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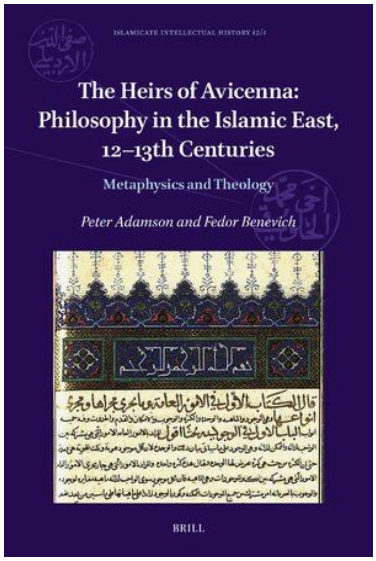

If the credibility of the authors is the first criterion in evaluating the quality of a sourcebook, it can be said with certainty, that this book stands on the shoulders of individuals well-versed in the field. The credibility of the authors is held in high regard.

The book itself is commensurate with the reputation of the publisher and the team. It is not just a random collection of *kalām* texts translated to English; it has many strengths, which include the following: 1) A sound introduction to the philosophers and their intellectual tradition along with glimpses of their history has been provided. 2) The themes dealt with have been carefully chosen, giving the reader a broad overview of the reception and development of Avicennian thought in a particular timeframe. 3) The original texts (though missing for the fifth chapter) have been provided online. 4) Arguments between *falsafah* and *kalām* form a common thread throughout, which demonstrates the evolution of this debate. 5) Each theme has been examined with a neat synopsis at the beginning of every chapter, which is certainly beneficial. The lucidity of these synopses is, thankfully, in stark contrast to the labyrinthine philosophical discourse of the chosen extracts. 6) Many keywords in the translations are followed with the Arabic equivalents after them in brackets. This has been useful. 7) Along with focusing on the selected period, philosophical arguments have been dealt with holistically, encompassing Greek, Latin, and modern scholarly literature. 8) Some arguments have been critiqued by the authors themselves.

In chapter one, the scope and subject matter of metaphysics and *kalām* are analysed, which for Avicenna (d. 1037 CE), is "the existent." Views of subsequent philosophers like Abū 'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. 1165 CE), who prefers the word "divine," along with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210 CE) and al-'Allāmah al-Ḥillī (d. 1325 CE), who both categorically reject the Avicennian definition, have been mentioned. Sensing that this chapter is a bit dry, the authors admit that "various ways of dividing up

the conceptual terrain may seem to be of little ultimate philosophical importance" but then justify its inclusion by saying that this demonstrates how *kalām* can be construed both narrowly and also broadly, encompassing all areas of ontology.

The second chapter discusses the crucial dichotomy of existence and essence. Views of a selected range of philosophers have been discussed, starting with, as in most of the chapters, extracts from Avicenna's works. The authors highlight how Avicenna became renowned in philosophical circles by advocating this dichotomy, in which he was even supported by his staunch critic, al-Rāzī. However, both these philosophers maintain that all essences are joint to existence, either concretely or in the mind. Subsequent issues, like al-Rāzī's proposition of neutrality of essences with respect to existence and non-existence, Abū 'l-Barakāt's argument of whiteness not needing a further attribute of colour, al-Juwanynī's denial of existence being a *ḥāl*, and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's (d. 1191 CE) views on *huwiyyah* (i.e., concrete being) have also been taken into purview.

Does the word "existence" have multiple meanings, or a single, unequivocal referent? This is the question chapter three addresses, citing multiple texts. The straightforward answer to this question is that all the philosophers studied in this work, excluding Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233), consider "existence" univocal (i.e., having a single meaning). However, the authors complain that neither al-Rāzī nor al-Āmidī are consistent in this regard. Linking this discussion with the previous chapter, it is demonstrated how Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī (d. after 1288 CE) argues for a distinction between essence and existence precisely because existence is univocal. Another interesting notion mentioned here is al-Rāzī's description of existence with the word *mushakkik*, which has been translated as "analogous." Al-Rāzī's explanation has then been provided; he interpreted this word as "more appropriate." Using this interpretation, al-Rāzī then calls some substances "more appropriately" existent than others.

Recognizing that philosophy has evolved over millennia and focusing on two centuries cannot provide a holistic view of the subject, the authors have been flexible and spoken about the Greeks and modern positions when necessary. This is true for chapter four as well, which deals with Non-existence and Mental Existence.

The standard Mutazilite stance is that non-existence (*'adam*) has a reality (*thābit*): its "reality" is conceptual (i.e., in the mind). It is an object of knowledge, hence a "thing" (*shay'*). The fact that Avicenna also spoke about non-existents in the mind has been pronounced as an "intimate connection" between *kalām* and *falsafah*.

The major argument for the reality of the non-existent in the *kalām* tradition is that things have their "essential properties," whether or not they exist; they have "essential independence." Many have their reservations in this regard, including the Asharites, who hold that these essential properties are also created by God so that these properties belong to things only when the things exist. Al-Rāzī's opinion differs from the majority view too, by rejecting "mental existence" of non-existence; instead, it can be in Platonic Forms, or simply "hidden" from us. Finally, modern views come a full circle, with the Austrian philosopher Alexius Meinong postulating that "intentional objects" are actually real, but not existent.

Philosophical extracts regarding universality have been examined in chapter five, with the focal point resting on Avicenna's definition. The terminology moves from universality to essences, basically meaning the "true reality of things"; humanity, for example, which is common for both Plato and Socrates. For Avicenna, as Duns Scotus quotes him, "horseness in itself is nothing at all except horseness," meaning that horseness can be either universal or particular, either many or one. Consequently, when essences have concrete existence, they are particular, while when they have mental existence, they are universal. Defining universals this way aligns Avicenna with conceptualism, which understands universals only as concepts in the mind. Conceptualism is the medium between the nominalism (viewing universals as objects that do not really exist other than being merely names) of Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Malāḥimī (d. 1141 CE) and full-fledged realism. Most thinkers, however, agree with the Avicennian position, holding, for example, humanity, as a mental notion, not any externally existing humanity. The final issue at stake here is whether these universal ideas correspond to extramental particulars, for which the conceptualists are happy to say that an essence, insofar as it is in the mind, may not "match" the same extramental essence.

Chapter six considers Platonic Forms, outlining the views of the proponents of the two opposing schools of thought in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE, who were: 1) the Illuminationists and 2) those who were in line with the Peripatetic tradition, with Avicenna at their forefront. The former supported Platonic Forms, while the latter, along with proponents of the Latin tradition, rejected this theory. Avicenna argued that humanity, for example, though it can be abstractly thought of in our mind, cannot exist as a Platonic Form "with the condition that there is nothing else" (*bi sharṭ lā shay' ākhar*) outside of our minds. He rejected the reification of mathematical entities too. The most common argument presented by those upholding Avicenna's view is the "third

man argument," which says that one Form will then need another Form as its ideal, leading to infinite regress. The Illuminationists, like al-Suhrawardī, have several counter-arguments against this. The first is that Forms are neither universals nor paradigms, but a direct experience of the sages. A further argument, known as the "nobler contingency (*al-imkān al-ashraf*)," states that all genuine possibilities are realized at some point in time. While Avicenna postulated that the Active Intellect was a "giver of forms," for the Illuminationists, we have Lords of Species, each a Platonic Form, each being a luminous intellect.

We move from universals and forms towards Individuation in chapter seven. What does make each individual to be an individual? Avicenna has a straightforward answer: it is matter, which is bestowed by the Active Intellect. For immaterial objects, their individuation is by the essences of the things themselves. The "identity of indiscernibles" is endorsed by al-Suhrawardī and others, which is the assumption that no individual can share all its features with anything else. However, for Avicenna, any combination of properties is in principle sharable, so he suggests that we can only verify that something is an individual thorough sense-perception, as by seeing it or pointing to it (*ishārah*). After providing a few extracts of al-Suhrawardī and his followers regarding how individuality is before discernibility, the authors move to the question of whether individuation is positive or privative. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī (d. *ca.* 600/1206), a staunch critic of Avicenna, believes that it is merely the *absence* of being shared, while al-Rāzī, on the contrary, says that the principle of individuation must indeed be positive (*thubūtī*): it is something additional to the quiddity.

The authors are impressed with Suhrawardī's argument against individuation by matter, which mentions its fluidity in the food chain. To solve these problems, philosophers come up with different solutions. Avicenna's student, Bahmanyār b. al-Marzubān (d. 1066 CE), proposes, that along with prime matter, it is with cosmic motion that species are instantiated as single individuals at single times, places and positions. Some also suggest different grades of intensity in shared features, when all other kinds of distinction fail. What ultimately individuates, must ultimately, be individual, and then to avoid regress, this individuality might be an unexplained, brute fact. This is what the discussion finally boils down to.

Chapter eight discusses this era's philosophers' arguments for the proof of God under four basic categories: 1) Aristotle's proof based on motion, which Avicenna rejected, in preference for the basis of existence. Aristotle considered the motion of the cosmos eternal, a notion that was then used to establish God's existence as a divine First

Mover. This argument was rejected by Avicenna and by most thinkers in the period under consideration. 2) The "*kalām* proof" by al-Rāzī, which argues that bodies must have originated. This argument is modified by using the "principle of preponderation," which has been fundamental in all attempts to prove God in this period, which means, that contingent things need to be determined/specified. 3) Specification arguments by al-Rāzī. Similar to the arguments of the *mutakallimūn*, specification arguments suggest that things could be arranged in various ways and that a divine being is necessary to select one of those possibilities. This is distinguished from the design argument which asserts that there is an optimal way for everything to be arranged, which, as Avicenna posits, necessarily flows from Him as a perfect agent. 4) Avicenna's "demonstration of the truthful" (*burhān al-ṣiddīqīn*). Occupying a major part of this chapter, this demonstrates that there must be a Necessary Existent because if everything were contingent (able to either exist or not exist), it would be impossible to explain why anything exists rather than not existing. Avicenna then considers a chain of causes, insisting that causal explanation must terminate at a necessary existent. Subsequent philosophers like Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 1264 CE), Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274 CE), and Shams al-Dīn al-Kātibī (d. 675/1276) further commented on these causal relationships, summarized by the authors as follows: God, who is extrinsic to all the contingent, individual parts, causes them to exist. These parts then are what cause the whole to exist.

Towards the end, a few other arguments like the "principle of sufficient reason" have been mentioned, which some philosophers view as self-evident. This extends to the point where 'Ayn al-Quḍāh (d. 1131 CE), driven by his longing for the transcendental, argues that mystical insight can dispense with all proofs for the existence of God.

Chapter nine observes how God's essence relates to His existence. In the metaphysical section of his *Shifā'*, Avicenna says that God has no quiddity, or at least no quiddity apart from existence. This suggests that the essence-existence distinction breaks down in God's case, for which Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) criticises him for going too far in the direction of apophatic, or negative theology. On the other hand, some objected to Avicenna's calling Him a Necessary Existent, by observing how this leads to a duality of existence and necessity. Several philosophers, including Suhrawardī, suggested a solution to this problem by arguing that divine attributes can be understood as hidden negations or external relations that do not create any division or multiplicity within God.

Arguments then ensue with this suggestion that God is nothing but existence. Al-Rāzī asks how one and the same kind of existence can be the principle of the universe when it is God and a caused feature of other

things. He sticks with the univocity of existence but addresses this issue by saying that God's essence simultaneously produces its own existence and receives it, something often discussed by other authors as well.

God's knowledge is discussed in chapter ten, which posits Avicenna as a necessitarian, who believes that things proceeded from God necessarily. Being an immaterial entity, He will inevitably engage in intellection, because there is no hindrance of matter for Him. Al-Ghazālī cannot come to terms with this, because he compares the rays of the sun to this notion. Just as the sun is unaware of its rays, would not God be unaware of what proceeds from Him, if it proceeded from His essence, necessarily? Avicenna would argue that since God knows Himself, He should know all the necessary concomitants (*lawāzim*) of His essence. However, al-Āmidī and al-Shahrazūrī do not think that knowledge of an essence implies knowledge of its concomitants. Further criticism of Avicenna's views comes from Suhrawardī, who argues that immateriality, which is a negative notion, cannot be a basis for a positive characterization such as being knowledgeable or intellective.

The authors then compare the similarity in Avicenna's arguments regarding God's knowledge to Alvin Plantinga's (b. 1932) arguments for God's existence. Plantinga says that if God exists, He exists in every possible world; Avicenna's argument was developed on similar lines; Al-Rāzī and al-Ṭūsī both posit that if God *may* know, He *will* know. Another well-known postulation for God's knowledge is what the authors call the "design argument," which has also been challenged by al-Rāzī, who asks how we can be sure that the design is by knowledge, and not by mere opinion (*ẓann*). To this Ibn al-Malāḥimī provides a solution by saying that creation cannot be according to an opinion, because there was nothing there in the first place regarding which God could have an opinion. Al-Rāzī also asks about animals, who produce without knowledge; could not God have done similarly? Al-Ṭūsī comes to the defence, saying that God made the things apparently produced by animals. A final question is about God's perfection. Aristotle was blamed for envisioning a God who knew only Himself since He could enjoy only this most perfect form of cognition. Ibn-Malāḥimī's solution can be quoted here too, in which he says that God is already perfect without having to know the things He creates.

One of the most controversial propositions of Avicenna, according to the authors of this book, is his insistence that God knows particulars only in a universal way, which has been discussed in chapter eleven. Avicenna argues that this is because particulars are multiple and changing; God's access to this is entirely like the best kind of cognition that humans have, which is to say, knowledge at a universal level.

However, Avicenna also acknowledges that God knows particulars because, after all, everything is the inevitable result of His causation. In a flash, he knows everything. Furthermore, because His knowledge is universal, He does not need to change in the course of continuously occurring events. Al-Rāzī views Avicenna's belief in this sort of causation as evidence of him being a determinist. Al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153 CE), al-Suhrawardī, and al-Abharī contest this. They argue that God indeed knows about particulars, as mentioned in the Qur'ān, but al-Ṭūsī defends the Avicennan position, saying that God can timelessly know things that are in time, in a mode different to that of temporal knowers.

Another view centres on "relations" with God. Al-Ghazālī and his student al-Anṣārī maintain that when someone gains knowledge about something that changes, this does not result in an actual transformation of the knower. Instead, the change that occurs is merely a superficial one, known nowadays as a "Cambridge change," which refers to a shift in external attributes or relations rather than any intrinsic alteration in the knower's essence. Suhrawardī proposes that God knows everything by "presence," and he too agrees, that change in knowledge will mean "only a relational change." A final debate regarding God's knowledge with the mediation of celestial intellects ensues, with al-Ṭūsī's support, and al-Ḥillī's rejection, because the latter feels that this would make them like organs for God.

The discussion on determinism and free will in chapter twelve is indeed an "eternal" one, an unextinguishable fire which still rages in the precincts of contemporary analytical philosophy. The two camps in *kalām* doctrine are initially identified: the Asharites, who support compatibilist determinism, and facing them, the Mutazilites, who choose libertarianism (free will). The authors note how we do not have supporters in this post-Avicenna era for what is now known as "hard determinism." Avicenna is, without any doubt, in the camp of the compatibilist determinists. In simple terms, this means that he believes in fate/destiny instead of unfettered free will. Consequently, he does not endorse the "principle of alternative possibilities" (PAP), which states that genuine agency requires the availability of more than one possible way of acting. He says explicitly that the performance of an act follows a "decisive will," which could not have been otherwise. Acts that qualify as "chosen" or "willed" are not such because other options are available but because the act is the result of the agent's motivation and beliefs.

Further explaining Avicenna's position, Bahmanyār says that our beliefs and intentions are determined by God through an unavoidable sequence of causes. When we pray for a particular outcome, the fact that our prayer is answered does not imply that God intervenes randomly or

without reason in the world's events. Instead, the prayer is effective only if it aligns with the predetermined series of events that God has willed from eternity. Al-Ghazālī has reservations about this. He says that a cause that gives rise to its effect without having other options does not count as a powerful agent. Others uphold this power attributed to God too though we do find a caveat in al-Āmidī's writings. He says that God has no power over intrinsically impossible things. This has also been mentioned by al-Ghazālī in his *Tahāfut.* The arguments of both these camps have then been presented. Libertarian (free will) proponents of the Mutazilite school argue that we cannot be morally or religiously responsible for that which lies outside our control. They also claim that it is obvious that we exert power over our acts, for which we have the necessary knowledge and immediate awareness. Al-Shahrastānī counters this by illustrating how we cannot hit the same spot with two successive throws. Another counter from the determinists can be that motives are not subject to one's will. Motivation is caused by beliefs, and beliefs are caused by factors out of an individual's control. For example, you are motivated to drink water because you believe that water will quench your thirst. This belief can be caused by an external agent.

On the other hand, the determinist camp posits that only God can create; humans cannot "bestow existence" on anything. Extracts from this camp also present the "competition argument" which states that God and humans cannot *both* have power over the same thing. Al-Ṭūsī notes a gap here, because God may have power, but simply choose not to exercise it. The second argument is that if one "creates" something, they must know it. Humans do not always have this detailed understanding of their actions. Counterarguments against this have also been quoted.

The authors stress how determinists support the "principle of sufficient reason" (PSR): nothing just happens or exists; rather, each thing is either necessary in itself or is contingent and needs to be preponderated to exist. However, some Asharites are nervous about saying that God needs preponderation, so they abandon PSR. Al-Rāzī, therefore, proposes that preponderation can occur without a preponderating factor. The authors do not find this argument convincing, and they quote al-Ghazālī's famous example of selecting one of two dates as an illustration of an unpreponderated choice. They are also not amused with the Asharite response to the compatibility of reward and punishment with their belief in determinism. The Asharites invoke the doctrine of "acquisition (*kasb*)" according to which the human "acquires" and carries responsibility for an act that God creates. Both schools are eventually merged in a Stoic, compatibilist reconciliation, viewing human action, as coined by Chrysippus as "co-fated" and explained by al-Ṭūsī in the following words:

God the exalted has determined it in such a way that it happens through the intermediary of the person's effort. Along with quotations from a few other propositions, the discussion ends with an extract from Abū 'l-Barakāt, who notes a difference between Avicennan and Asharite determinism, which is that Avicennan determinism refers to causal chains that go back to natural motions of the spheres.

The medieval philosophical tradition, as explained in chapter thirteen, has categorized the problem of evil into two categories. The first is its justification and the second is to explain how evil can be derived, however indirectly, from a good first cause. Using a Neoplatonic principle, Avicenna explains that evil is simply the privation of good or some perfection. Darkness is the lack of light. He also argues that nothing is bad about fire; its burning is essential, but *accidentally* bad for something that falls into it and burns. Another important notion proposed by him was that it would be a greater evil to refrain from creating the world if more good were thereby lost than evil avoided.

Avicenna's ideas about good and evil were integrated into the pivotal disagreement of the *kalām* tradition, which is demonstrated by comparing the Mutazilites who held that "reason" (*'aql*) indicates the goodness and badness of acts and the Asharites who trace good and evil to God's commands. They challenge the Mutazilites by saying that though we find some things agreeable by nature, and others disagreeable, this does not show that they have intrinsic moral value and disvalue. Sometimes, things that are "naturally" good can be bad, and vice versa. For instance, lying might be beneficial if it leads to a positive result.

Al-Shahrastānī and al-Āmidī see the philosophers (*falāsifah)* as agreeing with the Mutazilite view since the philosophers would allow reason to judge things as good without recourse to the religious law. However, other authors felt that Avicenna's views were irrelevant to the *kalām* debates because of his determinism, since according to Avicenna, God's will is decisive; He did not choose from alternative possibilities, as noted in the previous chapter.

Along with viewing good and evil in association with God's commands, the Asharites also equate it to being beneficial and detrimental; the reason for the statement, "It is 'good' for us to follow God's law and 'bad' to violate it," is that this is in our interests. Other authors who argue in favour of this equivalence include Bhamanyār b. al-Marzbān (d. 1066 CE), 'Umar al-Khayyām (d. 1131 CE), al-Ṭūsī, 'Izz al-Dawlah Ibn Kammūnah (d. 683/1284), and Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286 CE).

Multiple other propositions related to this topic have been provided, from which the following particular Avicennan position is

particularly interesting: "Since God is pure existence and existence is goodness, God is pure good." Here too, Shahrazūrī has a reservation. He contends that intelligible substances, apart from God, could also be considered purely good.

A final observation is that though the authors have taken Ya'qūb b. Isḥāq al-Kindī (d. 256/873) and Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. 339/95) into consideration in their commentaries, the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* are conspicuous by their absence. The Ismā'īlī tenor of the *Rasā'il* along with Avicenna's own Ismā'ilī affiliations are bound to have significant correlations, which would certainly be interesting to identify.

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