

i n t e r p r e t a t i o n

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Fall 1988

Volume 16 Number 1

- 3 Aristide Tessitore Aristotle's Political Presentation of Socrates in the *Nicomachean Ethics*
- 23 Victor Gourevitch Rousseau's Pure State of Nature
- 61 Wilhelm Hennis Tocqueville's Perspective
- 87 Charles Butterworth An Account of Recent Scholarship in Medieval Islamic Philosophy
- 99 *Discussion: "The Closing of the American Mind"*
- 101 William A. Galston Socratic Reason and Lockean Rights
- 111 Harry V. Jaffa Humanizing Certitudes and Impoverishing Doubts
- 139 Roger D. Masters Philosophy, Science, and the Opening of the American Mind
- 145 Will Morrissey How Bloom Did It
- 157 Harry Neumann The Closing of the Philosophic Mind



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\$7.50: by check in U.S. dollars and payable within the
U.S.A. There are three issues of INTERPRETATION
in a volume.

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INTERPRETATION, Queens College, Flushing, N. Y.
11367-0904, U.S.A.

An Account of Recent Scholarship in Medieval Islamic Philosophy

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Al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by F. W. Zimmermann. (The British Academy Classical and Medieval Logic Texts; London: Oxford University Press, 1981. clii + 287 pp.: \$145.00.)

Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Nasr al-Fārābī's Mabādī' Ārā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fādila. A Revised Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary, by Richard Walzer. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985. vii + 569 pp.: \$65.00.)

An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy. By Oliver Leaman. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. xii + 208 pp.: paper, \$12.95.)

Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation. By Barry S. Kogan. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985. xi + 348 pp.: paper, \$16.95.)

Al-Matn al-Rushdī: Madkhal li-Qirā'ah Jadīdah [Averroes' Corpus: Preface to a New Reading]. By Jamāl al-Dīn al-'Alawī. (Casablanca: Editions Toubkal, 1986. 245 pp.: paper, \$12.00.)

The five books to be discussed here comprise two translations, one with an accompanying edition of the Arabic text; one general account of Islamic philosophy; one detailed analysis of a problem central to Averroes' metaphysical teaching; and one examination of the problems attendant upon the heretofore accepted divisions of Averroes' writings, especially his commentaries on Aristotle. In what follows, I will try to explain briefly what each book is about and identify its salient features. Aware that many readers of *Interpretation* will not be totally familiar with the details of scholarship about medieval Islamic philosophy, I will try to place each book within its scholarly context and draw attention to the larger questions that surround it or the particular philosopher to whose work it is addressed.

Abū Nasr Muhammad al-Fārābī (about 870–950) is generally considered to be the most important among the Islamic philosophers. If not the first, that honor going to Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb Ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (d. about 866), Farabi is certainly the one who most captured the imagination of his readers by his subtle investigations of all aspects of philosophy. His acumen was such that he

came to be known within the Arabic tradition as “the second teacher,” the first being Aristotle.

Thanks to Muhsin Mahdi, Farabi’s famous treatises *The Philosophy of Plato*, *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, and *The Attainment of Happiness* are now available in English. Another work, his *Aphorisms of the Statesman*, is available in a fairly reliable English translation; and part of his famous *Political Regime* has been aptly translated by Fauzi Najjar in the Lerner-Mahdi *Sourcebook in Medieval Political Philosophy*.

But few of Farabi’s works on logic have been translated into English. Scholars were therefore desirous of having Zimmermann’s translation of Farabi’s *Commentary* and *Short Treatise* on Aristotle’s *De Interpretatione*, almost desirous enough to overlook the extraordinarily high price of the work, providing it were reliable. Their hopes were in vain. Neither the translation nor the long introduction seeking to explain how Farabi may have gathered the ideas expressed in these works justifies the price. We are told in the introduction that Farabi was anti-Christian, anti-Muslim, and critical of Arabic thought in general. Zimmermann also claims that Farabi was unduly enamored of Greek thought and expression though aware of Greek to only a limited degree, ignorant of Syriac, and without knowledge of the basic features of Arabic grammar and style. To buttress this last point, Zimmermann calls upon what he takes to be his own superior mastery of Arabic to explain, painstakingly, how he would rewrite many of Farabi’s examples (pp. cxxix–cxxxvii). He then goes on to revise Farabi’s text in the translation via emendations, omissions, and additions.

Zimmermann is best at historical accounts, especially at recounting the tradition of Aristotelian commentary. Here, his wide reading and tedious attention to detail bear fruit. His concern with history is so pronounced, however, that he deems a sufficient explanation of an idea to consist in a relation of its genesis and historical context. Moreover, claiming that he intends to “facilitate” the evaluation of philosophical ideas rather than to “anticipate” it (xi:32–34), he limits himself to an indication of the sources known by Farabi that might have prompted Farabi’s observations about Aristotle’s text or to an explanation of how the general historical setting influenced Farabi’s thinking.

Whatever the merit of such a procedure for instructing us about the history of thought prior to Farabi, it all too frequently leads Zimmermann to erroneous conjectures about what Farabi himself thinks. For example, Zimmermann presumes that since Farabi was a Muslim living from the late ninth to middle tenth century he must have considered Islam to be above question and philosophy to be universal religion. Unable to make Farabi’s discussion of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalām*) in Chapter Five of *The Enumeration of the Sciences* mesh with that judgment, Zimmermann seeks a psychological explanation or an otherwise obscure incident to resolve the difficulty (see xliii, n. 2 with cxiv–cxv). Yet attention to Farabi’s larger political teaching or reflection

upon Farabi's conception of the task of philosophy would have allowed Zimmermann to avoid such a pitfall.

By far the weakest part of the volume is the translation. Zimmermann's contempt for Farabi's style and confidence that his own grasp of Arabic style is superior lead him to revise, rather than translate, Farabi's text. He does so as much in the notes to the introduction and to the translation in citing from other texts as in the body of the translation. His revisions take the form of using a number of different English expressions to translate the same Arabic term and, conversely, the same English expression to translate a number of different Arabic terms; omitting inconvenient or difficult terms; and adding to the text by means of words and clauses placed in square brackets.

Plentiful as are Zimmermann's notes, he rarely uses them to explain what prompts these emendations or what might justify the omissions and additions. He even alters simple stylistic devices such as parallel constructions while ignoring more complex constructions, which are nonetheless unique to Farabi's style. When prompted by some unspecified urge, Zimmermann introduces Aristotle's name into the text as though Farabi had cited him. Most often, nothing calls for such an insertion; and the sense of the sentence would have been better expressed by indirect phrasing. Finally, Zimmermann passes over in silence major textual problems that might be resolved by reference to similar passages elsewhere in the text or simply emends them without comment.

Though it hardly compensates for the price, the one uncontested merit of the book is the list of variants and of corrected readings for the Arabic text that Zimmermann appends to his work.

The appearance of Walzer's edition and translation was also a cause for great rejoicing among scholars. Though it was first announced in the early 1970s, its fate had been the subject of much speculation after Walzer's death in 1975. Gerhard Endress explains in a footnote that he and his colleagues—all students of Walzer—did nothing to add to or correct the manuscript completed by Walzer before his death except for attempting to fill in the cross-references left blank in the original, removing mistakes and inconsistencies in the printing, drawing up a bibliography from material cited in the footnotes, and compiling detailed indexes. However commendable such dedication on their part, it did not suffice to overcome many shortcomings.

Walzer holds that the way to understand Farabi is to find the source for his ideas. The introduction and commentary are thus replete with suggestions about what authors or texts might have prompted various thoughts by Farabi. His adherence to this type of explanation is so deeply rooted that when unable to identify a particular author or text, Walzer surmises the existence of an author or text yet unknown to us. Consequently, all the criticisms made of Zimmermann's exegesis apply to Walzer's.

Once again, the price of the volume is exceedingly high. The price seems all

the more unwarranted when the reader notes that the English text is merely a photocopy of a typescript with unadjusted margins and the Arabic text a photocopy of a carelessly copied text written by hand. Moreover, the Arabic text is sometimes so faint as to be nearly illegible.

Walzer's learning was vast, and he was widely known for his careful attention to historical detail. It is apparent, however, that his scholarship did not extend to political questions. He is so unclear about Farabi's basic teaching as to mistranslate the title of the work itself, the proper title being *The Principles of the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City* and not *The Perfect State* nor even—as he suggests in the Introduction, p. 1—"Principles [i.e. essential features] of the Views of the Citizens of the Best State" (brackets in the original). More importantly, when Farabi explains that in addition to the various cities opposing the virtuous city—rendered here by Walzer as "the excellent city"—there are "individuals who are weeds within cities," Walzer translates "individuals who make up the common people in the various cities" (pp. 253–55). The Arabic is without ambiguity (*min afrād al-nās nawābit al-mudun*) and should call to mind similar terminology in the *Political Regime* with an extensive explanation that leaves no room for thinking that "weeds" (*nawābit*) refers to "common people" (see *Kitāb al-Siyāsah al-Madaniyyah*, ed. Najjar [Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1964], p. 87:5–7 or *The Political Regime*, trans. Najjar, in Lerner-Mahdi, *Sourcebook*, pp. 41–42).

As with Zimmermann, then, so with Walzer, we await a better translation and explanation of a very important text by Farabi. In Walzer's case, it is even difficult to be grateful for the edition of the Arabic text. Too many errors have slipped into the text. Some are surely due to carelessness, but others can only be understood as instances of mistaken readings of the Arabic manuscripts.

With Leaman's volume, we reach the nadir of contemporary scholarship on Islamic philosophy. The errors in English, in the transliteration of Arabic, and in the rendering of key philosophical terms, not to mention the grievous infringements against conventional scholarly procedure, are so many that one wonders how this book was ever accepted for publication. Since its appearance the book has been the subject of several attacks, including a lengthy one by myself ("On Scholarship and Scholarly Conventions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 [1986], pp. 725–32).

The volume is divided into two parts of three chapters each, one part concerned primarily with theoretical philosophy and the other with practical. To introduce his readers to Islamic philosophy, Leaman starts from the arguments of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (1058–1111)—best known for his writings on theological questions—about such issues as the creation of the world, the nature of the soul and its immortality, and God's knowledge of particulars. He then explains how philosophers like Farabi, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Sīnā or Avicenna (980–1037), Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd or

Averroes (1126–1198), and Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) discuss these same issues.

Leaman offers no justification for his inclusion of a theologian and a Jewish philosopher in his introduction to Islamic philosophy. The exegesis provides none either, for the basic explanation is in no way enhanced by their presence. Had Leaman proceeded historically, he might have introduced his reader to the dialectical unfolding of Islamic philosophy and thereby justified including Ghazali and Maimonides. That is, he might have begun by identifying the arguments in Farabi and Avicenna that aroused the ire of their coreligionists and then explained how Ghazali took it upon himself to defend the faith by attacking philosophy and especially these two philosophers. In that way, he would have been able to concentrate on the same basic themes and yet place them within their proper intellectual context, all the while showing how a continuous debate was carried on through time. Then Leaman could have introduced Averroes, emphasizing his explicit attempts to refute Ghazali and rehabilitate philosophy or at least to defend its pursuit. At this point, in order to justify the inclusion of Maimonides in what is ostensibly an introduction to Islamic philosophy, Leaman might have made a slight digression to explain how Maimonides takes his own philosophical bearings from the issues set forth in this larger debate and draws extensively on both the Islamic philosophers and theologians.

The part of the book devoted to practical philosophy is no more successful. Leaman begins by considering the question of religious ethics and whether they are deemed to be subjective or objective. In Islamic philosophy, however, the topic of ethics arises in a totally different context. Leaman would have been better advised to begin with Farabi's account of the virtues in *The Attainment of Happiness* or in *The Political Regime* and to explain how moral virtue—that is, ethics—fits into that larger view. He could then have examined how that account is modified by Avicenna, attacked by Ghazali, and eventually rehabilitated by Averroes. Instead, he becomes immersed in a discussion of how ethics is perceived in Islamic jurisprudence and theology. This approach eventually leads him to Maimonides and to religious, but not necessarily philosophical, themes.

Leaman's final chapter, "How to Read Islamic Philosophy," is primarily an attack on those who engage in what he terms an "esoteric" reading of philosophy—namely, Leo Strauss, Ralph Lerner, and myself. For some reason, Leaman does not include that other well-known practitioner of esoteric reading, Muhsin Mahdi, in this coterie. His attack on Lerner consists of drawing an unwarranted inference from a phrase in the introduction to Lerner's translation of Averroes' *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*. Strauss is attacked by means of puerile countersuggestions about how to read Farabi on Plato's *Laws* or explain Maimonides' procedure in *The Guide to the Perplexed*, suggestions that reveal more about Leaman's inadequate grasp of what Strauss is about in each

instance than about any shortcomings in his exegesis. But it is my interpretation of Averroes as set forth in the introduction to my *Averroës' Three Short Commentaries* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977) that receives Leaman's most careful attention.

Since I have responded to his arguments in the review essay mentioned above, I will limit myself here to presenting the basic themes of his critique of the "esoteric" approach. Leaman thinks that reading philosophy is "just a matter of looking at the arguments, picking out interesting points and judging the strength or otherwise of the reasoning process which they contain" (p. 182). Those who prefer "seeking out what is hidden in the text by the author and . . . put forward a dazzling variety of hermeneutic techniques" err, because they assume "that the conflict between religion and philosophy is of *overriding* importance to the construction of Islamic philosophy and all the arguments within that philosophy" (pp. 182 and 186, emphasis in the original). Leaman denies that the conflict was in fact terribly important and points to the many commentaries and expositions on Greek philosophers composed by the Islamic philosophers as proof. Those familiar with these writings will recall, however, that they serve to explicate issues central to the conflict between religion and philosophy. In fact, many of the texts Leaman refers to in the first part of his book are drawn from those very commentaries and expositions.

Kogan's book differs remarkably from Leaman's. It is a well-written, carefully argued, thoroughly researched, and very thoughtful study of Averroes' teaching about causal efficacy. The general exposition is enhanced by the careful attention Kogan pays to traditional and modern scholarship and the judicious use he makes of the Arabic and Latin sources.

The book is primarily concerned with the arguments set forth in the 3rd and 17th Discussions of Averroes' *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*Incoherence of the Incoherence*), that is, his famous reply to Ghazali's attack upon the philosophers in the *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (*Incoherence of the Philosophers*). Kogan focuses upon these two Discussions in order to explain what it means to hold that (a) causes produce effects and (b) we can know they do so. As it is set forth here, the basic position implies that causes (a) act by means of an agent, (b) have only certain kinds of effects, (c) have a necessary connection with their effects, (d) are prior to them, and (e) explain their effects. Ghazali's desire to insist upon the divine character of all causal efficacy leads him to deny the preceding.

Competent and engaging as is Kogan's explanation, it is not without problems. The study opens with a general rhetorical appeal for the significance of the dispute by placing the argument about causal efficacy clearly within its broader context in the history of philosophy. Because he is intent upon following the philosophical argument in Averroes' book, Kogan rejects the basic exegetical task as nonphilosophical. Instead, he concentrates his efforts upon

entering into argument with Ghazali and Averroes. That procedure has the unfortunate consequence of depriving the reader of a coherent account of the texts at issue. Moreover, Kogan's insistence upon plunging immediately into the intricacies of the extraordinarily complicated problem of causal efficacy without placing it in a specific contextual setting prevents the reader from learning why it arises in the first place or how it fits into Ghazali's attack upon the philosophers and Averroes' defense of them.

In the conclusion, Kogan emphasizes how Averroes' response to Ghazali constitutes a critique of Farabi and Avicenna as well as of Ghazali and leads to Averroes' own teaching about causation. It is questionable, however, whether Averroes does use this book to criticize Farabi in the same manner as Avicenna. Though Kogan brings forth texts to support Ghazali's original charges against Farabi, he never pauses to investigate whether those texts reflect Farabi's position. Nor does he show that Averroes is as strong in his censure of Farabi as he is of Avicenna.

Still, given the excellence of the larger analysis, these criticisms are minor. Kogan has conducted a thoughtful and probing investigation of a highly complex problem, and for this he deserves high praise.

Jamāl al-Dīn al-'Alawī is best known for his publications of works by Averroes and Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Yaḥyā Ibn al-Ṣā'igh, otherwise known as Ibn Bājjah or Avempace (d. 1138). In 1983, he brought forth several treatises by Averroes on logic and physics contained in a manuscript from the Escorial Library. This collection, entitled *Maqālāt fī al-Mantiq wa al-'Ilm al-Tabī'ī* (*Treatises on Logic and Physical Science*), was published in Casablanca at Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribiyyah. The same year, two other books by al-'Alawī appeared, both on Ibn Bajjah. One was a detailed bibliography of Ibn Bajjah's works, *Mu'allifāt Ibn Bājjah* (*The Writings of Ibn Bajjah*), the other a presentation of several philosophical treatises by Ibn Bajjah, many of which had never before been published—*Rasā'il Falsafīyyah li-Abī Bakr Ibn Bājjah* (*Philosophical Treatises of Abu Bakr Ibn Bajjah*); both books were published in Casablanca at Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribiyyah and in Beirut at Dār al-Thaqāfah. A year later al-'Alawī brought out a critical edition of Averroes' *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De Caelo* (*Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Samā' wa al-'Ālam*) based on the two extant Arabic manuscripts located in the Oxford Bodleian and the University of Leiden libraries; this volume was published in Fez at the Faculty of Literature of the University of Fez.

While engaged in this extensive publishing activity, al-'Alawī was also working on questions related to the way Averroes and other North African philosophers contemporaneous with him discussed philosophical questions, on their philosophical rhetoric as it were. These reflections have now come to fruition in a truly exciting book that reconsiders the whole corpus of Averroes'

writings, especially his philosophical writings, as these have come down to us in Arabic.¹ In his new book, al-ʿAlawī calls into question the way Averroes' writings about Aristotle have traditionally been divided into Short Commentaries (*Jawāmiʿ*), Middle Commentaries (*Talkhīs*, pl. *Talākhīs*), and Long Commentaries (*Sharḥ*, pl. *Shurūḥ*, or *Tafsīr*, pl. *Tafāsīr*).

It is not that al-ʿAlawī denies the validity of such a division or the nomenclature used to denote it. His point is both more limited and broader: more limited in that he questions whether certain writings really fall into this division and broader in that he wants to enlarge the division to include works like the logical and physical treatises he published in 1983. The latter he considers to be so many instances of Averroes coming back to precise questions first raised in one or another of his commentaries and attempting to resolve doubts that had plagued him in those earlier discussions. This aspect of al-ʿAlawī's argument is flawless. As he shows in the book and as the treatises themselves amply demonstrate, Averroes indeed uses these treatises for such a purpose.

The former point is somewhat more problematic, especially since it has as a corollary that writings now considered to be commentaries on Aristotle must be assigned new designations. According to al-ʿAlawī, only two groups of works fall into this category: the series of treatises on logic now identified as the *Short Commentaries on Aristotle's Logic* and the treatise now identified as the *Short Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*. He would give each of these a new title, namely, *Summaries on Logic* and *Summary on The Soul*. These new titles are meant to indicate in each instance that the work is the summary of a subject, not of a work or a series of works by Aristotle.

Since al-ʿAlawī's suggestions about the title of Averroes' treatises on logic have direct bearing on my *Averroës' Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's "Topics," "Rhetoric," and "Poetics"* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977)—a critical Arabic edition and an English translation of these works, with notes and an introduction—and on my current efforts to edit and translate all of the treatises in this collection, I would like to say something more about his argument. With respect to the logical treatises, al-ʿAlawī adduces three reasons for his proposed revision of the title: (1) that Averroes refers to them by the term "Summary" in another work; (2) that none of the old book lists assigns to them the title "Short Commentaries"; and (3) that they differ from his other Short Commentaries in structure and intent (p. 50; for the details and citations that follow, see pp. 49–57).

In the introduction to the *Three Short Commentaries*, I discussed the problems raised by points 1 and 2 at some length and concluded that they were not decisive (pp. 5–14). My argument there, in brief, was that Averroes' reference

1. The caveat about these works being in Arabic arises from the fact that many of Averroes' writings are extant only in medieval Hebrew or Latin translations, the original Arabic having been lost for a number of reasons.

to these treatises in the opening lines of his *Short Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* was of the nature of an allusion rather than a direct citation and thus not indicative of how he meant to name them. Secondly, the old book lists are notoriously inaccurate and can therefore not be used to determine titles that are questionable.

The third reason adduced by al-'Alawī does, however, raise major questions. These treatises on logic do differ from the other Short Commentaries in structure and intent. They differ in structure in that Averroes does not organize each treatise around a particular Aristotelian text. Instead, the first few treatises introduce the subject of logic in a manner that calls to mind Porphyry's *Isagoge*. In addition, when Averroes does begin to organize his discussion according to what might be considered Aristotelian texts, he speaks at length about Farabi and uses Farabian paradigms to explain the forms of syllogisms. He even goes so far as to invert the traditional Aristotelian order, placing the discussion of sophistry after that of demonstration and before that of dialectic—something tantamount to placing *On Sophistical Refutations* after the *Posterior Analytics* and before the *Topics*. He does something similar in the treatise on the soul in that he divides the work according to his discussions of the various faculties of the soul rather than the three books or chapters into which Aristotle's text is divided.

In the introduction to the treatises on logic, Averroes declares that his purpose "is to abstract from every one of the logical arts the arguments necessary for explaining" the subject matter. As he understands the subject matter, it consists of identifying how a concept is formed and an assent obtained in the logical arts of demonstration, dialectic, sophistry, rhetoric, and poetics. His reason for so limiting the scope of his investigation is that:

it is especially necessary to have this extent of the art in order to study the arts that have already been perfected, in the way most of the arts have been in this time of ours.

He then goes on to observe that:

to speak about the things that comprise and constitute these arguments is either useless for studying the arts that have already been performed or it is useful, but in the direction of what is more excellent rather than what is necessary and to pursue what is more excellent in this time of ours is almost impermissible. (The term "more excellent" here can in both instances also be understood as "superfluous" [*afḍal*].)

For al-'Alawī, it is especially significant that Averroes limits himself to speaking about what is necessary for an understanding of the logical arts in these treatises because he does something very similar in the treatise on the soul. At one point in the latter work, namely, at the end of the section entitled "The Discussion of Taste," he excuses himself for the brevity of the explanation and says:

an exhaustive discussion of these things calls for a much more extended discussion than this, but with respect to these things our discussion is merely according to what is necessary. If God grants longer life and removes this distress, we will speak about these things in a way that is clearer, more distinct, and more exhaustive. Yet what we have written about these things is the extent necessary for human perfection and by which the first of the human ranks can be attained.

Averroes then adds: “For anyone able to grasp it, this much is a great deal in this time of ours.” Taking this statement together with the opening lines of the treatise:

our purpose in this discussion is to establish those arguments of the commentators about the science of the soul that we see as in greatest conformity with what is explained in physical science and most in agreement with Aristotle’s purpose

al-‘Alawī insists that these two works stand apart from the other works by Averroes known as Short Commentaries.

He notes, for example, that Averroes begins the *Short Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics* by declaring:

Our purpose is to turn to the books of Aristotle and abstract from them the scientific arguments, I mean, the most reliable ones, that constitute his doctrine; and we will omit anything in them taken from the doctrines of other ancients besides him.

All of this he cites as evidence that Averroes has a different purpose in the treatises on logic and on the soul than in the treatises he recognizes as Short Commentaries on physical science.

Now I dispute none of these citations. Nor do I deny that Averroes begins each of the treatises on Aristotle’s other writings by making clear his intention to speak about a book rather than a subject matter. Rather, I differ from al-‘Alawī in that I do not attach that much importance to these indications of structural differences and of intention. In the treatise on logic, it is clear that the ultimate goal is to explain Aristotle’s understanding of the various logical arts. Averroes refers to Farabi as much to criticize as to praise and does so in order to clarify particular points of Aristotle’s teaching. The same is true with the treatise on the soul.

Averroes’ silence about commenting upon a particular book or books by Aristotle in these treatises does not appear to me to provide sufficient evidence of a different approach either, for I note that in the treatise known as the *Middle Commentary on De Anima* he says even less about his intention of commenting upon Aristotle’s book. Instead, he speaks at length about the importance of studying the human soul and then begins to discuss Aristotle’s book without further ado. The only indication that he is indeed commenting upon Aristotle’s

De Anima is his use of “he said” (*qāl*) at the beginning of quotations from or paraphrases of Aristotle’s arguments.²

Both the treatise on the soul and those on logic differ from the other Short Commentaries in that Averroes explicitly declares his goal as one of providing what is necessary to understand the subject matter rather than explaining Aristotle’s doctrine. In both instances, the importance of the subject justifies this limitation. That same emphasis on subject matter seems to account for the structural differences noted above. He has no qualms about beginning to explain logic from something like a Porphyrean framework nor about reordering Aristotle’s treatises, for he is intent above all on showing what the art of logic is and on correcting current misunderstandings of Aristotle’s teaching. That same line of reasoning explains his inattention to the traditional tripartite division of Aristotle’s *De Anima* in the treatise of the soul.

For these reasons, then, I differ with al-ʿAlawī about this aspect of Averroes’ writings and continue to maintain that the treatise on the soul is properly entitled a *Short Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima* and the treatises on logic *Short Commentaries on Aristotle’s Logic*.

Nonetheless, despite this disagreement with his interpretation, I consider al-ʿAlawī’s book a major contribution to the study of Averroes. His emphasis on these formal characteristics of the treatises draws our attention to two important minor themes in Averroes’ teaching, namely, his conviction that the arts have already been perfected in his time and his intimation that there is something exceptional about his time. Both themes are present in his *Commentary on Plato’s Republic* as well, but their significance for Averroes’ broader teaching is not yet clear. Perhaps al-ʿAlawī’s conjectures about the date of composition of the different parts of the corpus and the various programs of commentary followed by Averroes at various stages in his life are relevant. However that may be, he clearly provides a solid overview of the Arabic part of the corpus and makes it possible for scholars with knowledge of the Hebrew and Latin parts to investigate whether these confirm or deny his many suggestions about Averroes’ activity as a commentator of Aristotle.

2. This work, incidentally, is extant only in Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts—Arabic written in Hebrew characters—and was not examined by al-ʿAlawī. The treatises on logic are likewise extant only in Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts except for my previously cited edition and translation of three of them. His reference to a phrase from the introduction to these treatises (p. 51, n. 6) mistakenly cites the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale manuscript as a source. At this point, however, that manuscript has a major lacuna.