

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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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

Avicenna, *The Healing, Logic: Isagoge. A New Edition, English Translation and Commentary of the Kitāb al-Madḥal of Avicenna's Kitāb al-Šifā'* by S. Di Vincenzo, De Gruyter, Berlin 2021 (Scientia graeco-arabica 31), 24 Illustrations, 33 Tables, XIII + 420 pp.

Avicenna (d. 1037) is the crowning glory of Arabic philosophy, stealing the limelight from Aristotle in the Islamic world, and providing the new corpus to which subsequent philosophers writing in Arabic would respond. His longest work is the *Cure (al-Šifā')*, a compendious account of his philosophy written in the middle of his career, with frequent reference across its many component volumes to parallel expositions of the doctrines developed. The first book of this extraordinary summa is the *Madḥal*, the Introduction or—to give the Greek title of the work prefixed to the *Organon* to which Avicenna's *Madḥal* roughly corresponds—the *Isagoge* (by Porphyry). Silvia Di Vincenzo has given us a superb edition and translation of the *Madḥal*, along with a penetrating essay on various important aspects of Avicenna's response to Porphyry's original, an account of selecting the manuscripts on which to base the text and the method adopted in editing it, and a chapter-by-chapter commentary on the text itself. This will be the edition on which scholars of Avicenna will henceforth rely, and the work will serve as a paradigm to which future editors and translators of Avicenna should aspire. In what follows, I offer a few comments on each component of Di Vincenzo's book.

The book opens with a general introduction, *The Theory of Predicables in Avicenna's Madḥal*, the first part of which considers the structure of the *Madḥal*, set out in Table 1 (pp. XVII–XIX). The table offers a comparison with Porphyry's *Isagoge*, late antique exegetical forebears (which is to say, commentaries on the *Isagoge* by Ammonius, Elias, David and Pseudo-David, as well as a commentary by Avicenna's Baghdad contemporary Ibn Ṭayyib), and corresponding material presented by Avicenna in his other works. Table 1 bears witness to the closeness of Avicenna's concerns with those of Ammonius and Elias; the first of these in particular has been noted to have exercised influence over Avicenna. The *Madḥal* consists of two parts, and there are eight chapters in the first part before we come to a chapter (on genus) that corresponds directly with something in Porphyry's *Isagoge* (in this case, his first chapter): chapters 9 to 11, and 13 and 14 of the first part parallel Porphyry's exposition of the predicables, and chapters 1 to 3 of the second part correspond to Porphyry's comparisons among the various predicables. In the second part of her introduction (*Freeing Logic from Metaphysics?*), Di Vincenzo assesses how well Avicenna has lived up to his avowed intention of removing metaphysical concerns from logic. She examines Avicenna's account of the subject matter of logic, which is to say, secondary intentions. The force of the essay lies in identifying the discipline that proves secondary intentions exist, and the limits of logic's interest in them. The various claims of metaphysics, psychology and logic to study secondary intentions, and in what respect, are set out in a chart on p. XXXV. It is clear that Avicenna's interests in the *Madḥal* (and throughout his logic) are primarily formal, and the final and longest part of the introduction (*Avicenna's Theory of Predicables in a 'De-Ontologized' Logic*) assesses what this formal commitment means for Avicenna's originality in dealing with the material.

Many passages of the *Madḥal* have been translated into English in the past, and there are three existing translations into modern languages (see p. CLXXIII).¹ Unfortunately, I cannot

¹ See Ibn Sina, *Kitābu's-Šifā. Mantik Giriş*, Translated by Ö. Türker, Litera Yayıncılık, İstanbul 2006; Абы Абу

speak to the quality of the existing translations, but I can say that Di Vincenzo has provided an accurate and fluent rendition of the text which is more than adequate to allow close philosophical analysis of Avicenna's arguments. Relative to the most obvious competitor (because it is also into English), the Bäck translation, I can say this: the Di Vincenzo version has the sterling virtue of being given with the Arabic text on the facing-page; the Arabic text is there to soothe worries about the translation, should any arise.

And what a text it is! To the best of my knowledge (and I should confess that there are editions noted in the bibliography which I have not seen), the book under review represents the first critical edition in the Lachmann tradition of a logical text by Avicenna. The introductory essay, the translation and the commentary are extremely valuable; the edition is invaluable. The Cairo edition (keyed to this edition by page numbers noted in the margin) was never intended as anything more than an *editio princeps*, and for many years now there has been a crying need for a critical edition. The discussion of the text, the witnesses to it and the process of establishing the edition, is a magisterial account of problems specific to editing the *Madḥal*, many of which (though not all, we must note with trepidation) apply generally to the text of the *Cure* as a whole. We are treated to an account of the textual tradition, culminating in reflections on the centers of scholarly activity in which the manuscripts were produced (a fascinating interlude for those interested in historical specificities of the interaction between philosophical study and textual reproduction). This is followed by a provisional list of manuscripts of the text (129!), of which 22 are employed (pp. CXIV–CXXV). Careful consideration is given to the medieval Latin translation, as well as to the indirect tradition (which is to say, the commentaries and discussions of the text among Avicenna's disciples, above all Bahmanyār and Lawkarī). The whole body of material is critically assessed, and a stemma offered (see charts on pp. CXLIII, CLI and most importantly p. CLXX). The text is presented with an apparatus which has six levels (not all present all the time, but see p. 4 for the full armada under sail): presence or absence of a given passage in the various witnesses, Greek and Arabic sources, parallels in Avicenna's other works, variant readings, *marginalia*, and critical notes on difficult philological issues.

The commentary makes clear where Avicenna's efforts with respect to the predicables are continuous with the philosophical activity of late antiquity and his predecessors, and—more importantly—where they go beyond that activity. The commentary also offers a great many comments and diagrams which ease the path to understanding what Avicenna is trying to convey in his work. I can pay Di Vincenzo no higher compliment here than this: I felt I was once again in the presence of Fritz Zimmermann as he contextualized al-Fārābī's commentary on *De Interpretatione* against the late antique philosophers.

Let me conclude by noting a point on which Di Vincenzo and Avicenna's thirteenth-century readers diverge. I do so not to criticize, but simply to underline that the work under review is the most valuable first step in what is in fact a far larger project of understanding Avicenna's *Madḥal* and its later reception. Much of the third part of the introduction and relevant sections of the commentary are given over to a highly informative discussion of

Ибн Сина (Авиценна), Сочинения, Т. 5, аш-Шифа, Введение, пер. Т.Н. Маргони и Р.З. Назарьев. Душанбе. сс. 77–220 [Abu Ali Ibn Sina (Avitsenna), *Sochineniia*, V.5, *ash-Shifa*, Translated by T.N. Mardoni and R.Z. Nazaryev, Dushanbe, pp. 77–220], 2010; Avicenna/Ibn Sīnā. *Al-Madḥal. Avicenna on the Isagoge of Porphyry*, Translated and Introduced by A. Bäck, Philosophia Verlag, Munich 2019.

differentia in Avicenna and the tradition up to him. I think it is interesting to take account of Afḍal al-Dīn al-Ḥūnāḡī (d. 1248), a deeply able and cautiously respectful reader of Avicenna, who claims that Avicenna changed his position on how best to define differentia between the *Madḥal* and the *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-Tanbīhāt* (opinions differ on dates, but perhaps eight years after the *Madḥal* was written):

Moreover, Avicenna delineated [differentia in the *Madḥal*] as “the universal said of species in answer to ‘which thing is it?’ under its genus essentially.”² And he delineated it in *Pointers* as “the universal which is predicated of the thing in answer to ‘which thing is it?’ in its substance.”³ This [second delineation] is broader (*a‘amm*) than the first, and with it one has to add some clarification (*wa-bi-hi yajibū an yufassara*), otherwise the proof that the essentials are limited (*inḥiṣār*) to genus and differentia does not go through [*HK* 45.14–u].⁴

Briefly, the thirteenth-century Avicennists think that Avicenna in *Pointers* is dodging a problem which arises should someone demand a proof that the highest genus (in this case, substance) is in fact simple, but a compound of two coextensive meanings (neither of which can be a genus for the other, for obvious reasons). Were it such a compound, then neither component of the meaning substance is a differentia under the *Madḥal* definition, though both are under the *Pointers* definition. If a proof that substance is simple is not forthcoming, then Avicenna’s further claim that every quiddity is either a simple quiddity or a compound of a quiddity and a differentia is under threat; under the *Madḥal* definition, every quiddity will dissolve into differentiae and whatever the components of substance are, under the *Pointers* definition, simply into differentiae.

This volume is indispensable for anyone working in late antique, medieval, or Arabic philosophy, or medieval Islamic intellectual history.

Tony Street

² See p. 166.pu–u of the book under review.

³ Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt: Le Livre des Théorèmes et des Avertissements, Publié d’après les mss. de Berlin, de Leyde et d’Oxford et traduit avec éclaircissements* par J. Forget, Vol. 1: *Texte Arabe*, Brill, Leiden 1892, p. 16.15–16.

⁴ Afḍal al-Dīn al-Ḥūnāḡī, *Kashf al-asrār ‘an ghawāmiḍ al-afkār*, Edited by K. El-Rouayheb, Iranian Institute of Philosophy and the Institute of Islamic Studies – Free University of Berlin, Tehran – Berlin 2010, p. 45.14–u.