PREFACE

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It is a pleasure to introduce a new journal for interchange of knowledge. Knowledge interchange on a global scale is essential these days for the functioning of society, and is facilitated by means of the world-wide web, satellite communication, and the ubiquitous mobile phone. But such exchange was also a core element of pre-Modern society, even if the means of communication were slower and more ponderous. People travelled the length of Euro-Asia, whether along the Silk routes and the Musk routes overland, or along the sea routes through the Persian Gulf, the Indian and China Sea, and later across the Atlantic. Circumnavigating Africa became a reality, and finding a Northwest passage through the Arctic was considered possible. A thirteenth-fourteenth century Christian (Marco Polo) could recount his experiences on his epic journey to China in the lingua franca of the Crusaders. An Iraqi visitor to South America in the early seventeenth century could write a history of the area in Arabic. This journal, however, will focus on the Mediterranean, the restless sea that was the home for Christians, Muslims and Jews, and provided a means for the transfer of knowledge, artefacts, and peoples, throughout history. It will cover the fertile period between Late Antiquity and Early Modernity, and pay attention especially to the fields of philology, philosophy, science, culture and religion. This period is characterized by common streams of thought and approaches to knowledge, which enabled the easy sharing of new ideas across religious and ethnic boundaries. But the adjective 'Mediterranea' implies more than the sea which lies at the heart of this common civilization. As 'Middle Earthly Studies' it implies also the flowing in and out of ideas from the peripheries: to and from Africa, Persia, Indian, and China, and eventually to and from the New World. China may have considered herself as the 'Middle Land', but the united states that bounded the Mediterranean Sea was another.

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Transfer of knowledge can be centrifugal or centripetal. Many streams can contribute to a common tradition (such as that referred to as modern universal science of today). But as John Henry Newman (1801-1890) said:

> 'It is indeed sometimes said that the stream is clearest near the spring. [but] in the history of a philosophy or belief, [the stream is] purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad [...]'[1]

On the other hand one idea can give rise to many separate streams, such as that of there being a limited number of elements out of which whole systems can be built—such the 26 letters of the alphabet forming countless words, nine numerals forming an infinity of numbers, and seven pitches, a whole repertoire of music.

But transfer can also take place within societies, and without involving travel. The positive effects of different religious and ethnic groups within one community was as much noticeably in medieval and early modern societies as it is in modern societies.

The essays included in this first volume exemplify the range of subjects covered by Mediterranea. Sarah Stroumsa re-examines the idea of convivencia of Jews, Christians and Muslims in the 'Golden Age' of Islamic Spain in the light of the experience of several generations of the Jewish family of Banū Ḥasday, who held high positions as doctors and advisors in the Muslim courts, and wavered between conversion to Islam and adherence to the Jewish faith. Her conclusion is that the Jews in al-Andalus Arabized but did not Islamize.

Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala draws attention to the large variety of languages being used for religious and secular literature in Latin Antiquity, and gives an example of how an originally Jewish story of 'the descent of the Watchers', while probably written originally in Aramaic, passed through Syriac, Ethiopian, Greek, and Garshuni (i.e. Syriac written in Arabic characters). He points out the differences in the Syriac and Gharshuni versions and shows how Michael the Great, probably using a Greek version, enriched the story in his popular Syrian history.

Jules Janssens examines a particularly pervasive tradition of thought—that of mysticism. This, like pure philosophy, is a way of thinking and believing that goes deeper than the doctrines of any revealed religion, and penetrates to the roots of all religions. Ibn Sīnā's philosophy led to a mystical tradition which had a particularly long life in the Islamicate world. But was Ibn Sīnā a mystic? Janssens

[1] J.H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, London: Longmans, Greens and Co., 1909, p. 40.

concludes that 'in the final part of the *Ishārāt* (Ibn Sina) offers what may be labelled as a 'philosophical project that rationally interprets mystical terms, expressions, and phenomena', rather than as 'a philosophical mysticism'.

Nicola Polloni, in turn, shows a particular striking and important example of philosophical transfer from Arabic into Latin, in the person of Dominicus Gundissalinus. From the advantageous position of Toledo he was able both to translate into Latin texts by Arabic and Jewish philosophers (al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Gabirol), and to incorporate material from these works, together with works of the Medieval Latin tradition, into his own accounts of cosmology, psychology and metaphysics. Aside from Hermann of Carinthia, whose work was known to him, Gundissalinus was the first Latin to attempt this synthesis of often competing doctrines. But he was only able to do this because he understood what his sources meant, and was able to engage in dialogue with Muslims and Jews, using the common language of philosophy.

Rafael Ramón Guerrero addresses the philosophical elements in the *Secret of Secrets* (*Sirr al-asrār*). This regimen principum is typically regarded as a work of political and medical advice, with a lot of astrology and magic thrown in, given authority by being attributed to Aristotle and addressed to a king (Alexander the Great). And yet the heavily Neoplatonized Aristotelianism that the Arabs inherited from Hellenistic Greece and Alexandria shows through in the work's explanation of the universe, and its description of God's nature, and of man as the unifying element of all created essences.

This journal is the fruit of cooperation between the Córdoba Near Eastern Research Unit, of the University of Córdoba, The Warburg Institute, London, KU Leuven, Tel Aviv University, Syddansk Universitet, the Instituto de Filosofia of the Universidade do Porto and the Mediterranean Seminar based at the Center for Mediterranean Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and the department of Religious Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. This range of academic institutes, in itself, epitomizes the potential of academic research over continents and between languages. It is to be hoped that a high quality of articles will continue to be submitted to ensure the longevity of this new journal.