wider context of Islamic philosophy: nature must be seen as a second Scripture, to be studied with great attention and admiration. Such views are expressed, for instance, by the Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā' in "The Case of the Animals against Man", and Ibn Rushd also emphasizes this outlook in his Faṣl-al-Maqāl.

Ancient Greek medical literature gets ample attention in the *ʿUyūn,* an important source for Greek texts known in the Arabic tradition, containing material that has not otherwise been preserved. Simon Swain's essay (no. 7) extensively discusses this, showing Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah's strong focus on Galen, who received the longest biography in the *ʿUyūn.* Throughout the *ʿUyūn,* Hippocratic–Galenic medicine remains Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah's focus. Hardly any attention is paid to other forms of medicine. Given the prominence of Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah in the history of medicine, I suspect that this is one of the reasons why forms of medieval Islamic medicine (often simply classified as folk medicine) were long neglected by modern scholarship, even though on closer scrutiny they are part of many of the medical works mentioned by Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah.

I was particularly taken by Ignacio Sánchez's essay (no. 5) on Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah's sources and the art of compilation. It analyses Ibn Abi Uṣaybiʿah's intellectual approach and his use of written sources, an astonishing number of which have been identified. A full list is appended to the chapter. The alphabetical arrangement in the list follows the same order as the general index to Vol. I, but differs from that in the general bibliography, which is a little inconvenient (ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī under ʿAbd in the indices, under Baghdādī in the general bibliography, etc.).

Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah's range of sources is quite wide: libraries, catalogues, letters, archives, historical and bibliographical works, and a substantial amount of *adab* works and poetry. Plus, of course, the works composed by the physicians themselves, which occasionally contain (auto)biographical information. Sánchez also shows how the ʿUyūn relates to earlier histories of medicine used by Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah (there are quite a few, not all of which have come down to us) and in what way his own work differs from them. Methodological issues are discussed, such as how Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah acknowledged the origin of his information; his use of secondhand quotations; his unacknowledged borrowings; and much more. As such, the essay is a useful addition to the literature on scholarly practice, such as Franz Rosenthal's *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship*.

All in all, the edition is a great contribution to scholarship, to be received with gratitude by a wide range of scholars.

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GABRIEL SAID REYNOLDS:
Allah: God in the Qur'an.
x, 327 pp. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020. £20.
ISBN 978 0 30024658 2.
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This introduction to the figure of Allah/God in the Quran is written by one of the leading scholars in contemporary Quranic studies, professor of Islamic studies and theology at the University of Notre Dame, Gabriel Said Reynolds. *Allah:*

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God in the Qur'an is an engaging and easily read book in which Reynolds skilfully integrates contemporary subjects with pre-modern issues and theological debates. Besides students of Islam, felicitous target audiences would be specialists and students in religious, Jewish, and Christian studies as well as the inquiring lay-person.

As the title indicates, it is primarily a book about Allah according to the Quranic text, but it also endeavours to present interpretations of Allah according to the classical and contemporary Islamic tradition. Reynolds' focus is mainly on what we could call the ethical or moral God, who swings back and forth between being merciful and compassionate on the one hand, and being punitive and vengeful on the other. From a religious perspective, this oscillation is to a certain degree predictable if one follows the guidance of Allah as put forth in the Quran. Time and again, however, the oscillations and the reasons behind them seem unpredictable and inscrutable, which is why they constitute such a major theological challenge. It is this challenge and its sundry exegetical solutions (and dead ends) that the author investigates with great ease and learning. Being focused on the ethical issues, the book is therefore not an all-inclusive introduction to Quranic Allah, which would include other aspects like, for instance, Allah's function as creator or his role in ritual matters and legal minutiae.

The book opens with the graphic memory of a horrifying scene from 2015, i.e. the ISIS video showing the burning execution/torture of a Jordanian fighter pilot. Despite the agonizing nature of the execution, the video nonetheless opens with a *basmala*, the Quranic formula often translated as "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate" (a calligraphic *basmala* is also set just above the English title on the front cover of Reynolds' monograph). The author then asks "How could a God of mercy be pleased with acts of such cruelty?" The specific question is not answered directly, but Reynolds uses this seeming paradox of mercy and punishment as an investigative dynamo and lens throughout the book. Arguing against scholars wanting to give precedence to the merciful aspect of God, Reynolds contends that both aspects or modes of Allah must be taken into account if one aspires to a more nuanced and complex understanding. Quranic Allah, Reynolds argues, is not simply a God of mercy or punishment "He is both" (p. 5).

Reynolds outlines his aims on p. 14: "My interest is in the Qur'an as a book, and the Bible as a book, and God as a character in both of those books … to emphasize what is distinctive in the Qur'an's portrayal of God …". It is thus partly a comparative endeavour of two scriptures (or three, if we divide the Bible into the Jewish Tanakh and a Christian Bible), partly a literary and textualist project investigating Allah as a function of texts and rhetoric. The author thereby aims to "uncover the theology of the Qur'an" (p. 16). As such, Reynolds follows in a venerable tradition in modern Biblical studies, that is, the various attempts to write a theology (or theologies) of the Bible. Such "theologies of the Bible" usually strive to negotiate a balance between a purely descriptive and historical approach and a slightly more normative approach that focuses on the binding implications of the text, its contemporary relevance. Although Reynolds asserts that his approach is purely scholarly, the effort to bring the Quran up-to-date in terms of contemporary issues of coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims reveals that the author cannot help but engage normatively with the text. Thus, in the very last sentence in the epilogue, Reynolds suggests that the "the call of the Qur'an" should be based on a theology of good works (referring to verse 48 in sura 5).

Allah: God in the Qur'an consists of four parts ("Allah and His Book", "Mercy", "Vengeance", "Personal God"), which unfold in subchapters. In part I, Reynolds briefly presents his methodological approach, which is synchronic due to his

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reservations regarding the standard diachronic approaches to the Quran. In that respect, the author's approach could be compared to that of Brevard Childs in modern Biblical scholarship. The synchronic approach is, as it were, synchronized with a strong emphasis on the distinctive rhetorical and discursive dynamics of the Quranic language, including Reynolds' own concept of the Quran as a quasi-homiletic work. In the remaining subchapters, the reader is presented with a wealth of Quran passages that shows how Allah is simultaneously both a hard and a soft God, an ambivalent God. Reynolds' rhetorical and literary approach reveals how this ambivalence goes beyond mere contradiction or paradox, and functions rather as a kind of performative feature. Due to the ambivalent rhetoric, the Quranic audience can never be sure of Allah's innermost intentions. "The key to piety is uncertainty" writes Reynolds, because "Muslims should hope for Paradise and fear hell but be certain of neither" (p. 121). In the traditional jargon of Biblical theologies, this uncertainty can be said to constitute *Die Mitte*, the centre, of the Quran.

The ninth subchapter, on "God of the Bible and the Qur'an", marks a comparative turning point. In it, Reynolds demonstrates that the paradoxical and ambivalent God of the Quran, including some features that are less appealing today, very much resembles the complex character of God in the Bible. In exemplary manner, Reynolds thereby demonstrates that the Bible and the Quran, including their believers, constitute tangled threads that matter as much today as in the past.

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ALI HUMAYUN AKHTAR:
Philosophers, Sufis, and Caliphs: Politics and Authority from Cordoba to Cairo and Baghdad. xv, 262 pp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. ISBN 978 1 107 18201 1.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X20000099

Akhtar's book focuses on the relationship between government and religion in the Middle East and the Maghreb. He addresses this question through the lens of the debates among scholars in Cordoba and Baghdad on legal authority, in the context of rivalry between the three caliphates of the time: Abbasid of Iraq, Fatimid of the Maghreb and Egypt, and Umayyad of al-Andalus. He is particularly interested in the relative importance of Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic legacies in the field of political theory, and consequently examines how Hellenistic thought was integrated into the politics, ethics and theology of the Islamic period. Akhtar shows, among many of the book's merits, how intellectual developments around Greek and Greek–Arab philosophy and the debates to which they gave rise emerged in the political field.

The project is ambitious: to revisit the idea that philosophy disappeared from Islamic educational curricula from the thirteenth century onwards, to show how the heritage of philosophers of antiquity was selectively integrated into various currents of Islam; and how it was gradually "Islamicized" between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries. Akhtar bases the central thesis of his book on the interaction between circles of knowledge and those of power: scholars belonged to the elites close to the court, they served the leaders from whom they received stipends, but they were also in contact with the urban population. Moreover, when the ideas

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