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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābḫāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḍawī 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 *Kalām* (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 *Kalām* 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 *Kalām* 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 *Kalām* and *Falsafa* (Islamic philosophy), rather that settling Avicenna in the centre: a common, if inedequate, 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' (*wāǧib*) and contingent being (*mumkin*) before and after Avicenna, the description of God as a 'necessary being', the proof from contingency (*dalīl al-imkān*), 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 *Kalām*, the *Mutakallimūn*'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 *Mutakallimūn* is al-Ġazālī's stance, who was the first *mutakallim* to officially encounter the philosophical project of Avicenna. As stated by Kaya, al-Ġazālī was aware that the philosophy of Aristotle and his loyal followers in the Islamic world, such as al-Fārābī 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 *Mutakallimūn* 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 *Kalām* might have not endured its strong position in Islamic thought.

There have been different asssessments 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-Kindī, al-Fārābī and Avicenna were in contact with *Kalām*, specifically the Muʿtazilite *Kalām*. Kaya gives some examples to show the philosophers' interaction with Kalamic literature. In his treatises, al-Kindī discussed such Kalamic issues as the creation of the world (*ḥudūṯ*), the impossibility of infinite regress (*tasalsul*), prophecy, and human beings' capability to act (*istiṭāʿa*). Al-Fārābī considered the Kalamic and jurisprudential (*fiqh*) premises in his discussion of the logical premises and syllogisms. It is also known that he included *Kalām* and *Fiqh* in the classification of the sciences. Finally, with Avicenna's writings, the relationhsip between *Kalām* and *Falsafa* reached its peak.

In his treatise *R. Fī Aqsām al-ʿUlūm*, Avicenna posited an overlap between the subject-matter of metaphysics (*al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*) and the science of unity (*tawḥīd*, which is *Kalām*). 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 Faḫr 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 expeically on Avicenna's basic terms "necessarily existent" (*wāğib al-wuğūd*) and "possibly existent" (*mumkin al-wuğud*). 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 Ašʿarite Kalamic literature, since it might prove difficult to deal only with Muʿtazilite and Māturidite literature, due to the fact that the Ašʿarite 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-Muʿīn al-Nasafī's *Tabsira al-Adilla*, and Ibn al-Malāḥimī's *al-Muʿtamad* and *al-Fāʾiq*.

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-Naǧāt* on origination (*ḥudūṯ*), 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-Qāḍī ʿAbd 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 Muʿtazilite 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 Ašʿariyya and Māturīdiyya. Avicenna's *al-Risāla al-Arʿšiyya* exhibits a close interaction with the Muʿtazilite *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 Muʿtazilite 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 philosohical 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-ʿĀmirī. 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 *Taʿaqqub al-Mawāziʿ al-Ǧadaliyya*, 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 (*ḥudūṯ*). 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-Naǧāt* 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-ǧawāhir*). 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-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār which seem to set the background for Avicenna's discussion of origination. Another Kalamic 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 Kalamic atomism, which is based on indivisible parts. For that reason, a parallelism has been drawn with Avicenna and the Muʿtazilite Naẓẓām, 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 Kalamic discussions on whether non-existent (*maʿdūm*) entities are things or not. Accordingly, Kaya provides more Kalamic 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 *wuǧūd*, *ḥuṣūl* and *iṯbāt* denote the existence of things, the concepts of *šayʾiyya*, *ḏāt*, and *ʿayn* denote their essence. Avicenna criticizes the Muʿtazilite concept of non-existence and their proof from origination (*ḥudūṯ*), 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-wuǧūd al-ḫāṣ*) to denote essence, and the positive existence (*al-wuǧūd al-iṯbātī*) 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 Kalamic 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 *aṣlaḥ* (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-Arʿšiyya* is clearly taken from Muʿtazilite authorities such as al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār. 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 Kalamic 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 (*wāǧib al-wuǧūd*). 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 Kalamic 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-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār, al-Buṭḥānī (a Zaydite/Muʿtazilite author of the fourth century), all emphasizing the dichotomy of necessary being (God) and contingent beings. The concept of contingent (*mumkin*/*ǧāʾiz*) 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 Muʿtazilite (al-Kaʿbī) 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-Ašʿarī, 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" (*ḥādiṯ*) 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 Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, a prominant 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'a 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-Ǧuwaynī do not exhibit the influence of Avicenna, as alleged in recent studies; rather, they follow the classical Kalamic argumentation which is mostly based on the idea of *taḫṣīṣ*. Kaya points out that Avicenna's influence can be detected in an argumentation by al-Ġazālī in his *Faḍāʾih 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-*Mabdaʾ wa-l-Maʿād*. 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 Kalamic 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-maʿdum šayʾ*), 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 Ḍirār b. 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 Kalamic problem of the non-existent under the heading of the essence-existence distinction can be seen as a continuation of the early Kalamic 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 (*iḍāfa*) 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 Muʿtazilite tradition on the attributes of God. His clear statement in *al-Risāla al-Arʿšiyya* that God's attributes are not superadded to his essence is an approval of the Muʿtazilite 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 ('*wāǧib*') 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 Muʿtazilite literature. The Muʿtazilites 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 Muʿtazilites and the Kullābites (and later, the Ašʿarites). The Ašʿarites 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 Ašʿarite *Kalām* with Muʿtazilite theology on this particular subject led the later Ašarites 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" (*wāǧib bi-ḏātihī*) and "necessary by other" (*wāǧib bi-ġayrihī*) 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 (*iḍāfāt*) or negations (*sulūb*). Avicenna sought to explain the traditional Islamic theory of attributes in terms of these two catogories, 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".

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