
Averrois opera. Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis physicorum librum septimum (Vindobonensis, lat. 2334) edited by H. Schmieja

Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007. Pp. xxxii+292. ISBN 978-3-506-76316-7. Cloth € 43.90

Reviewed by
Ruth Glasner
Hebrew University, Mount Scopus
ruthg@math.huji.ac.il

For several years Dr Horst Schmieja of the Thomas-Institut Köln has been collecting and collating manuscripts for a critical edition of the Latin translation of Averroes' long commentary on Aristotle's *Physica*, and since 1986 he has published several articles in which he reports some of his findings. This commentary was undoubtedly one of the most influential medieval texts. Averroes wrote three kinds of commentaries on Aristotle's treatises: epitomes, middle commentaries, and long commentaries. He wrote epitomes and middle commentaries on all of Aristotle's treatises that were available to him. He wrote long commentaries only on five books: *Posterior analytica*, *Physica*, *De caelo*, *De anima*, and *Metaphysica*. Four of these have been published in modern critical editions in Arabic or Latin.¹ Only the commentary on the *Physica* has no modern edition. This commentary no longer survives in Arabic but it is extant in Latin and Hebrew translations. The Latin version dates from the beginning of the 13th century and is probably by Michael Scotus;² the Hebrew is in an anonymous translation from the 1320s or 1330s [see [Harvey 1985](#)]. The Latin translation is available in manuscripts (over 60 in number) as well as in several old printings. The standard reference to this is the Junta edition of Averroes' *opera* from Venice 1562 vol.

¹ For a complete list of the editions, see [Endress 1999](#).

² The name of Michael Scotus is mentioned on the translation of the long commentary on *De caelo*, and scholars agree that it is highly probable that he was also the translator of the *Physica*. Additional support for this ascription was provided recently by D. N. Hasse at the SEIPM conference in Palermo in 2007.

4 (henceforth J). The Hebrew translation (henceforth H) is extant in only a few manuscripts.

It is not surprising that this highly influential and important text has not yet been edited. It is the longest of the five long commentaries (433 folios in the Junta edition) and is a very difficult text. One of the reasons for the many difficulties is that it was heavily revised.

During his study of the more than 60 manuscripts of this text, Schmieja discovered that in the manuscript preserved in the Nationalbibliothek Wien (cod. Lat. 2334), which he refers to as Vindobonensis 2334, book 7 and comments 80–86 of book 8 differ from the rest of the manuscripts, which he designates as the ‘*Vulgatversion*’.

The first volume that has just appeared in Schmieja’s project is an edited version of book 7 according to Vindobonensis 2334 (henceforth V). The volume contains:

1. An introduction.
2. A critical edition of V with two *apparatus critici*: a variants apparatus and a comparison apparatus. The former is a standard apparatus of a critical edition, the second focuses on the excerpts. The excerpts from Aristotle are quoted from the Arabic translation of Aristotle by Yishāq ibn Ḥunayn. This translation is extant in one manuscript (Leiden Or. 538) and has been edited by Badawi [1964]. Schmieja compares the Latin translation of the excerpts as quoted in V, with the Arabic translation by Yishāq following Badawi’s edition. He often also consults Ross’ edition of Aristotle’s Greek text.
3. A detailed comparison of V, the Vindobonensis version, with J, the *Vulgatversion* (represented by the Junta edition, which is easily accessible to the reader). Schmieja analyses the stylistic differences between the two versions and comments on differences and omissions. His thorough comparison leads him to the conclusion that V is based on a second Latin translation of Averroes’ commentary, hitherto unknown. He identifies the translator of V as Hermannus Alemannus and convincingly substantiates his conclusion.
4. Two lexica. The first is an Arabic-Latin lexicon of the texts (the excerpts from Yishāq’s translation) arranged according to the three-letter Arabic roots in Latin transliteration. This lexicon includes

references to Badawi's edition and to the texts in the Latin V version. The second is a Latin-Arabic lexicon which also includes a complete list of references to the Latin words in the text.

5. Bibliography of sources and studies.

There is no need to say how useful this edition and these lexica are to the reader, who hitherto had recourse only to the rather inconvenient Junta edition. Publication of further volumes is eagerly awaited. To be sure, immense difficulties are inherent in the preparation of a critical edition of such a long and difficult text based on so many manuscripts. This complex project is of outstanding importance and deserves all possible support and encouragement.

Appendix: An answer to Endress' question

Before Schmieja discovered the Vindobonensis manuscript (V), only two translations of Averroes' long commentary on the *Physica* were known: the Latin translation by Michael Scotus (J) and the Hebrew translation (H). In a recent work [forthcoming], I have shown that J and H are two different redactions of Averroes' commentary that differ very significantly from one another. I argued that Averroes revised his commentary very heavily, perhaps more than once. Presumably his manuscript was full of modifications and additions in the margins, perhaps between lines, and typically at the ends of comments. These numerous changes were difficult to handle by the (Arabic) copyists and the (Latin and Hebrew) translators, and this accounts for why the two versions that have come down to us in J and H are so different from each other.

At the SIEPM conference in Porto in August 2002, Professor Gerhard Endress raised the question whether the second Latin translation V, discovered by Schmieja, which differs from J in several places, might be based on the same Arabic *Vorlage* as H. While working on the comparison of V and J, Schmieja asked me a few times to check whether passages that he had found in V but not in J appear in H, and indeed there are many such passages. Now, with his edition of V at hand, I can compare the two Latin translations with that of the Hebrew and try to answer Endress' question.

The references to J are to the standard Junta edition, references to V are to Schmieja's new edition, and those to H are to the Cambridge Harvard Houghton Library Heb. MS. 40.

Group A differences: Passages in V and H missing in J

The common instance of group A differences is a brief passage (usually a sentence or a part of a sentence, rarely more) that is missing in J. This may sometimes be due to the tendency of Michael Scotus to skip short phrases and to abbreviate the text. As Schmieja has shown, *lemmata* that are usually referred to by a few opening words in J are quoted in full in V (e.g., page 97 on 11.23–27; page 98 on 14.3 and 14.16). *Lemmata* are always quoted in full in H. These differences can be ‘blamed’ on Michael Scotus, who apparently tried to save time and/or writing materials. However instances of omissions in J are common not only in the *lemmata*: see, for example, Schmieja’s comments on pages 94 (on 2.6–10), 95 (on 7.16–19, 7.32–34), 110 (on 31.5), and 113 (on 34.9). Perhaps the omitted material corresponds to short additions and corrections placed above the line or in the margin in Averroes’ manuscript, which the copyist of the Arabic manuscript that Michael Scotus used or Scotus himself (in the event that he worked on Averroes’ autograph)³ ignored.

Group B differences: Corrections by the editors of J

Of the three translations, only J was printed; and several errors were corrected by the editors. A few examples:

- *V 3.3* H 106a2: *quod movetur totum*] J 306F10–11: *non movetur secundum totum*.
- *V 3.6* H 106a6: *quinto*] J 306G2: *principio quinti*.
- *V 12.23* H 109b1: *sexto*] J 309H10–11: *quinto*, which is the correct reference.

Group C differences: Passages in H missing in J and V

These are passages that appear in the Hebrew translation and are missing in the two Latin translations. While group A passages are typically brief, some of group C passages are long. The most notable instance of group C differences is a long lacuna in the two Latin translations. The lacuna starts after text 37 (which corresponds to

³ It is not unlikely that Scotus used a manuscript in Averroes’ own hand. See Burnett 1999.

Aristotle, *Phys.* 225a9–14 and Badawi 1964, 792.5–13). The Hebrew translation goes on with comment 37 (28 lines), an additional text 37A (four lines which correspond to Aristotle, *Phys.* 250a15–19 and Badawi 1964, 792.13–793.5), comment 37A (ten lines), and another text 37B (which corresponds to *Phys.* 250a20–25). At this point the two Latin translations are resumed. The following comment, which is on text 37B, appears in J and V as a comment on text 37. It should be noted that in H there is no numbering of the texts, so the discrepancy in the numbering is not easily noted. Book 7 should thus count 41 rather than 39 text-comment units. Schmieja comments on the lacuna in text 37 on pages 78n35 and 133.

Group C differences are very common. I shall list only a few examples:

- *Comment 1* H 105b18–19 missing in J (306C9) and V (2.11).
- *Comment 3* H 108a11–16, and b1–4 missing in J and V.
- *Comment 7* H 110b13–14 missing in J (310M6) and V (16.9).
- *Comment 9* Text 9 consists of two sentences from the end of *Phys.* 7.1 and two sentences from the beginning of 7I.2. Comment 9 is problematic. The three translations are more or less parallel until J 311 L9 and from J 312 D5. Between these lines the order of presentation in J and V is confused. Also, the end of the comment (H 112b9–12) is missing in J and V.
- *Comment 14* H 117a25 is missing in J and V.

Group D differences: Passages in J and V missing in H

A rather long passage at the end of comment 2, J 308A10–C14 *Sed disolutio... per se* = V 7.20–8.9 *Responsio... in aere*, is missing in H. A few words at the end of comment 5, V *aut quantitatis aut qualitatis aut ubi* (13.6) / J *aut quantitatis & ubi* (309I12–13), are missing in H.

In order to draw all the interesting conclusions a complete systematic comparison of the three translations of book 7 is needed. However, the few examples that I have mentioned should be sufficient to answer Endress' question in the negative. V and H are certainly not based on the same Arabic manuscript. It is possible that V and J are based on two slightly different Arabic manuscripts. It is also possible that they are based on the same heavily emended Arabic

manuscript and that Alemannus was more careful than Scotus in the rendering of the corrections and additions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Badawi, A. 1964. *Aṭ-Ṭabīʿa*. Cairo.
- Burnett, C. 1999. 'The "Sons of Averroes with the Emperor Fredrik" and the Transmission of the Philosophical Works by Ibn Rushd'. Pp. 259–299 in G. Endress and J. A. Aertzen edd. *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition*. Leiden.
- Endress, G. 'Averrois Opera'. Pp. 339–381 in G. Endress and J. A. Aertzen edd. *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition*. Leiden.
- Glasner, R. (forthcoming) *Averroes' Physics*.
- Harvey, S. 1985. 'The Hebrew Translation of Averroes' Prooemium to His Long Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*'. *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 52:55–84.