

Daniel D. De Haan. *Necessary Existence and the Doctrine of Being in Avicenna's Metaphysics of the Healing. Investigating Medieval Philosophy 15.* Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020. xvi + 426 p. ISBN: 9789004430372. Cloth: € 138/\$ 166

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De Haan's book is a revised doctoral dissertation written as a *cotutelle de thèse* between the University of St. Thomas, Houston (Texas) and the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Its 426 pages spread over ten chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, a bibliography, and an *index rerum et nominum*. The ten chapters themselves are distributed over four parts, each comprising two chapters, with the exception of part three, which contains four chapters, thus making for one third of the book.

The introduction describes the *Metaphysics* of Avicenna's most detailed and longest work *al-Šifā'* as an "Aristotelian metaphysical science whose subject is being *qua* being", which "eventually culminates in an aitiological and theological investigation into the existence and true-nature of the necessary existence in itself" (2). This, De Haan writes, conjures the "problematic" of how and why Avicenna proceeded from the one to the other, i.e., from ontology to theology. Suggesting that a fresh investigation of the scientific principles of Avicenna's philosophy will shed some light on these questions, De Haan recommends a thorough examination especially of book I of Avicenna's *Metaphysics* to describe the scientific backbone of metaphysics as conceived and put into words by Avicenna.

Even though the first book of Avicenna's *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifā'* has perhaps received more attention than any other so far, other areas within the history of philosophy, e.g., the study of the Presocratics or of Plato and Aristotle, have shown repeatedly that even a renewed investigation of better-known parts of a philosopher's oeuvre can be very fruitful – and at any rate, we are still only wading knee-deep through the profound waters of "Lake Avicenna". In that sense, De Haan's decision to revisit the foundational chapters of a monumental work is surely justified. Unfortunately, the result is somewhat less gainful than expected.

In Part One, comprising the first two chapters (13-92), De Haan trots by and large known paths, and so one quickly detects in the book's pages an overall strong reliance on earlier publications by Riccardo Strobino, Deborah Black, Asad Ahmed, and Jon McGinnis. Not displaying any active, critical, or innovative engagement with their interpretations, De Haan produces a synthesis which is overall not wrong but which does not bring anything significantly new to the table either. Readers well or semi-well versed in Avicenna might prefer to skip the first part *in toto*, while readers less familiar with Avicenna might profit from the De Haan's informed introduction into Avicennian logic, metaphysics, and

modality. The materials which De Haan presents at length in the first part would surely be justified if he was to return to them and to integrate them into his later analysis. However, apart from sporadic references, the materials on the first eighty pages remain strangely unconnected with the rest.

Somewhat disconcertingly, Part Two, comprising chapters three and four (95-179), starts similarly. De Haan explicitly announces – or: admits – that he will be “presenting a condensed digest of the historical and philosophical conclusions arrived at in Amos Bertolacci’s *The Reception of Aristotle’s Metaphysics in Avicenna’s Kitāb al-Šifā’*” (96). This “digest” includes *inter alia* even a table of contents and a basic structural overview of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, and describes the various interpretations of the theme of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* as prevalent among Avicenna’s predecessors. This is followed by a long account of the old – but admittedly still exciting – theme of Avicenna’s analysis of the subject-matter of metaphysics on the basis of a close reading of large portions of the first book of Avicenna’s *Metaphysics*, filling the remainder of chapter three, but proceeding with neither surprises nor relevant new insights. De Haan’s overall noticeably repetitive report of Bertolacci’s analysis remains very close to the original from 2006, which in turn was partially based on earlier articles. What this means, in effect, is that De Haan’s account of the structure of metaphysics relies in part on insights from 2002.

The book becomes more stimulating on page 152 – in the fourth chapter – when De Haan finally engages critically with secondary literature and provides a new reading – or rather reinforces an older interpretation by Ed Houser from 1981 that he thinks deserves closer attention. This is worthwhile and contains valuable moments, even if the central idea of this chapter was already developed in one of De Haan’s earlier publications, focusing on the question whether or not the first book of Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* contains a proof for God’s existence (some of his ideas from that earlier article also enrich the subsequent fifth chapter of his book, esp. 202-214). In 2016, when the article appeared, De Haan’s answer was “no”, and it was based on the argument – now further developed in his monograph – that the second half of the first book of Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* (i.e., chapters 1.5-8) is concerned with “providing us with insights into the proper first principles of metaphysics”¹. This being so, I found the concise and succinct exposition in De Haan’s article more compelling than the volatile meanderings in chapter four of his book. Admittedly, some of these meanderings have become necessary, because De Haan apparently realised that the concise, clear-cut answer he gave in 2016 is not entirely without its own tensions once it is more fully articulated, and so in his book, De Haan is now trying to argue for his view also by responding to and integrating some of the problematic points. While chapter four is by no means uninteresting, it is repetitive in a way that seems to actively confuse the reader who wonders whether De Haan’s changes of pace and direction within his narrative are accompanied by new bits of information or merely by new formulations. It is a peculiar mix of old and new, of relevant and not-so-relevant, that makes it difficult to see where De Haan

¹ Daniel D. De Haan, “Where Does Avicenna Demonstrate the Existence of God?”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 26 (2016): 97–128, here 104.

is actually headed and what he has to offer. (Additionally, this makes his book also a difficult read for the beginner student of Avicenna's philosophy, who may have enjoyed the book's first part.)

In chapter five, the first of four constituting the book's long third part (183-336), De Haan is back to repeating and restating earlier research. This time, he relies heavily on common knowledge about the well-known four senses of being in Aristotle's metaphysics and, especially, on Stephen Menn's analysis of it in al-Fārābī as a forerunner of Avicenna (and in Averroes as a critic of him) as well as Bertolacci's investigation of how themes from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* reappear in Avicenna's work. The reader is not informed about why De Haan decided to provide only these three selective spotlights – one each on Aristotle, al-Fārābī, and Avicenna – and, thus, why he left the rest of the history of philosophy in the dark, even though other studies have already shown that our understanding of Avicenna profits greatly from a broader and more inclusive analysis of the pre-Avicennian Arabic philosophical tradition (not to speak of late ancient Greek thought). In fact, broadening his analysis here would have been a convenient opportunity for De Haan also to go beyond the secondary literature he summarises so extensively and, effectively, to add to it. (In this regard, it is off the point that De Haan in the conclusion of chapter six refers to the “complex and diverse spectrum of metaphysical doctrines” prior to Avicenna (268); he is surely right about the diverse spectrum, but his study did not make use of it.) However, selective even as it is, De Haan quickly switches off that one spotlight on al-Fārābī and, having presented his views on being, does not integrate them into the subsequent analysis of Avicenna beyond a few isolated remarks. One of them, for example, is De Haan's assertion that al-Fārābī takes *wuġūd* in the sense of “to be”, whereas Avicenna takes it in the sense of “to exist” (202). No explanation is given as to what this shift means or entails, nor what would have motivated it for Avicenna. Of course, it is related to Menn's analysis of al-Fārābī's ontology which reappears in De Haan under the label “essentialism” (contrasted to Avicenna's “existentialism”), but the presentation of the view barely scratches the surface. (De Haan comes closest to an explanation more than thirty pages later in chapter 6.2, as far as I could see.)

Even more problematic from a reader's perspective, though, is De Haan's choice to translate Avicenna's *mawġūd* as “being”: if it is so pivotal that Avicenna shifts from “to be” to “to exist”, then why is Avicenna in De Haan's preferred terminology concerned with “the being” and not with “the existent”? On the other hand, De Haan immediately states that “absolute being signifies *existence*” (203) anyway, and then talks about Avicenna's metaphysics being concerned with “absolute being”, thus avoiding the notion of “existence”. (The worry could be expanded to the second half of De Haan's book, where he occasionally seems forced to avoid his own preferred terminology and to write about “the existent” or about “being or the existent” as a translation for *mawġūd*.) As it is, De Haan claims to contextualise Avicenna's innovations, but the result remains, again, disconnected.

Regarding De Haan's interesting interpretation – known already from the above-mentioned article – that Avicenna's investigation of the necessary and the possible in

Metaphysics I.6-7 is meant to integrate into his account of principles Aristotle's sense of being as potency and actuality (206-211), De Haan reserves more space for a rather subtle clarification concerning the translation of *bi-'aynīhī* in a sentence of Avicenna's *Metaphysics* I.4, §1 (alongside the implications of that translation), than for the, in my opinion, much more important – and for De Haan's overall interpretation potentially problematic – question whether “the investigation of potentiality and actuality” is analogous (a) to the account of the possible or (b) to that of *both* the necessary and the possible. Syntactically the Arabic may lean rather towards (a) than towards (b), especially because if (b) was the correct reading, then there is no reason why all the other accounts listed in the first half of the entirely paratactic sentence would not also belong to that same investigation of potentiality and actuality. On a doctrinal level, it remains unclear why the investigation of potentiality and actuality should be connected also with *Metaphysics* I.7, which covers the unity of that which is *necessarily* existing through itself (and the lack of unity of what is possible). Instead, it would make more sense to read the passage in light of option (a) – of which De Haan seems unaware – and, thus, to consider the investigation of potentiality and actuality as tantamount to the investigation only of the possible, i.e., of that which is possible in itself (and necessary through another). While this investigation could, then, indeed correspond to *Metaphysics* I.6, it could pose a threat to De Haan's overall reading – and perhaps even a danger to his in many ways convincing view that the first book of the *Metaphysics* does not contain a modal proof of the Necessary Existent.²

In chapter six, De Haan trots, again, well known paths about “primary notions”. Among his main claims is that Avicenna's (four) primary notions being, thing, one and necessary in Avicenna are co-extensional in such a way that they all together – and not alone being – are absolutely prior to any further “notional constriction” and also to categorical being. Dissent with earlier interpretation is stored away in footnotes (e.g., fn. 11 and 67), even though it could have been a major theme of his discussion had it been promoted to the main text. Admittedly, though, De Haan's remarks on the co-extensionality of the primary notions receive their reprise later in the context of chapters nine and ten, which are, then, concerned with the question whether the primary notions are also co-intensional (again with discussions of other views from the literature in footnotes). Be this as it may, chapter six evolves into an investigation of being and existence and gives some more context to earlier discussions from chapter five. This contextualisation – both doctrinal and historical – is welcome and was needed, even though it mainly relies, again, on earlier analyses by Stephen Menn, Robert Wisnovsky, Thérèse-Anne Druart, and others.

In particular, the (short) accounts of the primary notions “one” and “necessary” are wanting. Both would have constituted good opportunities for historical and/or philosophical analyses beyond the state-of-the-art in the secondary literature used. The notion of “one”, for example is one of the richest notions in the history of philosophy, and Avicenna's stance towards, and the extent of his awareness of, Neoplatonic accounts of “the

² Indeed, later in the book, De Haan states explicitly: “Necessary existence in itself alone is *entirely separate from or stripped of any association with potentiality and possibility*”, 284, my emphasis.

one” is still an open question. The “necessary”, on the other hand, is simply accepted by De Haan along the lines of a “temporal frequency model” (see “permanence of existence” on 260) and there is no attempt to explore whether there is more to Avicenna’s conception nor an awareness about the philosophical limitations a “temporal frequency model” could impose upon Avicenna’s modal ontology. Moreover, De Haan states that “existence ... is convertible with *necessity*, and so all beings that exist are necessary and their existence is necessary”, (262f.) without realising the implications that this view – and the way he put it into words – may have for questions about causal determination, for which the literature on Avicenna is not unanimous. All these would have been apt explorations for a book called “Necessary Existence and the Doctrine of Being”. Instead, De Haan reiterates, among other things, Avicenna’s household statements that “necessary”, “possible”, and “impossible” can only be defined in a circular way and that “necessary” nonetheless enjoys primacy. Other than that, De Haan starts in chapter six and continues in chapter seven to apply features of the necessary existent in itself invariably also to the necessary existent through another. Hence, for him, every existent is necessary, invariant in terms of existence (*ta’akkud al-wuġūd*), and even permanent (*dawām al-wuġūd*; 264, 266); indeed, he writes – without qualification – that “possible existents are necessary” (273) – but there surely are possible existents that are not necessary (yet). Of course, De Haan understood what Avicenna meant, but he appears to be rather careless in his use of terms when he is talking about possible and necessary existents. In fact, one wonders whether he is careless or rather makes an interpretive move here – especially because his remarks about his preferred translation of *ta’akkud al-wuġūd* as “invariance of existence” may indeed suggest such a move.

Chapter seven continues with this and provides a by and large superficial exposition of basic sentences in Avicenna’s work, whose meaning are neither surprising nor demanding to the reader.³ Restating various points from his earlier chapters, De Haan speaks about “Avicenna’s identification of the ‘invariance of existence through another’ and the ‘necessity of existence through another’” (288), even though Avicenna never used the expression “invariance of existence through another” as far as I am aware (and I am sceptical whether he would; and if he does, then this could cast doubt on De Haan’s suggestion to translate *ta’akkud* as “invariance”; cf. 263f.).

The last chapter of the book’s third part – chapter eight – takes on the topic of how existence is predicated of things and, hence, delves into issues of univocal, equivocal, and analogical predication. Rightly noting that there are various diverging interpretations of Avicenna, De Haan once more explicitly states that he wants to abstain from any engagement with these – by now a constant theme of his book – and instead to present his “own interpretation” (295). Arguing that for Avicenna existence is predicated analogically, De Haan collects various passages – especially from Avicenna’s *Categories* and *Metaphysics* – in support of his view. While all of these passages have been discussed in previous literature already, De Haan successfully adds some nice quotations from Avicenna’s *Physics*, which

³ E.g.: “Said otherwise, unlike the *intrinsically* necessary existence in itself, all possible existents are *extrinsically* necessary existence [sic!], insofar as they exist necessarily through another”, 278.

have so far been overlooked by interpreters. Less successful is his attempt to integrate chapter I.4 of Avicenna's *Physics* into his analysis as he overlooks the doxographical character of this chapter, which is borne out by structural comparison with Aristotle's *Physics* as well as the introductory statement of the chapter itself. While this could still be an instance of mere scholarly disagreement between reviewer and author on how this chapter as a whole ought to be read, De Haan – taking the chapter at face value and convinced that it contributes something to our understanding of Avicenna's views on being – actively interpolates a parenthesis into his long quotation which gives a wrong impression and is not justified by the context (307): the “conclusion” Avicenna is talking about in the quotation's sixth paragraph is *not* “that existence *qua* existence is different, for example, from what humanity is *qua* humanity” (as De Haan makes his readers believe) but that Parmenides' and Melissus' “foolish nonsense” is incorrect – and their “foolish nonsense” is the literal meaning of their statement that “being is one and unmovable” to which Avicenna claims to be compelled after his two attempts to interpret their statement failed.

The final part of chapter eight forms an interesting analysis of accidentality and various ways of accidental predication. In particular, De Haan is arguing that if we want to understand how existence is predicated to essence, we should consider it as either a “*per aliud* accident” or a “nonconstitutive accident” (or somehow both; 327). A repeated statement by De Haan is that “existence is inseparable and a concomitant of quiddity.” I find this confusing in light of Avicenna's famous essence-existence-distinction, which precisely establishes that quiddity is different from existence (culminating in the famous line that “in itself, horseness is nothing but horseness”). Most of the time the reader may simply take this as a matter of loose speech on De Haan's part, because clearly what he must be talking about are what Avicenna calls *things*, i.e., existing essences – and yes, existence is a concomitant of existing essences. However towards the end of chapter eight, De Haan really does make the alignment “between being and thing, and so between existence and essence” (327). It is unclear, now, if this is still loose speech or whether it has been a new interpretation all along.

These results pave the way for the two final chapters – nine and ten – which together make up the book's fourth part (339-386). The main question De Haan wants to raise and answer is: “is there any priority among the primary notions themselves?” (342). There is no doubt that these two chapters are the most interesting chapters of the book, esp. the arguments that “one” and “thing” are subordinated to “being” in chapter nine (343-348 and 348-359, respectively), and that “being”, in turn, is subordinated to “necessary” in chapter ten, making the latter the *primus inter pares* of all the primary notions (362-368). This conclusion is finally followed by De Haan's consideration of what has been described as “the primary aim of this study” many pages ago: “to identify and present the central argument of Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt* of his *Kitāb al-Šifā'*” (95, similar statement on 8). Clearly, these pages may form the *heart* of what De Haan meant to present, but they are not literally the *culmination*, as the latter term would imply that there has been a consistent built-up, step by step leading up to the culmination. To be sure, this is probably what De Haan aimed at when he designed the book with eight chapters before the purported culmination. However,

rather than contextualising or preparing the argument of chapters nine and ten, the preceding chapters are verbose and distract from an otherwise stimulating finale.

Before closing, I would like to emphasise two earlier points in a slightly more detailed manner: the first is that, occasionally, De Haan's analysis is a mixture of both error and obfuscation. One example of this is his analysis of the objection raised by Avicenna in *Metaphysics* I.2, §14 (131-139). De Haan quotes this objection from Marmura's translation but fails to mention that he was imposing his own terminology on Marmura's original wording. Either deliberately or by accident, De Haan's rendering of the passage also fails to reproduce the plural of *mawǧūdāt* (which, in my mind, helps a great deal in comprehending Avicenna's objection). For someone who does not strictly follow De Haan's personal preference to reserve "existence" for *wuǧūd* and "being" for *mawǧūd*, the resulting translation is already an obstacle for understanding what used to be a clear objection and a straightforward answer in Avicenna's text. De Haan not only clouds the former through his translation but also the latter through six pages of analysis which mix correct materials (whenever he paraphrases passages from Avicenna's own answer) with De Haan's own ideas about other materials that he deems indispensable for grasping the subtleties of the text. These ideas include a twofold division of principles into "scientific principles" and "causal principles", which De Haan labels an "important equivocation" and imports from Avicenna's *Physics*. Few pages later, this explicitly *twofold* division is suddenly an explicitly *threefold* division into "scientific principles", other "scientific principles" (*à propos* "equivocation"), and "causal principles", so that attentive readers who surely remember that the division was just said to be twofold may now doubt whether they have missed something important. Moreover, readers may continue to wonder when "notional amplifications" are suddenly referred to as "notional constrictions". (Is an amplification not the opposite of a constriction? Later on, De Haan will frequently refer to "notional amplifications *and* constrictions" or even to "notional amplifications *or* constrictions"; my emphasis.) Finally, readers are actively misled when De Haan inserts the word "causal" as the purported fruit of his idea to use the distinction between "scientific principles" and "causal principles" into Avicenna's wording of his very own answer, which is then quoted as the "theoretical enquiry into the {causal} principles is also research (*baḥt*) into the things that occur as accidents to this subject", which not only changes the meaning of Avicenna's own answer but furthermore prepares the bigger confusion entailed in De Haan's analysis: while Avicenna's initial objection was concerned with the science of metaphysics and *its* subject-matter of being *qua* being (the existent in so far as it is existent), De Haan suddenly sees other theoretical disciplines in its purview. The simple question raised by Avicenna's objection in *Metaphysics* I.2, §14 whether "the principles of being" (i.e., "the principles of the existents") are or are not established in metaphysics is now answered by De Haan as if Avicenna wanted to say: *some* are – namely those that are not principles of being but only principles of "caused beings". The main error in De Haan's train of thought, then, is that he is now clearly no longer speaking about the subject-matter of metaphysics – being *qua* being (the existent in so far as it is existent) – but about "being *qua* caused being". Hence, he has effectively left the purview of Avicenna's initial objection and conveys to his readers the impression as if the key claim that "no

science demonstrates its own principles” is only partially true for Avicenna, precisely because of the above-mentioned “important equivocation in the meaning of the term ‘principle’”: as De Haan describes it, a science may surely demonstrate *some* of its own principles. What De Haan fails to observe, however, is that whatever principles a science may demonstrate, they are simply not *its own* principles.

This was just a necessarily brief sketch of a puzzling section of the book, but it is one of those sections where error, idiosyncratic terminology, misunderstanding, misrepresentation, the incomplete development of ideas, and a penchant for decorative expressions cloud the reader’s comprehension. To be sure, I am not claiming that the “important equivocation” of the term “principle” and its division into “scientific principles” and “causal principles” may not be important, nor am I claiming that it could not be used perhaps to elucidate Avicenna’s objection from *Metaphysics* I.2, §14. Instead, what I am trying to convey here in the limited space of a review is that an actually new idea by De Haan – namely, to use that material from the *Physics* and apply it here in the *Metaphysics* – is left insufficiently worked out: De Haan simply *asserts* that this “important equivocation” is relevant, but neither does he demonstrate it nor does he develop his thoughts – and this is one running feature of De Haan’s book: he surely mentions and presents a great and even impressive quantity of materials, but in those crucial moments when some of these materials are finally combined in a potentially new form with the unmistakable aim of producing a new insight, he stops short of processing and refining them.

The second point is that most of what De Haan presents throughout the book has already been known. Among the best researched aspects of Avicenna’s metaphysics is precisely the subject-matter of metaphysics. One reason for why that is so is that it is closely related to the question about the best place for demonstrating the existence of God and the well-known disagreement between Avicenna and Averroes on this – a subject of discussion both after and before Herbert Davidson’s masterpiece on the *Proofs for Eternity, Creation, and the Existence of God* (1987). However, even without a direct relation to the question about the proof for God’s existence, the systematically important question about the structure of metaphysics as a science has long aroused the interest of scholars both after and before Albert Zimmermann’s *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?* (1965). De Haan now reinvestigates both Avicenna’s views on the subject-matter of metaphysics and its relation to Avicenna’s views about the proof for God’s existence. Considerable parts of the table of contents of the resultant monograph correspond to themes pursued, for instance, by Tiana Koutzarova in her book *Das Transzendente bei Ibn Sīnā* (2009), whose subtitle brings out very well the thematic connection between her investigation and De Haan’s: “Zur Metaphysik als Wissenschaft erster Begriffs- und Urteilsprinzipien.” Koutzarova’s book is not mentioned once, not even where both De Haan and Koutzarova address the same questions (such as Avicenna’s objection from *Metaphysics* I.2, §14, mentioned above) and, in fact, it does not show up in De Haan’s otherwise impressively long bibliography (which lists of course Davidson and Zimmermann). Now, Koutzarova’s book received its own critical review by Taneli Kukkonen, who – already in 2013 – passed the following verdict:

Long sections merely repeat information that is found elsewhere or restate interpretations that have become standard in the scholarly literature without adding much that would be of note (or, if they do, they add grace notes or offer translations that seem questionable). As a result, passages that would be of genuine novelty and interest are buried under verbiage.⁴

Reading and reviewing De Haan's monograph eleven fruitful years of Avicenna scholarship after Koutzarova's book (and seven after Kukkonen's review of it), I was reminded of these words again. If De Haan's book was clearer written, less distracting and misleading, one could recommend it to students and beginners who want to get up-to-date on scholarship about the fundamentals of Avicenna's metaphysics and theory of science. As it is, however, it seems to be safer to direct them to the many articles and monographs that clearly formed the basis of De Haan's book and which, apparently, have aged well. On that basis, readers are fully equipped to enjoy the two interesting final chapters nine and ten, and evaluate De Haan's interpretation (without taking a detour through the 336 preceding pages).

All in all, this recent addition to Brills series "Investigating Medieval Philosophy" contains some useful sections and summarises good portions about Avicenna's theory of science and his approach to metaphysics, with occasional sparkles of new insights, but it remains underdeveloped and reads, over many pages, as a polished summary of the author's private notes that he composed for himself in preparation for research and, above all, for then formulating the argument in the two final chapters of the book. It should be noted that there is certainly no serious harm in the way De Haan proceeds, and surely some good books may proceed that way. However, in terms of expectations, such a procedure might limit the number of new insights a book may provide. In that sense, De Haan's book clearly and visibly cannot compete with the density of analysis and depth of insight found in other recent monographs on Avicenna, such as Alpina's *Subject, Definition, Activity: Framing Avicenna's Science of the Soul* (2021), Benevich's *Essentialität und Notwendigkeit: Avicenna und die aristotelische Tradition* (2018), or Kalbarczyk's *Predication and Ontology: Studies and Texts on Avicennian and Post-Avicennian Readings* (2018).

Among minor complaints are the repeated misspellings of Arabic words (especially in the first half of the book): e.g., *išārāt* for the correct *išārāt*, *ma' qāla* for *ma' qūla*, *mabsātatan* for *mabsūṭatan*, *ḥakama* (a verb) for *ḥukm* (a noun, as explicitly indicated by the article *al-*), *tawaṣṣal* for *tawaṣṣul*, *naū'* for *naw'*, *ḍarūrī* for *ḍarūriyya*, *musullamāt* for *musallamāt*, *rabbamā* for *rubbamā*, and *muṭlaqā* for *muṭlaqan*, among others.

A constant confusion pertains to the transliteration of Arabic words that contain the letters *ḡim* and *ḡayn*, concerning which De Haan is apparently uncertain on a graphic basis, for we get *ḡālib* for *ḡālib* or *aḡrād* for *aḡrād* alongside *aṣjar* for *aṣḡar* and even *mujhālītī* for *muḡālītī*, to give only few examples. These are not merely due to alternative transliteration systems but constitute a puzzling mix of available systems in overtly incompatible ways.

⁴ Taneli Kukkonen, "Tiana Koutzarova: *Das Transzendente bei Ibn Sīnā. Zur Metaphysik als Wissenschaft erster Begriffs- und Urteilsprinzipien*", (book review), *Journal of Islamic Studies* 24/2 (2013): 203.

Unless this was due to an unfortunate last minute “search and replace” mishap right before submitting the manuscript to the presses, I cannot imagine how these came about. On the other hand, even *cum grano salis* the transliterations system is inconsistent (using *j* alongside *š*, *ǧ*, *ǧ̃*, etc.; *-ā* alongside *-á*; and ‘ or ’ alongside ‘ or ’), provides an uneven handling of the article’s assimilation to so-called “sun letters”, and uses an incorrect character (*ḥ*) for *h/kh* throughout. These mistakes are as difficult to bear for the Arabist as De Haan’s spelling of *ἐπιστήμη* is for the Classicist (*επιστεμε*, 74).

Finally, De Haan (and/or the editorial team responsible at Brill) might like to revisit their understanding of the use and merit of different dashes and hyphens as punctuation marks in academic prose, and rethink the overload of used brackets: *()*, *[]*, *{}*, and even *«»*.

As a *post scriptum* note: Brill seems to have started to use a paper that will disappoint readers who like to avail themselves of highlighter pens, whose yellow ink is likely to shine or even soak through to the other page. Admittedly, other publishers started to do the same (and even worse), but that does not make it okay. (The worst example in my possession is, in fact, a Brill print-on-demand hardback for 165€.) Books are there to be used; if they can no longer be put to their appropriate use, then why should they be bought for 138€ or \$166, instead of being downloaded (and printed out on *proper* paper)?