

**Ulrich Rudolph, *Islamische Philosophie. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart (Islamic Philosophy. From Beginning until Today)*, C.H. Beck, München, 2013, 128 p.**

Ulrich Rudolph (born in 1957) is a benchmark professor in Islamic Sciences and he teaches this discipline at Asia and Middle East Institute from University of Zürich. Research in the field of Islamic Philosophy is the main branch of his professorial and journalistic activity.

The book published by C.H.Breck publisher in Munich and written in German has over 128 pages and presents a view of the philosophical Islamic world from its birth (ninth century) to modern times. Part of a collection dedicated to the less initiated into Islamic philosophy theme, the study easily succeeds in placing the reader in the Eastern world and thought. The book is structured as follows: after the Preface (p.7-11), the author presents his ideas in the form of 15 chapters (p. 11-116) and at the end he adds a timeline (p. 116-119), a bibliographic guide (p.119-123), and a detailed index (p. 123-128).

As announced in the Foreword, the reading is guided by four chronological milestones in the history of Islamic philosophy. Thus, the 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries will be considered first (the centuries of first Islamic thinkers occurrence), then follow the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries (contact with first Christians and Jews authors), 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> (its peak time) and 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Islamic philosophy today). This division corresponds to the stages of research and project realization.

The first chapter “The reception of ancient sciences” presents the highlights of the philosophical work reception in Europe, namely Greek philosophy. This process begins in the eighth century through contacts with the Greek world, links born through the Byzantine Empire, Syria and Persia. From this moment the great work of translation begins, activity that will last until the second half of the tenth century. Treaties of philosophy, medicine, mathematics, mechanics, astronomy, astrology, natural science,

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music, etc. become available in Arabic. The reasons for this exchange were closely linked to the cultural boom and the strong development of the Islamic world. The new Muslims rulers thought these translations were necessary for developing, especially for the administrative one. Therefore they supported the translation of vast themes ranging from medicine to mechanics and geodesy (p. 12). A second wave of translation is outlined by the onset of the Omayyene dynasty and the establishment of the new capital - Baghdad. Considering the main duty of the ruler was to protect the Islamic tradition that had already been strongly Hellenized, there is a tendency of filtering the translation process. From now on, any processing of a text from outside the Arab world will be motivated by the necessity of an answer to a problem or by the need for an assignment.

The development of the Muslim world has also as result the beginning of medicine, law, theology and exegesis on Quran (p. 13). Amid a profusion of texts and translations, Muslims ask themselves their first philosophical questions. This is the start of the Islamic philosophy (p. 14).

The next chapter presents the development of the first personal project of this world. The writer is Abu-Yusuf Al-Kindi, known as the "Philosopher of the Arabs". Privileged with a childhood devoted to study, he not only manages processing new texts, but also correcting the old ones, most often translated wrong. Dedicated to the search for truth, he joins philosophy and theology, making not only valuable exegesis on Qur'an, but also reviews of Aristotle's work. It stands out his discussion with Al-Kindi's about an actual problem of those times. Arguing that the land is bordered, he manages to support this idea through a negative theology. Thanks to his work the first-Islamic philosophical terminology becomes reality.

"*The second project: Abu Bakr ar-Razi*" (Chapter 3) presents the philosophical activity after Al-Kindi's death (†865). Its centre is Abu Bakr ar-Razi († 925), a man of extraordinary training, and a doctor with high reputation. Because of the new themes inserted in his work he will be called a heretic. According to him there are five principles in the world: God, time, space, matter and soul (p. 24), and the whole existence consists of three pillars: God, a pre-existence of matter and the soul (p. 25). The main reason for cataloguing him as heretic lies in his vision on prophets' institution that he abolishes.

The fourth chapter refers to the first major philosophies of this world. We are now presented Abu Nasr Al-Farabi († 950) who, amid the new

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perspectives opened by ar-Razi, leads the study on Aristotelian work to a higher level. Being a linguist by profession his contribution on terminology was already expected. Using analogies, symbols or new comparisons he makes Aristotle's philosophy more accessible. This philosopher's merit also lies in formulating the intellect theory (the intellect has four steps: potential, real, acquired and active) and a philosophy of judgment in the afterlife (pp. 35-36).

In chapter five we can analyze a first enlarged propagation of Islamic philosophy ("Propagation of philosophical knowledge"), which has the foundation on Al-Farabi's project and on the impact of its message. The resonance among teachers and scholars of that world makes the process of translation come to an end. More accessible now, the philosophy finds new spearheads: Ahmad ibn at-Taiyib as-Sarakhs († 899), Abu Haiyan al-Tauhidî († 1021) - leader of the literary scholars in the capital or Ibn at-Taiyib († 1043) - a teacher with Nestorian orientations (p. 37). The new authors pursue two goals: guiding and initiating the readers into the philosophy and propagation of the high opinion on world (p. 36-41).

The centre of Islamic philosophy is analyzed in Chapter VI: "Avicenna - a new paradigm". Abu Alîbn-Sina († 1037), known as Avicenna in the Latin world, is considered a supporting pillar of Arabic philosophy. Dedicated to study since childhood, Avicenna is the author of numerous treaties, the most outstanding being "The Canon of Medicine" - medicine manual widely used in medical schools in Europe until the seventeenth century (p. 44). He also wrote a philosophical treaty, "Healing" or "The Book of Healing". Structured in four parts (Logic, Physics, Mathematics and Metaphysics) it will also be translated from Arabic into Latin.

Acquiring Farabi's teaching he takes it to a higher level. He starts further discussion on: the difference between God and creature, the difference between substance and essence, immateriality of the soul that exists after death too (pp. 48-51). If Farabi considered there are only three steps of understanding, Avicenna found four, namely: potential intellect, dispositional intellect, aprioric concepts and axioms become aware (p. 51-52). One particular aspect is the comparison made by ibnSînâ: philosophy is the light that illuminates the cave of existence (p. 54).

Avicenna's philosophy contains an offer: the integration of theology in philosophy (p. 56). al-Ghazali († 1111), a scholar in theology, law, sophism and polemics responds to it. Continuing the vision of Avicenna,

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he connects ancient philosophical traditions with religion. Despite his efforts he leaves some question marks for continuity. Thus, he believes God emanated the world and not built it (pp. 58-59). Also, the Creator does not have attributes, His essence and existence being identical (p. 60).

The last part of the study on the 11th century presents the transmission of Islamic philosophy in Spain by Ibn-Bâdjja († 1138/1139) and his question: “What is the highest goal of the creature?” (Chapter VIII, pp. 61-64).

A fragment that draws our attention is Chapter IX - “Trying a synthesis: Ibn Tufail” (p. 65-69). Ibn Tufail († 1185) is a scholar who manages to make a career in state administration and medicine - even becoming the main doctor of the Sultan in Marrakesch. He is distinguished by his method to express philosophical message: HaiybinYaqzan. Haiyi grows alone on a desert island, starting to know the world from the dark stage (p. 66). The crossroads moment of his life is when his adoptive mother - a gazelle - dies. Looking at the dead body he realizes there must be something inside the body that animates it. Hence the idea there is a Creator of all is born in his mind (pp. 66-67).

Another character with links to the Iberian Peninsula is Abu I-WalidibnRuschd († 1198) - Chapter X. A native of Spain and known in Europe under the name of Averroes, he is an acknowledged jurist and a renowned doctor. Faithful commentator of Aristotle, he tries to find new common ground between Aristotle’s philosophy and Islam. Considering there are two ways to reach the truth, namely philosophy and religion (p. 73) he argues the Quran does not say the world was created out of nothing. Another disputed teaching is that the soul does not exist after death, the only metaphysical entity being the Creator (p. 75).

In the eleventh chapter it is presented the Islamic philosophy as Enlightenment through Surwardî’s effort (†1191). A native of Iran, he studied theology and philosophy thoroughly. Much closer to theology, he says that “God is the light of the world. He is the only one who illuminates all creation from the moment of its making” (p. 84).

The next period of the twelfth century is shaped by the significant development of philosophical analysis, treated in two chapters (XII and XIII). Increase in the number of schools, availability of works and especially the rise of the Ottoman Empire explain this growth (p. 92). Now many intellectuals from the Muslim world stand out. Nasîrddîn at-Tusi

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(† 1274), Qutbaddīnasch-Schiraz († 1311) or Nuraddīnibn al-Djurdjāni († 1434) are just a few of them (p. 93).

An important passage of the work is described in Chapter XIV: “A new approach-MullâSadrâ and school in Isfahan” (p. 99-104). Sadra († 1640) stands out as a fine commentator on Avicenna’s work. Very good connoisseur of the Quran, his work is centred on the question of existing. Two functions emerge from his writing: the theological tradition corresponding to different aspects of divinity and presenting the Archetype of Creation.

The last chapter, entitled “Challenge by European thinking” (p. 104-117), reflects the actual contact of Islamic philosophers with the European world. The philosophical work of scholars is presented here, such as: Yusuf Karam († 1959), a thinker who embraced Christianity, ZakîNadjîb Mahmud († 1993) - member of the Vienna Circle of philosophy or Mohammed Arkoun († 2010), an analyst who lived in Paris the last part of his life, where he wrote critical texts on the issue of secularization (pp. 113-114).

Very attractive and easy to read, the book fulfils its original purpose, namely making a short introduction to Islamic philosophy, an agreeable presentation even to those less familiar with the subject mentioned above. Along with specific chronological and highly structured information, the author manages to present not only punctual elements but also their context. This only serves to help understanding the presented phenomena more clearly and to assimilate the information more easily. Without noticing weak points in the this material, I consider professor Ulrich’s book made a good first step in the study of Islamic philosophy.

**Adrian Popa**