

Studia graeco-arabica

7

2017

Editorial Board

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

Staff

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

Submissions

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

Peer Review Criteria

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

Subscription orders

Information on subscription rates for the print edition of Volume 7 (2017), claims and customers service: redazione@pacineditore.it

Web site: <http://learningroads.cfs.unipi.it>

Service Provider: Università di Pisa, ICT - Servizi di Rete Ateneo

ISSN 2239-012X (Online)

Registration at the law court of Pisa, 18/12, November 23, 2012.

Editor in chief Cristina D'Ancona (cristina.dancona@unipi.it)

Mailing address: Dipartimento di Civiltà e Forme del Sapere, via Pasquale Paoli 15, 56126 Pisa, Italia.



© Copyright 2017 by Industrie Grafiche Pacini Editore, Pisa.

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

Cover

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

V. Kaya, *İbn Sînâ'nın Kelâma Etkisi* [*Avicenna's Influence on Islamic Theology*], Otto Yayınları, Ankara 2015, pp. 183 (in Turkish).

In recent scholarship, it has already been established that major issues of *Kalâm* (Islamic theology) such as the distinction between essence and existence, the dichotomy of necessary and contingent beings, and the proofs for the existence of God had significantly contributed to Avicenna's philosophical system. Nevertheless, to what extent Avicenna's contributions and criticisms played their role in the development of the later *Kalâm* is still worth studying, for this entails a comparative approach. V. Kaya's *Avicenna's Influence on Islamic Theology* is important in that it proposes to offer us a comparative approach to evaluate how *Kalâm* interacted with Avicenna's philosophy and developed after his time. What makes Kaya's interpretation valuable is that he prefers an approach which posits a mutual influence between *Kalâm* and *Falsafa* (Islamic philosophy), rather than settling Avicenna in the centre: a common, if inadequate, method which has mostly been applied in the studies on Avicenna.

First the author deals with the issue of the subject-matter of theology in the eyes of Avicenna. He goes on to examine such problems as the conceptual history of the terms 'necessary being' (*wāğib*) and contingent being (*mumkin*) before and after Avicenna, the description of God as a 'necessary being', the proof from contingency (*dalil al-imbkân*), the essence-existence distinction, God's attributes in terms of their being under the category of necessity and contingency. All these topics are addressed in order to evaluate to what extent Avicenna was influential in the relevant problems.

In the history of *Kalâm*, the *Mutakallimûn*'s (Muslim theologians) perception of Avicenna was either positive or negative; in each case, it was almost impossible for them to disregard Avicenna's writings. A milestone of this approach of the *Mutakallimûn* is al-Ġazālî's stance, who was the first *mutakallim* to officially encounter the philosophical project of Avicenna. As stated by Kaya, al-Ġazālî was aware that the philosophy of Aristotle and his loyal followers in the Islamic world, such as al-Fārābî and Avicenna, had not been critically dealt with by his predecessors. However, the fact that Avicenna was seen as a turning point should not give the impression that all philosophical production after him could be reduced to certain influences and implications of Avicenna's philosophical system, for this contradicts the rules of continuity in the history of ideas. Any attempt to relate metaphysical ideas after Avicenna directly to his system is simply "taking the easy way out". However, the *Mutakallimûn* did not refrain from confronting Avicenna's philosophy, for they were aware that, if they had ignored the rapid expansion of the writings of Avicenna, the *Kalâm* might have not endured its strong position in Islamic thought.

There have been different assessments as to the two-sided relationship between philosophers and theologians, who were both under the influence of Greek philosophy. In this respect, it is essential to look into the relationship of the Muslim philosophers to classical Islamic theology, in order to reach a correct assessment of the nature of the relationship between Islamic philosophy and theology. In fact, if their works are studied closely, major figures of Islamic philosophy such as al-Kindî, al-Fārābî and Avicenna were in contact with *Kalâm*, specifically the Mu'tazilite *Kalâm*. Kaya gives some examples to show the philosophers' interaction with Kalam literature. In his treatises, al-Kindî discussed such Kalam issues as the creation of the world (*hudût*), the impossibility of infinite regress (*tasalsul*), prophecy, and human beings' capability to act (*istiṭā'a*). Al-Fārābî considered the Kalam and jurisprudential (*fiqh*) premises in his discussion of the logical premises and syllogisms. It is also known that he included *Kalâm* and *Fiqh* in the classification of the sciences. Finally, with Avicenna's writings, the relationship between *Kalâm* and *Falsafa* reached its peak.

In his treatise *R. Fî Aqsâm al-'Ulûm*, Avicenna posited an overlap between the subject-matter of metaphysics (*al-'ilm al-ilâhî*) and the science of unity (*tawḥîd*, which is *Kalâm*). According to the

author, this gave way to the later *Mutakallimūn*'s understanding of philosophy and theology as two disciplines which seek for the same truth. Besides, the fact that for al-Ġazālī and Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī philosophy was almost equalized with the philosophical system of Avicenna, and that the latter sought to establish a new and "correct" system of *Kalām* contributed to the increase of Avicenna's influence on later periods. In accordance with these facts, the author set his objective to see how much the later theologians were influenced by the works of Avicenna and how one can evaluate this influence accurately. However, since it is impossible to examine the influence of Avicenna in all areas, he focuses on ontology, i.e. the study of the existent qua existent, and especially on Avicenna's basic terms "necessarily existent" (*wāġib al-wuġūd*) and "possibly existent" (*mumkin al-wuġūd*). In such a project, it is also necessary to limit the scope of investigation in terms of Kalamic literature. The author deems it necessary to look into Aš'arite Kalamic literature, since it might prove difficult to deal only with Mu'tazilite and Māturidite literature, due to the fact that the Aš'arite works provide sufficient material. However, it is still interesting to examine the works which belong to these two important literatures, in terms of the interaction between *Kalām* and *falsafa* after Avicenna, such as Abū l-Mu'īn al-Nasafī's *Tabsira al-Adilla*, and Ibn al-Malāḥimī's *al-Mu'tamad* and *al-Fā'iq*.

Avicenna generally avoids mentioning the names of the Kalamic scholars and schools, in spite of the fact that his writings allude to many contemporary Kalamic concepts and discussions. As an example of the rare occasions in which Avicenna mentions the *Mutakallimūn*, one can see the section in his *al-Naġāt* on origination (*ḥudūt*), where he displays contempt for the weakness of the *Mutakallimūn*'s misconception of creation, and his *Risāla* to one of the *Mutakallimūn* in which he mentions the Mutazilite al-Qādī 'Abd al-Ġabbār by name. In order to prove Avicenna's hidden, but deep engagement with *Kalām*, Kaya specifies certain contexts, all of which, he argues, bear witness to Avicenna's interaction with contemporary Mu'tazilite theology. According to the author, there is still no clear evidence to prove that Avicenna uses any other work which belongs to other Kalamic schools, such as the Aš'ariyya and Māturīdiyya. Avicenna's *al-Risāla al-Ar'īyya* exhibits a close interaction with the Mu'tazilite *Kalām* in that it shows Avicenna's familiarity with the Kalamic discussions on the essence of God and the relationship between essence and attributes. In this treatise, Avicenna sets his aim to establish "the realities of the science of *tawḥīd*", a typical Kalamic agenda, confirming the Mu'tazilite formula that God's attributes are not different from His essence. Nonetheless, Avicenna also criticises the classical Kalamic viewpoint that different actions come from the single essence of God, thus he avoids following any Kalamic ideas if there is any harm to the basic principals of his philosophical system.

In the classification of the sciences, Avicenna gives particular importance to the science of *Kalām*, or rather the "science of unity" as it is called by him, a fact that ties him to the attitude of his predecessors, such as al-Fārābī and al-'Āmirī. For these Muslim philosophers, *Kalām* corresponds to dialectics in the Aristotelian sense, whose duty is to defend or rebut certain argumentations. In this respect, Kaya points to the places where Avicenna's observation on the method of *Kalām* are similar to those of al-Fārābī. In Kaya's words, no matter if the situation seems so, there is the simple fact Avicenna included the main issues of Islamic theology, such as the existence of God, the unity of God and the attributes of God in the science of metaphysics. According to Kaya, Avicenna, in fact, attempted to establish "an apodictic (*burhānī*) *Kalām*", just as the *Mutakallimūn* strived to do (p. 44). To prove his case, Kaya quotes Avicenna's statement in his *Ta'aqqub al-Mawāzi' al-Ġadaliyya*, that it is possible to raise the Kalamic argumentations to the state of certainty (*burhān*), even though the *Mutakallimūn* of his age fell short of achieving that purpose. Besides, Avicenna's inclusion of the Kalamic principles in the science of metaphysics paved the way to al-Ġazālī's making of *Kalām* as a universal science in philosophical terms.

Another context which proves the strong relationship between Avicenna and *Kalām* is the discussions on the origination of the world (*ḥudūt*). Avicenna criticized the *Mutakallimūn* who argued

that the world has a beginning in time, having stated that their argument from its origination lacks certainty in its premises. Furthermore, Avicenna supported the idea that it is contingency (*imkān*), not origination itself, that sets the criteria as to why something receives its existence from its agent. In fact, Avicenna devotes a famous section in his *al-Nağāt* to this particular issue. Offering a new context to understand this section, Kaya argues that it should be examined with the contemporary Muʿtazilite literature about the issue of the permanence of substances (*baqā al-ğawābir*). Kaya points that Avicenna refutes the Muʿtazilite view that substances are free from the effect of their agents in the state of their being existent. The author also quotes some passages from al-Qādī ʿAbd al-Ğabbār which seem to set the background for Avicenna’s discussion of origination. Another Kalamīc topic which concerned Avicenna was atomism. Avicenna levels his criticisms towards the theory of atomism, not only in relation to ancient Greek philosophical literature, but also with respect to the contemporary theories in Muʿtazilite *Kalām*. Basically, Avicenna’s recurring definition of the body, as “a contiguous (*muttaṣil*) substance which is not composed of indivisible parts” exhibits his open criticism of Kalamīc atomism, which is based on indivisible parts. For that reason, a parallelism has been drawn with Avicenna and the Muʿtazilite Nazzām, who was also against the theory of atomism.

As is shown by recent scholarship, Avicenna’s stance on the essence-existence relationship has direct reference to the Kalamīc discussions on whether non-existent (*maʿdūm*) entities are things or not. Accordingly, Kaya provides more Kalamīc grounds for thinking so. As he points out, pre-Avicennan Muʿtazilites examined in detail the ontological status of the non-existent, significantly contributing to the usage and development of concepts such as existence, non-existence, thing etc., a situation which sets the backdrop for the later essence-existence distinction. For the Muʿtazilites, while the concepts of *wuğūd*, *huṣūl* and *iṭbāt* denote the existence of things, the concepts of *ṣayʿiyya*, *dāt*, and *ʿayn* denote their essence. Avicenna criticizes the Muʿtazilite concept of non-existence and their proof from origination (*hudūt*), arguing that the Muʿtazilite’s biggest mistake is to take non-existence as an existent entity and to build the origination theory on this false premise. Avicenna uses the particular existence (*al-wuğūd al-ḥās*) to denote essence, and the positive existence (*al-wuğūd al-iṭbātī*) to denote real (*versus* mental) existence. By the expression “particular existence” for the essence of things, Avicenna’s choice entails direct criticism of the Muʿtazilite notion that entities are absolutely non-existent before their creation.

Avicenna’s engagement with Kalamīc literature extends to his familiarity with discussions in Muʿtazilite works. In one particular example, it is very interesting to see that Avicenna supports the Basran Muʿtazilites on their view of *aṣlah* (what is proper and best for God to do), against their opponents, the Baghdad Muʿtazilites. Avicenna holds that God cannot be required to consider what is best for His creatures, as the Baghdad Muʿtazilites claim. If this were accepted, it would have been useless for human beings to be grateful to God, since God would have done what is required for Him. This line of argumentation, which is used by Avicenna in *al-Risāla al-Arṣīyya* is clearly taken from Muʿtazilite authorities such as al-Qādī ʿAbd al-Ğabbār. Overall, as Kaya says, Avicenna’s relation to classical *Kalām* goes beyond simple allusions which occur in several places in his writings, and indicates a much more elaborate interaction with contemporary Kalamīc literature. This can only be seen with a comparative outlook between his writings and classical *Kalām*.

In the second chapter Kaya addresses the development of a key concept in theology and philosophy, that of necessary being (*wāğib al-wuğūd*). The trio of necessity, contingency and impossibility were known to the *Mutakallimūn* before Avicenna at the epistemological level, and the *Mutakallimūn* also utilized ‘necessity’ to describe God as “the necessary being” at the ontological level. Especially the Kalamīc literature of the fourth/tenth century witnesses the fact that in the discussions on the attribute of ‘eternity’ (*qidam*), God’s existence was posited as necessary while other beings are only possible. Kaya quotes some passages from the works of pre-Avicennan *Mutakallimūn* such as

al-Bāqillānī, al-Qādī ‘Abd al-Ġabbār, al-Butḥānī (a Zaydite/Mu‘tazilite author of the fourth century), all emphasizing the dichotomy of necessary being (God) and contingent beings. The concept of contingent (*mumkin/ġā’iz*) also played an important role in the *Mutakallimūn*’s theory of the origination of the world. The classical distinction of the eternal-originated was equalized with the distinction between necessary and contingent. The early *Mutakallimūn*’s usage of modal logic witnesses to the fact that they were acquainted with these Aristotelian concepts, even though these were adapted to different contexts. The author points to some related texts which belong to the early Mu‘tazilite (al-Ka‘bī) and Maturidite *Kalām*, all of which indicate that modal logic was in wide circulation in classical *Kalām*. Therefore, it is not acceptable to say that Avicenna was a starting point for *Kalām* to engage in modal logic and ontology. The description of God as a necessary existent can even be found in the writings of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Aš‘arī, as is traceable in quotations from the works of his followers. All this shows the early *Mutakallimūn*’s eagerness to utilize Aristotelian logic, even if they tried to settle *Kalām* as a distinct discourse from the philosophical tradition. As a result, Avicenna cannot be the only one who transmitted the above-mentioned concepts to theologians.

The two-sided nature of the relationship between philosophy and theology suggests to re-evaluate the topics in later *Kalām* which have been supposed to be totally under the influence of Avicenna. The author argues that the main concern of Avicenna in his criticisms towards the *Mutakallimūn* was the issue of the origination of the world. He wanted to propose a mediation between the notion of origination and the Aristotelian concept of eternity. The world is eternal in time, but it is still “originated” (*ḥādīt*) since it owes its contingent existence to its sole creator. For Avicenna, to apply the concept of contingency (*imkān*) is the best way to prove God’s creating power, since it entails that, in this way, the world depends on God’s action at every moment, not only at the time of creation, as suggested by contemporary *Mutakallimūn*. It is meaningful to see that Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, a prominent theologian after Avicenna, saw the notion of contingency as an alternative method to the classical notion of origination. In the last resort, the *Mutakallimūn* did not totally depend on Avicenna’s writings to use the proof from contingency – they rather took Avicenna’s criticisms into consideration when they applied their classical method for proving the contingency of the world.

As for proofs for the existence of God, Kaya disagrees with the idea that before Avicenna the *Mutakallimūn* used the proof from origination, while after him they switched towards the proof from contingency. The texts of *Kalām* scholars such as Abū Rašīd al-Nisābūrī, Ibn Bābawayh, al-Bāqillānī reveal that the proof from contingency was in circulation before Avicenna. Besides, it is important to notice that the idea of contingency supported by the *Mutakallimūn* and Avicenna differ significantly. While Avicenna is of the opinion that the state of contingency must be found in the eternal substance, the *Mutakallimūn* maintain that contingency does not need the notion of ‘eternity’. Besides, the proof from contingency in *Kalām* does not depend exclusively on the concept of existence, as is the case with Avicenna’s. Post-Avicennian scholars such as al-Ġuwaynī do not exhibit the influence of Avicenna, as alleged in recent studies; rather, they follow the classical Kalamīc argumentation which is mostly based on the idea of *taḥsis*. Kaya points out that Avicenna’s influence can be detected in an argumentation by al-Ġazālī in his *Faḍā’ih al-Baṭiniyya*, where in order to prove the existence of God he bases himself on mere existence and states “there is no doubt that something exists”, just as Avicenna does in his *al-Mabda’ wa-l-Ma’ād*. Avicenna criticized the *Mutakallimūn* because they used an argumentation to prove the existence of God which is based on the sensible world. Avicenna’s main impact, as Kaya suggests, was that he proposed a more stringent and clear proof based on logical terms, not that he introduced new concepts into the vocabulary of the *Mutakallimūn*.

The chapter on the essence-existence distinction argues that early Kalamīc texts show that, in the mind of the Muslim theologians, there was certainly a distinction between the essence of things and

their existence, but expressed in terms different from those of the *falāsifa*. According to Kaya, there were two main contexts in classical Kalam to look for the distinction: 1. The discussions on whether the non-existent is a thing or not (*al-mā'dum šay'*), 2. The discussions on whether human beings are capable of knowing the essence of God or His existence. In the first context, some *Mutakallimūn* held that God's creating power is active only in bringing things into existence, not in giving them their essences and identities. The non-existents can be regarded as entities, even though these were not yet brought into existence by God. As for the second context, the early theologian ʿAmr (d. 815) held that human beings can only know that God exists, not what He really is. He clearly distinguished between the *māhiyya* ('essence') and the *anniyya* ('existence') of things. According to Kaya, the fact that later *Mutakallimūn* dealt with the classical Kalam problem of the non-existent under the heading of the essence-existence distinction can be seen as a continuation of the early Kalam idea that the issue is directly related to the problem of creation. Avicenna is of the opinion that the attributes of God can be predicated of God either in the way of attribution (*idāfa*) or negation (*salb*), and this is in order for him to prove the ultimate unity of God, beyond any multiplicity. This can be seen as a purely Neoplatonic tenet; however, in some of his texts, Avicenna seems to take into consideration the Mu'tazilite tradition on the attributes of God. His clear statement in *al-Risāla al-Arṣiyya* that God's attributes are not superadded to his essence is an approval of the Mu'tazilite thesis, or at least a denial of the views that God has attributes besides His essence, an opinion that was held by the *Ṣifātiyya*. This position of Avicenna shows that he acted not only as a representative of Neoplatonic philosophy, but also an intellectual actor in the Muslim community of his times.

The discussions on whether the attributes of God are necessary ('*wāğib*') or possible ('*mumkin*') in later *Kalām* cannot be merely related to Avicenna's distinction of necessary and possible, since we can trace back the discussion well before Avicenna in Mu'tazilite literature. The Mu'tazilites saw the concepts of necessity and possibility as general categories to be applied to all existent and mental entities. Moreover, they particularly pointed to the problem whether God's attributes can be accepted as necessary, since necessity means being free from any cause. In this context, the discussions on the necessity of the attributes of God took place between the Mu'tazilites and the Kullābites (and later, the Aš'arites). The Aš'arites struggled to find a way to put the essential attributes under the category of 'necessity' and to argue that both God and His attributes are necessary, that is, free from any cause. The early interaction of the Aš'arite *Kalām* with Mu'tazilite theology on this particular subject led the later Aš'arites to take into consideration Avicenna's dichotomy between necessary and contingent beings in their system. Moreover, Kaya discusses the claim by scholars such as R. Wisnovsky that the *Mutakallimūn* owe their distinction of "necessary by itself" (*wāğib bi-dātihī*) and "necessary by other" (*wāğib bi-ğayrihī*) to the vocabulary of Avicenna: the distinction, again, was in wide circulation in the Kalam of this age. For Kaya, the real influence of Avicenna in the issue of God's attributes has to be detected in his understanding of the attributes as attributions (*idāfat*) or negations (*sulūb*). Avicenna sought to explain the traditional Islamic theory of attributes in terms of these two categories, and the theologians after him followed his path to come with alternative theories.

Kaya's overall thesis in the book can be summarized as follows: to evaluate Avicenna's influence on Islamic theology, one must not fall into the error of reducing all post-Avicennan philosophical theories in later *Kalām* to the philosophy of Avicenna. Indeed, the interactions of *Kalām* with the philosophical notions goes well back early from the time of Avicenna, and this is particularly relevant in the application of the terms necessity, possibility, and impossibility at the epistemological and ontological levels. It is essential to look into the history of the relationship between *Kalām* and *Falsafa* as a "history of mutual interaction" and to see Avicenna as a "decisive point", rather than a "starting point".

ZH