

the subsequent rivalry and/or harmonization of the two schools (entries 9–15; 17–18). The topics discussed here vary between traditional Ghazālīan 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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ALEXANDER ORWIN:

Redefining the Muslim Community: Ethnicity, Religion, and Politics in the Thought of Alfarabi.

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Alexander Orwin’s book is a significant contribution especially to three disciplines: to modern and contemporary political theory (specifically to the discussions on “ethnicity”, “nation”, and “nationalism”), to the history of Islamic philosophy (as a novel interpretation of Alfarabi’s political treatises), and to Islamic intellectual history (as a work that explores the notion of *umma*). The term *umma*, usually translated as “community”, but also frequently as “nation”, is key to understanding Islam. In the Islamic context it refers not only to a religious community but also to a variety of ethnic nations. This notion appears in practically all major political works of Alfarabi, but apparently only in its ethnic sense and not in the religious sense. Throughout this book Orwin tries to show that Alfarabi’s understanding of the *umma* includes both the Islamic and ethnic components, thus claiming that Alfarabi’s notion of *umma* sheds light on both the understanding of the Islamic community and the conception of ethnic nation, underlining the way in which it influences human institutions as well as cultural activities such as philosophy, religion, and politics.

Orwin's approach to Alfarabi's political philosophy deserves attention, not only because it provides new insights into a largely unexplored topic, but mainly because it challenges scholars in the field, thus stimulating philosophical debate. He points out that some (Mahdi, Galston, Parens) have reflected on the topic, resorting mainly to the *Political Regime* while not attending to the *Book of Letters* in enough detail; others (Alon, Nassar) have rejected Alfarabi's religious use of the term. Orwin offers a thematic interpretation of the notion of *umma* within Alfarabi's treatises, prioritizing the *Book of Letters* where, according to him, its most detailed and revealing characterization is found: while in the *Political Regime* this characterization is built on climate and nutrition, the *Book of Letters* focuses on language. I agree with Orwin regarding the importance of the *Book of Letters* and the relevance of language for understanding Alfarabi's use of the inherited Greek philosophical terminology. Orwin challenges the common assumption among scholars that Alfarabi did not know Greek. This is relevant given Alfarabi's concern regarding the relation between particular grammars and logic and his interest in the translation and interpretation of philosophical texts; it is also relevant for understanding the development of philosophical terminology, in this case, the term *umma*. Certainly, as Orwin points out, there is no single, definite Greek term that could be translated as "nation". Plato uses the terms *ethnos* and *genos*, equivalent in some contexts to "ethnicity" and "identity", respectively.

Orwin finds several parallels between the idea of "nation" as found in Plato's *Republic* and Alfarabi's account in some of his treatises, especially in *The Philosophy of Plato*. However, Alfarabi's treatises also resonate with the political thought of Aristotle, who sometimes uses the term *ethnos* ambiguously, dissociated from the idea of partnership. Nevertheless, I think that although Alfarabi's political thought has been considered more Platonic than Aristotelian, Aristotle's influence is very much present. For instance, Alfarabi's *Political Regime* echoes many passages from Aristotle's *Politics*. Orwin briefly deals with the well-known controversy on whether Alfarabi actually knew this treatise and, following the positions of Pines and Brague, he remains sceptical in this regard. Concerning this discussion, in "A note on the transmission of Aristotle's political ideas in medieval Persia and early-modern India: was there any Arabic or Persian translation of the *Politics*?", Syros Vlastos has provided relevant insights and information that should be considered. Yet, beyond this debate, Orwin clearly shows that whereas Plato and Aristotle deal with something close to the idea of "nation" their approaches, though influential in Alfarabi, are still vague. In contrast, Alfarabi seems to go beyond his Greek masters providing a much more elaborate notion of *umma*.

In the *Book of Letters* and the *Political Regime* there is a thematic account of the *umma* including its causes and its character. In both texts Alfarabi affirms that every *umma* is formed by nature (natural temperaments and natural states of character), but consummated only through custom and convention (i.e. by language). This suggests, according to Orwin's interpretation, that by the end of this development the natural elements disappear. In this sense, while *umma* and language are rooted in nature, both extend beyond nature: while human beings tend by nature to live in association, this natural tendency leads to different kinds of conventional communities, associations, and political regimes. Orwin notices that while in both treatises we find a strong connection between language and *umma*, there is still no connection between *umma* and religion. From this Orwin concludes that some scholars might have inferred that Alfarabi avoids religion. However, Orwin's main goal is exactly the opposite: he wants to show that Alfarabi's *umma* is Islamic. This is not an easy task given the strong imprint of Greek thought in Alfarabi's political thought. Actually, when reading Alfarabi one is tempted to think that, although he uses

Islamic concepts, his model is essentially Greek. Orwin holds that although Alfarabi never openly proclaims the Muslim *umma*, it is nevertheless often present, mainly in the *Book of Religion*. If this is so, the subordination of a religious *umma* to philosophy, as Alfarabi conceived it, demands further elucidation. Orwin accordingly provides several clues for reading Alfarabi as though he were justifying a religious *umma*. Certainly, this possibility also requires a particular interpretation of Islam which is certainly debatable. In sum, Orwin's book goes beyond the scope of an exegetical work on Alfarabi's philosophy. In the final chapters he shows that Alfarabi is able to contend in contemporary debates on the notions of nation and nationalism. Orwin explains that Alfarabi's presentation of the *umma* does not support modern nationalism. Like every book that is worth reading, Orwin's opens several fronts of debate that will surely be appreciated by academics working in these fields.

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CHRISTIAN LANGE:

Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions.

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The last few years have witnessed a remarkable proliferation of scholarship related to all aspects of eschatology and apocalypticism in Islamic thought and culture. In *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, Christian Lange, one of the leading scholars of Islamic eschatology and apocalypticism, aims "to provide as full an account of the history of the Islamic paradise and hell as is presently possible on the basis of the published and unpublished primary sources, as well as the scholarship produced on the topic in the major modern research languages" (p. 31). This is an ambitious claim, but Lange has indeed succeeded in producing a superb history of Islamic eschatology, one that is carefully researched, elegantly written, and richly detailed.

Lange's introduction argues that Islamic eschatological traditions tend to present this world and the otherworld not as ossified and impenetrable entities; rather, "Paradise and hell . . . are everywhen" (p. 11). This continuum – the "disappearing boundary between this world and the otherworld" (p. 10) – is a central theme in the book. Lange notes that images of the afterworld are, among other things, "theaters of and for the imagination" (p. 13) – loci for some of the most creative expressions of the Muslim eschatological imagination, but also, at times, fodder for Western anti-Muslim polemics (p. 18).

Lange's first chapter illustrates how Quranic eschatology develops over time, arguing that it becomes "more aligned with biblical traditions" (p. 56) and highlighting parallels between Quranic notions of paradise and hell and those of other Late Antique texts. Chapter 2 surveys three major periods of hadith literature, considering the eschatological tenor of each collection and the milieu in which each was produced.

Chapter 3 discusses parenetic and popular eschatological literature in more detail, including such works as al-Muḥāsibī's (d. 243/857) terrifying and personal *Book of Envisioning*, as well as popular manuals such as *What Refreshes the Eyes*. The discussion of texts that describe the Prophet's ascension narrative hints interestingly at parallels with narratives from neighbouring traditions. Chapter 4 focuses on the