

KHALED EL-ROUAYHEB and SABINE SCHMIDTKE (eds):

The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy.

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New scientific disciplines often go through three stages of formation. First, scholars from other disciplines come to be interested in a hitherto little-known area of research. Second, this area receives sufficient appreciation and support so that it generates its own discipline of investigation to which more and more specialists devote their expertise. Third, these specialists engage in the teaching of their field of studies at different academic institutions. It is in the transition from the second to the third stage that handbooks and compendia are produced. They are intended to provide a general summary of the achievements of the new discipline, position it among the traditional areas of scholarship, become a manual for teaching and learning, and serve as a reference work for a new generation of scholars.

Studies on the history of Islamic philosophy have just been moving from the second to the third stage. In the last decade, a handful of such handbooks and compendia on Islamic philosophy (sometimes also called “Arabic philosophy” or “philosophy in the Islamic world”) have been published: Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2005); Ulrich Rudolph (ed.), *Philosophie in der Islamischen Welt: Bd. 1, 8–10. Jahrhundert* (Basel, 2012); Heidrun Eichner, Matthias Perkams and Christian Schäfer (eds), *Islamische Philosophie im Mittelalter: Ein Handbuch* (Darmstadt, 2013); Richard C. Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy* (London and New York, 2016); Peter Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World* (Oxford, 2016), and now: *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy* (OHIP). These recent developments show that studies on Islamic philosophy have found their place as an established scientific discipline, which should and now can be taught in academia, given the numerous introductory works offered as road maps to both teachers and students.

The OHIP distinguishes itself from the other mentioned handbooks and compendia in two respects. First, it deals with the whole history of Islamic philosophy: the so-called “Classical period”, which usually is said to end with Averroes, takes up only one-third of the book, unlike other handbooks listed above. Second, the OHIP chooses an approach that is chronological as well as text-oriented: while advancing in time each entry usually focuses on one treatise of one author. In their introduction, the editors justify such an approach as a middle way between excessive superficiality (a pitfall of author-oriented presentations) and the danger of bigger chronological gaps (a problem for systematic treatment). One may say that the chosen method generally supports the editors’ intention of chronological proportionality and of a sufficient – if not exhaustive – presentation of the main topics and developments in Islamic philosophy. One downside to this approach is that it involves the danger of neglecting other works by the same author that contain equally relevant material. This is particularly dangerous in the post-Avicennian period, when philosophers such as al-Shahrastānī, al-Rāzī, al-Abharī or al-Āmidī defend contrary views and discuss different topics and arguments in their various treatises. Nevertheless, most entries in the volume manage to provide references to the whole range of works by the same author. The chronological and geographical exhaustiveness (even Islamic philosophy in India is addressed in entries 22, 24 and 27) is one of the major achievements of the OHIP. The only apparent lapse is an insufficient treatment of the Baghdad Peripatetic School. Al-Fārābī (entry 5) cannot be counted as a mainstream Baghdad Peripatetic. The entry on Yahyā b. ʿAdī (no. 6) discusses only his rather marginal work on ethics without addressing his interests in metaphysics and natural philosophy or their influence on his theological treatises. The Baghdad Peripatetic School thus remains largely unexplored, compared to other trends and schools in Islamic philosophy that are adequately covered for an introductory volume such as this.

One may divide OHIP’s presentation of the history of Islamic philosophy into five main thematic clusters: First cluster (entries 1–3 and 5–8; the entry 4 on Ibn Masarra might be better placed in the *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*) presents early developments in Islamic philosophy on the basis of the ancient Greek traditions. The main tension here is usually between choices either to adhere to Neoplatonism or to Peripateticism, to eclectically harmonize both, or to develop one or both of them significantly further.

The second cluster represents the encounter between Avicenna’s philosophy and the philosophical theories of the Islamic theological tradition of *kalām* (both Ashʿarite and Muʿtazilite, for the latter see entry 18) in the eleventh century, and

the subsequent rivalry and/or harmonization of the two schools (entries 9–15; 17–18). The topics discussed here vary between traditional Ghazālian problems with Avicenna’s philosophy, such as the eternity of the world, and other disagreements such as the essence–existence distinction, God’s essence, atomism and occasionalism. Due to the method of focusing on one work, Averroes, slightly surprisingly, appears in the second cluster. By contrast, Suhrawardī’s entry depicts him as choosing between Platonic and Peripatetic (in fact, Avicenna’s) philosophies, even though one might have preferred to present him as being more interested in the dispute between *kalām* and *falsafa*.

The third cluster is devoted to achievements in the field of logic in post-Avicennian Islamic philosophy (entries 16, 22–3).

The fourth thematic cluster (entries 19–21; 24–5; 29) discusses the post-Suhrawardian illuminationist philosophy and its roots in exchange between Avicenna’s philosophy, the philosophy of *kalām*, mysticism, and the rediscovered Neoplatonism. This tradition is shown to persist until our days.

The fifth cluster (entries 24; 26–28; 30) presents the interaction of Islamic philosophy with the Western scientific and philosophical traditions, beginning with the rejection of Copernicus, through an engagement with Henry Bergson and the problems of empiricism, up to incorporating analytic philosophy.

All in all, the OHIP is a helpful introduction to Islamic philosophy which is highly recommended – not so much to undergraduate students, as it presupposes considerable knowledge of philosophy on the part of the reader – but to graduate students of philosophy and young scholars who intend to broaden their knowledge about Islamic philosophy, especially its post-classical period.

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