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## CONGRÈS

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## Panel 33

## Imagination in (judeo-)arabic Philosophical Literature

Since the first centuries of Islam, philosophers have attempted different ways to define the range of the imaginary faculties both in the process of translating sensible data into knowledge and in translating knowledge into sensible experience. From the philosophical perspective, imagination occupies a liminal status: on the one hand, it is a faculty variously engaged in the different stages of the process of cognition (it can both reflect and create reality); on the other, imagination becomes manifest in prophetic and poetical speech, which are both crucial vehicles of transmission of virtues, habits and differently play a central role in the individual process of self-refinement and intellectual perfection. This bridge function of imagination between epistemology and the political realm is particularly evident in the philosophical discussion on *adab*.

Our panel aims at exploring different moments in the discussions on imagination in relation to theoretical perfection and practical wisdom: (1) the descriptions on the function of imagination and mental faculties in Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia*, *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*, the most important source for 'internal senses' in the Arabic tradition; (2) the early discussions on *wahm* and *ḥayāl* elaborated in the 2nd/9th century medical treatise *Firdaws al-ḥikma* by al-Ṭabarī that exercised great influence on the Arabic medical tradition and arguably on Sa'adyah Gaon (3rd/10th), Ibn Sīnā (4th/11th) and Suhrawardī (5th-6th/13th); (3) later interpretations and employments of the notion of imagination as reported by Andalusian figures like Moshe Ibn 'Ezra (4th-5th/11th-12th century), who in his most theoretical works, the *Kitāb al-Muḥāḍara wa-l-mudhākara* ("The Book of Discussion and Conversation") and the *al-Maqāla bi-l-Ḥadīqa fī-mā nā al-majāz wa-l-ḥaqīqa* ("The Treatise of the Garden on figurative and literal language"), collected several sources, most of them building on al-Fārābī's thought and Neoplatonic syntheses; (4) a later stage of the transmission of al-Fārābī's conception of the connection between generally known things (*al-mashhūrāt*) and the faculty of imagination (*al-wahm*), as shown by a 12th/13th century Hebrew anonymous translation of Fārābī's Short Commentary on Aristotle's *Topica* (*Kitāb al-Jadal*) and which provide a different reading from the Arabic text.

The interpretations of all these authors, Arabic speakers and Arabic/Judeo-Arabic writers or readers reflect theories of imagination as a bridge between the mental and the sensible dimensions which had a great impact on their contemporaries and beyond on late medieval and modern Arabic and Hebrew philosophy.

**Person in charge : Gorgoni Francesca (University of Haifa)**

**Disussant : Lizzini Olga (University of Aix-Marseille)**

### Program

## **Gorgoni Francesca (Université de Haïfa, Israël)**

### *Imagination as inner spiritual and practical power: Moshe Ibn 'Ezra's poetics and philosophy*

In his major works written in Judeo-Arabic, the *Kitāb al-Muḥāḍara wa-l-mudhākara* (The Book of Discussion and Conversation) and the *al-Maqāla bi-l-Ḥadīqa fī-ma' nā al-majāz wa-l-Ḥaqīqa* (The Treatise of the Garden: on figurative and literal language), Moses Ibn 'Ezra describes at length the functioning of imagination within the human soul and the meaning of imaginative statements for individuals in the process of acquisition of practical wisdom and intellectual happiness. In both these two sources Moses Ibn 'Ezra is much engaged in the discussion on the differences between poetry and prophecy and on the connection between the literary background of Scriptures and the art of poetry as a philosophical practice that leads to the internalization of the most perfect forms of science. Combining a great number of sources rooted both into the Aristotelian tradition, Galen's theory of internal sense, and a more neo-platonic vision of the imaginative experience, imagination seems to be seen as a bridge between the embodiment of theoretical wisdom and the realization of practical knowledge.

## **Halper Yehuda (Université de Bar-Ilan, Israël)**

### *Dialectic and Imagination in al-Fārābī: From Arabic to Hebrew in Provence*

At the end of the first chapter of his Short Commentary on Aristotle's *Topica*, *Kitāb al-Jadal*, al-Fārābī notes that everything that is found in dialectic is also found in sophistry. This would appear to subsume all of the dialectics under sophistry, with the qualification that the falsehoods of dialectic are discovered with greater effort than those of sophistry. Yet, this position is at odds with nearly everything else al-Fārābī states in his Commentary: e.g., that dialectic is an introduction to philosophy, that it outlines the subjects of inquiry for science, or that it is useful for things beyond the reach of demonstration (*burhān*). None of these could be true if the basis of dialectic were falsehood. Nor could al-Fārābī refer to true (*bi-l-ḥaqīqa*) dialectic, if it were sophistry. In this paper, I suggest that al-Fārābī's statement subsuming dialectic within sophistry as it appears in the Arabic manuscripts is probably erroneous. An anonymous Hebrew translation, made somewhere in Provence in the 12th or 13th century, provides a different reading of the sentence. While the Arabic said that everything in dialectic is also in sophistry, the Hebrew translation adds that this is so through the imagination (*behistapqut*, which this translator uses to mean «through *wahm*»). That is, according to the Hebrew translation the connection between dialectic and sophistry is that both treat things through imagination. This reading allows for a connection between generally known things (*al-mashhūrāt*) and the faculty of imagination (*al-wahm*), without implying that all arguments based on generally known things are false. It also locates dialectical arguments within a particular faculty of the soul. For these reasons, I shall suggest amending al-Fārābī's text based on its Hebrew translation.

## **Hansberger Rotraud (Universität Ludwig-Maximilian)**

### *Functions of Imagination and the Mental Faculties in Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*

Avicenna's system of internal senses has been described as 'expansion' or 'differentiation' of Aristotle's notion of imagination (D. Black, 'Estimation in Avicenna', *Dialogue* 32, 1993, 219; F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, Westport, 1952, 83). While it may well-conceived in this way in terms of philosophical analysis, the historic development that eventually should lead to Avicenna's famous elaboration of the notion of the perceptual faculties will have been much less straightforward than this view appears to suggest. For the Arabic version of Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia*, *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*, arguably the most important source for 'internal sense' theories not just in Avicenna, is a heavily adapted text, in which a more Galenic view of the mental faculties of imagination, thought and memory is prevalent. In this paper, I want to investigate whether the functions of these three faculties, as well as that of the common sense faculty, are seen as clearly distinct in *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*, or whether (and to what extent) the text conveys a sense that they do, after all, form a unity in so far as their various functions are, at their core, 'imaginative'.

## **Lahmann Almuth (independent researcher, Vienna)**

### *Imagination about 'internal senses' in al-Ṭabarī, Sa'adyah Gaon and Suhrawardī*

The paper traces the conceptions of imaginary faculties concerning the 'internal senses' from al-Ṭabarī's *Firdaws al-ḥikma* (Paradise of Wisdom) over Sa'adayh Gaon's *Kitāb Ṭalab al-ḥikma* (Search of Wisdom), his translation and commentary on Proverbs, touching on Ibn Sīnā's notion in his *al-Shifā'* to Suhrawardī's *Risāla fī hālat al-ṭūfulīya* (On the State of Childhood). Firstly, it will be argued that works from the medical ethical tradition like al-Ṭabarī and al-Ruhāwī's *Adab al-ṭabīb* (Medical Ethics) have been Sa'adyah's sources to develop his notion of "generative senses", critically adopting the notion of "internal senses". Yet, whereas the named physicians locate the internal senses in the brain, Sa'adyah follows Aristotle and locates them in the heart. Thus, the question arises of how the location of the internal senses affects the relation to the imaginary faculties. For, the "estimative" power (*wahm*) by Ibn Sīnā seems to have been applied by Sa'adyah in a similar mode, namely as a pondering or weighing movement or thought between different imagined options within speculative thought. Though, this differs from imaginations related to poetics and moral epistemology, which Sa'adyah both aims at stimulating in his translation of Proverbs (*Amthāl*) and thematizes in his commentary. Conclusively, the paper investigates the changing relations between inner senses and imagination in Sa'adyah's and Suhrawardī's epistemology.