Philosophy
in the Abrahamic Traditions:
Intellect, Experience and More

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Abstracts

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Acar, Rahim, Marmara University, Istanbul

Title: *Avicenna's Conception of God's Knowledge of Particulars within the Constraints of Theological Language*

Avicenna's position concerning God's knowledge of particulars is usually interpreted such that for him God does not know particulars. Although Avicenna confirms that God knows particulars, many of his interpreters, medieval scholars as well as modern ones, are not convinced. They usually analyze Avicenna's conception of rational knowledge and conclude that rational knowledge cannot include particulars. In my presentation, I am going to argue that in discussing whether Avicenna's position implies that God cannot know particulars, one should take into account not only his conception of rational knowledge but also his position concerning theological language. His position regarding the nature of theological language must be taken into account, because Avicenna's conception of theological language does not allow predication of perfection terms between God and creation univocally. Thus evaluating his position regarding God's knowledge of particulars with the assumption of univocal predication prevents a proper interpretation of his position.

Ahmed, Fouad Ben, Al-Qarawiyine University, Rabat

Title: *Challenging Ibn Sīna and the Avicennism. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī and the Reform of Philosophy in the 13th Century*

Kitāb an-Naṣīḥatayn (*Book of Two Pieces of Advice*) by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (629/1231) is one of the numerous philosophical works written after the death of Ibn Rushd (595/1198). The work invites us, on one hand, to revisit "the exaggerated death" of philosophy in the Muslim contexts, and to reconsider, on the other, the perspective that identifies the history of Ibn Sīnā's tradition (427/1037), after the alleged death, as being the history of Islamic philosophy itself. As the title shows, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf's treatise is divided into two pieces, one medical and the other philosophical. My paper focuses on the second, highlighting its philosophical implications and its critical and reformist contents, and bringing new insights to the places where al-Baghdādī is influenced by Ibn Rušd.

Bennett, David, University of Gothenburg

The maʿnā in pre-Avicennan thought

That property of the wolf recognised by the estimative faculty of the sheep, in Avicenna's famous case, is a *maʿnā*, a term with a rich and complicated history in Arabic philosophy. As a "conceptual entity," it performed a number of roles for early practitioners of kalām before being formalised in mature Muʿtazilism. Significantly, it was often associated with a sort of causal efficacy, such that *maʿnā*s were determinate with respect to attributes inhering in the perceiving subject. Extra-divine causality was always a problematic issue in *kalām*, so this arrangement led to extensive deliberation. This chapter will demonstrate how the arguments about the standing and function of the *maʿnā* in *kalām* anticipated its role in Arabic peripatetic psychology.

Brenet, Jean-Baptiste, University of Paris Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris
Title: *From the Possible to the Necessary: Averroes on Ontological Transmutation*
Can what is 'possible' become 'necessary'? With the aim of drawing new conclusions concerning Averroes's doctrine of 'conjunction,' this presentation studies how Averroes, in noetics, metaphysics and cosmology, reacted to the notion of ontological transformation as found in Alexander of Aphrodisias, al-Fārābī and Avicenna.

Chase, Michael, CNRS Centre Jean Pépin, Paris
Title: *Aristotelianism and Negative theology in early Islam*
The importance of negative theology in Islamic theology is widely recognized. Ismāʾīlīs, Sūfis, and other heterodox theologians, but also thinkers as orthodox as Avicenna and Maimonides agreed that human knowledge of the divine First Principle must be to some extent limited. The sources of this doctrine have occasionally been studied, yet it has not been so widely noted that orthodox Aristotelianism could also lend itself to the conclusion that there are strict limits to what human beings can know about the Divine. Particularly important in this regard were the well-known four methodological questions from Book II of the *Posterior Analytics*. I therefore study the development of the interpretation of these four questions in Greco-Roman and early Islamic thought. Finally, I suggest that this use of the Aristotelian scheme may go back to such early figures as Jahm ibn Ṣafwān and Ḍirār ibn ʿAmr, who were active before the great waves of Greco-Arabic translation began.

Cory, Therese Scarpelli, University of Notre Dame, South Bend
Title: *Alexander, Aquinas, and the Genus of Intelligibles*
On a standard way of interpreting Aquinas's language of intelligibile, this formula is supposed to refer to something's being potentially or actually an object of thought--i.e., its potential or actual situation relative to some intellect. I propose an alternative reading according to which intelligibility is a genus of being identical to the genus of intellects. This metaphysical construal of intelligibility, I argue, is traceable to the Aristotelian commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias. The paper explores the significance of this approach to intelligibility and makes some suggestions about the route whereby the Alexandrine doctrine reached Aquinas.

D'Ancona, Cristina, University of Pisa, Pisa
Title: *A Response to Dr. Taylor's "Natural Human Knowing in Aquinas: Problems and Challenges"*

De Haan, Daniel, University of Oxford, Oxford
Title: *Aquinas's Anthropology: From Experiences of Being Human to Understanding What it is to be Human*
For Aquinas, every Aristotelian science commences with what is more known to us before advancing to an enquiry into what is more known in itself. This is especially true

of ethics and psychology, and what is more known to us in these cases are the endoxa as well as our experiences of being human and living a life full of ethical experiences. But Aquinas does not always spell out how his theoretical enquiries in psychology and ethics are derived from human experiences, for Aquinas rarely provides us with, what we might call, a phenomenology of human experiences. In this paper I present an interpretation of *De veritate* 10.8 that articulates how Aquinas might have understood the connection between our experiences of being human with his theoretical understanding of human nature. I then deploy this interpretation to interrogate and bring out certain difficulties with Aquinas's theoretical account of the agent and possible intellects, and in particular, his account of intellectual cognition of singulars.

Donati, Silvia, Albertus-Magnus-Institut, Bonn
Title: *Albert the Great's Treatise De intellectu et intelligibili within his Project of a Peripatetic Science of the Soul*
Albert the Great's treatise *De intellectu et intelligibili* - a work clearly inspired by the Late Ancient and Arabic tradition of the treatises on the intellect - is probably the most significant result of Albert's noetic speculation. The treatise is divided into two books, the first dealing with the origin of the human intellect and its nature (tr. 1), the object of the intellect (tr.2) and the relationship between the intellect and its object (tr. 3), the second analyzing the successive stages in the process of completion which leads the human intellect to contemplative happiness. Within Albert's philosophical encyclopedia, the treatise is located in the section of natural philosophy dealing with the soul; more precisely, it belongs to the investigation of the operations and affections of the soul. In my presentation, after giving an overview on the content and the main sources of the treatise, I will focus on its classification as a work of natural philosophy, discussing Albert's model in the light of some of his contemporaries' criticism.

Halper, Yehuda, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan
Title: *Intentiones as Mediators of Experience in 14th – 15th century Hebrew Philosophical Works*
Following Averroes' interpretations of Aristotle's *De Anima*, *Parva Naturalia*, and *De Interpretatione*, Hebrew commentators understood intentiones as media between human beings and the external world as well as between descriptions things in the world and their descriptions in speech. 13th and 14th century Hebrew authors used a cognate of the Arabic maʿana, the Hebrew term ʿinyan, to describe what in Latin commentaries was known as *intentiones*. Yet, the Hebrew term ʿinyan was also used to translate a number of other key Arabic terms (including amr and ḥāl) and in other ways that did not always correspond directly to the specific meaning of associated with intentiones in Latin. Consequently, many commentators, particularly in 15th century Italy, dedicate significant effort to explaining the meaning of ʿinyan and to raising critical problems with ʿinyan as a medium

between human beings and the world and between the world and words about the world. These problems derive from 14th century scholastic discussions of intentiones, but take on their own character in Hebrew form.

Harvey, Steven, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan
Title: *Medieval Jewish Aristotelians and the Need for Experience*
Jewish Aristotelians of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, following their two philosophical authorities, Maimonides and Averroes, sought truth and human perfection through the orderly study of Aristotle's books on logic, natural science and metaphysics, as they were paraphrased and explained by Averroes. Averroes had famously claimed that Aristotle had originated these three disciplines and completed them. He thus saw his task as the study and explication of Aristotle's writings. Jewish thinkers in turn expressed their intentions to convey, explain, simplify, and even – on occasion – critique Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle. But did these thinkers really do as they wrote? And, in any case, was the careful study of such authoritative texts, combined with competence in formal logic, sufficient for leading one to true knowledge and perfection? I will consider the need for and role of experience for late medieval Jewish thinkers in the study of physics, astronomy, medicine, dreams and prophecy.

Janssens, Jules, KU Leuven, Leuven
Title: *Thomas Aquinas' use in the Q. De Veritate of Arabic sources (especialy with regard to his theory on the intellect).*
Thomas' *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* contain a number of explicit references to both Avicenna and the 'commentator', i.e. Averroes. Special attention will be paid to those references related to the issue of intellect and intellection (in man, but also on the angelic level). Given that both Arabic thinkers are far from holding the same view, Thomas' precise attitude regarding each of them will, through a careful examination of the most significant passages, be determined as precisely as possible. Moreover, I investigate to see if Thomas' understanding of their respective views has been influenced — and, if so, to what extant — by earlier or contemporary Latin thinkers, such as Albert the Great his fellow brother and teacher. Finally, it will be determined which of their ideas Thomas found: a) both innovative and valuable; b) only valuable (being in line with the classical Latin tradition); and c) rejectable.

Krause, Katja, MPIWG Berlin / TU Berlin, Berlin
Title: *Experience in Medieval Biology and Medicine*
Transmission processes of scientific experience have effects on the characteristics of this experience, on its emphases, its scientific functions, its epistemic status, and related values. In their discussions of the question of sensation in teeth, for instance, Avicenna

(*Canon*) and Albert (*De animalibus*) show that teeth are the exception to the general anatomical rule that "no bone ... has sensation." Their approach to exposing this truth is to rely on the experientia of Galen. Authority and experience thus seem to form a continuum of epistemic practices in medieval biology and medicine. In my paper, I show first how Galen's experience in Avicenna and Albert was a reworked, de-contextualised, and re-contextualised epistemic object, embedded into the practices of argument and theorisation. As such, Galen's experience did not have to be re-experienced by Avicenna and Albert, but could be re-told, because Galen's soul was presumed to function in the same way as the souls of Avicenna and Albert. I then turn to further select examples in Avicenna's *Canon* and Albert's *De animalibus* where experience is invoked, and analyse it in its interactions, reciprocal effects, and interdependencies with the act of experiencing, as a tool of knowing and its different functions within the sciences of our historical actors, in its conceptualisations in language(s), and in its different forms of transmission on the conceptual level.

Lahdhiri, Aicha, University of Azzaytouna, Tunisia
Title: *The Classification of Religious Sciences in Medieval Islamic Philosophy*
Abstract: In the history of Islamic sciences epistemological issues and the religious importance of these sciences are important topics of study in schools of theology and schools of jurisprudence.The independence of these studies from philosophical is also discussed. However, medieval philosophical thinkers of the lands of Islam such as al-Farabi, al-Ghazali and Averroes, in spite of their philosophical interests, chose also to write on jurisprudence and kalam as well. This paper focus on next questions: (i) What were the theoretical and epistemological considerations that led al-Farabi, al-Ghazali and Averroes to write on the religious sciences of jurisprudence and kalam? (ii) What was the importance of the religious sciences in their philosophical teachings?(iii) Is it possible to consider their writings in theology and jurisprudence as a part that in some way completes their accounts as those of Islamic philosophy?

López-Farjeat, Luis Xavier, Universidad Panamericana, Mexico City
Title: *'Abd al-Jabbār and the 'Philosophical' Refutation of the Eastern Christian Christological and Trinitarian Doctrines*
Within his theological works—mainly the *al-Mughnī* and the *Tathbīt*— 'Abd al-Jabbār refutes the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines as formulated by several Eastern Christians. His criticism provides, on the one hand, relevant and relatively accurate historical information regarding the controversies among Eastern Christians; on the other hand, it allows appreciating how a Muslim theologian understood and refuted two crucial Christian doctrines; finally, it portrays the vocabulary and philosophical concepts used by Eastern Christians through a Muslim scholar's lens. In this presentation,

I shall delve into 'Abd al-Jabbār's criticism with both a historical and a philosophical purpose. Regarding the historical purpose, I shall analyze 'Abd al-Jabbār's understanding of the Eastern Christian controversies. His approach, however, is not merely descriptive, but deserves philosophical examination. Consequently, the philosophical purpose shall be to discuss 'Abd al-Jabbār's understanding of the logical and metaphysical vocabulary, as well as the philosophical arguments involved in the Christian debates.

Montada, Joseph Puig, Complutense University of Madrid, Madrid
Title: *Avempace and Alfarabi on scientific knowledge*
Alfarabi (d. 950) commented on Aristotle's logical works and on Porphyrios' *Eisagoge* and besides he wrote some logical opuscules. Alfarabi became very influential as logician in al-Andalus and Avempace (d. 1038), who is better known for his independent treatises on metaphysical issues, wrote on logic too, although only in form of annotations to Alfarabi's commentaries. However, the annotations show originality and develop new ideas. In the lecture I will focus on Avempace's handling of a text of Alfarabi called *The Five Sections*; the contents of *The Five Sections* echoes Aristotle's *De interpretatione* although in a broad sense. Alfarabi's text was first edited by D.M. Dunlop (1955), later by Rafiq al-Ajam, (Beirut 1986), and by Muhammad Taqi Danishpazhuh (Qom, 1987-89). Majid Fakhry edited Avempace's annotations to *The Five Sections* in his *Ta'līq Ibn Bāğğa alā manṭiq al-Fārābī* (Beirut, 1994), pp. 64-76, and this is the edition used here. The first section bases on the distinction between sound and meaning; the second distinguishes between argumentative and intuitive knowledge; the third contrasts what is essential to what is accidental; the fourth describes the various meanings of anterior and posterior; and the fifth, which is the longest, analyses how the mind conceptualizes meanings. The paper will expound Avempace's ideas and compare them to those of his master Alfarabi.

Ogden, Stephen, The Catholic University of America, Washington DC
Title: *Reconsidering Avicenna and Averroes on Abstraction*
According to the two regnant interpretations of Avicenna's epistemology, either he diametrically opposes Averroes with respect to the intellectual abstraction of intelligibles, or he basically holds the exact same view. I argue (briefly here, building on other work) for a different conception of Avicenna on the Active Intellect's emanation and abstraction which resolves the exegetical debate, but also suggests an interesting reassessment of Avicenna and Averroes on the nature of abstraction. Avicenna's position is distinct (on my view) because abstraction is an emanated power. But, if I am correct, Avicenna also turns out to hold a more robust and (by some measures) more Aristotelian view of abstraction than his supposedly arch-Aristotelian rival, Averroes. Furthermore, I make some attempt to discern what Averroes actually knew and thought of Avicenna's psychological theory.

Polloni, Nicola, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Berlin

Title: *Marginal Epistemologies of Matter: Premodern Strategies for Knowing the Prime Substrate*

This paper explores some relevant strategies adopted by Premodern authors in order to supersede the intrinsic limitations on prime matter's knowability as implied by the "otherness" of its peculiar ontological status. In particular, I shall focus on how Premodern authors have engaged with problematic passages from (and hermeneutics of) Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Z, 10 and , 8; *Physics* A, 7; and Plato's *Timaeus*, 52b. My analysis will centre on three main authors: Calcidius, Solomon ibn Gabirol, and Roger Bacon. Examination of their strategies for establishing criteria of intelligibility of prime matter will show a fundamental tension in place between the scanty conditions of knowability of unqualified matter and the pivotal role this notion was meant to play in both natural philosophy and metaphysics.

Taylor, Richard C., Marquette University, Milwaukee

Title: *"Natural Human Knowing in Aquinas: Problems and Challenges"*

Thomas Aquinas is famous for his insistence that all human knowledge begins with particular things of the world grasped by the senses and is realized through a process of "Aristotelian" intellectual abstraction that yields universal concepts which can be used in scientific reasoning. In this presentation I review the important roles played in the development of his account by the Greek philosopher Alexander of Aphrodisias, the Muslim philosophers Avicenna and Averroes, and by Albert the Great, teacher of Aquinas. I then proceed to consideration of two recent challenges to that account from two interestingly different directions. One maintains that for Aquinas natural human knowledge of essences requires a nearly Platonic or Neoplatonic connection to the mind of God, while the other stresses that for Aquinas in the present life knowledge of essences is seemingly impossible. These prompt serious questioning of the viability of Aquinas's traditional account of human knowledge

Twetten, David, Marquette University, Milwaukee

Title: *The Source of Aquinas' "Being as Act" (esse ut actus) in Arabic Philosophy*

What is the source of Aquinas' doctrine of being (esse) as act? The notion of the "act of being" (*actus essendi*) has not yet been discovered in Avicenna's discussion of the essence-existence distinction. The paper examines some of the other answers in the literature: Plato and Aristotle (Fabro), Plotinus (Corrigan), Porphyry, Victorinus and Boethius (Hadot, McInerny), the Sayings of the Greek Sage and the Arabic Plotinus, etc. I address the issue with help from Aquinas' philosophy of language for "being": "that which is [in act]" *vs.* "that by which it is in act." The distinction is helpful because, as Geiger observes, Albert the Great uses the language of "esse ut actus," but Albert refers merely to the essence by which "that which is" is actually real. So, Aquinas takes the language from Albert but discovers the doctrine in Avicenna (and Aristotle). The paper shows how this occurred.