Richard Sorabji, Wolfson College, Oxford and Emeritus, King's College London
Commenting as a philosophical discipline and way of doing philosophy

Towards a Definition of Philosophy in the Arabic-Islamic Tradition. Some remarks.
Olga Lizzini, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

What does it mean for philosophers writing in Arabic to write commentaries on philosophical works? To answer this question I first attempt a definition of this field of research: what is Arabic philosophy? How do we define it? In what sense should we include Islam (from both cultural and religious points of view) in its definition? I then attempt to present some of the key elements related to the definition of Arabic-Islamic philosophy, making an initial but certainly not exhaustive inventory of the issues involved. I then focus on the commentary in the Arabic philosophical tradition, emphasizing the dual aspect of philosophical commentary in Arabic, which is on (Greek) philosophical writings as well as Qur'anic verses. The authors of falsafa had to integrate, identify or simply explain and analyse the religious phenomenon within the limits of their theories.

Zev Harvey, Emeritus, Hebrew University and Columbia University
Rabbi Abraham ibn Daud's Aristotelian-Sufi Reading of Psalm 139

In the opening chapter of his Aristotelian book, The Exalted Faith (1161), written in Toledo in Arabic (al-'Aqīdah al-Rafī'ah), but surviving only in two 14th-century Hebrew translations (Ibn Labi's Ha-Emunah ha-Ramah and Ibn Motot's Ha-Emunah ha-Nissa'ah), the famed philosopher and historian, Rabbi Abraham ibn Daud, expounds Aristotle's ten categories. He defines the categories, making use of Alfarabi's Paraphrase of Aristotle's Categories, Avicenna's Shifā', and Algazali's Maqāsid al-Falāsifa. In the course of his discussion, he criticizes the Neo-Platonic concepts of substance and accident found in Ibn Gabirol's Fons Vitae.

After his explication of the categories, he illustrates them by means of Psalm 139, which begins "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me." Resourcefully, he finds examples of all ten categories in this psalm. David, the Psalmist (v. 1), is substance; his "sitting and rising" (v. 2) is place; his "traits" (v. 2) are quality; his measurements (v.3) are quality; his "ways" (v. 3) are habitus; his whereabouts (vv. 7-10) are place; his mother (v. 13) is relation; God's forming his fetus (v. 15) is action and passion; and the day of his conception (v. 16) is time.

In interpreting the verse, "Even darkness is not too dark for Thee" (v. 12), he speaks of five "grades of lights" (madregot ha-orot = darajāt al-anwār): the lamp, the moon, the sun, the human intellect, and God. His fascinating discussion is based on Sufi insights about the "grades of light," which he apparently found in Algazali's Mishkāt al-Anwār.

In short, this 12th-century Jewish philosopher taught Aristotle's categories with the help of the Hebrew Psalms, and the Hebrew Psalms with the help of the Muslim mystics.

Ratio translationis. **Good reasons why to translate and to comment on the *Corpus dionysiacum*. Marsilio Ficino's interpretation of Dionysius the Areopagite**
Thomas Leinkauf, Westfälischen Wilhelms Universität Münster

From the Greek to Islamic tradition of commenting on the Pythagorean Golden Verses
Anna Izdebska, Warsaw University

Although the date and authorship of the Golden Verses were already uncertain for ancient authors, they had no doubts that its origins are Pythagorean. Almost all the authors who refer to the poem (since the 3rd c. AD onwards), as well as its commentators, hold it in a very high esteem, reckoning it as a classic text for Pythagoreanism or even philosophy in general. It was particularly important for the Neoplatonist milieus of the Late Antiquity. Therefore, apart from numerous mentions of it by various authors, there is a full Commentary to the Golden Verses of Hierocles of Alexandria, but also a section commenting selected verses of it in Iamblichus' Protrepticus.

Not only did the Arabs inherit this attitude towards the Golden Verses from their late antique predecessors, but even gave it a more important role in the whole Neopythagorean corpus of texts. The Arabic translation of the Golden Verses was composed at the very beginnings of the translation movement (probably around the 9th c.) in the circle of the great translator Hunayn ibn Ishāq and is preserved in several versions in many works of Arabic authors. Frequently quoted as the source of knowledge about Pythagoras and his philosophy, at times they even furnish all information on Pythagoreanism included in Arabic histories of Greek philosophy. The popularity of the Golden Verses was probably rooted in the gnomological form of its ethical prescriptions, in its imperative and easy, universal content, especially in its Arabic version This must have been the background for the demand for commentaries on the Golden Verses in Arabic, of which two preserved: one attributed to Proclus and one to Iamblichus. The question of their real authorship is still

under discussion but those two texts, apart from the Greek commentaries of Hierocles and Iamblichus can serve as a source of information about not only the Greek, but also the Islamic tradition of commenting and interpreting this Pythagorean text. Unfortunately, no commentary to the Golden Verses composed by the Arabic philosopher under his own name is preserved, but we know that such commentaries were composed.

In this paper I will look at this entire tradition of reading, quoting, commenting and interpreting the Golden Verses. On hand, I want to identify common elements that remain immutable in different religious-cultural contexts; on the other, I am interested in the evolution of this tradition in its process of transmission from the Greeks to the Arabs. I will try to define what was characteristic for the Islamic approach to the Golden Verses as compared with the earlier Greek approach, and to place this new approach in the context of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement. Thus, I will also touch upon the issue of the broader reception of the Greek philosophy in Islam, in particular the similarities and differences in the way philosophy was done in both traditions, including the way in which the classic Greek texts were commented.

Isaac Arama's "Nightmare" of Philosophical Commentary
James Diamond, University of Waterloo

Unhappy with the trend of reading the Hebrew Scriptures strictly philosophically, most prominently advanced by Moses Maimonides (1138-1204), the Spanish Jewish exegete, Isaac Arama (1420-1494), in his own biblical commentary, Aqedat Yitzhaq, attempted a balance between the foreign Greek body of rational knowledge and the supra-rational revealed knowledge native to Judaism's prophetic tradition. A separate treatise, itself claiming revelatory inspiration, or as its title indicates, "A Difficult

Vision", what I translate as Arama's "nightmare", provides the theoretical apparatus for his mode of biblical exegesis which blends Greek philosophy, rabbinic tradition, and kabbalistic notions in the promotion of a new hybrid biblical commentary. Although Aristotle is treated with great reverence in his biblical sermons, forcing scripture to consistently conform to Greek philosophy distorts its meaning and renders revelation otiose. Judaism demands a combination of both reasoned loyalty and unquestioned obedience to an inscrutable divine will that transcends reason. In doing so philosophy and traditional belief complement each other and respectively compensate each other for what the other lacks thus erasing the binary opposition which the rationalist both sets up and reconciles by harmonizing, rather than supplementing scripture with philosophy.

As the rational commentators that preceded him, a prime strategy is to reinvent biblical figures and their scripturally narrated lives in the mode of their particular ideals. This is acutely so with Abraham, the founding father of Judaism, and so Arama reinvents those reinventions he has been bequeathed, particularly by Maimonides. Interestingly, rather than challenge Maimonides' conception of love of God as solely a function of accumulating knowledge and intellectual perfection, Arama endorses it as necessary but insufficient for religious life and thought. Philosophy, represented by Hagar, paves the way for the Torah, or Sarah, and Hagar's divinely mandated submission to Sarah, is philosophy's capitulation to Torah, thus perfecting, and subverting Maimonides' Abraham, God's supreme lover, as both a lover and "fearer" of God.

Abraham embodies the knowledge of good and evil Adam acquired in another subversion of Maimonides' philosophical transformation of the Eden story. Arama considers the good and evil Maimonides identified as subject matter that is inferior to the universals of philosophical thought, to be the ability to distinguish between what is good and bad in philosophy by the yardstick of traditional notions of God originating in revelation. In other words Adam, and subsequently Abraham, are paradigms of how to read the Bible philosophically using the "good and evil" methodology, or selective philosophical commentary. In a striking completion of that Maimonidean subversion Arama resorts to a rabbinic midrash which has "truth" (emet) thrown to the ground by God to enable the creation of man, subordinating what Maimonides considered the very highest form of knowledge to (truth and falsehood) to ethics. This paper will demonstrate Arama's ideal hybrid philosophical commentary through his own applied hybridic commentary of scriptural narrative resulting in an authentic philosophical theology. Arama's critique of philosophical commentary offers profound insights into the workings and tensions of philosophy as commentary in medieval Judaism.

"Ascent of Nature from the Lower to the Perfect": Synthesis of Biblical and Logical-Philosophical Descriptions of the Order of Natural Beings in the De opificio hominis, 8 by Gregory of Nyssa
Dmitry Biriukov, University of Padova (Italy)

It is showed that for building his hierarchy of beings Gregory of Nyssa followed two strategies: the strategy of dividing genera and species with the entire "existing" as the summit of the hierarchy, and the strategy of taking the uncreated nature to be the summit of the hierarchy. The hierarchy of beings discussed in Gregory of Nyssa's De opificio hominis, 8 is analyzed from the viewpoint of the first strategy. Four conceptual systems may be discerned in Gregory's thought: anthropological, cosmogonical, logical, and natural-philosophical. The evolutionary ascent of natural species towards the increasing vitality from inanimate beings to

human beings in accordance with the order of creation which is described in the Bible, and the related topic of the genera-species hierarchy (of the division of beings) are examined along with the influence of the preceding authors on Gregory concerning his thought on the subject. It is argued against K. Reinhardt, G. Ladner, and a number of other scholars that the influence of Posidonius on the emergence of the topic of hierarchy of beings in Gregory is not sufficiently well-founded. A brief overview of the genera-species divisions elaborated by several philosophers of Antiquity is provided. The general conclusion is that the Tree of Porphyry had a direct impact on the division of beings in Gregory. Besides this, in this respect Gregory of Nyssa seems to manifest the Aristotelian, the Stoic, and particularly Platonic trends. It is suggested that it was the Stoic trend that inspired Gregory of Nyssa to put "the existing" on the top of the genera-species division. Similarities and differences of Porphyry's Tree of beings and the hierarchy of natural beings in Gregory are analyzed. As opposed to the previous studies which only pointed to the closeness of both systems, it is shown that there are some significant differences between their orders of levels. Gregory of Nyssa must have changed the order of hierarchical levels compared to that of Porphyry in order to align the logical and philosophical structure of the division of beings common for his time with the logic of the order of creation, described in the Bible, trying to achieve the synthesis between the Scriptural description of order of natural beings and the order taught in Greek philosophical schools. Finally, a direct influence of the Aristotelian teaching on the topic of ascending order of nature in Gregory is proposed.

Plato's Self-Moving Myth the reception of Plato's *Phaedrus*, and especially the famous myth of the soul (Phaedrus 246-249) from the 1st to 6th centuries CE
Sara Abhel-Rappe, University of Michigan

In this paper I investigate the reception of Plato's Phaedrus, and especially the famous myth of the soul (*Phaedrus* 246-249) from the 1st to 6th centuries CE in terms of this text's migration into exegetical or speculative traditions or even languages far removed from the original site of Plato's dialogue in terms of the theory of textual networking.

Subject Matter

Allusions to the myth of the psychic chariot, the incarnation of the soul after the molting of its wings, and its pre-carnate life in the super celestial world, are ubiquitous in the religious and philosophical texts of the Roman Empire. With it, Apuleius of Madaurus , Philo of Alexandria, Origen of Caesarea, the anonymous authors of the Nag Hammadi library, Numenius and Iamblichus of Syria, the Chaldean Oracles, and the 4th Century hermit, Evagrius Ponticus, fund their cosmological and soteriological speculations.

What work did the Phaedrus perform in the project of self-articulation for these traditions, Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, Pythagorean, and Polytheist, during the first through sixth centuries, CE? The text implies answers to a host of doctrinal and ideological issues, fueling speculations on the status of both mind and body. To what extent is soul a bona fide member of the divine order and to what extent is it a finite creature? The story of the charioteer, originating in the super celestial realm but after a violent cataclysm, crashing in the terrestrial realm and embarking on a series of endless transmigrations, helps these authors to negotiate the problem of how ultimate the separation of the human and the divine proves to be.

Christian and Jewish authors track the Biblical account of the Fall in Genesis via the myth of the charioteer, strangely fusing their exegetical targets.

Sometimes, elements of the myth split off and colonize infra sectarian debates concerning e.g. the shape or existence of an astral body or the extent to which the soul changes its very essence during the process of descent. Some philosophers or religious traditions emphasize the moment of the "crash" itself-suggesting that we are here only by default, as a result of poor travel directions, the psychic equivalent of a malfunctioning gps.

Method

Classicist Daniel Selden has used the term "text network" to describe texts whose very composition facilitates migration into a series of narratives at ever further chronological, linguistic, and geographical remove from their site of origin (e.g. The Alexander Romance). Scholars of other periods have used the term more broadly in an effort to think about the circulation of texts while keeping to Selden's original insight, that text networks "explicitly thematize their own dissemination." I extend this work in a consideration of how a particular myth circulated through texts in a variety of languages in the first through sixth centuries. I shift the location of agency from writers to texts: how might we understand the text itself as an agent of its own migration? Such a question cannot entirely neglect the human writer, but it allows me to resituate relationships among texts by valorizing the work done by the narrative itself, and understand how the spread of Platonism may be explained not just by philosophers' engagement with a useful myth, but how the myth itself may motivate philosophical questions as it circulates among religions.

Goal

I am not only seeking to track the circulation of the Charioteer myth as a self-contained text adapted for various apologetic purposes, but I am also attempting to answer the question of how and why Platonism insinuated itself into so many disparate regions and religions. Beginning in the first century CE Platonism imploded within the religious traditions of the Roman Empire, even as the Academy itself had long since stopped reading Plato's texts! My claim is that an analysis of the text networks through which the myth spreads will tell us something about how the central tenets of traditional Platonism (mind-body dualism, the ideal world, the degrees of reality, the unitary source, immortality of the soul) grew to prominence in late antique intellectual traditions and beyond.

Thomas Aquinas' Commentary on Boethius' De trinitate: advocating for Avicenna in a Boethian Context
Matthew Kostelecky, St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta

The 12th-century Latin west has appropriately been called the aetas Boetiana, since much of the metaphysical work of that century occurred in explicit dialogue with and commentary on Boethius' oeuvre (the 'School of Chartres', with Gilbert of Poitiers as the stand-out thinker, is a good example). As is well known, the Latin 12th-century intellectual climate occurred in the absence of what would come to dominate the subsequent century: Aristotle's physical, ethical, and metaphysical works, accompanied by 'Arabic' commentaries, which are (re)introduced to the Latin west at the turn of the 12th to 13th centuries. As a result, this Boethian oriented landscape shifts with the appearance of these Aristotelian texts. Indeed, the commentaries on Boethius that had been a centerpiece of 12th-century philosophy become vanishingly rare in the 13th century.

A notable exception to this trend to eschew the commentaries on Boethius that had so predominated the previous century is St. Thomas Aquinas, who writes commentaries on two different Boethian texts. These commentaries, on Boethius' De trinitate and De hebdomadibus, are the only known 13th-century commentaries on Boethius' 'theological tractates', and for that reason alone are worthy of study. The text I will be focusing on, Thomas' Commentary on Boethius' De trinitate, is a work of particular importance for understanding Thomas' account of the relationship between metaphysics and revealed theology and of philosophical commentary and original, creative philosophical thought.

I will present a remarkable feature to this remarkable work: that Thomas, though explicitly commenting on Boethius, in fact subtly advocates for a notion of metaphysics that is foreign to Boethius. Though he never disagrees with Boethius outrightly, Thomas turns away from a Boethian approach to metaphysics (as appropriated by Boethius' rather restricted and unattributed use of Aristotle's Metaphysics VI, 1), and advocates instead for an alternate, fundamentally Avicennian, approach to metaphysics. Boethius' approach to metaphysics does not allow for a conception of metaphysics that takes Aristotle's Metaphysics IV as a basic point of departure, whereas Avicenna's reformulation of Aristotle's metaphysics does. Indeed, Avicenna's account of metaphysics has shaped the reception of Aristotelian metaphysics of the Latin 13th century, Thomas included, such that nearly all 13th-century thinkers posit that "being as being", or a cognate of that term, as the 'subject' of metaphysics. Instead of merely being a commentary on Boethius, in which Thomas and Boethius may be seen to agree in all important matters (as some commentators have argued), Thomas is staking new and important ground, and, moreover, in advocating for the Muslim Avicenna's approach to Aristotle's metaphysics over that of the Christian auctoritas of

Boethius, Thomas is able to differentiate metaphysics from revealed theology in novel and influential ways. The ground has simply and fundamentally shifted from the previous approach and, I argue, Boethius' method is no longer satisfactory for Thomas' account of metaphysics and revealed theology. Time permitting, I will conclude with some reflections on how I think Thomas' decisions vis-à-vis an Avicennian approach to Aristotle's metaphysics exemplified in this commentary have reverberations in his own oeuvre and in some influential thinkers subsequent to Thomas.

Origen as interpreter of Plato's *VII Letter*
Chiara Crosignani, University of Pavia

From Origen's perspective a commentary is not really able to explain the true and whole meaning of the sacred writings. The role of revelation is indeed absolutely crucial according to Origen: without revelation there is not real truth and understanding. As Origen clearly explains in his preface to the Commentary on the Psalms (his first commentary) and in his Commentary on the Song of the Songs, Revelation shows itself in a progressive way, on the basis of soul's skill to understand it: the spiritual meaning of the Bible is hidden by the veil of apparent meaning. The soul must gain the understanding of the spiritual level, but it has to do it by degrees: proceeding by degrees also can control the risk of an early and imperfect form of knowledge. In view of this Origen finds it dangerous to write commentaries on the Bible: oral teaching is, in his perspective, more suitable. As observed by Eric Junod, Origen seems to have the same opinion of Plato about this argument. This problematic point of view comes from the main forms of Revelation: the meaning of the Bible depends on the soul's skill to understand it. So, it is dangerous and against

God's will to explain it to other people. That is why, according to Origen, the evangelists didn't want to communicate clearly their message.

In the Contra Celsum, Origen stresses the inability of Celsus to penetrate the truth of Revelation: his knowledge of philosophy cannot help him in this process, because it gives access only to the apparent meaning of the Bible.

There is even a kind of knowledge so dangerous for men that it has never been written: Origen says that John and Paul had a knowledge that only angels may have, and so they wrote nothing about it. The truth about the most relevant and divine mysteries is not contained in the Scripture, because it cannot be written in a human language: even the complete understanding of the Scripture cannot give the complete knowledge.

The Sun as an Image of God? Philo of Alexandria and the Emperor Julian on the Compatibility of Plato and the Bible
Gábor Buzási, ELTE Budapest

Ever since Plato's analogy of the Sun and the Good (Republic VI), philosophers and theologians in the Hellenistic era and late antiquity had a powerful metaphor at their disposal to describe or rather depict the invisible God or Supreme Deity. At the same time, they also had various reasons to be cautious or reluctant in taking advantage of this possibility. For traditional Greco-Roman polytheists, the Sun was too abstract to be a plausible image of the divine, and heliolatry was a relatively foreign, or at least marginal, phenomenon for most of them. Biblical monotheists, for their part, were impeded by an unequivocal Scriptural prohibition to worship the Sun; and declaring the Sun to be the most similar of all visible things to the unseen God could be interpreted as an invitation to make it an object of worship. And yet, there were Jews, Christians and Pagans who, in one way or another, followed Plato in considering the Sun to be the most appropriate visible image of God. In this paper I will examine and compare the reflections of a Jewish and a Pagan author on this dilemma: Philo, the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, and Julian, the pagan Emperor. As a background, I will contrast both of them to the Patristic idea of Christ as the true Sun, the visible manifestation of the hidden Father.

Philo speaks about the Sun and its God-like nature repeatedly and in various contexts. I will give a synthesis of his exegetical efforts by which he tries to demonstrate that this is contrary to the letter of the Torah only, while in a deeper sense Moses in fact encourages the reader to use the Platonic analogy. I will point out how and to what extent this is in line with Philo's general attitude to harmonize the Mosaic Law with Platonic ideas. Julian, the emblematic figure of pagan Neoplatonic solar theology, has an intention diametrically opposed to that of Philo. The anti-Christian emperor intends to convince his audience that the Bible does in fact contradict Plato as well as the best traditions of the Greeks and the Romans. Nevertheless, in his interpretation of Greco-Roman myths and rituals, Julian resorts to exegetical techniques that are strikingly similar to those applied by Philo to Scripture. Moreover, the Apostate sometimes goes as far as to allow that the Bible, not unlike Greek myths, may also have a deeper meaning conforming to Platonism.

In comparing Philo and Julian I am primarily interested in how both authors interpret Plato's analogy of the Sun and, more particularly, how they discover it in traditional, partly authoritative, texts. This will bring us to a more general question, i.e. the opinion of both authors on the relation of Plato and the Biblical tradition.

Ibn Sīnā's View on Pleasure and Happiness
Theodora Zampaki, University of Ioannina, Greece

This paper aims at presenting Ibn Sīnā's view on pleasure and happiness as depicted in his work al-Ishārāt wa'l-Tanbīhāt. In the eighth class of issues in this work, Ibn Sīnā is concerned with showing that happiness or the highest pleasure is a state resulting from goodness. Having defined pleasure, he gives a hierarchy of pleasures, and defines perfection as something whose existence gives actuality to what a thing is supposed to be. Ibn Sīnā focuses on the intellectual pleasure and gives emphasis on the corporal things that prevent soul from attaining intellectual pleasure. This intellectual pleasure is the highest of all and it can be achieved by the one who has become a gnostic ('ārif). It is he who enjoys the true pleasure. When we come to compare Ibn Sīnā's view on human happiness to those in the Greek tradition, upon closer examination we find that he appears to synthesize the Aristotelian and the Plotinian trend.

Remarks on the issue of creation versus the eternity of the world in the correspondence between Ibn Sīnā and al-Bīrūnī
Elias   Giannakis, University of Ioannina, Greece

Among the questions and answers that are included in the correspondence that was exchanged between al-Bīrūnī and Ibn Sīnā, the issue of creation vs. the eternity of the world is also dealt with. This paper looks into the arguments and their sources both of the questions posed by al-Bīrūnī and the answers given by al-Maʿṣūmī on behalf of Ibn Sīnā on the eternity of the world. Besides, there is a reference to John Philoponus' work against Proclus known to both al-Bīrūnī and Ibn Sīnā. Al-Bīrūnī not only drew upon John Philoponus' argumentation but also he appears to side with his views. Ibn Sīnā, though, has argued for the eternity of the world, thus siding with Aristotle and Proclus. There is also a justification for Aristotle's view. Further, al-Maʿṣūmī, in his answer, drew upon the works of his master and gives several arguments for the eternity of the world.

Origen Lost in Translation? The Expulsion of Philosophy in Rufinus' Translation of On First Principles 3.1-3
Louise Loehndorff, University of Michigan

Much ink has been spilt over Origen's stance on Plato. Was he 'for' or 'against' the Platonic world and all that it entails? A better question may be 'What part does Plato play in Origen's philosophy and how does Origen comment on Platonism?'. My investigation of Origen as a commentator will focus on book 3.1-3 of First Principles, which discusses free will and the soul. Because this section is preserved in both the original Greek and Rufinus' Latin translation, these sections can provide a framework for understanding the eclectic nature of Origen's commentary on Plato, as well as provide insight into why this commentary became problematic for later   Christians.
My goal in this investigation is to trace the life and afterlife of a particular philosophical idea— namely, the qualities and experiences of the soul. The soul as 'self-moved mover' travels across seemingly uncrossable boundaries and persists through hundreds of years, from Plato to 4th century Italy. Following its journey reveals two types of conclusions: one, on a more socio-political level, we can see the escalation of conflict between religious doctrine and philosophy. Second, on the level of text and ideas, we discover how a text that has lost its intellectual ties to other texts becomes isolated.

The first step in the soul's journey is that from Greek philosophy to Christian. In Origen's discourse on the soul, both the linguistic markers and thematic content present in these opening sections of Book 3 point to Plato's Phaedrus as the backdrop for Origen's investigation. Origen lays his framework with Plato, as the myth of the charioteer and the character of the self-moved soul in the Phaedrus motivate his own discussion of the soul, but when moving on to dealing with the source of choice and free will in human beings, he changes the register by bringing in language and concepts found in Stoic psychology. Finally, he weaves in Neoplatonic elements of the vehicle of the soul as seen in Iamblichus. The nexus of these three different doctrines is phantasia. The sights the souls see, while interpreted as the vehicle of the soul in Neoplatonism, are also the basis for assent in Stoicism. Origen knits these two doctrines together around his Platonic base, and thus the phantasia, or representation, serves as the linchpin for connecting the three often disparate doctrines. Origen follows the Platonic narrative, but uses different registers -- his own Christianity, Stoicism, and later incarnations of Plato in Neoplatonism – that carry with them different ideas and interpretations. In doing so he creates a unique doctrine and an intriguing re-reading of the Platonic soul. Next, the preservation of both Greek and Latin translations of this particular section of First Principles gives us a unique opportunity to study the journey of a philosophical idea as it goes through the process of translation. Since Rufinus' project took place in a time when the Christian corpus was being solidified, and, perhaps more importantly, standardized, the alterations to Origen's text as rendered by Rufinus can illuminate the particular qualities of the original that later became problematic. What we find is that when Origen was writing, he did not seem to have any problem mixing his Christian devotion and philosophical inclinations. Later, however, these two identities came into conflict, and Origen's philosophical identification with Plato and pagan philosophy had to be muted in order for his text to live on. The after-effects of Rufinus' translation are marked. The Latin text loses much of its original allusion to philosophical discourse. This is partly, of course, due to a natural process of transformation that occurs when one switches languages-- the particular vocabulary often does not hold the same connotations in Latin as it does in Greek. There is also, however, also a concerted effort by the translator to excise connections outside of the Christian corpus. Rufinus' Origen remains a commentary on Christian doctrine, but ceases being a commentary on the philosophical dispute on the soul. The end result is that Rufinus' translation acts as a process which sterilizes the text, seals it off from outside influence, and thereby makes it less vulnerable to external contamination.

Boethius's *mutatio* of Aristotelian categories in theology
Mario Coppola, University of Salerno

In the years between 512 and 520, Boethius combines his activity of Latin translator and commentator of Aristotle's logical works with the composition of five original treatises on theological topics, today collectively known as Opuscula sacra. In my paper I will focus on one of the opuscula, namely the De trinitate, in which Boethius exploits the knowledge and competence he acquired as a Neoplatonic philosopher and commentator of Greek texts in addressing the highest theological dogma of Christianity: how one God can also be a Trinity. Boethius gives a re-interpretation of the tripartition of theoretical philosophy in physics, mathematics and theology – a tripartition established in Aristotle's Metaphysics E – in a Neoplatonic key, and identifies the forma, that is the object of philosophical theology, with the substantia of the Christian God. Moreover, he extends the grid of Aristotle's Categories so as to

encompass the predication on God, also by borrowing suggestions from Augustine's own De trinitate, but applying a much more rigorous logical approach, which allows him to ascribe the Trinity to the category of relation. This attempt at rationalization drives Boethius to postulate an ambiguous theory of the semantic change (mutatio) of the meaning of terms and predicates when employed in reference to the divine. I aim at evaluating if, how, to what extent, and with what limits the philosophical framework provided by Aristotelian categories and technical terminology can supply a significant contribute to an actual comprehension of the formulations of faith, as Boethius claims.

Between Aristotle, Neoplatonism and the Bible: Meister Eckhart's Interpretation of Beatitude in the German Sermon 52 and its Latin Translation
Mikhail Khorkov, Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

The aim of my paper is to examine main forms and strategies of the interpretation of Mt 5,3 in the German vernacular sermon "Beati pauperes spiritu" by Meister Eckhart and its anonymous Latin translation which is preserved in the Ms Koblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, Abt. 701, Nr. 149 (15th century). Two major challenges in the study of the 15th-century reception of Eckhart's German sermons have centered on this Latin translation. Specifically these challenges are to explain 1) the absence in the Latin translation of the term beatitudo (frequently used in the works by Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart) and 2) the use of the term aeterna felicitas as the Latin rendering of the mediaeval German word sælicheit. The latter rendering in particular is typical of the writings of Nicolas of Cusa and is of great importance for his interpretation of Eckhart's thought.

This choice of words is remarkable, especially because the radical interpretation of Averroistic aeterna felicitas as an achievement of man, who has a natural disposition to make himself a being attained perfection in intellectual and moral virtues, was condemned in 1277 in Paris (nn. 157/171, 176/172). In the decades thereafter, this term disappears almost entirely from the theological lexicon, and is only found in the contexts related to the ethics of Aristotle, and also not as aeterna felicitas, but simply as felicitas.

This rendering was transformed in the Late Middle Ages in the period from Meister Eckhart to Nicolas of Cusa together with the corresponding ideas of "spiritual poverty" and "detachment". There is a common place in the literature on Nicolas of Cusa that he was greatly influenced by Meister Eckhart. Not exactly defined what kind of influence it was, Meister Eckhart's thought is often described as "mysticism", "speculative mysticism" or as a "rational mysticism". The works of Meister Eckhart were surely presented in the library of Nicolas of Cusa and obviously read by him for his own philosophical and theological purposes. They would have had an obvious appeal to Nicolas of Cusa in his effort to reconcile the distinctions of finite reality within the absolute unity of God, which he saw as transcending the limits of man's reason. Cusanus draws some of the Neoplatonic elements, namely of Proclus and of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, from Eckhart's philosophy and expands upon them. To compare both thinkers, proponents of this theory of reception come to the conclusion that Cusanus' approach ends up being far more Neoplatonic than anything in Eckhart. But the main paradox is that the sources do not confirm this direct straightness of transformation of a supposed "mediaeval" Neoplatonism of Meister Eckhart to a "Renaissance" Neoplatonism of Nicolas of Cusa.

In his polemical work De ignota litteratura, which was composed against De docta ignorantia, John Wenck of Herrenberg, a professor of theology at the university of Heidelberg, cites three excerpts from three German works of Meister Eckhart: Liber benedictus, German sermons 2 and 6 (numeration according to the critical edition by J. Quint). There is no doubt that John Wenck touched in his polemical treatise the core issue in the late mediaeval debates on the Eckhart heritage and its compatibility to the dogmatically uncontroversial Christian anthropology. His main point is obvious: Had Cusanus not read the German works by Meister Eckhart, he would not have constructed his ideas at all, and without intoxication by Eckhart's introvert and optimistic spiritual anthropology he would not make an attempt to write a treatise like De docta ignorantia.

Comparing the passages from these Eckhart's texts used in the treatise by John Wenck with a Latin version of the German sermon «Intravit Iesus in quoddam castellum» in the Ms. Koblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, Abt. 701, Nr. 149, ff. 10v—13v, I come to conclusion that the main object of the critics in De ignota litteratura was not only Cusanus, but also an attempt to rehabilitate some metaphysical and anthropological teachings of Meister Eckhart in the Latin translations of his German sermons made during the Late Middle Ages. It seems to be very possible that a collection of Latin translations of the vernacular sermons and other works by Meister Eckhart was made and circulated among mystical circles on the Upper and Middle Rhine in 14th and 15th centuries.

THE ALL-OR-NOTHING READING: HOW AVERROES AND AQUINAS AGREED ON ARISTOTLE'S DE ANIMA III.4-5
Stephen Ogden, Yale University

Contemporary commentators on Aristotle's De Anima III.4-5 often dismiss or overlook an important interpretive move made by both Averroes and Aquinas. Many medievalists have also failed to take note of this largely shared core reading between the two commentators. However much the two disagree on the separate substantiality of the intellects in Aristotle's two chapters, the crucial agreement in both their interpretations turns on a persuasive all-or-nothing reading of the joint immateriality of both the material/possible intellect (MPI) and the active intellect (AI).

The core reading of the two medieval philosophers' commentaries stands opposed to three groups of contemporary commentators on DA III.4-5: the modernists, the minimalists, and the materialists. Modernists are those who would choose to ignore medieval commentaries on Aristotle altogether. Minimalists see only two or fewer intellects (or intellectual capacities) in the two chapters. Materialists hold that at least the MPI of DA III.4 is somehow at bottom a material faculty of the human body. I propose that we look to the DA commentaries of Averroes and Aquinas to see what profitable insights we might glean against these groups.

Both Averroes and Aquinas argue that the MPI, described as δυνατός (الامكان, possibilis) in III.4, must be separable, impassible, and unmixed—exactly like the AI (νοῦς $\pi o \iota \eta \tau \iota \kappa ός$, العقل لفعلّا, intellectus agens) in III.5. The fact that Aristotle uses this same language of each intellect urges that each be given the same ontological status. Either both are inherent human faculties or they are both separate celestial substances—this is why I call the reading all-or-nothing. Therefore, any of the many

ancient or modern attempts to attribute only the MPI to human beings or to characterize it as essentially attached to our bodily nature are undermined. This core reading also entails that the description of passible intellect (νοῦς παθητικός, العقل الآلم, intellectus passivus) at the end of III.5 cannot be identified with the MPI, so a third faculty must be introduced. Both Averroes and Aquinas assign this role to the imaginative-cogitative faculty.

In all these points, Averroes and Aquinas agree on the major joints of the two chapters. In fact, I argue that we can safely surmise that Aquinas was following Averroes. Furthermore, this linguistic analysis proves just as strong in the original Greek text as in their translations. I conclude that this shared core reading provides a useful corrective and should revive roughly Averroistic and Thomistic interpretations of Aristotle's theory of intellect.

Commentaries in Early Modern Jewish Philosophy: Mendelssohn and Maimon
Gideon Freudenthal, The Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas, Tel-Aviv University

Philosophizing in the form of commentaries is normally ascribed to late antiquity and the medieval age. However, in traditional Judaism this form of intellectual work survived longer, in traditional Jewish lore it is practiced until today. In early modern philosophy, two important Jewish philosophers, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) and Salomon Maimon (1753-1800), retained this form of work. Mendelssohn authored both commentaries on Scripture (the Pentateuch, Ecclesiastes) and on philosophical classics (his adaptation of Plato's "Phaidon" is a commentary of sorts on Plato, Mendelssohn also penned a commentary on Maimonides' "Logical Terms", his "Sache Gottes" is a commentary on Leibniz, etc. etc.), Maimon published a commentary on Maimonides' "Guide of the Perplexed", his "Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie" is a commentary on Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason", and it can be argued that all his publications are in fact commentaries on some earlier work. Whereas in previous publications I emphasized the inter-cultural productivity of this technique of philosophizing, it is also worth noting its drawbacks. Sacred Scripture puts clear limitations to interpretation and commentary: the text is true and cannot be changed or criticized. This attitude reflects also on the interpretation of "profane" texts. The commentary's implicature is that the text commented on is "classic", that its statements are either true and need only elucidation and elaboration, or, at least, that they are rich and suggestive enough to promise worthwhile fruit from commenting on them. The analogy between "sacred" and "classical" texts is often responsible for a similar, apologetic approach of the commentator. There are many, even contemporary examples of commentaries that "save" their text "no matter what", to the disadvantage of philosophy. Whereas Mendelssohn and Maimon chose (consciously or not) to work in the form of commentaries, and although both were committed to Enlightenment, we see the differences in their world views, religious commitments, philosophies and personal temperament in their different use of the genre of commentary. Mendelssohn is apologetic, Maimon a radical critic.

The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* and Gnostic Readings of Plato
Zeke Mazur, Université Laval (Québec, QC Canada)

It is well known that the anonymous commentary on Plato's Parmenides, which Pierre Hadot famously attributed to Porphyry (the Anonymous Taurinensis, hereafter "ACPP"), contains non–coincidental parallels with two extant Platonizing Sethian Gnostic tractates preserved in Coptic— Allogenes (NHC XI,3) and Zostrianos (NHC VIII,1)— that are homonymous with Gnostic apocalypses said by Porphyry (Vita Plotini 16) to have been carefully read and critiqued in Plotinus' circle. Scholars have typically explained these parallels with recourse to one of two hypotheses. On the one hand, those who have agreed with Hadot's Porphyrian attribution have tended to see the extant Coptic tractates as in some way the result of post–Plotinian redaction to take Plotinian or Porphyrian innovations into account. On the other hand, those who see the ACPP as the product of pre–Plotinian academic Platonism have tended to see the Platonizing Sethians as dependent either upon the commentary itself or some related but lost text of academic Platonist provenance. In either case, the majority of scholars have assumed that the interpretative creativity must have been the product of an academic–philosophical milieu, while the Gnostics are assumed to have been largely derivative. In the course of several previous studies, I have attempted to challenge this assumption by adducing evidence that the Gnostics contemporaneous with Plotinus were reading the Platonic dialogues themselves, that they produced original interpretations that frequently differed from those of academic Platonists, and that— to a considerably greater degree than the latter— they identified and exploited genuine philosophical inconsistencies and explanatory 'gaps' inherent in Plato's thought as stimulus for creative speculation, much as they did with (Jewish and Christian) biblical scripture. I have further suggested ways in which this kind of Gnostic speculation might have been influential upon Plotinus and his successors. It is thus evident that ACPP potentially occupies an extremely interesting position in this debate, since it not only demonstrates precise conceptual parallels with the Platonizing Sethian corpus, but also— as I have argued previously at the ISNS in Atlanta in 2011— it contains many other Gnostic terminological and conceptual resonances. In this paper, therefore, I would like to survey the current state of research into the ACPP, including a recent (not yet published) quantitative study by Harold Tarrant that refutes Hadot's Porphyrian attribution, and to suggest that the ACPP [a] reflects a specifically Gnostic preoccupation with the problem of the genesis of the plurality of ontological strata, and that [b] this interpretation arises from a careful reading of not only the Parmenides itself but also the Timaeus and the Republic, of a sort evident elsewhere in Gnostic literature. In conclusion, I will offer the conjecture the ACPP itself might be the product of a curious intersection of the pre–Plotinian Gnostic and Academic Platonist milieux. If correct, this conjecture would greatly expand our notion of the nature and motivation for Platonist commentary in late antiquity.

Nemesius of Emesa. On a formation of a human body: between ancient philosophy and medicine.
Andrey Darovskikh, SUAI/CEU

In the paper the author is dealing with the problem of human body in sense of philosophical and medical understanding in late antiquity and early Middle Ages particularly with influence of ancient philosophy and

medicine on Christian anthropological thought. On the base of analysis of the 4th chapter of Nemesius of Emesa' treatise On the Nature of Man the author makes an attempt to trace origins of a notion of human body's genesis from forth elements and humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile). Studying the legacy of Aristotle, Hippocrates and Galen gives us the foundation to presuppose the nature, origin and character of clash between pangenetic and epigenetic theories in Nemesius's view on structure of a foetus and constitution of human body. Analyzing the treatise of Nemesius the author shows the birth of first synthesis in attempt to investigate human nature at the intersection of philosophy and natural science with the intention of reconciling them with each other and with Christian theology.

The central aim of the paper is to show that controversy on medical issue of two/or one semens was correlated with Aristotelian idea of dynamism as main point in understanding the way of mixture of fluids and creation of foetus. Such insight into the problem of philosophical anthropology in Byzantium reveals the basis of the physiological and therapeutic systems of antiquity, which paved the way for the foundation of the philosophical aspects of the Christian doctrine of human being, such as embryology, physiology, brain structure, etc. This case study offers a glimpse of science progresses during the transfer from antiquity to «era» of Christianity. Even though the advances in medical technology were comparatively minor, there is a great deal more sophistication in the conception theories of Aristotle and Galen and finally in Nemesius' legacy than was present in the Hippocratic writers. Finally systematic experience of "mixture" between philosophy, theology and medicine in studying of human nature implemented by Nemesius of Emesa facilitated the subsequent intellectual movement in Byzantine field of natural sciences.

Theōría of effable and ineffable in Evagrius Ponticus's exegetical commentaries
Monika Miazga, University of Warsaw

Evagrius Ponticus is known primarily as the author of fascinating ascetic writings (Praktikos, Sententiae ad monachos, De oratione, De octo spiritibus malitiae) on the one hand, and of enigmatic and speculative sentences (Kephalaia gnostica, Gnostikos, Capita cognoscitiva) on the other. However, his key philosophical concepts and principles can be found elsewhere, namely in his extensive exegetical texts (Scholia in Psalmos, in Proverbia, in Genesim, in Iob, in Canticum Canticorum, in Ecclesiasten, in Lucam). In turn, ideas contained in these biblical scholia help with deciphering several of Evagrius's gnomic statements. In addition to that, Evagrius's own texts were commented upon by his disciples and successors, who followed the example of this master of spiritual life and one of the father of the monastic literature. Although Evagrius himself was writing in Greek, some of his writings are preserved only in Oriental versions, mostly in Syriac or Armenian translations. Often we have just commentaries on the translations of Evagrius's own writings – and then it is through these later texts that we can access the work of Evagrius (a good example are Kephalaia gnostica recovered from the commentary of Babai the Great). In the Syriac monastic literature, this process started as early as the fifth century, and thus we can trace back the Evagrian thought almost back to its late antique origins, as well as its unique form in Syrian mysticism and doctrine.

Two short scholia, De Seraphim and De Cherubim, which survived only in Syriac and Armenian manuscripts (6th-9th century), can be used as a great exemplum of this phenomenon, and also as an opportunity to depict Evagrius's fundamental theses on the contemplation (theōría) of

creature and its creator. Due to the condensed character of these compositions, also called the 'most philosophical' among his works, it is possible to find here an exposition of the basic conceptual and metaphysical categories underlying the concept of the contemplation of effable and ineffable. An exegesis of the passage on the Seraphim (Isaiah 6: 2-3) and on the Cherubim (Ezekiel 1: 18; 10: 12) becomes a report of the commentator's contemplative prayer recognising the hidden lógoi, the divine rational principles, by reading the 'books' of scripture and nature. The commentary that is given to a reader in intimate contemplation, is following both the literal and allegorical meanings regarding ascetical practice, physics, and theology. This exegetical method is used to explain biblical texts entirely in terms of spiritual life, based on philosophical definition of Christianity as „teaching (dogma) of our Savior Christ consisting of praktiké, physiké, and theologiké. Thus, it also allows – as the commentary proceeds – to realise the ideal of the spiritual growth: from sense-perception of the world and contemplative knowledge of corporeal and incorporeal beings to the vision of God in apophatic rapture and the glory of the Holy Trinity.

The standard of probability in Plutarch's *De Animae Procreatione*
Máté Veres, Central European University

Plutarch's treatise 'De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo' is not only the earliest extant commentary on a Platonic work, but also a very important piece of evidence for the so-called 'literalist' interpretation of the Timaeus. On this reading, Plato did in fact subscribe to the view that the cosmos as we know it was generated at a certain point in time.
Plutarch's approach to Platonism is saliently exegetical in character. That is, in order to substantiate his interpretation of the Timaeus, Plutarch

goes out of his way not only to analyze the relevant passages of the dialogue, but also to provide us with a set of key texts from other works of Plato that might shed light on his authorial intentions.

At the heart of this approach is the commitment to treat the Platonic corpus at large as the source of a single coherent and compelling philosophical system, a system that has not been completely explicated and elaborated by Plato but can be drawn out from his dialogues, by using the appropriate exegetical methods.

What is most interesting about his exegesis is, however, the standard that he sets for a successful interpretation, namely, the criterion of 'probability' or 'persuasiveness'. This notion derives from the text of the Timaeus itself, but had underwent certain changes in the later Academic tradition, and - or so I will argue - is taken up by Plutarch having this transformed sense in mind. In my paper, I will aim to show, first, that we have reason to believe that Plutarch was aware the philosophical pedigree of his exegetical standard, and, second, that appeals to it in order to prove that rival figures of a broadly conceived Platonic movement fail to provide a satisfactory account of

Plato's views concerning the generation of the world.
The Shadow of Plotinus: Anticipating and Influencing Later Traditions on Evil and Matter
David Morphew, University of Michigan

Plotinus' identification of matter with evil has been a source of great contention, from antiquity to the present. Plotinus' evil is a principle and source (ἀρχή) of specific evils of souls and bodies, broadly speaking. Matter is an indefinite and unstable "shadow upon a shadow." Like a mirror that reflects mere images, matter serves the function of underlying

(ὑποκείμενον) properties exhibited by corporeals, including properties of spacial extension, change over time, and corporeity itself. Yet, matter is like a void over which the soul projects properties.

In order to serve all of these functions, matter-evil holds a distinct and obscure position in Plotinus' universe. Unlike other principles, matter-evil is in no way active, definite, or stable. Matter-evil also fails to meet the conditions of being a substance. Yet, Plotinus insists that it does have some sort of existence as potentially (δυνάμει), but never actually (ἐνεργείᾳ), anything. It becomes an impotent source of distraction for the soul, and negation of any definite qualitative feature of substances capable of corruption.

When we take a survey of what Plotinus has to say about matter-evil, we find that many of his descriptions of it stand in tension with the argument that it is a principle. In the first part of my paper, I will highlight how Plotinus' descriptions of matter-evil as evil help spur on a tradition of evil as privation and parasitic. In this vein, I will look at how many of Plotinus' descriptions of evil are congruent with theories of parasitic evil developed by both Proclus and Augustine. Although Plotinus argues that there is an essential evil that causes other evils, his descriptions of evil as lack (ἐρημία, ἐν ἐλλείψει), privation (στέρησις), negation (μὴ εἶναι), and other (ἕτερον, ἄλλο) point in the direction of evil as parasitic on substances. In at least one passage, Plotinus also suprisingly describes evil as "others" (ἄλλα) rather than "other" (ἄλλο) to show its indefinite nature. This draws close to the view developed by Proclus and Augustine (among others), who see disparate evils arising in substances deprived of being, without a single, definite principle source of evil.

In the second part of my paper, I will discuss Plotinus' matter-evil as matter, looking at his anticipation of immaterial idealism. A. H. Armstrong (1962) points to a curious passage in which Plotinus entertains the notion that matter is unnecessary: all that is needed for corporeal beings is provided by Forms and intelligible qualities. Although Plotinus rejects this view, Gregory of Nyssa argues for a similar position. R. Sorabji (1983, 1988, 2005) finds in Gregory's writings a type of immaterial idealism in which all corporeals consist of bundles of intelligible properties. Although Plotinus does not explicitly argue for such a position, there are seeds of such a theory present in Plotinus' Enneads. Matter-evil is not absolute non-being (παντελῶς μὴ ὄν) for Plotinus, but its unintelligibility draws us close to it. In many passages, Plotinus also paints a picture in which Forms provide all that is necessary for corporeal entities.

Moses Ibn Tibbon on Samuel Ibn Tibbon on Maimonides on Job and the question of Providence
Yoav   Meyrav, Tel Aviv University

Maimonides' discussions of the question of providence in several chapters of the third part of his Guide of the Perplexed have been the subject of a heated debate since the time of writing to the present day. Linked with the question of theodicy in face of the suffering of Job, Maimonides' analysis can be understood anywhere between undermining the possibility of personal providence on the one hand, to advocating supernatural care to the worthy and pious on the other. In Samuel ibn Tibbon's famous Letter on Providence, addressed to Maimonides, the author vividly uncovers the inconsistencies – if not flat out contradictions – in the various discussions in the Guide, and in doing so reveals his own uncompromising dichotomy between the biblical and the philosophical, the faithful and the rational. Samuel ibn Tibbon's own analysis of the problem, presented in convoluted fashion in his Ma'amar Yiqavu Ha-Mayim, pushes the idea of providence to the extreme, depersonalizing

God altogether – perhaps going farther than his master had intended. Less discussed is Moses ibn Tibbon's, Samuel's son, response to his father's radical approach, and this will be the focus of my paper.

After a brief biographical introduction, the proposed paper will consist of two parts. The first part will deal with Maimonides and Samuel ibn Tibbon; and the second part will deal with Moshe ibn Tibbon. For the sake of context, Part 1 opens with a short presentation of Maimonides' much discussed approach to the book of Job and divine providence in the Guide to the Perplexed, along with the hermeneutical problems associated with it. I will then proceed to present Samuel ibn Tibbon's critical questions regarding some of Maimonides' remarks on this issue in his Letter to Maimonides on Providence, and his own views on Providence and Job in his Ma'amar Yiqavu Ha-Mayim, in light of recent scholarship. Part 2 will focus on Moses in Tibbon critique of his father in his notes on the Letter on Providence, as well as his own view on Job in his Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ma'amar Ha-Taninim, which reintroduces an autonomous prophetic realm that Samuel seems to have done away with. A question that will be discussed is whether Moses' renewed understanding of the prophetic realms is in tension with his overall adherence to a rational philosophical outlook. I will argue that a careful reading of Moses' critical remarks on his father's views on providence and on the understanding of the book of Job exhibits a relaxed approach to the Guide to the Perplexed which has a toning down effect on the problems his father had supposedly found in Maimonides' discussions. I will suggest that Moses' reading of Maimonides reflects a pragmatic approach and a literal antithesis to his father's (perhaps overly) non-literal approach, reintroducing much needed modesty to the rational philosopher's self-perception as the exclusive means for truth and salvation.

Farabi and the history of philosophy
Paul Ballanfat, Galatasaray University

Farabi, the well known Muslim philosopher belonging to the period of the rise of philosophy in the Abbaside Empire is most of the time looked at from the point of view of his politics, and when not from the perspective of his elaboration of logic. The views we have of his thinking leads to a kind of separate domains of which we don't find easily what unifies his positions. In the second part of his Kitâb al-huruf, Farabi deals immediately with the question of the unity of philosophy and its position relatively to the essence of human being and its development. His interpretation supposes an attempt to give philosophy a definition that would enclose all the different developments that it has gone through. The striking fact is that he articulates his understanding of philosophy and its necessary unity, that belongs to the unity that is presupposed to be the way thinking finds its ground, with time. Shortly said, « history » – and this would require to loo, carefully at what Farabi would think of a concept of history – is the way philosophy can be thought in its unity and thus finds its fundamental ground. The foundation of philosophy as it is assumed by Farabi requires thus the explication of the historical essence of philosophy. The hypothesis would be that history could be the way Farabi articulates the diversity of the fields through which philosophy is being spread and finally desarticulated.

Commentating and Philosophy in Dante's *Inferno*, Canto xvii
Thomas   Curran, University of King's College (Halifax)

The sin of usury is punished at the midway point in Dante's Inferno; Canto xviii describes the depraved features of the violent in Dante's 7th Circle of Hell. Here the sinners are treated as more grievously venal than misers, heretics, brutal tyrants and blasphemers. The 8th Circle, with its ten ditches, is reserved for the perpetrators of fraud, of which usury is clearly represented as both an antetype and preamble.

Given the ambiguous (and rather insubstantial) Biblical prohibitions against usury (e.g., "…and lend, hoping for nothing again" Luke 6:35), the effect of this forceful, even violent, condemnation of usurers puts the tradition of the "commentators" into rather fierce opposition with early modern European financial institutions — not least the distinguished banking houses of Dante's own Florence.

The enormous influence and extensive authority of this prohibition against usury — obviously now more or less completely historical in two branches of the Abrahamic "interpreters" — can only be appreciated when the prohibition is elucidated by way of the profound underlying philosophical tradition. In his Politics, Aristotle provides the authority for this wholly negative assessment of the breeding of coins from coins: "of all modes of getting wealth this is the most unnatural". Dante's schematic for this fraudulent accumulation of wealth follows precisely the censure that the "commentators" discover in Aristotle.

 Money, according to the (Aristotelian) interpretative tradition is "sterile"; in Medieval economic history — I rely on the analysis provided by Lawrin Armstrong — coinage is always understood as a "fungible", which is to say one coin can be replaced by another coin of equal number, measure and weight, without profit or loss. Usury, as St Thomas Aquinas explains, insists on treating money as a commodity, and, in effect, "selling it for more than its real worth"; thus the usurer initiates a systematic mechanism for his illicit and ill-gotten gains. Thomas's Summa understands the lending of money as a transfer of ownership, so that it would be impossible to ask for more in some future return. This forceful, sustained prohibition against usury, among "the interpreters", can only be understood when the fragmentary sacred texts are brought into alignment with the philosophical tradition which gives them both substance and clarification. How apart from the philosophical tradition (as affirmed in The Divine Comedy) could the "commentators" ever come to the conclusion that usury is "completely unnatural and wicked", so that "there is no evil greater than usury"?

Rethinking on Alfarabi Conception of Epitomizing Philosophical Text
Mostafa Younesie, Tarbiat Modares University (Iran)

As the history of scholarship demonstrates more or less thinkers and thoughts are in different kinds of interrelations with each other. More specifically, in order to have an understanding of a specific text and thinker such as Laws and Plato it is an academic necessity to have a literature review and in this regard Alfarabi as the founder of Islamic political philosophy who has the only available and extant pre-modern summary of Laws gains prominence and priority. With regard to these points here the below titles will be explored and examined:
- The nature of Alfarabi reception of Laws?
- Why epitomizing Plato's Laws is necessary for Alfarabi?
- How Alfarabi does it?

With regard to the long and detailed background of Islamic jurisprudence, at first we will explore the nature of his reception of Laws. When we expounded the characteristics of his reception then we will suggest the reasons for epitomizing it. We see that for different reasons and ways he does his epitomizing. Consequently, it will be suggested that for Farabi philosophy and philosophical text is not something external for mere reading but it is something "familiar" that we as "concrete human beings" should "engage with" it.

The Search for Reason through Commentary
Antonio Vargas, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

It is often believed that the most that the study of past philosophies can contribute to philosophical debate is to make the opinions of previous philosophers accessible to us, opinion that are frequently of limited value to contemporary inquirers since their formulators either did not have access to information now available and/or were not confronted by the world and society with the same problems as we now are. I want to consider an ancient understanding of philosophy that calls into question this point of view. The assimilation of the soul to divine nous or Reason is often held to be the elevated cognitive goal of philosophical inquiry in both Aristotelian and Platonist traditions. Different philosophers will describe this contemplative aim differently and some will hold that beyond the fulfillment of contemplation there is yet a further goal, such as union with the One, but nonetheless the view can be formulated in a general enough manner to discuss it in a form which is not the commentary of a particular philosopher. This is important, for it would be circular to attempt to show that commentary can make a philosophical contribution through commentary itself. The view can be distinguished from a more general view that philosophy has as its goal a philosophical way of life, as here that way of life is specified as according to nous and thus, rational and informed by demonstration. This noetic view seems rife with implications for the significance of commentary in philosophical investigation. In particular, it seems that if a philosopher does not seek ultimately to grasp an object outside of him, but to assume the noetic point of view, then it would seem that the fact that the interpretation of another philosopher can do no more than offer another point of view on a subject is not a weakness, but a strength of commentary, especially if this philosopher is held to have successfully assimilated his soul to nous or to have achieved union with principles even higher than nous. Learning such an author's meaning and seeing things through his eyes could be in itself a true step in the direction of philosophy's goal: understanding the philosopher might just be starting to see things in the right way, or perhaps even, coming to an understanding of the things themselves. Furthermore, the communities and traditions constituted by interpretation may themselves be an integral part of the work of philosophy, insofar as an assimilation to nous involves an overcoming the partiality of human viewpoints and properly speaking only a (limitless) community of souls could be said to be like nous, never an individual soul on its own. If furthermore Reason is understood to be a person or individual, then philosophy as well as commentary will include not only a theoretical element of assimilation of one's reason, but also a charitable element of assimilation of the will. According to this maximal position, the goal of philosophy would be to constitute such an in principle unbounded community of minds and hearts, all united in and through a shared contemplative activity; under such a description it would appear that commentary is essential to the success of philosophy.

The Renewal of Aristotle's Theory of Motion in Maximus the Confessor's Commentaries
Sotiris   Mitralexis, Freie Universität Berlin

St. Maximus the Confessor's (580-662) voluminous work mainly consists of commentaries and answers on scripture, the legacy of the Church Fathers and various doctrinal differences among his contemporaries; his philosophy and theology is not usually developed in the context of specialized treatises, but rather in the context of commentaries and responses. A substantial and important part of Maximus' ontology and cosmology as it is expounded in these works is his theory of motion, which is not a mere appropriation of Aristotle's theory of motion, but rather a renewal thereof. For Maximus, the overall motion of existence constitutes a relationship between creation and the uncreated Creator, a relationship and motion that can either be actualized "according to nature" (affirming this relationship) or "contrary to nature" (rejecting of this relationship). The very act of creation's creation is defined as God's creative motion, who is neither motionless nor in motion, but beyond both of these categories pertaining to createdness. In developing a distinct and unique theory of motion defined by the interrelation of createdness and the uncreated on a markedly Aristotelian background, Maximus the Confessor is renewing Aristotle's philosophy in the context of his ecclesial testimony.

Philosophy in the Age of Commentary: Plotinus and Aristotle on Time, Timelessness and the Soul
Marie-Lise Zovko, Institute of Philosophy (Zagreb)

"The reversal of thought and language": Damascius and the limits of ancient commentary

David D. Butorac, Fatih University

My paper will investigate the role that commenting on the *Parmenides* played in the development of late Neoplatonic thought, particularly in the move from Proclus to Damascius. What I will argue is that Proclus is a key transitional figure, in so far as he sees the *structure* of the Parmenidean hypotheses to be adapted to the particular soul, which is, following Iamblichus, descended. While also placing the divine soul within the second hypothesis, Damascius develops a more profound sense of the 'human one' in his interpretation of the third hypothesis. But it is precisely this focus on the human soul, not so much as dianoetic, but as composed of contraries that allows him to articulate his system as he does. What he discovers, through commentating, is how division itself, in any reality, is ultimately not true and thus through this self knowledge can 'know' the Ineffable One.