

Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karim al-Shahristani, *Struggling with the Philosopher: A Refutation of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, trans. and ed. Wilferd Madelung and Toby Mayer.  
London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001. x + 107 + 135 pp.

This book is an edition and translation of the important, but little-known book, *Kitab al-Musara'a*, written by the medieval Islamic scholar al-Shahristani (d. 1153). Shahristani is known primarily for his encyclopedia of religions and Islamic schools of thought (*Kitab al-milal wa'l-nihal*). In *al-Musara'a*, he attempts to refute the views of the classical Muslim philosophers, particularly the metaphysical arguments of Avicenna (Ibn Sina). The tradition of refutations of philosophers by Muslim scholars and responses to them began with al-Ghazzali's (d. 1111) *Tahafut al-Falasifa* and continued with an increasing absorption of philosophical views into theology (kalam) in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Shahristani's *Musara'a* was published in two earlier editions: one by Suhayr Muhammad Mukhtar (Cairo: n.p., 1976), and a more recent one, of which the editors seem unaware, by Muwaffaq Fawzi al-Jabr (Damascus: Dar al-Numayr, 1997). Both earlier editions were based on an incomplete manuscript in the Gotha Library (MS. orient. A 1163, which is mistakenly referred to as A 1103 in the reviewed book) through its microfilm copy can be found at the Library of Academy of Sciences in Baghdad (no. 471). The present edition is based on an additional manuscript from the Kazan Library (MS., no. 1124) and lengthy quotations by Nasir al-Din al-Tusi in his refutation of Shahristani, *Musara'a al-Musara'a* (Ayasofya Library, MS., no. 2358). The Madelung-Mayer edition, in addition to showing the differences between the manuscripts, also corrects the grammar and spelling mistakes of the text when needed. However, it appears that the editors did not annotate the Arabic text to the extent that they did in the English translation. Qur'anic references and quotations from Avicenna are not footnoted in the Arabic text, nor are philosophical and technical terms added to the Arabic indexes. The Arabic portion of the book does not even include a table of contents.

The introductory essay by W. Madelung provides useful information on Shahristani and his book, but it also includes some controversial points and weak arguments that need to be discussed. Madelung rightly emphasizes that Shahristani's responses to Avicenna in *al-Musara'a* were philosophical rather than theological. While noting Shahristani's Shafi'ite/Ash'arite background, his teaching at Nizamiya Madrasa in Baghdad, and his interest in

philosophy, he also draws attention to the claims about the Shi'i/Ismaili influences he experienced. Although none of al-Shahristani's Sunni contemporaries suggested that he joined the Ismailis, and Shahristani openly criticized Hasan al-Sabbah's Nizari/Ismaili movement in his *al-Milal*, Madelung describes him "as Sunni socially and communally, but as Shi'i and Ismaili in some of his core beliefs and religious thought" (p. 4).

Madelung does not, however, distinguish the supposedly Ismaili elements of Shahristani's "key thesis," such as "the absolute transcendence of God above all being and comprehension" (p. 3), and his questioning of Avicenna's division of existence into the necessary and the contingent (p. 11) from similar views in Ash'arite thought. Examining the roots and developments of Islamic intellectual history, one can realize that Ash'arism in the Post-Ghazalian period was more involved in philosophical problems in general and in Avicenna's thought in particular. The relation of kalam with Avicennan philosophy was twofold: Although the theologians criticized Avicenna for some of his views, they were also influenced by his epistemological and ontological contribution to Islamic thought. Therefore, Shahristani's interest in Avicennan metaphysical views, and his being criticized by traditional Sunnis of pursuing philosophy (p. 6) indicate that he shared the position of later Ash'arites (*muta'takhhirun*), such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and Sayf al-Din al-Amidi, who combined kalam with philosophy. As for Shahristani's failure to condemn the Shi'ite and Batinite schools in his book *al-Milal wa'l-nihal*, it may reflect the scholarly objectivity of a historian of religion, rather than implying a secret affiliation with these schools.

Apart from these shortcomings in the Arabic text and the introduction, this edition and translation is a valuable contribution to the studies of pre-modern Islamic philosophical thought.

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*Siyasal Tefsirin Oluşum Süreci*, İsmail Çalışkan.  
Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2003. 358 sayfa.

Bu çalışma, özellikle İslâm tarihinin erken döneminde ortaya çıkan siyasi ve ideolojik ayrılıkların Kur'an'ın yorumundaki etkilerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca bu etkilerin tefsir geleneğinde yazarın "Siyasal Tefsir", "İdeolojik Tefsir" olarak adlandırdığı tarzların oluşumuna neden olduğunu varsaymaktadır. Bu türden yorumlar, şimdiye kadar "mezhebî tefsir" başlığı