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Annotated bibliography on Avicenna's Logic and Metaphysics: First Part: A - K

The Arabic Rediscovery of Aristotle's Metaphysics

Contents of this Section

This part of the section History of Ontology includes the following pages:

Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: the *Theology of Aristotle* (under construction)

Al-Kindi's *Metaphysics*: First Philosophy as the Study of God (under construction)

Al-Farabi on the Scopes of the Aristotelian Metaphysics (under construction)

Ibn Sina (Avicenna) on the Subject and the Object of Metaphysics

Translations of the Philosophical Works of Avicenna

Selected bibliography on Avicenna's Logic and Metaphysics:

Avicenna A - G (Current page)

Avicenna H - Z

Averroes (Ibn Rushd) on the Divine as the Subject of Metaphysics (under construction)

Index of the Pages on Medieval Philosophy

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    "Avicenna's notorious claim that God knows particulars only 'in a universal way' is argued to have its roots in Aristotelian epistemology, and especially in the *Posterior Analytics.* According to Avicenna and Aristotle as understood by Avicenna, there is in fact no such thing as 'knowledge' of particulars, at least not as such. Rather, a particular can only be known by subsuming it under a universal. Thus Avicenna turns out to be committed to a much more surprising epistemological thesis: even humans know particulars only in a universal way."

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    "En muchas de las obras traducidas se encontró Gundisalvo con la palabra *al-qiwam*. Vamos a recorrerlas transcribiendo los pasajes más representativos para darnos a entender su significado. (p. 381)
    (...)
    Después de haber señalado así la mayoría de los pasajes en que Gundisalvo, tanto en las traducciones como en sus propias obras emplea la palabra 'existentia' para traducir *al-qiwam,* y despues de haber visto que Gundisalvo quiere asi significar et 'esse' o 'quo est' como contradistinto de 'quod est', debemos preguntarnos ¿qué es lo que et propio Avicena entiende por *al-qiwam*? Desde luego tratamos del sentido correspondiente inmediato entre el concepto y la cosa significada, no de un sentido implicito o de un sentido consecuente al modo como al decir 'casa' significamos 'el techo' y significamos 'las paredes', y al designar et 'individuo' designamos su 'esencia especifica'.
    Primeramente observemos que hoy por *al-qiwam* todo el mundo entiende la 'subsistentia' (traducción que tambien Gundisalvo aceptó, como hemos visto). Por esto dice A.-M. Goichon: «599. -'Qiwâm', *subsistence*, sens donné par Lane art. *qiwam* et *rukn*, mais qui n'est presque jamais rendu exactement par les traductions, pourtant des plus diverses». No podían traducir al-qiwam por 'subsistentia', porque el latin corriente de entonces carecía de esa palabra. No se encontrará vocabulario

del rabe ni arabista entendido que haya visto en Avicena el uso de *al-qiwam* en el sentido de 'existencia' contrapuesta a la 'esencia' corno *principia quibus* de las cosas, ni Gundisalvo lo vió, ya que la 'existencia' para él no significa lo que en tiempos posteriores a los suyos vino a significar. Contra los que quieren ver en el *al-qiwam* de Avicena o en la `existentia' de Gundisalvo ese significado de tiempos posteriores, ya es bastante decir que nadie, conocedor del árabe, haya encontrado tal significado en dicho *al-qiwam* aviceniano.

En segundo lugar, la existencia en ese sentido posterior a los tiempos de Gundisalvo es algo simple en sí el acto último que entra en la composición de las cosas. Es, como veremos, algo del orden de la *al-anniyya* de Avicena. En cambio, el *al-qiwam* aviceniano es algo compuesto de 'acto' y `potencia', mas o menos simples (cada uno de por sí), o bien mas o menos determinados. (pp. 392-393).

(...)

Que ese 'acto' y esa 'potencia' pueden recibir (según la dottrina de Avicena) determinaciones, hasta convertirse en lo que Santo Tomas llamó 'materia' y `forma', es manifiesto por et mismo pasaje a que aludimos, ya que a continuación prueba Avicena que ese acro de *al qiwam* es en las plantas *y* animales ' et alma` *y* esa potencia del mismo *al-qiwam* es 'el cuerpo' . De aquí que ese *al-qiwam* sea ciertamente la 'constitucion' de la cosa, o sea su esencia específica, su *mahiyya,* como por otro nombre lo nombra el mismo Avicena, según luego vamos a ver. He ahí por que Gundisalvo, en la traduction de la *Isagoge* de Avicena equiparo el 'esse' (o 'quo est') de Boecio a la *rnahiyya* aviceniana, y la traduce cerca de cien veces por 'esse', y este 'esse', según el, se define: «Esse est existentia formae in materia». Esta existencia, pues, es la esencia específica o simplemente 'la esencia', dicha en abstracto, solo que latinistas posteriores a Gundisalvo cambiaron los conceptos que implicaban esas palabras.

De aquí que tengamos en Avicena pasajes que contradistinguen entre sí *al-qiwam y ' existencia' (al-wuyud*) en cuanto se suele contraponer a 'la esencia'. (p. 394).

(...)

En otro artículo seguiremosn: con el estudio de *al anniyya* en las obras de Avicena. El hecho de que una palabra se apoderó del significado de la otra, al par que et confusionismo que de eso se siguió y aun vemos seguir, relacionó de un modo inconveniente los terminos *al-qiwam y al-anniyya* y sus mismos conceptos. Pero quizá con lo dicho y con lo que diremos después encontremos alguna mayor claridad en ese boscaje de traducciones e interpretaciones." (p. 405).

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quite explicit form, a view of predication at odds with many current interpretations
of Aristotle and views of predication. That view is that the simple affirmative
categorical proposition 'S is p' is to be read as 'S is (existent) as a p', and that for its
truth it is required both that S be existent and that S be p. This paper sketches out
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regained philosophical importance in the twentieth century. The theories of intention

and intentionality of the medieval Islamic philosopher and physician Ibn Sina and the phenomenological philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl are examined, compared, and contrasted here, showing that Ibn Sina's conception of intention is naturalistic and, in its naturalism, is influenced by the medical professional culture to which Ibn Sina belonged. As well, Husserl's anti-naturalistic conception of intentionality is influenced by his background as a mathematician and by his desire to ground mathematics and the empirical sciences in a truly scientific philosophy. In conclusion, an argument is presented for the superiority of the Husserlian transcendentalist account of intentionality over the Avicennian naturalistic account, on the grounds that the latter falls prey to psychologism and reductionism, the two specters that according to Husserl must haunt all naturalistic accounts of consciousness."

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"The autobiography witnesses a significant evolution in Avicenna's approach to Aristotle's Metaphysics during the years of his education. It clearly shows that, at a certain point of his philosophical training, Avicenna faced the entire text of the Metaphysics, was puzzled by its extent and complexity, and found in a treatise by al-Farabi a guide for its understanding. But, albeit less perspicuously, the autobiography also suggests that this was not Avicenna's first encounter with the Metaphysics. Avicenna dealt with Aristotle's work in a previous stage of his studies as well. Then, however, he did not read the Metaphysics in its entirety, but, rather, focused only on its essential parts and some commentaries thereupon. The parts of the Metaphysics that Avicenna read in this earlier stage were books Alpha Elatton and Lambda, as constituting the natural theology of Aristotle's work. He neglected, on the contrary, the books corresponding to its ontological part. The special attention to Alpha Elatton and Lambda and the close connection between these two books in a theological context were peculiar traits of al-Kindi's approach to Aristotle's Metaphysics. Therefore, the evolving approach to Aristotle's Metaphysics that Avicenna's autobiography witnesses can properly be described as a passage from the Kindian to the Farabian way of interpretation."

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Contents: Introduction VII; Abbreviations XV;
Part One. The Arabic reception of the *Metaphysics* before Avicenna.
Introduction 3; 1. The Arabic translations of the *Metaphysics*: a new assessment on account of the evidence provided by Avicenna 5; 2. Beyond al-Kindi and al-Farabi: Avicenna's position in the history of the Arab reception of the *Metaphysics* 37; 3. Between Ammonius and Avicenna: al-Farabi's treatise *On the Goals of Aristotle's* Metaphysics 65;
Part Two. The scientific profile of the *Metaphysics* according to Avicenna.
Introduction 107; 4. Avicenna' conception of the theme of the *Metaphysics*: "existent *qua* existent" as the subject-matter, the first causes and God as the goal of metaphysics 111; 5. Avicenna's reworking of the structure of the *Metaphysics*: metaphysics as the discipline dealing with the species, the properties and the principles of "existent" 149; 6. Avicenna's elaboration of the method of the *Metaphysics*: metaphysics as a demonstrative, analytical, non-dialectical science 213; 7. Avicenna's view of the relationship of the *Metaphysics* with the other parts of the Aristotelian *corpus*: metaphysics as the founding discipline 265;
Part Three. The content of the *Metaphysics* according to Avicenna.
Introduction 305; 8. The quotations of the *Metaphysics* in the *Ilahiyyat* 309; 9. The main source of Avicenna's conception of metaphysics as a science: book *Gamma* and its quotations 375; 10. Avicenna's attitude towards dialectic: book *Beta* and its quotations 403; 11. The other sources of the *Ilahiyyat* 441; Conclusion 471; Appendices.
Appendix A: Towards a critical edition of the *Ilahiyyat*: list of corrections of the Cairo printed text 483; Appendix B: Index of authors and works quoted in the *Ilahiyyat* 559; Appendix C: Overview of the main works by Avicenna on metaphysics in chronological order 581; Appendix D: Names for Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and metaphysics as a discipline in Avicenna's works 593; Appendix E: The style of the *Kitab al-Sifa'* 607; Appendix F: The terminology for "property" in the *Ilahiyyat* 613;
Bibliography 617; Index of names and places 655; Index of Aristotle's works with passages cited 665; Index of Avicenna's works with passages cited 666; Index of manuscripts 669; Index of texts, outlines, tables 670-675.

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"Avicenna has been interpreted as having held the real distinction between 'esse' and 'essence'; Averroes as having criticized him on this point: "Avicenna made a big mistake here." A closer reading, however, will, I believe, reveal that Avicenna was talking about two intelligible notes, 'intentiones' or 'dispositiones', in the comprehension of a concept, whereas Averroes was pushing two different modes of understanding that same content. St. Thomas thought that Averroes "was closer to the truth." No Arabic scholar today would, so far as I can make out, read that real distinction into this context. Avicenna has also been accused of holding an independent order of possibles, just as Averroes was accused of holding a double truth theory. Both charges were libels."

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"Taking as a starting point the knowledge that the Arab world had of the neo-Platonic texts ascribed to Aristotle, such as the *Pseudo-Theology* and the *Liber de Causis*, the author of this study investigates the possible knowledge that Avicenna had of this under book, well-known in the Arab world under the title of *Kalamfi mahd al-hayr*. In order to demonstrate this, she provides an analysis of four passages that belong to the *Metaphysics* of the great philosophical encyclopaedia *Al-Sifa'* ("The cure").""

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Reprinted in: H. A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1987 pp. 281-310.
"The first philosopher known to use the concept of necessary existence in order to construct a proof of the existence of God was Avicenna. Avicenna's proof, it will appear, neither is, nor inevitably reduces itself to, an ontological proof. It is rather a certain kind of cosmological proof.
The concept of necessary existence is used by Avicenna to prove the existence of God in two works, at length in the Najat, briefly and somewhat obscurely in the Isharat. The concept is also discussed fully in two other works, the Shifa and Danesh Namesh, but there Avicenna employs it only to define the nature of God, not, as far as I can see, to establish His existence."

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"Aborder les thèmes de l'être et de la création chez Avicenne c'est, en principe, risquer une recherche immense à travers les concepts qui structurent trois dès domaines où les spéculations du grand philosophe sont les plus remarquables et aussi les plus difficiles: l'ontologie et la cosmologie, avec leur jointure. Les prendre tels qu'ils s'offrent dans le travail des traducteurs tolédans du 12e siècle, c'est tenter d'en saisir le fil tel qu'il pouvait apparaître à travers un ensemble lexical différent de celui de leur origine, constitué dans une langue d'un type différent et, *a priori,* moins riche; et d'autant moins que le fonds spécial dont disposaient ces traducteurs, leur vocabulaire technique, s'était constitué à partir de textes qui avaient assez peu à voir avec ceux que pratiquait Avicenne: c'étaient ceux de la philosophie latine, des Pères et de Boèce, quelque peu de Platon et de la logique d'Aristote, transposés en latin. D' autant plus remarquable, notons-le, est que les premiers lecteurs de ce corpus avicennien devenu accessible aient su en faire l'usage que l'on sait. On voudrait ici proposer seulement quelques remarques sur une partie du lexique ainsi constitué, en noter quelques correspondances plus ou moins réussies avec celui d'Avicenne, y accrocher quelques observations. Nous disposons pour cela d'un instrument de travail inestimable: les trois tomes de la *Philosophia prima* publiés par la regrettée Simone Van Riet et dont le troisième offre un double lexique: arabe-latin et latin-arabe, où est donc recueillie toute la matière de notre examen (1)." p. 35
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