

Introduction

This special issue of *Nazariyat* partly consists of presentations given at the second workshop of the project *Epistemic Transitions in Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science*, funded by the European Research Council (grant agreement ID 682779) and hosted by the University of Jyväskylä. The focus of the workshop, held at the Institut Finlandais in Paris in January 2019, was metaphysical realism in post-Avicennian Islamic thought, a topic of particular interest in light of the critical reception of Avicenna's (d. 428/1037) philosophy in the sixth/twelfth century and the consequences of this vigorous period. The papers deriving from the workshop have been guest edited by myself, the PI of the project.

The past year has been difficult, and a number of contributors to this volume had to retire from the project at a relatively late stage. For this reason, the coverage of questions and historical figures is nowhere near as representative as I initially envisioned. However, we have three highly interesting historical contributions to offer, and these are complemented by a methodological reflection concerning the existence and nature of post-classical Islamic philosophy, a descriptive notion the validity of which has been recently contested.

İbrahim Halil Üçer's paper addresses a crucial question of debate concerning metaphysical realism in the post-classical period, namely the question of the metaphysical status and the representative validity of our essence concepts. The focus is on Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 766/1365), who is particularly well known for his critique of universals. Üçer's paper is also a nice complement to the recent *Nazariyat* special issue (5:2) on Quṭb al-Dīn.

One of the central principles in Avicenna's Neoplatonic metaphysics is the so-called rule of the one (*qā'idat al-wāḥid*), according to which one cause, insofar as

it is one, can have only one effect. Although the principle is sometimes considered to be axiomatic, Avicenna attempted to give a proof for it, and Davlat Dadikhuda's paper discusses this proof and its reception by Avicenna's student Bahmanyār ibn al-Marzubān (d. 458/1066) and his critical commentator, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210). Although historically grounded, Dadikhuda's contribution is also an attempt to defend the validity of Avicenna's proof.

One of the catalysts for the critical discussion of Avicenna's philosophy was the early sixth/twelfth-century maverick philosopher Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. ca 560/1165). Mariam Shehata's paper focuses on Abū l-Barakāt's take on the theological dilemma between God's omniscience and human responsibility. One of the most vocal defenders of the responsibility and freedom of human agents, Abū l-Barakāt is forced to tackle some of the central doctrines of Avicenna's metaphysics, such as his formulation of the PSR, or the principle that every actual existent is necessitated by its complete cause.

Finally, my own paper is a reflection on some of the background assumptions that are constitutive of the historiography of post-classical Islamic philosophy. Although these are not essentially different from similar assumptions at work in the historiography of other contexts of philosophy, a recent polemical paper by Dimitri Gutas, a leading scholar in our field, gives rise to a need to address them explicitly. In brief, Gutas argues that post-classical Islamic philosophy does not merit the title of philosophy, because it fails to meet the standards of open-ended critical study set by Avicenna. My claim to the contrary is that verdicts of this sort always hinge on a normative concept of philosophy that guides our historical research, that in the formulation of such a concept, historiography of philosophy must take its cue from its own time, and that on the basis of relatively uncontroversial contemporary examples of philosophical practice, we can adopt a concept, in light of which many of the post-classical debates and authors are clearly instances of philosophy.

I hope that even in its unfortunately reduced form, this special issue will make a genuine contribution to the study of post-classical Islamic philosophy as well as to the methodological reflection of problems particular to our field. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to all the colleagues who generously shared their expertise by referee the papers, some at very short notice. Heartfelt thanks are also due to the editorial staff of *Nazariyat* – the process could not have been smoother.

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