Philosophy and Language in the Islamic World, hg. v. Nadja GERMANN / Mostafa NAJAFI. – Berlin: De Gruyter 2021. 343 S. (Philosophy in the Islamic World in Context, 2), geb. € 99,95 ISBN: 978-3-11-055217-1

The editors admit that their collection is nothing more than an "album" containing various snapshots of issues in the philosophy of language during the first centuries after the advent of Islam; but the result is valuable not only because of the high quality of individual contributions, but because of the directions for further study in which it points. The collection clearly demonstrates that the various traditional Islamic sciences provide a rich resource for many issues in the philosophy of language.

David Bennett's contribution kicks things off with the daunting task of understanding the term *maʿnā*, which has been translated as *meaning* and as *intention.* After reviewing seven ways in which the term is used in Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt,* Bennett suggests that *maʿnā* generally signifies a cognizable content. Bennett observes a gradual expansion of the extension of the term, from attributes to relational properties, non-existents, non-acts, and various sorts of reasons for how things come to be. This background in early *kalām* will certainly serve as warning not to jump to conclusions when the term is found in later works in *kalām* or Islamic philosophy.

Jonathan Owens provides a discussion of how the eigth century Persian grammarian of Arabic Sībawayhi described various aspects of phonetics. Sībawayhi first defined the grammatical categories of Arabic followed by all later Arabic grammarians. While Greek phonetics sought to describe various elements that simultaneously contributed to articulation, Sībawayhi's approach was sequential.

Nadja Germann and *Noel A. Rivera Calero* demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of the reflections on the origins and nature of language by the philologist Ibn Jinnī (c. 932–1002). Arabic grammarians sought general principles that could be used to explain fundamental linguistic structures. Ibn Jinnī took the inquiry to a further level of abstraction by considering the origins and function of language itself. Ibn Jinnī sought to minimize the features of language that could be considered arbitrary conventions. On the other hand, he opposed the view of some theologians to the effect that the Arabic language was simply revealed by God. The intermediary position the authors attribute to Ibn Jinnī is that God gave the Arab bedouins and their ancestors an inborn disposition that enabled them to devise the Arabic language.

Alexander Key builds upon work done in his monograph, *Language between God and the Poets: Maʿnā* in the Eleventh Century. Oakland, CA 2018; to provide "notes" that trace discussions of ambiguity from the end of the tenth to the fifteenth century. Although ambiguity, whether lexical or syntactic, was often viewed as a flaw to be explained away, there were repeated attempts in poetics to view it as a valuable poetic device.

Tony Street's contribution introduces distinctions in meaning (*maʿānīn*) from Avcienna's *Ishārāt*, along with the commentaries of Tusi and Fakhr al-Rāzī, and others through the fourteenth century. What emerges is a division of meanings into three basic types: meaning by correspondence; meaning by containment; and meaning by implication, which was divided further into strong and weak implication. Ghazzali and Razi both claimed that meaning by implication is not a part of science. Street finds this puzzling, because it would seem to exclude descriptive meanings on which science depends. Perhaps the exclusion was only supposed to apply to *science* when understood as investigation into the essences of things and their definitions. Street's article finishes with two valuable appendices in which we find a key paragraph from Avicenna's *Ishārāt*, with the Arabic and English translation in facing columns, which continue with Tusi's commentary and then, in the next appendix, some key passages from Najm al-Dīn Kātibī (d. 1277) on signification. Street is certainly right to point out that in the passages he introduces we find the genesis of a distinctive philosophy of language.

Bilal Ibrahim's "Reason and Revelation in Fakh al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the Ashʿarī Tradition" is a tour de force of over fifty pages that can serve as a standard reference for Ashʿarī treatments of the relation between reason and revelation, the theory of evidence (*dalīl*), and scriptural hermeneutics. Ibrahim defends Rāzī's claim that scripture does not yield certainty against the accusations of Ibn Taymiyyah that Rāzī was more extreme in his rationalism than the Muʿtazilites. The two principles upon which Rāzī bases his hermeneutics are: (1) that scripture does not impart certainty because its interpretation depends upon the reader's ability to distinguish literal from figurative uses of language; and (2) there can be no purely scriptural proofs for religious claims, whether legal or theological.

David Vishanoff's contribution takes up the distinction between informative and performative speech acts as found in the works of four legal theorists of the late 10th and early 11th centuries. All struggled to extract descriptive content from divine commands that would indicate the legal status of various kinds of actions. Particularly perplexing was how to distinguish commands that indicated that what is commanded is obligatory from commands that indicated something was merely recommended.

After introducing the famous 11th century Shiʿi scholar, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Robert Gleave* zooms in on a discussion in one of the Shaykh's major works of the hermeneutical question of how to "discern the intended meaning of a speaker from their verbal utterances?" Gleave makes room for Ṭūsī in the company of analytic philosophers of language like Paul Grice and François Recanati, and observes that Ṭūsī and other scholars of the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) assumed that many of the principles governing ordinary human communication could also be applied to communications from God through His Prophet. Ṭūsī attempts to provide principles for understanding the texts of religious sources that are grounded in theological views in the attempt to confer on them a certainty that was considered insupportable by later theoreticians of Shiʿi jurisprudence.

Feriel Bouhafa challenges current scholarship about the views of Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 1119) about the origins of language. Ibn ʿAqīl discusses divine communication more generally as including: (1) direct audition, (2) angelic mediation, and (3) delivery to their hearts. In the first two modes, God uses human language. Ibn ʿAqīl argued that God gave humans an innate capacity to originate speech. We already learned from Germann and Calero that a similar view was held by Ibn Jinnī in the previous century, so it is somewhat surprising that Bouhafa does not consider the extent to which Ibn ʿAqīl drew upon Ibn Jinnī and others who had explained the revelation of language dispositionally.

In the final article in the collection, *Mohamed Mohamed Yunis Ali* offers an attempt to build upon medieval Muslim legal theories in the light of modern linguistics to construct a new theory of *ma'nā.* Long before John Stuart Mill and Gottlob Frege distinguished denotation/reference from connotation/sense, al-Ījī (d. 1355) made a comparable distinction. The author relies primarily on four medieval Muslim legal theorists in addition to Ibn Sina, while for modern linguistics, he refers to Geoffrey Leech and Paul Grice. The article is very useful for orienting those familiar with modern philosophy of language to identify relevant issues and some major similarities and differences with medieval Muslim theories.

One minor complaint is that the book does not contain a list of contributors.

The book as a whole is an extremely helpful reference that reviews the ideas relevant to contemporary philosophy of language that can be found in the works of a number of important medieval Muslim scholars.

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