

J.-B. Brenet – O. Lizzini (eds.), *La philosophie arabe à l'étude – sens, limits et défis d'une discipline moderne*, Vrin, Paris 2019 (Sic et Non), 784 pp.

The acts of the international colloquium “Studying Arabic Philosophy. Meaning, Limits and Challenges of a Modern Discipline” (Paris, September 4-7, 2013) together with several external contributions are collected in the volume, which displays the impressive amount of twenty-nine works. According to the editors' brief introduction (pp. 7-8), such a collection aims to assess an updated state-of-the-art about the historical studies concerning Arabic philosophy. Historiographical and methodological questions are therefore addressed as pivotal by numerous papers, as well as the problematisation of the terminological choices employed in the field of studies at stake. Questions concerning what meaning is to be accorded to the terms ‘Arabic’, ‘Islamic’, ‘Muslim’ or even ‘philosophy’ are hence recurrent, weaving a thread that links several contributions and establishing an interesting dialogue within the volume itself. Cultural and historical queries are also often remarked, such as the relationship between philosophy, religion, apologetics, mysticism and law in the Arabic tradition, or else the mutual influences or confluences among the Greek, Arabic and Latin legacies in different places at different times. Such a massive displaying of challenging and structural enquiries sustains the whole volume and upholds Brenet's and Lizzini's wish to unshackle Arabic philosophy from any narrow historiographical compartments, ascribing it in the long history of collective rationality (p. 8).

The twenty-nine writings in the volume – twenty-seven papers either in English or French and two textual appendices – are organised in five thematic sections. While the first is devoted to historiographical and methodological issues, the second, third and fourth ones suggest a chronological order. They deal in fact respectively with the relationship between the Greek philosophical legacy and the Arabic context, with the relationship between the philosophical and religious disciplines belonging to the Arabic intellectual history, with the relationship between the Arabic and Latin traditions during the medieval and modern eras. A less stringent perspective is offered instead by the fifth and last section, generically devoted to Authors, traditions and issues in the whole field of Arabic philosophy.

### *1. La philosophie arabe: une discipline moderne. Historiographie et méthode*

The first section begins with a diptych from Dimitri Gutas (“Rethinking the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy. An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy”, pp. 11-36; “On the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy, Postscript 2017”, pp. 37-45) where the first writing corresponds to the content of a lecture held in Cambridge (July 4, 2000) and is complementary to the second, which strengthens some claims and softens some others. The first paper calls for the accountability of scholars in the field of Arabic philosophy, whose work has proven unsatisfactory in appealing both the fellow historians of the Greek and Latin philosophical legacies, as well as the specialists in Islamic studies who received a traditional kind of education. Gutas presents therefore the three historiographical approaches which “have virtually monopolized” (p. 13) historical studies on Arabic philosophy throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and which have led to the current emasse. The ‘orientalist approach’ draws a line in terms of rationality and emotivism between the supposed west and east of the world, assigning to the eastern cultures a kind of intense, non-rational religious drive. Such cultural bias entails a diminished understanding of the Arabic philosophical tradition: identified with mysticism, conceived as an appendix of religious studies or merely addressed as an interlude

between the ancient and medieval Eurocentric philosophy. The ‘illuminationist approach’, mainly rooted in H. Corbin’s works, claims instead that Arabic philosophy is Islamic philosophy tout court, marking an essential correspondence between the philosophical inquiry in the Arabic world and the development of Islamic spirituality. Lastly, the ‘political approach’, upheld by L. Strauss as a hermeneutical methodology, is understood by Gutas as grounded in the orientalist claim that philosophy and religion in the East are inevitably meant to clash. Philosophers are therefore assumed to work in a hostile cultural environment, which forces them to beguile religious and philosophically uneducated readers, cloaking their production in layers of deceptive, exoteric arguments. Having dealt with several issues raised by each approach, Gutas concludes his writing providing a schematic outline of Arabic philosophy from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Before engaging to further criticism of the Straussian political approach, the second paper cherishes the current general rejection of the Eurocentric claim that Arabic philosophy would have perished together with Averroes. A new matter of worrying for scholars is perhaps a kind of opposite reaction, that is conceiving several confessional or theosophical movements within the Islamic world as authentically belonging to its philosophical tradition.

Gutas’ theses and the Straussian political approach to the history of philosophy are recurrent themes within the volume and most of the papers in the first section deal in fact with some aspects related to them. Such is the case of Catherine König-Pralong (“La philosophie arabe dans la médiévisique des XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles”, pp. 47-64), who focuses on some historiographical aspects endorsed by 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars dealing with the Arabic philosophical milieu. Recalling an alternation of paradigms – from the earlier exoticism, through the ‘colonialistic comparativism’ and the biological model to E. Renan’s foundational writings –, Gutas’ concerns for the orientalist approach are furtherly confirmed. König-Pralong addresses in fact the works of several scholars, problematising the friction between a medieval, ‘Catholic’ production and the modern rationalism, as well as the relationship between European intellectuals and their Arabic fellows – mainly Avicenna and Averroes. As a result of this confrontation, the Arabic philosophical tradition ended up restricted to the Middle Ages, merely conceived as a bridge between the ancient legacy of western philosophy and its medieval development.

Chiara Adorisio (“Some Remarks on Leo Strauss’s Philosophical-Political Reading of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophers”, pp. 65-78) devotes her paper entirely to the Straussian approach, arguing that it is not actually grounded in orientalism as Gutas suggested, but rather in a wider theoretical frame. Focusing on the debate between L. Strauss and J. Guttman on the topic of Jewish medieval philosophy, this detour about Maimonides’ ‘platonic’ rationalism aims in fact to better assess Strauss’ political interpretation of Arabic philosophy. According to Adorisio, Strauss develops his historical research with the ultimate purpose of invigorating rationalism: the robust systems produced by the ancients should be addressed by intellectuals to avoid the weakness of their current speculation. Historical inquiry carries therefore out a fundamental and preliminary effort to provide valuable theoretical tools: its main concern is philosophical rather than philological and it is devoid of any orientalist bias.

The freedom from Eurocentric perspectives in the history of philosophy is central to Rüdiger Arnzen’s paper (“Philosophy in the Islamic World and the Debates on the Aims and Methods of Philosophical Historiography. Some Remarks on the State of the Art”, pp. 79-97). Specifically, the case of “philosophy in the Islamic world”, an expression by

U. Rudolph, is addressed, showing how scholars working in this borderline field need to face a series of methodological problems, ultimately requiring a general rethinking of the current historiographical approaches. Having attempted to clarify some terminological declension of the term ‘philosophy’, Arnzen deals with the relationship between philosophical historiography and philosophy in the Islamic world, showing the latter’s peculiarities within the general frame of western vs. non-western philosophies. Seven scholarly positions endorsed to place the philosophy in the Islamic world in the current historiographical debate are then summarised and critically addressed.

The peculiar contribution by Anke von Kügelgen (“Philosophy in the Modern Middle East. An Interview by Peter Adamson to Anke von Kügelgen”, pp. 99-111) can be once again located in the perspective of recent non-Eurocentric views. This interview deals in fact with the general relevance of philosophy within the MENA – Middle East and North Africa – areas of the world, addressing academical, political, religious and broadly social contexts peculiar to those countries. Through a series of six questions, several interesting aspects are described such as the reception of western philosophical and political systems – Darwinism, Positivism, Materialism, Socialism and Constitutionalism – in the late modern and contemporary MENA, as well as their diffusion through madrasas, private schools, universities and scientific journals. The political commitment of professors of philosophy in the Middle East, the role of the media to convey politically laden interpretations of some historical figures such as Averroes, the connection between a kind of Arabic rationalism and some western, foreign philosophical positions as well as their consequent adoption or rejection are just some of the various themes addressed.

Damien Janos (“The Role of Developmentalism in the Study of Arabic Philosophy: an Overview and some Methodological Insight”, pp. 113-78) presents a long and exhaustive paper about the historiographical approaches of developmentalism and unitarianism. The focus is placed on developmentalism as a “heuristic method of inquiry” (p. 114), namely a useful working hypothesis to solve specific issues such as dealing with inconsistencies within any Authors’ production. This approach would allow scholars to employ developmentalism as a flexible tool without committing to any structured historiographical position. Through a broad analysis of several approaches in the Greek and Greek-Arabic studies, Janos reaches the conclusion that developmentalism in the field of Arabic philosophy has usually been imported without any critical engagement. He tries therefore to provide a kind of definition of such approach, underlying its weaknesses as well as its valuable aspects. To do so, he exposes seven criteria necessary for any developmentalist analysis and applies them to three different case studies, involving al-Fārābī’s metaphysics, Avicenna’s epistemology and al-Baḡdādī’s philosophical system.

Strauss’ political approach and its criticism by Gutas are once more addressed by David Wirmer (“Arabic Philosophy and the Art of Reading. I. Political Philosophy”, pp. 179-244), who opposes Gutas’ position stressing the philosophical reasons behind Strauss’ political interpretation. The paper is devoted to the limits of human reason, an epistemic topic with both practical entailments and a connection to the issue of the pre-philosophical foundations of philosophy. Wirmer focuses on this last issue to assess the Straussian opposition between philosophy and religion, subsuming it in the opposition between philosophical reasoning and non-philosophical opinions. To uphold his claims, Wirmer resorts to a discussion about the conception of habit in Ibn Bāḡḡa and al-Fārābī, which involves the topics of the weakness of reason, moral virtue and theoretical speculation. The paper is followed by a textual appendix:

“Ibn Bāǧǧa on Habit. Partial Edition and Translation of the *Treatise On the Desiderative Faculty*” (pp. 245-50).

The late lamented Mauro Zonta † (“Studying Jewish Averroism: Historical Materials, Meaning and Limits and a Future Challenge”, pp. 251-70) devotes his paper to the Jewish milieu, providing a summary of the medieval Jewish interpretations of Averroes. Resorting to a methodological comparison with the better studied “Jewish Avicennism”, the survey resorts to a wide collection of historical data, beginning with the numerous Hebrew translations of Averroes’ commentaries on treatises from Aristotle, Porphyry and Plato (table 1) which witness how all the Averroan commentaries were translated in Hebrew between 1240 and 1340. The circulation of the Arabic, Hebrew and Latin versions of Averroes’ commentaries is then addressed (table 2) to claim that the study of the Commentator’s works spread earlier in the Jewish milieu than in the Latin one. Lastly, Hebrew super-commentaries on Averroes’ commentary on *Physics* are analysed (table 3), attesting how Jewish scholars in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries used to focus on the Averroan corpus rather than engaging with Aristotle’s own writings. The paper remarks at last how much work is still to be done, since both critical editions and rigorous historical contextualisation are nowadays *desiderata*.

Olga L. Lizzini (“Comment définir la philosophie dans un contexte? Autour des mots: ‘arabe’, ‘islamique’, ‘philosophie’”, p. 271-295) tackles at last the thorny issue of the definition of Arabic philosophy, focusing on the relationship between the terms ‘Arabic’, ‘Islamic’ and ‘philosophy’ itself. Once again, Gutas’ preliminary remarks about orientalism and illuminationism are explicitly addressed. Lizzini understands Islam as the confessional, social and cultural context within, and not about which, Arabic philosophy has been developed. She also remarks that ‘Arabic philosophy’ should not be conceived linguistically, namely restricting the discipline to the Arabic written text, otherwise relevant witnesses in Hebrew and Latin would be excluded. The role of the confessional nature of the Islamic context is stressed too, since it poses the crucial historiographical, historical and philosophical problem of the relationship between faith and rational thought. Having presented different literary genres in which philosophical inquiries were developed in the Arabic milieu, Lizzini concludes with a series of open definitory questions, partially addressed by several papers in the volume, involving what philosophy is and how it relates to texts and to socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, she claims that deepening the dichotomy between Arabic and Islamic philosophy seems unsatisfactory to assess a definition of Arabic philosophy, unless the very conception of ‘philosophy’ is problematised as a starting point.

## 2. *La philosophie arabe et la philosophie ancienne*

This section displays four papers covering a wide range of topics and contexts. While the first and second writings are devoted to the late antique philosophical production, and keep the focus on Neoplatonism, the third and fourth address Averroes’ speculation and its relationship with the Aristotelian production.

Opening the late antique section, Riccardo Chiaradonna (“‘Existence’ in Greek Neoplatonism: Remarks on a Historiographical Issue”, pp. 299-313) remarks how the distinction between essence and existence, commonly attributed to Avicenna and to Aquinas’ interpretation of the former, cannot be fruitfully applied in the Neoplatonic context. Refusing P. Hadot’s theses according to which the idea of God as pure activity can be traced back to Neoplatonism, Chiaradonna analyses the Neoplatonic terms employed to describe the first principle – *hypòstasis* and *hypàrxis* – and argues how they convey a

wider meaning than *ousia* or *òn*, rather suggesting a super-substantial understanding of the One. The differences between the terms at stake are inferred by Plotinus' treatise 39, 6.8 and by an anonymous commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* – the same writings addressed by Hadot to uphold his own thesis. According to Chiaradonna, the essential and existential aspects of the One are not singled out, but rather indistinctively held together by the notion of *hypòstasis*. On the other hand, the Stoic vocabulary and the Latin translations of *hypàrxis* as 'existence' by Marius Victorinus are addressed to remark how undue is Hadot's extension of the late antique conception of existence to the Thomistic 'pure act of being'.

A different topic is addressed by Dominic O'Meara ("Alexandrian Aristotelism vs. Athenian Neoplatonism: Critique of a Historiographical Model Applied to Early Arabic Philosophy", pp. 315-26), whose polemical target is a historiographical model developed by K. Praechter. Specifically, such a model opposes the Athenian and the Alexandrian philosophical schools, associating each of them to certain favoured topics and to a peculiar methodology. Hence the school of Athens would be primarily Neoplatonic, and its scholars endorse a sectarian, if not initiatory approach. On the other hand, the Alexandrian school would constitute the former's rationalistic and scientific opposite, mainly devoted to an Aristotelian and naturalistic kind of philosophy. O'Meara undertakes therefore the task of unhinging Praechter's model, which had a wide fortune in the field of Greek-Arabic research, referring to several updated scholarly studies.

The general problem of organising Aristotle's writings in the correct order holds Cristina Cerami's paper ("Le commun avant le propre. Le rôle des *Seconds Analytiques* I, 4-5 dans l'organisation du corpus de philosophie naturelle d'après Averroès", pp. 327-44). The case study consists in Averroes' production about the Aristotelian natural philosophy, given the fundamental distinction between general and specific research as endorsed by the Stagirite himself. The scientific methodology exposed in *Second Analytics*, I, 4-5, which grants to general research a priority on the specific ones, if not directly employed by Averroes is however consistent with the exposition in the Great commentary on *Physics*. *Physics* itself is in fact assessed by the Commentator as the first treatise in the corpus of natural philosophy, which is structured according to the deductive "order of teaching" – proceeding from the general causes to the particular ones – rather than its inductive counterpart, the "order of research".

Lastly for this section, David Twetten ("Whose Prime Mover is more (un)Aristotelian? Broadie's, Berti's or Averroes'?", pp. 345-90) presents a rich paper both in its historiographical and theoretical contents. Relatively to the formers, E. Berti's and S. Broadie's opposite understanding of the Aristotelian prime mover, respectively a transcendent and an immanent feature of the physical world, are addressed. On the theoretical side instead, Twetten's goal is to "rehabilitate" the status of Averroes as a reader of Aristotle (p. 345), mainly considering four cosmological theses upheld by the Commentator. Such theses match in fact with some of the most innovative claims developed by Averroes and, above all, each of them is incompatible with the canonical Aristotelian cosmology. Although this assessment might delegitimize Averroes as a reader of Aristotle, Twetten claims that it rather underlines the deep sensitivity the Commentator had towards the Aristotelian littera as he knew it, since his 'un-Aristotelian' conclusions ultimately rely on the same critical issues sustaining some recent debates about the Stagirite's natural philosophy.

### 3. *La culture philosophique dans les sciences religieuses islamiques: kalam, mystique, droit*

The third section consists of three papers widening the inquiry to some traditional and mostly confessional disciplines belonging to the Arabic milieu.

Ulrich Rudolph (“Philosophie, théologie et mystique au IX<sup>e</sup>/XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le témoignage de ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ġāmī (m. 898/1492)”, pp. 393-408) focuses on the erudite figure of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ġāmī. Given the deep and articulate competence displayed by this intellectual in the fields of philosophy, mystics and theology, his writings can be resorted by scholars to grasp an outline of such debates within the Arabic tradition up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. As an example, Rudolph addresses two topics from the starkly metaphysical treatise *al-Durra al-fāhira*, namely divine science and the eternity of the world. In addition to showing how al-Ġāmī’s classification of sciences is quite different from the canonical one in classical Arabic philosophy, a concise textual analysis effectively highlights a *plethora* of inner references to theories and position belonging to different traditions of the aforementioned disciplines.

The turbulent relationship between philosophy and mysticism is central to Steffen Stelzer’s paper (“Following Authority: Philosophers in the Eyes of Mystics”, pp. 409-419), which aims to assess the reason why, according to several mystics, philosophers would not be followers the Prophet. A common ground for the two disciplines is ensured by a shared thesis: both mystics and philosophers struggle to achieve authentic happiness through a process of transformation of the character. A crucial difference depends however in the methodology employed, since philosophical research would rely exclusively on rationality, refuting any kind of authority. Given their peculiar admixture of Sufism, Islamic sciences and philosophy, Stelzer contextualises this topic resorting to some of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s writings, which claim that every being either worships or is worshiped by something else. Consequently, the worshipers – the creatural beings – are subdued to the authority of the worshiped – God – and creatural knowledge gets its legitimacy only from the closeness to such an authority. It is therefore patent how the self-relying knowledge pursued by the philosophers, the furthest from the sovereign authority, results highly defective in this frame: the purest kind of knowledge, leading to complete happiness, requires the selfless prostration of the knower’s heart to God.

Lastly, Ziad Bou Akl’s paper (“Volonté humaine, volonté divine: le choix d’indifférence dans les deux *Tabāfut*”, pp. 421-39) is devoted to an Arabic equivalent of Buridan’s ass argument, namely an argument about choices in a situation of equivalence or indifference. In Averroes’ *Tabāfut al-Tabāfut* is in fact reported the case of a hungry or thirsty man to whom is asked to choose between two identical dates or glasses of water, a scenario attributed to al-Ġazālī’s *Tabāfut al-falāsifa*. Akl retraces the Arabic sources of the argument, engaging with the work of L. Gauthier, showing how the pivotal theme is the explanation of the act of choice developed in the scope of *kalam*, within the dispute between philosophers and theologians or apologists. Apparently, the *falāsifa* commonly claimed that the will required an external element to carry out the choice, while the opposite faction upheld that the determination to choose should be purely internal to the will. Akl shows then how an analogous opposition is displayed much later both in al-Rāzī’s *Maṭālib al-‘āliya* and Averroes’ criticism of al-Ġazālī’s arguments.

### 4. *La philosophie arabe, le monde latin et les traditions modernes*

The fourth section collects four papers addressing the relationship between the European and Arabic philosophical traditions, from the perspective of the European scholars. The first

two papers deal respectively with Thomas Aquinas and William of Luna and their connection with Averroes' production, while the last ones are devoted to specific contexts in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Massimiliano Lenzi ("Entre Averroes et l'Aristote latin: Thomas d'Aquin interprète de la *Physique* II, 2, 194 b 9-15", pp. 443-69) stresses how Aquinas' reading of *Physics* II 2 upholds his own conception of independent forms, a crucial point for metaphysics and anthropology. The paper proceeds therefore to show how Aquinas' positions are not only directly dependent on the *Aristoteles Latinus*, but rather rely on several theoretical assumptions that involve an engagement with the Arabic tradition and with some Platonic elements within it. While the conception of the human soul as a separate form, claims Lenzi, cannot be inferred by the *Physics*, it is instead consistent with Averroes' Great commentary on the same writing: the intellectual soul is in fact described by the Commentator as the highest element in the hierarchy of the material forms and as the lowest in those of the separate forms. This specific passage justifies therefore Aquinas' understanding much better than the Aristotelian *littera*, and places Averroes as an intermediary between the Stagirite and the Angelicus.

The late lamented Roland Hissette ("Les leçons doubles d'une traduction arabo-latine de Guillaume de Luna. Le commentaire moyen d'Averroès sur l'*Isagoge*", pp. 471-89) presents a philological paper that deals with William of Luna's translations of Averroes' middle commentary on the first three elements of the *logica vetus*. Since Hissette has already produced a critical edition of Luna's work on the *Categories* and *Perihermeneias*, in this paper he focuses on the *Isagoge* case, which presents an interesting similarity with the former two: the critical edition requires a series of double translations. Having provided a list of the relevant manuscripts for the analysis, Hissette points out five cases of double equivalences and suggests a strategy to choose a lectio when the witnesses are divergent. A further analysis of the available manuscripts assesses the systematic occurrence as well of Boethian imprints.

Jean-Baptiste Brenet ("Descartes l'arabe. Averroès jusque dans la querelle d'Utrecht", pp. 491-518) engages with the historical frame of the 'Utrecht quarrel', a harsh confrontation between exponents of the late academical scholasticism and Cartesian intellectuals. In this context, some scholars opposing to dualistic theories about body and soul, specifically Regius' understanding of their conjunction as merely accidental, accused their foes of Averroism. To explain this charge, Brenet focuses on Voetius' objections to Regius' and Descartes' theses about philosophical anthropology, tracing back the former's arguments to Aquinas. Voetius seems in fact to resort to the same objections that the Angelicus opposed to Averroes' own conception of the human unity given a real, separate intellect. Despite their remarkable dissimilarity to the Averroan system, at any rate dualistic description of reality became by the 17<sup>th</sup> century a critical target of late scholasticism, which exploited the same traditional arguments once enforced against the Commentator.

An incursion in the field of literature is made by Remke Kruk ("An XVIII<sup>th</sup> century Dutch relative of *Ḥayy ibn-Yaḳẓān*: Robinson of Walcheren", pp. 519-42), since the paper is concerned with the contaminations between the Arabic and the European literary tradition rather than with academical or erudite philosophical debate. Accounting for the European diffusion of ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaḳẓān*, translated in Latin and published in 1671 by an Oxonian professor and then furtherly spread thanks to several English translations, Kruk recalls the possible influence of this novel on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, published in 1719. She then addresses the curious case of a 1752 Dutch novel, the anonymous *Der Walchersche Robinson*, supposedly written in the Netherlands and belonging to a Christian Evangelic

environment. This last story presents in fact some remarkable similarities with both Defoe's and Ibn Ṭufayl's writings, in terms of setting as well as contents. Particularly striking is for instance the theological claim within the tale that rational beings can infer the existence of a divine principle by observing the natural world. In the conclusive section, Kruk remarks however how these similarities are not supported by stringent philological proofs (p. 524), hence being ultimately conjectural.

### 5. *La philosophie arabe: traditions, auteurs, questions ouvertes*

The last section presents a group of six independent papers ranging through several Authors belonging to the Arabic tradition. A cluster of three papers is devoted to different themes within Avicenna's authentic or pseudo-epigraphic production, while the other three deal instead with Farabian and Averroan studies, and with the figure of Ibn Ṭumlūs.

Strauss' political approach occurs one last time at the beginning of the last section with Philippe Vallat's paper ("L'ésotérisme de al-Fārābī expliqué par lui-même: nature et fonctions", pp. 545-611). In this case, the author deals with a Straussian interpreter of al-Fārābī, C. Butterworth, about the topic of "Farabian exotericism". According to Strauss, exotericism in philosophical texts has the main function of veiling the actual meaning of the exposed theories, allowing but a few readers to understand them. In his translation of al-Fārābī's *Al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, Butterworth endorses such approach which, according to Vallat, misleads him to an erroneous interpretation of the contents. Vallat thesis is in fact that Strauss is partially right regarding al-Fārābī, since the latter's writing are indeed exoteric. Nevertheless, the key to decipher the exoteric content is explicitly provided to the reader by al-Fārābī himself, and this position is argued resorting to several textual passages from different treatises. Through his analysis, Vallat points also out four different functions of al-Fārābī's exotericism, involving the relationship between philosophy, politics, religion and theology.

Meryem Sebti ("La question de pseudo-épigraphe dans le corpus avicennien", pp. 613-33) devotes her paper to the case study of the epistles commonly attributed to Avicenna. Having recalled the case of a pseudo-epigraphic commentary on the *surah A'lā*, attributable to Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Sebti applies the same methodology, namely a rigorous doctrinal analysis of the contents of the writings, to the current case: the *Risāla fī-l-kalām 'alā al-naḥs al-nāṭiqā*. This epistle, commonly considered the last written by Avicenna before his passing, presents three main issues: a not-Avicennian understanding of the relationship between the corporal mixture, emotivity and morals; a Koranic doctrine regarding human purification and assimilation to the celestial spheres; a quote from a *ḥadīth* attributed to the imam 'Alī. According to Sebti, the textual evidence would be sufficient to assess the work as pseudo-epigraphic, given also that a possible Author, always according to the doctrinal methodology, could be appointed: Šarāzūrī, a disciple of Suhrawardī. To furtherly uphold her theses, Sebti joins the paper with the edition of the epistle at stake (Édition de la *Risāla fī-l-kalām 'alā al-naḥs al-nāṭiqā*, pp. 635-43) and supplies it with passages from Šarāzūrī's works.

Avicenna's theories are once more addressed by Yamina Adouhane ("Distinction modale, distinction causale chez Avicenne: une étude croisée des concepts de 'possible' et 'nécessaire', de 'causé' et 'sans cause'", pp. 645-74). The paper deals with Avicenna's understanding of the modals 'possible' and 'necessary', resorting to the categories of dependency and independency from other elements. Adouhane shows how both al-Ġazālī and Averroes, respectively endorsing a nominalist and a statistic conception of modality, describe Avicenna's position resorting to causal terminology. According to them, in fact, the Persian philosopher defines

‘possible’ as what has been caused, ‘necessary’ as what does not require a cause to subsist. Opposing to such an interpretation, Adouhane resorts to Avicenna’s passages from the *Kitāb al-Šifā*, *Danešname* and *Kitāb al-Nağāt* to show how the connection between alethic modalities and causality, although consequential, is not relevant to the definition of the formers. Modalities should be in fact regarded as independent from any causal connection, since they relate to the essential condition of a certain entity: something can be authentically possible even if it is not caused, while what is necessary simply exists by itself.

Jules Janssens (“Signification des études avicenniennes (philosophiques, scientifiques et médicales) pour la pensée contemporaine (occidentale et orientale)”, pp. 675-90) asks whether and how Avicenna’s production can be a significative resource for the current scientific and philosophical studies besides its historical value. To assess so, the paper addresses at once a few preliminary concerns about approaching and interpreting Avicenna’s writings, most of which have not yet been critically edited. Janssens remarks therefore the peculiarities of the relevant historical context, the most common interpretations that force latter theoretical elements on Avicenna’s production and the risks of expecting a perfectly consistent theoretical system from the Persian philosopher. The paper attempts then to actualise some relevant aspects in the fields of scientific knowledge – mainly medicine – and philosophy.

Leaving Avicennian studies, Matteo di Giovanni’s paper (“How Islamic is Averroes’ Philosophy?”, pp. 691-703) deals with the relationship between philosophical production and Islamic precepts in Averroes. Recalling the historiographical debate about ‘Islamic philosophy’, di Giovanni stresses how Averroes, being a Muslim scholar who chooses to develop autonomous philosophical inquiries, is a significant case study. The Almohad cultural context is addressed as crucial to understand Averroes’ positions, specifically the relationship between philosophy and religion, given the political exploitation of al-Ġazālī’s theological theses against the Almoravids foes. Di Giovanni shows then how Averroes’ theses, subordinating religious doctrine to philosophy while presenting philosophers as the most realised heirs of the prophets, makes especially sense in such a milieu. Having widened the methodological query to the case of “Christian philosophy” too, di Giovanni concludes that the religious connotation of a philosophical endeavour cannot be generalised neither within the same religious tradition, given the relevance of the specific historical context, nor resorting to cross-religious analogies.

Fouad ben Ahmed’s paper (“Ibn Ṭumlūs’ Logic and Medicine. An Overview of the Current State of Scholarship”, pp. 705-22), devoted to one of Averroes’ pupils, concludes the section and the volume. Aiming to reach an updated state-of-the-art about the studies on Ibn Ṭumlūs, ben Ahmed addresses three main scholarly interpretations on the Author’s philosophy by M. Asín Palacios, A. Elamrani-Jamal and M. Aouad, respectively connecting Ibn Ṭumlūs to al-Ġazālī, al-Fārābī and Averroes. A summary of Ibn Ṭumlūs’ writings is then presented and, lastly, an overview on his doctrines is provided. Specifically, ben Ahmed focuses on some topics from the Author’s logical and medical inquiries and treatises, to show how several arguments still need to be analysed by scholars and how they can be historically relevant. The conclusive remarks state then how the interpretations developed until now are reductive and elusive of the direct approach with the writings.

The bibliographical references and sources of each paper have been collected at the end of the volume in a general bibliography (pp. 723-78).