

Studia graeco-arabica

13

2023

PISA
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

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Subscription orders

Information on subscription rates for the print edition of Volume 13 (2023), claims and customer service: press@unipi.it.

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

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

ISSN 2239-012X (Online)

ISBN 978-88-3339-881-5

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

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Italian Scientific Journals Ranking: A (ANVUR, Classe A)

Indexing and Abstracting; ERIH PLUS (SCH ESF); Index Islamicus (Brill Bibliographies); Scopus (Elsevier)

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www.pisauniversitypress.it

Studia graeco-arabica. Vol. 1 (2011)- . - Pisa : Pacini editore, 2011- . - Annuale. Dal 2021: Pisa : Pisa university press.

180.05 (23.)

1. Filosofia araba - Periodici 2. Filosofia greca - Periodici

CIP a cura del Sistema bibliotecario dell'Università di Pisa

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Cover

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

Aristotle's Physics VIII: Translated into Arabic by Ishāq ibn Hunayn (9th c.), Edited with Introduction and Glossaries by R. Arnzen with a Contribution by P.S. Hasper, De Gruyter, Berlin - Boston 2021 (Scientia graeco-arabica 30), CCLIV + 2 + 289 pp.

In 1994, Paul Lettinck wrote that the *Physics* of Aristotle “has influenced philosophy and science right up to the seventeenth century”¹ and we could add that some of its concepts are still matter of scholarly discussion. And it strongly influenced Arabic, Jewish and Latin philosophy in the Middle Ages. For his research on its reception in the medieval Arabic world Lettinck relied on the Leiden manuscript Or. 583 (Warner) that had been edited by ‘Abdurrahman Badawī.²

The indefatigable Badawī who worked amid hardship and isolation made available to the Arabic reader this manuscript containing the translation by Ishāq ibn Hunayn (between 870-900) and all the incorporated commentaries, but he could not avoid a number of errors. He discussed whether or not that Yaḥyā who is mentioned only by this name as the author of some commentaries was the Christian Greek Johannes Philoponus known in Arabic as Yaḥyā al-Naḥwī, John the Grammarian, and he rejected the view.³ But as G. Endress has rightly proven, this Yaḥyā is actually John the Grammarian and he is the author of the fragmented commentaries ascribed to him, although they are often not literal.⁴ Lettinck translated Philoponus’ extant commentaries on *Physics* 5-8 into English⁵ and his translation is a complement to Philoponus’ original Greek commentaries since they are preserved for *Books* 1-4, and only few of them for the latter.

The error is easily understandable because the four major commentators belong to the Baghdad school of Aristotelian philosophers, so that the Leiden manuscript Or. 583 is an exceptional piece of evidence for their activity and the importance of Aristotle in Baghdad in the 10th and 11th centuries.

Given the import of the Arabic translation of the *Physics*, there was need for a critical edition that took into account the various stages and the Greek background of the Arabic text. The Greek tradition had been studied long time ago, and Herman Diels should be especially mentioned, but Pieter S. Hasper offers an updated study of 74 pages which considers new Greek manuscripts (pp. CXIII-CLXXXVII), showing how necessary was his new research.

Rüdiger Arnzen points to the “threefold aim” of his book: a) A critical edition of the “Linguistic Text” of the Arabic translation as opposed to the “Conceptual Text”, b) A comparison of this reconstructed text with the extant Greek copies, obtaining possible clues for reconstructing the Greek text, and c) A contribution to Graeco-Arabic lexicography (p. XXIII).

¹ P. Lettinck, *Aristotle's Physics and its Reception in the Arabic World. With an Edition of the Unpublished Parts of Ibn Bājja's Commentary on the Physics*, Leiden, Brill 1994 (*Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus* 7), p. 1.

² *Al-Ṭabī'a. Tarjamat Ishāq ibn Hunayn ma'a shurūḥ Ibn al-Samḥ wa-Ibn 'Adī wa-Mattā ibn Yūnus wa-Abī l-Faraj ibn al-Ṭayyib*, 2 vols, Al-Dār al-Qawmīya li-l-Ṭibā'a, Cairo 1964.

³ *Al-Ṭabī'a* (above, n. 2), p. 22.

⁴ G. Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī. An Analytical Inventory*, Reichert, Wiesbaden 1977, pp. 36-9.

⁵ *Philoponus. On Aristotle Physics 5-8 with Simplicius On Aristotle on the Void*, trans. by P. Lettinck and J.O. Urmson, Bloomsbury, London – New York 2014 (first published 1994), pp. 2-154. Elias Giannakis had translated them also in his inedited PhD work at Oxford University: *Philoponus in the Arabic Tradition of Aristotle's Physics*, 1992.

The author, and editor, gives us a magisterial description of the manuscript Leiden Or. 583, its history and prehistory (pp. XXXVII-LXXV) and of the manuscript Escorial 896, that contains some passages of *Books IV and V of the Physics*. He informs us that “the Greek exemplar from which Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥunayn prepared his Arabic translation of Aristotle’s *Physics* antedates all extant Greek manuscripts” (p. C). According to Pieter S. Hasper, the oldest one is *Vind. Phil. gr.* 100, 9th century (p. CXVI), and we know that the Vienna manuscript was probably written around the middle of that century.⁶ Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥunayn had died in 910.

Arnzen enquires about the Greek manuscripts that Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥunayn could have had at his disposal and he observes four coinciding omissions by homeoteleuton in Iṣḥāq’s translation and the Greek text. The coincidence enables him to conclude that “the overwhelming part of Iṣḥāq’s translation can be assigned beyond doubt to one of the known branches of the Greek manuscripts (branch *alpha*)” (pp. CXI - CXII). This conclusion marks the place where Hasper begins his research on the Greek manuscripts of Aristotle’s *Physics*. Hasper admits that the manuscript tradition is “quite complicated” but he proves that the common origin of *E Paris gr.* 1853 and *Ypsilon* the “exemplar” of the Arabic translation is undeniable. Auguste Mansion had found that Michael Scot’s translation of Aristotle’s Arabic *Physics*, which is contained in his translation of Averroes’ Long Commentary on it, is closely related to *E Paris gr.* 1853 and Arnzen agrees with him (p. CCIII).

The author considers the Latin reception of Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥunayn’s text to be more important “for the critical edition” (p. CC), than the indirect Arabic transmission that he has also studied (pp. CLXXXVIII-CC). There are three Latin translations, by Gerard of Cremona (d. 1187), Michael Scot (d. ca. 1235) and by an unknown translator, respectively. Horst Schmieja⁷ deserves merit for discovering this third translation. Arnzen collated three manuscripts of Gerard of Cremona’s never printed translation of *Book VIII* for this chapter, compares them and draws a “tentative stemma” from Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥunayn’s Arabic translation down to the anonymous Latin translator (around 1250?), and the stemma is very convincing (p. CCXXX).

The critical edition (pp. 1-120) is supported by three apparatuses, and Arnzen indicates that he preferred “clarity and legibility over economy” (p. CCXLII). The first refers basically to the preserved Greek manuscripts and to *Ypsilon*, the Greek text reconstructed by Arnzen on the basis of the Arabic manuscript. The reconstruction of the Greek text is of great usefulness for better understanding of the original *Physics* as well as for a new critical edition. I would even say that this apparatus is the key to Arnzen’s vault.

The second apparatus deals with the Arabic testimonies, of which the Leiden manuscript is the only one for *Book VIII*. Arnzen has reconstructed it as *Phi*, admitting its shortcomings. The Leiden manuscript abounds in glosses and marginal *scholia*, and it is plagued with difficulties. On folio 205r6, بوار “perdition, ruin” lacks the diacritical dot.⁸

⁶ G. Rossetto “Il corpus dei trattati fisici aristotelici nel codice *Vind. Phil. gr.* 100: indagini filologiche, paleografiche, codicologiche” (Master Thesis, accessed on-line), Padova University 2014, p. 75.

⁷ Averroes, *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis Physicorum Librum Septimum (Vindobonensis, lat. 2334)*, ed. H. Schmieja in *Averroes Opera. Series B. Averroes Latinus*, F. Schöningh, Paderborn 2007. According to Schmieja, Herman the German can be its translator (pp. 90-1).

⁸ دار البوار is the hell: “Hast thou not seen those who gave the grace of Allah in exchange for thanklessness and led their people down to the Abode of Loss”, trans. by M.M. Pickthall of Sura Ibrahim (14) 28. <https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=14&verse=28> (accessed on 12 June 2023).

ابوار “no perdition” is translation of ἀθάνατον (*Phys.* 250 b 13), but Badawī suggested لا يزال and Arnzen prefers لا يواد.

In this apparatus Arnzen gives also the rationale for choosing the word, or phrase, indicating the sources in parenthesis, so that the reader can effectively solve his doubts. For instance, *Phys.* 250 b 15 –the agreement of the Greek manuscripts-- reads that there is motion, but Leiden *Or.* 583 misses “there is”. Badawī inserted موجودة in angled brackets, and so does Arnzen (p. 2, line 1), but the latter explains why: He points to the Greek consensus and to the Latin translations writing the equivalent word and sigla between parentheses.

The third apparatus gathers all glosses and *scholia*, and most of them are very difficult to read. Arnzen has been able to decipher them and identify the texts in the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Philoponus or Ibn al-Ṭayyib.

The main purpose of the work is to supply the editor of Aristotle’s *Physics* with a new, precious tool and it shows clearly that Arnzen has fully succeeded in achieving his purpose. Secondly, he has shed light on the importance of the Latin translation for Christian philosophy in the Middle Ages.

As for the Islamic side, Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn wanted to satisfy the need of his contemporaries for knowing Aristotle’s doctrines, and the Arabic translation fulfilled it for a long time, in a direct or indirect way. Whether contemporary Arab scholars benefited or not from Badawī’s edition or they will do so from Arnzen’s critical edition is a question to be answered yet.

Rüdiger Arnzen has completed his work with two impressive glossaries, Greek-Arabic and Arabic-Greek; Greek words are in original characters while Arabic terms are always transliterated. The high proficiency acquired throughout lifelong working on the *Greek Arabic Lexicon* “GALex” is reflected as an accomplished lexicon.

Josep Puig Montada