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exclamation marks (see for instance p. 204; c) regarding the haematite is sawn or polished the resulting dust is blood-red. This tentative suggestion made on p. 51, end of page: when extracts of all seventy-two Greek authors (I did so quickly, Leiden, January 1992 Remke KRUK capitals and italics, and are not highlighted in any other

The work is nevertheless quite useful for those who are interested in the Graeco-Arabic tradition and who, such as many Arabists, do not possess the wide knowledge of Greek source material that is called for if one studies the relations between Greek and Arab thought. Of course Greek sources are extensively used by — for instance Arab scholars writing on magnetism, and Greeks and Arabs may also have drawn on common sources; the extent to which this is the case is obvious even from simple consultation of the Encyclopedia of Islam (s.v. Maghnûtsî).

For the student of such subjects a book like Radl’s may be extremely useful. Much time, however, might have been saved for this type of user if the book had been provided with a Sachindex. To get an answer, for instance, to the interesting question whether the references of Arab scholars to other types of stones with attraction power (e.g. gold magnets attracting gold, silver magnets attracting silver etc.) are also found in Greek sources, one has to peruse the extracts of all seventy-two Greek authors (I did so quickly, but did not come upon any information of the kind just mentioned). And does any Greek author provide a ground for the Arab author al-Tifashi’s curious theory that the attraction of magnet and iron is due to the fact that the kernel of the lodestone transforms itself into iron, implying that the attraction is based on attraction of the like for the like? As far I have been able to ascertain from the present study, this is not the case: the Greek authors (especially Alexander of Aphrodisias, pp. 190-2) do not go beyond the assumption that magnet and iron are related substances and consequently attracted to each other.

A few brief remarks: a) I was surprised to see that book titles in the text are not referred to in the usual way with capitals and italics, and are not highlighted in any other way (de anima instead of De Anima); b) the author has a marked, and rather irritating, preference for the use of exclamation marks (see for instance p. 204; c) regarding the tentative suggestion made on p. 51, end of page: when haematite is sawn or polished the resulting dust is blood-red.

Leiden, January 1992 * * * Remke KRUK


This book deals with the work al-Muhtawi (The ‘Comprehensive’) by Joseph ben Abraham ha-Kohen, or more commonly: Yūsuf al-Ḏaṣrī, Qara‘i‘te author and philosopher. Yūsuf al-Ḏaṣrī lived in Iraq or Persia in the first half of the eleventh century. Though blind (euphemistically called al-Ḏaṣrī ‘The one who sees the hidden things’) he seems to have travelled extensively as a Qara‘ite propagandist. His al-Muhtawi, divided into 40 chapters, tries to bring the main principles of the mu‘tazilite kalām into agreement with the Qara‘ite dogmas. The author polemicizes frequently against Christian dualists, Magians, Epicureans, and other sects. The book was translated from Arabic into Hebrew under the title Sefer ha-mem‘atot or Zikron had-datot, probably by Tobias ibn Moses. A compendium of the previous work was entitled al-Tamyi‘iz (‘the Distinction’) and also al-Mansūrī. It consists of 13 chapters. This work was also translated by Tobiah ben Moses, under the title Makhīmat Petī (‘The wise maker of the inexpert’).

As far as his philosophical ideas are concerned, Yūsuf ibn al-Ḏaṣrī tried to reconcile reason with revelation. Just like the mu‘tazilites reasoning was important to prove God’s omnipotence and will, and other attributes such as oneness, and simplicity, incorporeality, and eternity. Of primary importance in al-Ḏaṣrī’s philosophy are the questions of God’s justice, of the nature of good and evil, and of free will. God always does good because of His wisdom, not by necessity, and even if He inflicts pain it is for the good. Considering God’s foreknowledge, al-Ḏaṣrī has no doubt that man is free to determine his actions, though God knows beforehand how he will act. The commandments are God’s means of guiding man in the right path and the obedient are eternally rewarded in the next world. If a sinner repents of his evil deeds, it is the duty of God to accept his repentance and remit his punishment.

The present book is edited by Blumenthal on the basis of Vajda’s articles and Vajda’s redaction of the hitherto unpublished Judeo-Arabic text of Yusuf al-Ḏaṣrī’s al-Kitāb al-Muhtawi. The included articles — reprints of articles dispersed over several journals since 1968 — consist of translations and introductions to chapters of the work. In his articles Vajda notices many parallels with the mu‘tazilite theology and philosophy. He especially mentions those with the mu‘tazilite theologian ’Abd al-Jabbar (10th century). Now to the translations a first edition of the Judeo-Arabic text in Hebrew characters has been added. Vajda makes us also acquainted with other works on kalām by Yūsuf al-Ḏaṣrī, such as the earlier composed Kitāb al-tamyi‘iz, also called al-Mansūrī. This work is a compilation of the material which we also find in the Kitāb al-Muhtawi.

Vajda has also made use of the Hebrew translations of Yūsuf al-Ḏaṣrī’s work, made by Tobiah ibn Moses. He often complained, when the Arabic texts were inaccessible to him [e.g. the fragments from the Leningrad manuscripts which arrived only after Vajda’s death and are integrated in the Judeo-Arabic text by Blumenthal]. Usually Vajda made use of the Hebrew version available in Hungary (collection Kaufmann no 280) and the Hebrew version in Leiden by
Tobia ben Moses (Warner 41). Vajda mentions somewhere (p. 122) that the Hungarian manuscript was already the object of a whole series of Hungarian dissertations of different quality under the direction of Alexander Scheibe.

— (I, II) The introductory part and the translation of the first two chapters of the book is dealt with in the article ‘L’examen rationel, préalable de la loi, dans l’œuvre du théologien karaité Yûsuf al- Bàṣîr’. It begins with a short mention of the life and activities of Joseph al- Bàṣîr, as well as of his translator in Hebrew, Tobiah ibn Moses.

The two problems discussed here derive from the dogma of the unity of God [tawhîd] and his attributes, e.g. God’s justice, i.e. the problem of evil, free will and responsibility for men’s deeds and repentance. They were discussed by Yûsuf ibn al- Bàṣîr in his Kitâb al-tamyîz as well as in his Kitâb al-Muhtawi and the respective Hebrew translations of those works. In his article, Vajda places the Qara’îte author against the background of Jewish and Islamic philosophical currents of his time. Following the Muslim Mu’tazilite author ‘Abd al-Jabbâr the Godly [deîc] Authority with His message has to be wise and just. Such an Authority must possess an absolute science, must essentially be ‘knowing’, not by means of knowledge added to his essence, but be self-sufficient, ‘autarchic’. Those attributes can only belong to the unique God who is One. The belief in the mission of an envoy only can be the result of a demonstration founded on the very reason of the divine attributes ‘knowledge’ and ‘autarchy’. The first chapter ends with a list of Hebrew treatises that underwent the influence of Yûsuf al- Bàṣîr.

— (III, IV) The second section dwells on the necessity of knowing beforehand the definitions of the terms. The author [Yûsuf al- Bàṣîr] gives a list of terms and Vajda made a list comparing the original Arabic with the terms in Hebrew. In the third chapter of Yûsuf’s al-Muhtawi the four incorporeal realities are presented, following the mu’tazilite school of ‘Abd al-Jabbâr: such as reunion [of atoms] and separation, movement and pause. Reunion and separation are casual; they occur after a preceding non-existence. The body can not be separated from them and does not precede them. The body is casual like them. Yusuf concentrated himself on union and separation.

The fourth chapter concerns the problem of God as the Author of all events. It is called ihtibâr (‘Confirmation of the Productor of events’). The focus of discussion in this chapter is the analysis of the human act perpetrated consciously and according to one’s will. Free acts are casual, but at the end free acts and unfree acts [like those in a dream] have come into existence thanks to the Author of everything.

— (V-X) The third section contains passages about God’s attributes such as Mighty, Knowing, Living, Existing and Eternal. In Chapter VIII it is proved that God perceives everything that can be perceived, which is based on four principles (ugûl) [p. 72], among which the notion that God is living, unaffected by disease, handicap or obstacle.

According to Vajda this is the translation of a thought which has been uttered by Aristotle and is well-known in the words of Abu Bashir Mattâ: if we are deprived from a sense, we are deprived from a science.

— (XI-XI bis) The next section deals with the attributes by essence and the divine incompatibility [p. 87]. This piece exists only in a French translation by Vajda without any further comment. ‘Prof. Vajda had probably been working it through in his mind when he died’ [p. 87 note].

— (XII) This section contains the article “Le problème de la vision de dieu d’après Yûsuf al- Bàṣîr”. In this chapter Vajda also compares the work of Yûsuf al- Bàṣîr with the works of the Mu’tazilite authors ‘Abd al-Jabbâr and Ibn Mattawây by whom he is inspired. A man can see his image in a mirror, provided that he does not close his eyes. God, however, as an eternal being, does not have a body, and so he can not be seen. Then the author tries to refute three popular visions about the view of God: 1. the angels can see God; 2. God shows himself to whom he wants; 3. the blessed ones will see God in the other world.

It would be absurd to suppose that some [e.g. the blind] were less favoured than others to see God. The major argument is: since God has no body, He can not be seen.

— (XIII-XIV) This section is entitled “La démonstration de l’unité divine d’après Yûsuf al- Bàṣîr”. There are two proofs of the unity of the Highest Being, based on the refutation of the absurd: 1) a second Highest Being would be necessarily equal to God with respect to His omnipotence. From this follows that they would not allow one another to act; 2) the object of the acting of two omnipotent actors would be necessarily identical.

Yûsuf al- Bàṣîr here mentions other religions and sects which are against the unity of God, such as the Sûfîsyyah [they believed in really existing attributes of God], the Daysanites, Christians, Zoroastrians [Manicheists] and the so called Kullâbiyyah [‘an unknown splinter group of Nestorians] according to which it is impossible to know whether God’s science is God or something different.

— (XV) This section is about God’s created speech (‘La parole créée de Dieu d’après le théologien karaité Yûsuf al- Bàṣîr’). Speech is an attribute that, though not essential and therefore not eternal, still belongs to God. At the time of Vajda’s article J.R.T.M. Peters’ University of Nimegue dissertation entitled God’s Created Speech, A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Mu’tazilite Qadd Abu I-Hasan ‘Abd al-Jabbâr bn Ahmad al-Hamadhânî [Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1976] had not yet appeared. However, in Vajda’s later articles, this book has been mentioned extensively.

— (XVI-XVII) This section is about ‘La volonté et l’autarcie divines selon Yûsuf al- Bàṣîr’. Chapter XVI deals with the Divine Will, in relation to His Unity and Justice (tawhîd and ‘adl).

In Chapter XVII it is demonstrated that God is enough for Himself, the principle of the Theodicee. The current method is to adduce autarchy as an argument that God does not do harm or evil. God has no necessities whatsoever. Yûsuf quotes ‘Abd al-Jabbâr’s Muḥîf with approval against al-Mutakallim [probably an-Nazzâm and his sect] according to which God always does the best thing. There are also translations made from the Kitâb al-Tamyîz about the same subject. It reveals the dependence of Yûsuf on the mu’tazilite school of Basrah.

— (XVIII-XXII) This section entitled ‘De l’universalité de la loi morale selon Yûsuf al- Bàṣîr’ begins by dealing with the qualifications of actions. There are two kinds of actions: 1) actions without added quality [ṣīfah] to their production. 2) actions with.

The latter are subdivided into a) actions which can be done b) actions which cannot be done. The ashâb al-aslah pretend that God always does the best. Chapter XIX (p. 271) deals with the fact that God does not do harm or evil, but He has the possibility to do so. Chapter XX deals with
the fact that injustice, lies and other such misdeeds are always evil, whoever perpetrates them: God or we. Chapter XXI deals with the fact that God has the power to perpetrate intrinsic evil, such as lies or other things. Chapter XXII is about God, who does not choose the evil, and does not omit what is necessary. At the end of the chapter, after the translation of Yusuf's work, Vajda compares the contents with 'Abd al-Jabbar's sayings [in his Mughni]. He also makes the balance with Ibn Mattawiah's Kitāb al-Majmūʿ fi-l-Muḥtā bil-taklīf.

I quote Vajda from p. 302 [171] to illustrate his opinion about the value of the comparison of Yusuf's writings with those of the main mu'tazilites: "Une lecture attentive des chapitres traduits dans le présent mémoire, comme d'ailleurs du livre tout entier, nous porte à croire que l'information de Yusuf en théologie musulmane reposait surtout, sinon exclusivement, sur les œuvres du grand cadi 'Abd al-Gabbār; dans l'état actuel de notre documentation ou peut-être faute d'avoir étudié suffisamment en profondeur les ouvrages conservés, nous avouons ne pas être en mesure de déterminer les textes précis auxquels il a emprunté ses matériaux. Du reste, ce n'est là, après tout, qu'un fausse problème car, contemporain du grand Docteur mu'tazilite, notre Karaité a fort bien pu se servir de textes qui n'ont pas encore leur forme définitive du vivant de 'Abd al-Gabbār.

Quo qu'il en soit, l'exposition copieuse et détaillée des doctrines et des questions controversées dans les cours dictés, puis transformés en ouvrages ou moins définitivement rédigés, de ce dernier, pourvoyait le théologien karaité, et il devait en être de même pour maints théologiens musulmans ne disposant pas de bibliothèques bien garnies, d'extraits des œuvres et de résumés des opinions des grands maîtres du Xe siècle (surtout des deux sayh-s, Abū 'AIT al-Gubbā'ī et son fils, Abū Hāšim), avec, également, un certain nombre de rappels de thèses plus anciennes'.

— (XXIII, XXV-XXVI) This section is entitled 'Le problème de la souffrance gratuite selon Yusuf al-BAṣīr'. It deals with the notion 'lawd or compensation', i.e. the mu'tazilite solution of the problem of unmerited sufferings, and the different theories which pretended to justify this phenomenon by speculations which were judged unacceptable according to Yusuf and his mu'tazilite colleagues.

From the ideas of Yusuf results that God when he authorises someone to inflict sufferings to a sacrificial animal, has to compensate the victim. The same thing is true for circumcision, because God made the child suffer without the child deserving it.

— (XXV) This section is directed against the Bakiyyah sect of the Majāš, a kind of Sunitiyyah or Buddhism. Bakr pretended that a child does not feel physical pain. Yusuf argues against Bakr in the following manner: 'Le souvenir que nous conservons des coups reçus dans notre enfance suffit à montrer la fausseté de cette opinion'. (p. 340). Yusuf quotes the opinions of 'Abbāb and the Jabariyyah [negators of free will] who think that physical pain has the function to establish a distinction between rational beings and non-rational beings [p. 336/343]. In this chapter Vajda also presents extracts of works of later Kara'ites on this point.

— (XXIV) This section is entitled 'La réflexion de la métempsomatose d'après le théologien karaité Yusuf al-BAṣīr'. This treatise, says Vajda, does not offer much that is original. The interest of it lies in the choice and the arrangement of the texts and the manner in which he inserts the problem in the general mu'tazilite system of Theodicee. Reincarnation of the soul is refuted by Yusuf, who sees it only as a means for a body to bring to a solution the problem of unjust sufferings, unjust sufferings also by children or animals. It is refuted because unjust sufferings can seem unjust at some time, but inflicted in view of a future advantage, and compensated at least in the hereafter.

— (XXVII-XXXIII) This section is entitled 'Le libre arbitre de l'homme et la justification de son assujettissement à la loi divine'. It is partly directed against the Jabariyya.

One of the problems discussed is whether belief may be imposed on an unbeliever. According to Yusuf this is possible in view of the doctrine that God never does any evil. Thus imposition of goodness is conform divine justice.

The whole problem of free will can be summarized in three points (p. 460): 1. Man is free, because otherwise he could not be held responsible for his actions and according be retributed for them; 2. Consequently, the decisions made by him escape from God's power or science; 3. In these conditions, is it just (and universally valid, be it perpetrated by God or by any creature) that on a man from whom God knows that he must persevere in unbelief, is imposed belief and the revealed Law?

The mu'tazilite school also does not admit an action perpetrated by two agents. Vajda mentions here many opinions from mu'tazilites.

— (XXXIV-XXXVI) This section is about God's lutf or benevolent assistance, the best thing to do and the necessity of the revealed Law, entitled 'Le problème de l'assistance bienveillante de Dieu, du «Mieux», et de la nécessité de la Loi révélée'. Yusuf al-BAṣīr quotes Abu 'Ali al-Jubbā'ī that the lutf only precedes one instant the action of the matlūf so that there is between them a link which makes an action. With his son Abū Hāšim he admits that lutf can also be there more instances before the action, provided that the one who commits the action, did not forget it. The idea lutf is also called tawfiq or 'ismah [ma'sum signifies in fact 'impossible, inattainable for the evil']. God has taken the initiative out of generosity and not because of a supposed obligation to impose belief in Him upon certain members of mankind. He is not obliged to do the best or the most prouxicous (al-aslah). [God has no obligation whatsoever towards the universe].

Vajda also compares the text with minor works by Yusuf al-BAṣīr like al-Manṣūrī a part of whose original Arabic text he now disposes of because of the kindness of the Leningrad State Library. The twenty ninth chapter thereof is entitled: 'About the obligatory character of God's benevolent assistance and about the condemnable character of the excitation towards evil'. Chapter 30 is about the revealed law which consists of benevolent assistance.

— (XXXVII-XL) This section is about the problems of godly sanctions, about repentance and similar questions. From free will and God's benevolent assistance follows that a responsible man deserves sanctions and can be rewarded and punished because of his free decisions. On the other hand, it is possible, that a man redresses his situation with respect to the Creator, when he has submitted himself to temptations of sin. In the last chapter of the Kitāb al-Manṣūrī the same subject is broached, but with other arguments and developments.
Yūsuf also speaks of the legitimacy of punishment and the balance of actions: how long a punishment, blame, and praise takes, and whether the award is with or without conditions. Chapter XL is about repentance. The passages from al-Muhtawi are confronted with the Kitāb al-Manṣūrī and its chapters on balance and repentance. Vajdah confronts the works of Yūsuf also with the Arabic Muʿtazī-lite counterparts.

The last part of the book [from pp. 633 on] consists of an edition of Yūsuf al-Ąṣīr’s Kitāb al-Muhtawi mainly on the basis of Kaufmann manuscript no. 280 of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. David R. Blumenthal has prepared the manuscript for publication on the basis of Vajdah’s annotations. The first few pages [of the first chapter] are provided from the Firkovic Manuscript [Leningrad] edited by Blumenthal. Vajdah had asked for the microfilm of this manuscript long ago, but it arrived only after his death. Vajda based his translations of the first pages on the Hebrew version of the Muftawi [the Sefir Ne’omot, Ms. 41 Warner, University Library Leiden]. Some fragments from other manuscripts are also used in the critical apparatus.

The text seems to be edited with care. I did not find many mistakes except perhaps small mistypes e.g. p. 646 line 8 yatabaqaddānī instead of yatabāqaddānī; p. 714 line 28 yakhṭarā-hu* instead of yakhṭara-hu. The Arabic of the text is homogeneous without Hebrew interspersed in it as we see in the works of so many non-Qara’ite authors. At face value the simple style of the work eludes understanding, when one is not accustomed to the non-literary style. It takes time to grasp the line of reasoning. It is this which makes the translations, explanations, and clarifications by Vajdah in the first part extremely useful.

It goes without saying that although Judeo-Arabic and dealing with Judaic philosophy and religion, the overall importance of this book goes far beyond this scope: the issues raised in the book are important for Islamic and Christian medieval philosophy and religion as well. Therefore it should also be recommended for students in these fields.

Amsterdam/Leiden, January 1992

Arie Schippers


In 1973 Sasson Somekh published a monograph on Najib Mahfūz which still features as an authoritative study on the Nobel Prize Winner. The Changing Rhythm focused on structural and character analysis, but there already was a clear interest in discourse analysis, expressed in terms of “language” and “dialogue”. Since then, the author has written more about this aspect of modern Arabic prose. He has published (in Arabic) a study about the language of the story-teller Yusuf Idrīs (Lughat al-qiyasa fi adab Yusuf Idrīs, Tel Aviv 1984) and a large number of articles in the same vein in different periodicals. The most important articles have now been collected in the second part of his most recent book and should be read as “case studies” on stylistic and linguistic problems, such as the question of how to translate modern Western prose (Ch. 7) and poetry (Ch. 10), the function of sound in some of the stories of Yūsuf Idrīs (Ch. 8), the use of the vernacular or the fushā language in dramatic dialog (Ch. 9), and the so-called concept of lugha thalitha or “Third Language” (Ch. 11).

In the first part, called “Prolegomena”, the problem of language is treated systematically, following the historical development of the main literary genres in modern Arabic. The author begins by arguing that there is a language problem for the writer of literature as a result of the “near-religious reverence” accorded to the classical language and the actual status of diglossia in the Arab world. This particularly applies to the writer of realistic fiction and drama. Somekh discusses various levels of fushā (FU) and ‘āmmiyā (AM) and their mutual interference and he also investigates the influence of foreign languages, not only with regard to the lexicon, but also with regard to phraseology, syntactic structures etc. Although the dialect is “an abundantly communicative and highly pliable medium” it is considered to be non-literary by most Arab authors, apparently for aesthetic reasons.

In Ch. 2 the author discusses a number of new stylistic features acquired by modern Arabic prose. One of these features is the abandonment of parallelism, which is so common in classical prose. Others are the tendency to follow the so-called Standard Average European and to avoid dialectal forms. Lexicon, morpho-syntax and sentence structure are three factors that give modern standard FU its distinctive style. Style-markers may also help to realize this style. The examples given here are few but effective.

In the following chapters — on Prose fiction (Ch. 3), Drama (Ch. 4), and Poetry (Ch. 5) — discourse analysis is preceded by a short historical survey. Ch. 3 deals with two aspects that dominate the development of prose fiction: the use of FU and AM in dialog (which has been discussed at large elsewhere) and the language of narration, on which very little has been written until now. In the discussion about dialog the main question is how to express the spoken language. Normally, a vernacular would be used but for all kinds of reasons (social, cultural, pragmatic) it is expressed differently in a FU text. Najib Mahfūz and many other writers after him found a solution to the problem in the use of a “quasi colloquial” or “colloquialized” FU or “hidden AM”. At the beginning of the section on “Narration” the author lists a number of aspects of narrative discourse but in the following pages he focuses on only one of them: the transition from a “neutral” or “static style” to an “involved” style that leads naturally to the “stream of consciousness” in which the implied author and the character are shown as having a “combined discourse”. Although his examples, taken from Mahfūz’s Trilogy, are not sufficiently worked out to be really convincing, I agree with him when he states that this transition is characteristic of Arabic literature after 1960.

The chapter on drama follows naturally on the discussion of dialogue of the preceding chapter. In social drama and comedy, particularly, the discrepancy between language and situation becomes evident when the actors use a FU language that has nothing in common with the spoken language. Somekh describes the different solutions worked out by dramatists like al-Ḥakim and Mahmūd Taymūr. It