

INTRODUCTION

The papers gathered in this volume represent in part the proceedings of The First Graduate Student Conference on Ibn Sīnā, convened at Yale University, 17–18 March 2001, along with three papers solicited from Dimitri Gutas, Jules Janssens and Robert Wisnovsky, all of whom served as respondents at that conference. Considered as a whole, these papers represent the major trends and concerns of current scholarship on the life and thought of Avicenna, perhaps the most important and influential philosopher of the pre-modern period in the East and West. The contributions of these scholars are here topically divided into three sections: Before Avicenna, The Age of Avicenna, and After Avicenna.

The section “Before Avicenna” contains four papers that address different aspects of the influence of the Classical heritage on Avicenna’s thought as well as the many substantive modifications that Avicenna’s own intellectual development brought to the articulation of Greek philosophy in Arabic. Specific issues of three of the philosophical disciplines treated by Avicenna, viz. logic, metaphysics, and psychology (theory of the soul), are taken up in these papers. A noteworthy aspect of all of these contributions is perhaps not the collective recognition of the degree to which Avicenna was indebted to his first master Aristotle, but rather the exploration of the philosophical concerns shared by the Greek commentators of Aristotle (both Peripatetic and Neoplatonic) and Avicenna. The study of this relation between the commentary tradition and Avicenna is one that traditionally has been undeveloped in Avicenna studies and so the observations offered in these four contributions will undoubtedly open up new horizons for scholars of Avicenna.

Asad Ahmed’s “Avicenna’s Treatment of Aristotelian Modals” presents an analysis of the manner in which Avicenna addressed a problematic aspect of Aristotle’s theory of modal syllogisms. For the purposes of clarifying the background to this problem, Ahmed sets forth useful accounts of Aristotle’s theory and its “inconsistencies” and Avicenna’s general approach to modal syllogistics. The case of

the two Barbaras, one of which Aristotle rejects, the other he inconsistently accepts (since the argument against the first turns out to be applicable to the second also), serves as a model example for the manner in which Avicenna addresses such seemingly contradictory elements of Aristotelian logic. Ahmed highlights the twofold approach Avicenna takes. On the one hand, he defends Aristotle's interpretation through an interesting reading of the major premise of the two Barbaras, a reading which appears to have had an impact on medieval Latin logicians' *de re/de dicto* distinction. However, Avicenna was not a slavish follower of Aristotle and when he departs from Aristotle's theory, he does so through a unique flexibility in the construal of the premises (in the case at hand, necessary conclusions can be drawn from assertoric premises). Ahmed suggests that this flexible construal of premises derives in part from Avicenna's reading of the commentaries of Theophrastus and Alexander of Aphrodisias. Ahmed's contribution again makes apparent both Avicenna's mastery of the Classical tradition as well as his own significant contributions to the history of logic.

Amos Bertolacci's "Some Texts of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the *Ilāhīyāt* of Avicenna's *Kitāb aš-Šifā'*" traces one aspect of Avicenna's reliance on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the *Ilāhīyāt* portion of his magnum opus *Kitāb aš-Šifā'*. Unlike the direct quotations of Aristotle in the *Ilāhīyāt*, the passages Bertolacci examines involve "anonymous quotations" of the *Metaphysics*. These passages have great significance for the study of Avicenna's reception of Aristotle. In a specific sense, they confirm Avicenna's use of Uṣṭāt's Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, evident in the nomenclature Avicenna employs in particular passages (in the example provided, the use of *huwīya* to render "existent" rather than the more common *mawǧūd*). In broader terms, these passages underscore the sophisticated exegetical techniques Avicenna employed in elucidating the doctrines of his Greek master. In addition, the analysis that Bertolacci applies to Avicenna's use of Aristotle provides a case example of the ways in which such background study will aid in the future critical editing of the *Šifā'*. By identifying the sources Avicenna used in composing the *Ilāhīyāt*, scholars will better understand his choices of philosophical terminology and will be better equipped to make sound editing decisions. Bertolacci's parallel translations of the texts of Avicenna's *Ilāhīyāt*, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and Uṣṭāt's version of the *Metaphysics* serve as a model for similar future investigations of Avicenna's reception of Aristotelian philosophy.

In “Towards a History of Avicenna’s Distinction between Immanent and Transcendent Causes” Robert Wisnovsky investigates Avicenna’s division of Aristotle’s four causes into those that are intrinsic to their effect (formal and material causes) and those that are extrinsic to their effect (final and efficient causes). Arguing against an earlier thesis by Jean Jolivet that such a distinction was not only introduced by Avicenna but also represented a significant departure from Aristotle’s own conception of causality, Wisnovsky provides a detailed overview of the Greek Neoplatonic commentary tradition to which Avicenna was heir. In the course of this overview, Wisnovsky makes it obvious that the commentators’ division of causes is not as significant a departure from Aristotle’s own “underdetermined” distinction of the four causes by matter (material cause) and form (formal, efficient and final causes). The Neoplatonic twofold division of Aristotelian causes apparently surfaces in Arabic philosophy for the first time in al-Fārābī’s commentary on the *Physics*. Avicenna’s own treatment of the four-cause theory evinces a progression in the chronology of his writings, the relevant passages of which Wisnovsky translates. In Avicenna’s earliest work in this sequence, *al-Ḥikma al-‘Arūḍīya*, the Neoplatonic instrumental and paradigmatic causes find a place in his treatment of this division. However, in his later work, *al-Isārāt wa-t-tanbīhāt*, the criterion for division of the causes into the immanent/transcendent dichotomy is discarded in favor of Avicenna’s own distinction between essence and existence which in turn serves as the basis for the division of formal/material causes and final/efficient causes. Wisnovsky concludes that Avicenna’s treatment of causality is representative of a larger characteristic of his metaphysics, in which we see elements of the Neoplatonic project give way to a uniquely Avicennan synthesis of Arabic Aristotelianism and medieval Islamic theology.

Another source of influence on Avicenna’s thought, and one which has not been as vigorously investigated as the Aristotelian connection, is the work of the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus. In “Intellect versus Active Intellect: Plotinus and Avicenna” Rahim Acar focuses attention on the question of Plotinus’ influence on Avicenna’s conception of the active intellect. Acar concludes that while there does not appear to be an immediately discernible relationship between the views of Plotinus and Avicenna (whether in the role Plotinus assigns the cosmic intellect in the creation of the human soul, or indeed in its actualization of the human potential intellect) we can credit Plotinus in part for Avicenna’s theory that human knowledge

derives ultimately from the active intellect. In the process of comparing the theories of Avicenna and his philosophical predecessor Plotinus, Acar offers an illuminating revision of previous scholarship on the issue (most notably the work of Herbert Davidson). He notes that a more recognizable derivation of Avicenna's conception of the active intellect is to be located in the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius on Aristotle's *De anima* rather than in the Arabic paraphrase of Plotinus' *Enneads*. This conclusion echoes in some respects the findings of Asad Ahmed in the realm of logic and Robert Wisnovsky in metaphysics, and highlights the importance of further research into Avicenna's reliance on, or at the very least, his knowledge of, the Aristotelian commentary tradition. Such research is now all the more readily possible with the English translations of nearly the entire ancient commentary corpus in the series *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle*, under the general editorship of R. Sorabji.

"The Age of Avicenna" is a useful phrase which, loosely construed, applies to both the period of Avicenna's active career and also, considering the enormous impact of his thought in later times, the subsequent periods of development in Arabic-Islamic philosophy. The boundaries of this "age" here are equally fluid, but the papers gathered under the section so titled all treat elements of the historical, social, and intellectual contexts of Avicenna's own time.

Only in recent years, with the work of Dimitri Gutas and Yahya Michot, have we seen a development in the study of the historical context of Avicenna's career. In "Stealing Avicenna's Books" I seek to provide an overview of the historiographical sources available to us for a reconstruction of that context. A specific event reported by Avicenna, scil. the seizure of his works during the attack on Isfahan by the Ġaznavid forces in 421/1030, serves as a case study for the treatment of the few facts about Avicenna's life known to later historians. In the course of investigating this later historiographical tradition (in Arabic and Persian), it becomes clear that the biographer Ibn Funduq al-Bayhaqī in his *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma*, while basing his report about the seizure of Avicenna's works on the information provided by Avicenna and his students, perhaps intentionally dated that seizure to a putative *later* sack of Isfahan. In so doing, Ibn Funduq appears to be the source for the unverifiable legend that at least some of Avicenna's books were carted off to Ġazna where they would later be burned in the Ġürid sack of that city in the mid-

sixth/mid-twelfth century. An examination of other contemporary or near-contemporary histories elicits no evidence to corroborate Ibn Funduq's report, but it is his report which, with various modifications, is taken up by later historians such as Ibn al-Aṭīr. As partial explanation for Ibn Funduq's manipulation of the facts in this case I present other instances in Ibn Funduq's *Tatimma* in which the literary topos of just recompense for the perceived faults of Avicenna play a role in Ibn Funduq's accounts of Avicenna's relations with his contemporaries. The conclusions to be drawn from this analysis suggest that very little information about the historical context of Avicenna's career were known to later historians beyond that provided by Avicenna himself and his students, and where that information was lacking later historians had no qualms about presenting a portrait of Avicenna influenced by their own reactions to him. Such a "re-invention" of Avicenna in this specific case is also found to have an impact on the accepted chronology of some of Avicenna's writings.

Avicenna's professional and intellectual relations with the Mu'tazilī theologians of his day have, to date, received very little scholarly attention. Avicenna's assessment of the intellectual rigor of Mu'tazilī views on topics in the Natural Sciences (*at-ṭabī'iyāt*) and some of their metaphysical presuppositions can be pieced together to some degree from random statements in the *Šifā'*, the *Nağāt*, and other works. Alnoor Dhanani's contribution, "Rocks in the Heavens?! The Encounter between 'Abd al-Ġabbār and Ibn Sīnā," investigates a much more substantial source for such a reconstruction. In a (still unedited) letter to an unidentified recipient, Avicenna responds to a question about the nature of space (*makān*) in which Mu'tazilī *kalām* views and definitions are adumbrated and the leader of the Mu'tazilī of the time, the Qāḍī 'Abd al-Ġabbār (d. 415/1025) is expressly quoted. Dhanani examines the evidence for possible professional contacts between Avicenna and 'Abd al-Ġabbār at the Būyid court at Rayy, and presents convincing arguments for Avicenna's knowledge of Mu'tazilī refutations of philosophy, along with a detailed account of 'Abd al-Ġabbār's testimony on physical theories. Dhanani's appraisal of the encounter between Avicenna and 'Abd al-Ġabbār serves as a departure point for a valuable contribution to the ongoing research into the areas of contact and conflict between Aristotelian philosophical and Islamic theological views on physical theories in medieval Islam.

In “Medical Theory and Scientific Method in the Age of Avicenna,” Dimitri Gutas examines the crucial question of Avicenna’s conception of the relation between theory and method in medicine. Gutas notes that medicine was not accorded a place in the classifications of sciences inherited by the medieval Islamic world from late Greek antiquity, and thus presented an epistemological problem for philosophers such as Avicenna seeking to incorporate it into the educational curriculum of the period. Avicenna’s attempt to accommodate medicine within such theoretical constructs shows a development over the course of his career. In an early schema, he subsumed it under a derivative category which included Astrology and Magic and which drew its principles from the theoretical (or “fundamental”) science of physics (i.e., Natural Philosophy). Later in his life, and perhaps following his reported teacher al-Masīhī, Avicenna demoted medicine still further, to a corollary, and thus non-theoretical, category of philosophy in general. Within such schemata, medicine was denied status as a theoretical science with demonstrative principles of its own (deriving such, rather, from physics), and its practitioners, insofar as they were physicians, were precluded from applying the knowledge they gained from experience to the investigation of principles of physics upon which their medicine was based. Gutas concludes that the intellectual and social context in which philosophers and physicians such as Avicenna worked inhibited an evaluation and development of medical theory that would extend beyond the simple description of medical practices. However, this does not mean that such descriptions, based on the observations and experiments of medieval Arab physicians, did not advance medieval medicine or that they do not actually constitute, for modern scholarship, an area for future research into medieval medical theory, and so Gutas enumerates a number of areas and sources that look particularly promising in this regard.

Tariq Jaffer’s “Bodies, Souls and Resurrection in Avicenna’s *ar-Risāla al-Adḥawīya fī amr al-ma‘ād*” directly confronts Avicenna’s theory of incorporeal resurrection as he articulated it in the *Adḥawīya*. As in Dhanani’s contribution, Jaffer observes that Avicenna approaches the problem of immortality in this treatise within the context of a refutation of Mu‘tazilī views on resurrection. A notable part of Avicenna’s understanding of resurrection is his insistence on locating the individual identity of a person in the soul and his argument that since the soul is separate from the corruptible matter of the

body, it alone is immortal. Jaffer frames his analysis of the issue through a presentation of Avicenna's twofold refutation of the theologians and the supporters of metempsychosis. In the case of the theologians, the precise identities of Avicenna's opponents are left unspecified in the text, but through a careful sifting of the intellectual currents of Avicenna's time, Jaffer is able to offer viable suggestions about whom Avicenna may have had in mind when composing the *Adḥawīya*. In the case of the refutation of metempsychosis, Jaffer makes the important observation that Avicenna deftly overcomes the argument in favor of metempsychosis by refuting the theory of pre-existent souls implicit in his unnamed opponents' stance.

The papers in the section "After Avicenna" collectively constitute a chronological map of the intellectual legacy of Avicenna in the medieval Near East. From the work of Avicenna's student Bahmanyār to the reception of Avicenna in Syriac, all of these contributions make abundantly clear the monumental degree to which Avicenna's thought influenced subsequent intellectual trends. These contributions also represent some of the first detailed studies of a period (twelfth-eighteenth centuries) in Near Eastern intellectual history that has traditionally been considered a time of scholarly conformism and decline. The significant developments in the reception of Avicennan thought outlined below, however, suggest a very different picture of the period in question.

Almost immediately, Avicenna's philosophical legacy underwent considerable transformation at the hands of his student Bahmanyār, as Jules Janssens plots in his "Bahmanyār ibn Marzubān: A Faithful Disciple of Ibn Sīnā?" From the scant evidence that can be collected from Avicenna's papers, it would appear that the relationship between Avicenna and Bahmanyār was not the traditionally fideistic bond of master and disciple common to medieval Islamic educational praxis. One of the reasons suggested for this is that Bahmanyār also drew intellectual influence from the little known figure Abū l-Qāsim al-Kirmānī, whom Avicenna "much despised" (in the words of Janssens) as a result of an earlier public controversy that pitted Avicenna and Abū l-Qāsim against one another. It is, thus, reasonable to ask, as Janssens does in the present contribution, whether or not Bahmanyār's own philosophical work, *Kitāb at-Taḥṣīl*, reflects any ambiguity in Bahmanyār's allegiance to Avicenna's ideas. Janssens finds that while Bahmanyār presents his work as a model of Avicenna's philosophy

in the organization of his material (following Avicenna's Persian *summa*, *Dānišnāmah-yi 'Alā'ī* in which metaphysics precedes physics), such mimicry overlays substantive alterations to Avicenna's philosophy. In a painstaking analysis of Bahmanyār's work, Janssens presents unquestionable evidence for Bahmanyār's innovations and modifications to the Avicennan program of thought. These departures from Avicennan thought include the discussion of *all* of the Aristotelian categories as well as much that belonged to Avicenna's Physics in Bahmanyār's metaphysical discourse, and the complete exclusion of theological issues from his Metaphysics. Janssens concludes that rather than "re-Aristotelizing" the Avicennan philosophical program, Bahmanyār's intention in reconceptualizing the parameters of the philosophical disciplines may have been influenced by Abū l-Qāsim al-Kirmānī's weak grasp of those disciplines.

An important episode in the reception of Avicenna's thought among later Muslim theologians and philosophers is located in the commentary by Faḥr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) of Avicenna's *al-Iṣārāt wa-t-tanbihāt*, followed by Naṣīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī's (d. 672/1274) super-commentary, which aimed in part to defend Avicenna against what Ṭūsī deemed to be misapprehensions on ar-Rāzī's part. Avicenna's *Iṣārāt*, intended as a highly condensed version of arguments and theories developed in greater detail elsewhere, presented a considerable challenge to the exegetical skills of later thinkers. In "Faḥr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī's Critique of Ibn Sīnā's Argument for the Unity of God in the *Iṣārāt* and Naṣīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī's Defence," Toby Mayer analyzes the reception of Avicenna's metaphysical argument for divine unity in these later commentaries. Mayer begins with a presentation of Avicenna's argument that emphasizes its avoidance of positions based on physical premises and its focus, instead, on the issue of individuation. Mayer then notes that Rāzī's understanding of Avicenna's proof produces enormous difficulties for his commentary in that it leaves many of Avicenna's references without meaningful connection to his premises. While Mayer's examination of Rāzī's views highlights its inconsistencies, it also recognizes an important philosophical presupposition on the part of its author, scil. the belief in a complex God. Mayer suggests that such a belief is to be explained by Rāzī's Aś'arī allegiances, as well as perhaps his readings of the philosopher Abū l-Barakāt al-Baḡdādī. Ṭūsī's response to Rāzī is next set forth in equal detail. Mayer points out that in many instances, Ṭūsī needs only challenge Rāzī's unreflective assertion that the philoso-

phers argue for the univocity of the term “existence” in order to demolish his predecessor’s objections to Avicenna. In doing so, Ṭūsī introduces the idea of “the ambiguity of existence” (*taškīk al-wuğūd*) into his debate with Rāzī. This raises the question of whether Ṭūsī is justified in using such an idea in defense of Avicenna, and so Mayer traces Avicenna’s use of *taškīk al-wuğūd* in his “private statements” found in the *Mubāḥatāt*, noting this important Neoplatonic element in Avicenna’s thought as well as Ṭūsī’s own significantly developed connotation of the term.

Naṣīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī appears again in Ahmed H. al-Rahim’s “The Twelver-Šī‘ī Reception of Avicenna in the Mongol Period,” a biobibliographical account of the trajectory of Avicenna’s influence on Šī‘ī authors of the twelfth-fourteenth centuries. Al-Rahim begins his survey by noting the relative lack of scholarly attention directed toward the period in question, which has recently been termed the “golden age” of philosophy in Islamic civilization. Al-Rahim notes that partial reason for this may be the scholarly devaluing of genres such as the commentary and gloss, popular in the period, but presumed to be unoriginal. An important *isnād* of philosophers which links Ṭūsī directly to Avicenna’s student Bahmanyār serves as the framework for al-Rahim’s account of the transmission of Avicenna’s philosophy in the centuries after his death. While much about this *isnād* is historically problematic in al-Rahim’s view, it did serve as a means by which later theologians, particularly those associated with the Niẓāmīya *madrasas*, could articulate their allegiance to Avicennan philosophy. Al-Rahim next presents a bibliographical survey of the most important Šī‘ī philosophical works which served as a curriculum for the study of Avicenna, including those by Ṭūsī and his Twelver-Šī‘ī student al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325).

Another important area for the reception of Avicenna’s thought is to be located in the *Iṣrāqī* tradition of the so-called “school of Isfahan,” and, in particular, the philosophy of one of its major representatives, Mullā Ṣadrā. In “Process Metaphysics in Islam? Avicenna and Mullā Ṣadrā on Intensification of Being,” Sajjad Rizvi examines Mullā Ṣadrā’s doctrine of *taškīk al-wuğūd* (translated by Rizvi as “modulation of being”) in relation to Avicenna’s substance-based metaphysics. As Rizvi explains, the doctrine of *taškīk al-wuğūd* forms a key part of a later Islamic metaphysics that directs attention toward the acts, or processes of being, rather than substance. Rizvi illustrates Mullā Ṣadrā’s interpretation of a process metaphysics through

an analysis of his views on intensification in being and develops this aspect of Sadrian metaphysics by observing its Neoplatonic roots and outlining Mullā Ṣadrā's modifications to the standard Illuminationist interpretation. While Rizvi recognizes that the Peripatetic tradition, as represented by Avicenna, generally does not recognize intensity in being, he notes (as does Mayer in his contribution) that Ṭūsī's commentary on the *Iṣārāt* allows for such a conception of intensity, if not in causality, then certainly in other divisions of being; and this is perhaps also present, albeit in an ambiguous manner, in Avicenna's *Mubāḥaṭāt*. Rizvi thus characterizes Ṭūsī's views as a turning-point in Islamic philosophy which was further developed by Mullā Ṣadrā, who rejects both the Peripatetic and Illuminationist stances on modulation in being. Rizvi concludes with an explanation of how such intensification need not result in a complex divinity in Ṣadrā's thought.

Hidemi Takahashi's contribution, "The Reception of Ibn Sīnā in Syriac: The Case of Gregory Barhebraeus" closes the volume with an outline of an entirely neglected sphere of Avicennan influence: the translation and assimilation of parts of his thought in the medieval Syriac philosophical and scientific works of Barhebraeus. Takahashi provides a brief biographical study of Barhebraeus, followed by a detailed conspectus of those of his philosophical works related to the Avicennan tradition. This corpus includes original compositions influenced by Avicenna's thought and designed to be a philosophical curriculum in Syriac (including *Cream of Wisdom*, modeled on the *Ṣifā'*); translations of Avicenna's works, especially *al-Iṣārāt wa-t-tanbīḥāt*; and theological treatises that contain much that can be traced to Avicenna. Takahashi emphasizes the importance of Syriac translations of Avicenna's works as witnesses for the critical editing of the Arabic originals, not simply for their translated material, but also because they often contain the parallel Arabic text. A detailed analysis of a few of the ways in which Barhebraeus employed Avicenna's *aṣ-Ṣifā'* in his *Cream of Wisdom* follows Takahashi's conspectus. Notable aspects of Barhebraeus' methods are that he added a section on practical philosophy absent in Avicenna's work, and his excerption of the *Compendium* of Nicolaus Damascenus (first century B.C.) as part of his discourse. In both cases, Takahashi observes a possible "re-Aristotelizing" (to borrow a phrase from Janssens' contribution) of Avicenna. Takahashi next provides a few examples of textual collocation of the *Cream* and the *Ṣifā'* in order to demonstrate the type of paraphrase and alteration undertaken by Barhebraeus. The vari-

ous aspects of Barhebraeus' significance for Avicennan studies include his role as a thirteenth-century commentator of Avicenna (in which his endorsement of Avicennan philosophy fluctuates); the function of his work as textual witness to Avicenna's oeuvre (often more useful than even the Latin translations); and his role as transmitter of Avicennan philosophy to Oriental Christianity. Much about the Syriac reception of Avicennan thought is little known to Arabists and Persianists; Takahashi's contribution thus constitutes an important foundation for the further development of Avicenna studies.

During the concluding session of The First Graduate Student Conference on Ibn Sīnā, and as a result of the mutual enthusiasm of the participants for the convivial atmosphere of shared scholarship, The Avicenna Study Group was formally created. The participants agreed that the recent growth in research directed toward the life and thought of Avicenna had reached significant a stage as to warrant a formal structure and vehicle for its continued dissemination. The purpose of The Avicenna Study Group is to facilitate communication concerning recent academic research on the life, times, and thought of Avicenna through annual meetings, to disseminate information on manuscripts, primary, and secondary material related to Avicenna and medieval Arabic philosophy in general, and to serve as the first stage in projected major collaborative research projects on Avicenna. The present volume represents the first collective activity of The Avicenna Study Group.

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27 October 2002

Note on the Transliteration of Arabic and Persian

The transliteration follows the rules of the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* for both Arabic and Persian, with the exception of *aw* and *ay* for diphthongs instead of *au* and *ai*, and *á* instead of *ā* for the *alif maqṣūra*. The Persian *-h* (representing the *tā' marbūta*) is retained, and the Persian *idāfah* is represented as *-i* or *-yi*.