

Whoever prepared the indexes, however, cannot have known much about the subject. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib is listed (p. 693) as an Umayyad caliph (quite possibly for the first and only time in Islamic history). On p. 698 ‘Ubayd Allāh is a “Fatimid Imam, fl. 304–9/916–21” whereas two pages earlier he is somewhat more correctly said to be “al-Mahdī bi-Allāh, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad,” the first Fatimid caliph, with correct dates of his rule. This is the name the text gives him, although it should have been Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh. How this error occurred is unknown, but the author of this text should have known better, most particularly if he was an Ismaili.

Of course, indexes are often an afterthought or not the work of the main editor, author, or translators. However, there are some signs that work on the edition and especially the translation was not always done in its various stages by a single hand or checked carefully for conformity. The Arabic *maṣallā* (in its dual form) appears twice in reference to a suburb of Tinnīs, once translated as “two prayer places” (p. 471) and the other as “two prayer houses” (p. 475). The latter cannot be correct and is misleading; the festival prayer grounds normally have no built structure (except perhaps a *minbar*). In the chapter where al-Mahdī is mentioned a sentence begins: “The Mahdī may the peace of God be upon him, passed away. . . .” This Fatimid caliph had the title al-Mahdī but he was not the Mahdī.

Nevertheless, despite a few things to quibble about, the whole volume represents an impressive achievement, both as the study of a single Arabic manuscript in all its fascinating detail, and in the assembling of the learning needed to begin to explain what it is and how important.

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*Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*. Edited by PETER ADAMSON. Cambridge: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2013. Pp. xi + 300. \$99, £55.

There is little doubt that one of the real success stories of recent times in Islamic Studies has been the flourishing of intellectual history, especially with respect to the study of philosophy. We have a much better understanding of the course of rationalities (and perhaps even a-rationalities) in the world of Islam than ever before, from the rise in the focus on the “post-classical” period, which stretches from the systematic popularization of philosophy in a range of intellectual and seminary disciplines, to the initial encounter with colonial modernity during the eighteenth century and beyond, all the way to a deeper understanding of the “Avicennan” turn in *kalām*. The turn toward more serious philosophical reflection on the work of Avicenna himself has been part of this process and in many ways this book under review is the critical and essential guide to the state of Avicennan studies today. This is an opportune moment for such a work to be available, as new critical editions of texts along with highly useful translations of his works and editions of those he influenced, whether in the Latin West or the Islamic East, have appeared. Highlights include Mujtabā Zārī’s 2004 edition of *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt* and Ḥusayn Mūsavīyān’s edition of the different recensions of *al-Ta’līqāt* (which help us understand the reception of these recensions, especially in the Safavid period), alongside editions (Sā’atichān and Nūrānī, among others) of the works of the philosophers of Shiraz in the Timurid and early Safavid periods that debunk to a large extent the notion of Iran being dominated by Illuminationist thought and demonstrate the vitality of Avicennism. Meryem Sebtī and Daniel De Smet’s ongoing editions and translations of the mainly non-extant *al-Inṣāf* corpus, which included Avicenna’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics Lambda*, his glosses on the *Theologia Aristotelis*, and his corpus of exegesis, will also be a major contribution, as will Amos Bertolacci’s ERC-funded project on *al-Shifā’*. All in all, these works allow our study of Avicenna to move away from generalizations divorced from textual evidence and ideological polemics about the “real” Avicenna, the very meaning of what we consider to be philosophy in Avicenna between the focus on “mysticism” and an *askesis* of life and a more hard-headed empirico-rationalism. Each of these ideological postures suffers from what contextualists would consider to be “prolepsis” and an insufficient regard for linguistic and intellectual possibilities of their

time—it is our weakness that we cannot necessarily break out of our presentist concerns in discerning patterns of rationality in premodern Islam with at least one eye on the contemporary world. In his introduction Peter Adamson does not engage with these polemics; instead, rather sensibly he presents each chapter and notes how much remains to be done on Avicenna and, more critically perhaps, on his further reception. If we are to make the case for intellectual historians and historians of philosophy to bring Avicenna into a new canon, or to locate him in a curriculum that goes beyond the desire to form canons, this book is a vital offering to that cause.

The book's twelve chapters take us through Avicenna's context and his contributions on aspects of his philosophy and culminate with the Abrahamic reception of Avicenna in Jewish, Latin Christian, and Islamic thought. The whole volume is offered in memory of the wonderfully talented David Reisman, whose early demise in 2011 has affected the field so greatly. It is fitting that the first chapter is Reisman's study of Avicenna's context, drawing upon the biography of al-Juzjānī and Avicenna's so-called autobiography to present his life situation within the developing Aristotelianism of his time and the culture of patronage and learning in the Islamic East. Various works and patrons are considered, as is Avicenna's rivalry with the "Westerners," the Aristotelians of Baghdad. The chapter offers a broad chronology of the works of Avicenna, with some gaps, and certainly this is not the place for the more reasoned explanation of the chronology (elements of which are found in Reisman's other work, including his published dissertation on the *Mubāḥathāt* and *Lawāḥiq* corpora). What is clear is that the context, the need to shine forth and to forge his name as physician-scientist-philosopher who rendered other physicians, Aristotelians, theologians, and others obsolete, made Avicenna critically reexamine and modify Aristotelianism. Reisman very usefully points to a three-stage process: a rejection of "doctrinaire" and non-reflective school Aristotelianism, followed by a critical appraisal and modification of the system in his major summa, and, finally, clear ideas that one finds in *al-Ishārāt* and arguably in *al-Mubāḥathāt* about how best to teach philosophy. Reisman argues that there is a stylistic change in the latter works and not a turn to mysticism. While this may be true, a more considered analysis of the different Sufi and intellectual milieux of Iran might force one to rethink his context and the reasons why elements of his exegetical, supplicatory, and philosophical corpus are written as they are. A more holistic approach to the Avicennan corpus is still needed to consider what the actual project was—and some recent contributions by Mohammad Azadpur and Christian Jambet that locate Avicenna within a paradigm of "philosophy as a way of life and of spiritual exercises" influenced by the late Pierre Hadot deserve some serious engagement. The question remains why Avicenna turned to the allegorical and to the language of the Sufis found in some of the later writings.

This brings us to Dimitri Gutas's chapter and his appraisal of the project. Gutas, the doyen of Avicennan studies, considers Avicenna to be the most successful naturalizer of Greek philosophy in an Islamic milieu, who regarded philosophy as the ultimate idiom and means to understand and explain all phenomena (including material of a theological and more religious nature). The rational Graeco-Arabica movement constituted the primary influence upon Avicenna, and Gutas decides that the central animation of Avicenna's thought is rational empiricism akin to the early modern thinker John Locke. Central to the project is the immense *al-Shifā'* as a systematic overhauling of Aristotle. Along the way Gutas polemicizes against an Eastern, Iranian, and broadly Shi'ī reading (partly based on pseudo-epigraphica) of Avicenna that considers him to be both a Peripatetic and a mystic, with the latter being dominant and constituting the "real teaching," perhaps akin to some of the later Neoplatonists for whom one started with Aristotle before moving onto the higher mysteries of Plato in both the formal dialogues and in his esoteric reading. Leaving aside the question of the bounds of the authentic Avicenna (which is more debatable than allowed here), this is a rather exaggerated critique. As Robert Wisnovsky shows in his chapter, for much of the course of history the teaching and reception of Avicenna in the East was mediated by *al-Shifā'* and not by works of a dubious nature. Most glossators and Avicennans in the later period in Iran were not mystically inclined (Mullā Ṣadrā is an interesting exception—mystically committed but not in his glosses on the *Ilāhiyyāt* of *al-Shifā'*, and in fact in his *al-Asfār* dismissive of the rather rationally discursive limitations of Avicenna). One feels that there is much more to be said about Avicenna's philosophical project.

Tony Street follows with a chapter on the syllogistic, in particular on *al-Ishārāt*. He does a good job not only of presenting why the logic is important and worth studying but also of enthusing readers toward it. His greatest argument in favor of studying *al-Ishārāt* and not *al-Shifā'* is not only the chronology but also the reception in the later tradition. The main text is often quite different from the commentary culture but one is minded to pay attention to the latter to consider the nature and extent of the former. Street appends a very useful list of Avicenna's extensive works on logic and some of the key editions and translations relating to them.

Having translated *al-Ṭabī'iyyāt of al-Shifā'*, Jon McGinnis is an excellent guide to the natural philosophy. He argues that a study of motion and of the very stuff of the world demonstrates Avicenna's keen and critical engagement with the Aristotelian tradition and with the early *kalām* reception of that school to bring forth new and varied notions. Peter Pormann next takes up the study of Avicenna's medicine and its relation to his epistemology exemplified in his examination of the physiology of the inner senses. He concludes that a study of the medical texts will be profitable for one interested in the philosophy and, in particular, provide further evidence for his approach to the mind-body problem. Clearly a desideratum alongside the focus on the philosophical works is a critical edition of *Qānūn fi l-ṭibb* and other texts.

Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Deborah Black follow with a pair of chapters on the epistemology from broadly different perspectives. In his study of Avicenna's epistemological optimism Hasse begins with the problem of intellection and the relative roles of emanation of the forms for the active intellect versus the abstraction of universals from sense perception. This is an old problem, with the former stressing the Neoplatonic reading from Fazlur Rahman, among others, and the latter stressing the Aristotelian and empirical elements from Gutas and others. Hasse tries to resolve this tension by first drawing upon Christina D'Ancona to show that Avicenna's notion of abstraction comes from *Theologia Aristotelis* (hence a Neoplatonic source), and second by citing McGinnis, who argues for conflating the ontology of essences with Avicenna's understanding of vision. Hasse posits that there is a confusion in this debate between the ontology and epistemology of essences: the emanation of forms from the Active Intellect concerns the ontology of how things come about, while abstraction of forms from sense perception relates to human epistemology. This seems like a relatively neat solution. But by discarding the illumination theory of what the active intellect bestows on the human because of Avicenna's purported optimism one wonders whether it is simply a *façon de parler*. Extending and amending the metaphor to describe the active intellect as an "external hard disk" does not help. It seems to me that the theory expounded by Yahya Michot some time ago in which abstraction is a preparedness in the soul which is then complemented with the reception of the form from the active intellect—*désagrégation* followed by *épiphanie* as he puts it—is quite reasonable. Black would perhaps broadly agree with such an approach in her study on the internalism of Avicennan epistemology and its foundationalist basis. This is a masterful article that is concerned with the fundamental question of how we know things, and it takes us through Avicenna's views on this from the propositional foundations of knowledge through the social context, finally arriving at certainty. Significantly, she also reads Avicenna as an epistemological optimist.

Two chapters on metaphysics follow, with Stephen Menn on the broad scheme and Peter Adamson on the Necessary Existent. Given the significance of the area of concern, it is not surprising that Menn's article is the longest in the volume. Menn locates Avicenna in the wider tradition (including the work of *mutakallimūn* and Ibn 'Adī, among others) and begins with the assumption that Avicenna wished to replace the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle with his work (the processes of that correction and modification were already the subject of Amos Bertolacci's dissertation published in 2006). Menn's primary concern is with the unity of the *mawjūd*. This study of being is complemented by Adamson on one of Avicenna's most famous arguments on the existence of God. Does Avicenna's argument for the Necessary Existent prove the existence of God? If one follows the course of the fourth section of *al-Ishārāt*, one can see the strategy that Adamson explains: moving from Necessary to why it is unique, simple, ineffable, essentially intellecting, and good. So far, so Neoplatonic. Of course, to arrive at the God of Islam—as Adamson acknowledges—one would have to consider a range of the attributes critical to the theological tradition, such as will, power, creation, and so forth. The God of the philosophers is still

somewhat remote from the personal God of piety, morality, and salvation. It is here in particular that Adamson could have had recourse to some of the material at the end of *Metaphysics* as well as the supplicatory and exegetical tradition; just as the late Neoplatonists had theurgic and petitionary elements to their thought on the reversion to the One, so, too, one finds elements of such practices in Avicenna. His own critics felt that Avicenna had not done enough to prove the existence of the God of faith but their assessment was similarly a partial one.

We turn to the Abrahamic trilogy of pieces. Bertolacci introduces us to the formation of the Avicenna Latinus and the Latin reception, which was significant and has been the subject of interest for medieval philosophy over the ages. While we know much about the translations, we do not always understand the choices of terms and equivalences and little research has been done on areas of influence outside of philosophical texts. Bertolacci suggests considering influence through explicit nominal citation as well as inter-textual reference and the ways in which Avicennism in a Latin idiom was mediated by al-Ghazālī and Averroes. He ends with some salutary points, not least that there is an urgent requirement to complete the critical edition of the whole Latin corpus of Avicenna and, in terms of understanding the fortunes of Avicenna's reception, to consider the centrality of his project as a harmonization of Greek thought in an Islamic idiom, as the first real Islamic philosopher—as he was often received in the Islamic East. Gad Freudenthal and Mauro Zonta's joint contribution signals the relative neglect of the Jewish cultural reception of Avicenna. Surprisingly, they conclude that Avicenna was little read and engaged by Arabophone Jewish philosophers—this is because they exclude Abū-l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī and Ibn Kammūna, the former a critic and the latter a follower, since they were not Jewish philosophers as such (it is possible that both converted to Islam late in life). However, when one considers the Hebrew context, the medical corpus of Avicenna was a major influence—despite hardly any of his philosophical works being translated into Hebrew and only secondhand citation of ideas through Maimonides and other figures. It does seem that more research is needed in this area. The conclusions are quite interesting—the adherence to more doctrinaire Aristotelianism mediated by Averroes as the philosopher and the absence of the actual and direct Avicenna either in the Arabophone or Hebrew context limited his influence.

Finally, Robert Wisnovsky's ambitious study of Avicenna in the Islamic East up until the late nineteenth century reflects the broad turn to the "post-classical" by considering the course of the commentary traditions on *al-Shifā'* and *al-Ishārāt* as well as the indirect traditions mediated by the commentary traditions of the major theological summa, such as *al-Tajrīd* and *Sharḥ al-mawāqif*. This is a very rich and large corpora of texts that will keep us all busy for many years to come. Wisnovsky starts and ends with Muḥammad 'Abduh, sometimes considered to be the culmination of an intellectual tradition, to see how far the reach of Avicennism spread. One important point to consider is that most thinkers were responding to Avicenna in some way or another given his dominance in the curriculum—and contra Wisnovsky we have been misled by Henry Corbin and others on the "Illuminationist" tradition, which was far more limited than thought. For example, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī's primary positions are Avicennan—just because an author writes a commentary on a text does not make him an adherent of its school. The influence of *al-Ishārāt* in the middle period seems to have much to do with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī since, as Heidrun Eichner has shown, it was his work that was the pivotal influence in the ways in which philosophical and theological summae were conceived and structured. These texts as well as works modeled on *al-Shifā'*, such as *al-Taḥṣīl* of Bahmanyār, meant that the absence of commentaries of the former did not mean it was actually absent from consideration. But the sixteenth-century turn to formal commentary on *al-Shifā'* may well be part of the fracturing of the tradition that reflected the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry, although the manuscript libraries of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal spheres are not filled with only one element. In terms of the specific development of the philosophers of Shiraz into the Safavid period, Wisnovsky gets it the wrong way around: the insights of the Dashtakīs were developed and extended by Mullā Ṣadrā in his gloss and his own original works, and it was actually Mīr Dāmād in his work who developed Dawānī. Wisnovsky does provide a useful notion of four philosophical traditions developing on Avicenna: one in Iran, another in the Ottoman lands, a third in India, and a fourth in Central Asia. But as Khaled El-Rouayheb's volume on the seventeenth century in Ottoman contexts and Asad Ahmed's work on India suggest, the real turn was that these areas were

more concerned with Avicenna's logic, semantics, and modes of argumentation, while the Safavid thinkers remained primarily concerned with the reality of his metaphysics. And the latter reverts to 'Abduh in the nineteenth century through Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, trained as he was in the Shī'ī seminaries. The irony of Wisnovsky's conclusion is that the rupture of the new learning in the colonial period may have reinvigorated the metaphysical turn of Avicenna that had been cherished in Iran.

It is hard to quibble with the merits of this volume, and readers interested in Islamic thought, and in particular Islamic philosophy, as well as historians of philosophers will profit from a careful reading, using it to map out possible research trajectories. There are lacunae. I would like to have seen an engagement with the question of non-propositional thought in Avicenna and what Neoplatonic mysticism in an Arabic idiom might mean. His exegetical and more "religious" writings and their philosophical significance also bear scrutiny. And then there is the mathematical and scientific thought—not least in the light of current work being undertaken on Samarqand and the reception of Avicenna's philosophy and Avicennan science by Ihsan Fazlioğlu and his students in Turkey. The volume could have done more to indicate the major contributions of scholars working today in Turkey and Iran on Avicenna—his actual corpus as well as the rich commentary traditions of the post-classical period. But this is not supposed to be a definitive map of Islamic intellectual history and it would be unfair to expect that. Nevertheless, the course of philosophy begins and remained focused on Avicenna—and this is why anyone interested in Islamic intellectual history will have to read this book.

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*Islamic Law in Theory: Studies on Jurisprudence in Honor of Bernard Weiss.* Edited by A. KEVIN REINHART and ROBERT GLEAVE. Studies on Islamic Law and Society, vol. 37. Leiden: BRILL, 2014. Pp. xx + 370. \$181, €140.

This festschrift cum workshop volume (2008) begins with the editors' introduction (pp. 1–16), which links the contributions to the groundbreaking scholarship of Bernard Weiss, and follows with thirteen chapters in four main sections: Law and Reason, Law and Religion, Law and Language, and Law: Diversity and Authority. The large tome and the limited space of the review are incompatible; I therefore apologize in advance for not sharing the word count fairly among the contributors but for picking out the chapters that align the closest with my focus.

Ahmed El Shamsy's first chapter explores the question of whether Mu'tazilī ethics provided conceptual tools for legal reasoning (p. 19). He examined two early tenth-century works of Shāfi'ī legal theory—*al-Aqsām wa-l-khiṣāl* by the little-known Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Umar b. Yūsuf al-Khaffāf and *Maḥāsīn al-sharī'a* by al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (d. 365/976). Despite the centrality of the notion that the sacred law promotes "human benefit" (*maṣlaḥa*), El Shamsy cautions that *maṣlaḥa*, which was justified by God's wisdom (*ḥikma*), had not by that time been mobilized as a practical tool of analogical reasoning (pp. 24–25). According to El Shamsy, al-Qaffāl and other early Shāfi'īs drew a distinction between the specific causes of legal rules and the overall purpose of the law. They treated legal causes as arbitrary signs that therefore could not be used in analogical reasoning (p. 28). Not until the rise of Ash'arism did the theory of *maṣlaḥa* become more practical in lawmaking. One could postulate that al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)—whose argument in *al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl* (ed. Medina, 1992, 2: 502) against the anti-*maṣlaḥa* opponents was that his theory was based on the Quran, Sunna, and *qiyās*—*textualized* the theory of *maṣlaḥa*, bringing it in conformity with Ash'arism.

Éric Chaumont follows in chapter two along the same lines, arguing that George Makdisi and Henri Laoust overestimated the influence on Sunnism of traditionalism, especially that of the Ḥanbalīs of Baghdad of the eleventh century (p. 39). The traditionalists, in his view, were no more than "an empty shell" (*une coquille vide*). Like salafis today, they were activists who were both intellectually and spiritually depraved (p. 40). *Pace* Laoust and Makdisi, Chaumont contends that Abū Ishāq