saepe contraria, sicut nihil possit magis*.[20]

Unbiased tension to go *ad fontes* guided, in the 13th century, also Thomas Aquinas to refuse any Aristotelian authorship to the *Liber de causis* – an attitude that seems to inspire individual scholars in various times and cultural areas. Scholars sharing this attitude became admittedly numerous in the Renaissance and set the tone of the epoch, thus paving the way to the philological approach both to Greek and Arabic classics.

Cristina D'Ancona

---

medieval literature: that Yūhannā ibn Māsawayh who has already been mentioned above, Yūḥannā ibn Sarābiyūn (a 9th century author of a medical compendium), and John Damascenus.

[17] As testified by his harshly polemical commentary on the *Physics*: *Petri Rami Scholarum physicarum libri octo in totidem acroamaticos libros Aristotelis recensione emendati per Joannem Piscatorem Argentinensem cum indice accurato*, apud haeredes Andreae Wecheli, Francofurti 1583.

[18] *Petri Rami Scholarum metaphysicarum libri quatordecim in totidem Metaphysicos libros Aristotelis recensione emendati per Joannem Piscatorem Argentinensem cum indice copioso*, Francofurti apud haeredes Andreae Wecheli 1583, p. 5.

[19] The allusion is to the fact that the Latin version of the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, whose *editio princeps* appeared in 1509 in Rome, arranges the text into fourteen chapters instead of the ten of the Arabic original.

[20] Kraye, "The pseudo-Aristotelian *Theology*" (above, n. 15), p. 274.

Finito di stampare nel mese di dicembre 2019
presso le Industrie Grafiche della Pacini Editore S.p.A.
Via A. Gherardesca • 56121 Ospedaletto • Pisa
Tel. 050 313011 • Fax 050 3130300
www.pacinieditore. it