CULTURAL ACCOMMODATION AND THE IDEA OF TRANSLATION

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INTRODUCTION

In a previous paper,[1] I tried to establish whether there was an identifiable and consistent body of theories or ideas about translation to be found in the writings of producers and recipients of Arabic translations. My verdict was largely negative: while a number of translators, chiefly Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, left us a body of scattered remarks about specific translation problems and their attitudes to their work, the material was insufficient to identify full-fledged "theories of translation." Also, the arguments of contemporary scholars who disputed the possibility and value of translations and the philosophical and scientific knowledge they transmitted, while occasionally brilliant, only touched on specific aspects of the task of translation without developing a coherent theory of language or translation to support their criticism. Rather, what emerges from these sources is a series of criteria of translation, i.e. ideas about the nature of the translator's task and the characteristics of a successful translation (as opposed to a suboptimal or failed one).

The findings of this paper suggested that we need to take these criteria of translation, particular those of the translators themselves, into account when assessing their work and tracing the influence of particular translations on the

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[1] U. Vagelpohl, "The ʿAbbasid Translation Movement in Context. Contemporary Voices on Translation," in: *ʿAbbasid Studies II. Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies. Leuven, 28 June-1 July, 2004* (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 177), ed. J. Nawas, Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming, pp. 245-267.

Arabic philosophical and scientific traditions. Translations need to be measured against criteria applied by contemporary observers as far as they can be recovered through their own writings or are implicit in the characteristics of translations themselves. Since they often differ from our understanding of the task of translation, value judgments about the quality of Greek-Arabic translations inherent in categories such as 'literal' versus 'free' or diagnoses of 'mistranslations' according to modern translation standards are unhelpful.[2]

I want to extend this discussion by asking the following question: what happens when a translator encounters a term, a phrase or an idea that he, for various reasons, is unable to translate? The answer to this question touches on a number of extremely important theoretical issues in translation studies and, like the question of an overarching concept of translation described above, helps us understand individual translations and the impact texts and ideas had on the development of Arabic science and philosophy.

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[2] On this point, cf. also R. Evans, "Translating Past Cultures?," in: *The Medieval Translator 4*, ed. R. Ellis and R. Evans, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994, pp. 20-45 (pp. 25-27). P. St-Pierre maintains that translation consists of a relation between three elements: a source, a translation and a set of translation criteria. Hence, translation is by necessity historical: "the criteria used by translators to produce their translations are ... at once a limited and fairly stable set as well as contextually and historically defined": P. St-Pierre, "The Historical Nature of Translation," in: *Translation Theory in Scandinavia*, ed. P. Chaffey et al., Oslo: University of Oslo Press, 1990, pp. 254-263 (p. 255).

Each translator was faced with a set of challenges determined (among others) by his training, background knowledge and experience and the character and quality of his source text(s).[3] In spite of the highly specific nature of each such 'translation situation,' there are a number of typical problems that arose again and again. They raise the question of what I would like to term 'translatability':[4]

1. the translator does not understand a term, phrase or idea;
2. the translator understands but feels constrained by political and/or religious sensibilities;
3. the translator understands but there is no target-language equivalent to convey a notion to his audience.

Even the most competent Greek-(Syriac)-Arabic translator was never entirely immune to the first kind of problem. Any number of factors could get in the way of a full understanding of a source text, ranging from a translator's qualifications and simple slips of the pen to problems outside his control such as deficient manuscripts. In addition, the transmission history of a translation sometimes

[3] E.g. the complexity of the subject matter or an author's language but also material factors such as the condition of manuscripts.

[4] Understood literally as the ability or potential to be translated. The 'translatability' issues treated here are separate from other problems that are frequently discussed under the same label, e.g. the often intimate relationship between the form and contents of a text. Cf. e.g. H.-J. Störig, *Das Problem des Übersetzens* (*Wege der Forschung*, 3), Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973[2], p. xxi-xxii.

complicated matters through scribal mistakes, glosses that were absorbed into a text or the interventions of well-meaning scribes and readers. Generally, such problems have little explanatory value for the mechanism of translation itself, i.e. the series of decisions through which a translator transitions from source to target text. Also, until we have a better grasp of the history of the Greek-Arabic translation movement and the influence of its transmitters and audiences on a text in the course of its transmission, the distinction between problems caused by translation and those arising in the course of the transmission process will remain problematic.

It is the remaining translation problems which interest me. They illustrate general phenomena of translation and reception history and the interaction between texts and their audience and illustrate the serious methodological challenges facing translators. The last item in particular, the lack of a target-language or even target-culture equivalent, affects a wide a variety of texts but has often been relegated (without further explanation) to the large and amorphous category of 'mistranslations.' Below, I would like to present a set of examples for this important phenomenon and try to describe it in terms of wider issues affecting translation into any language.

The translation and reception history of philosophical texts in Arabic pose an equally, if not more interesting question that is directly related to the problem described above: what does 'translatability' mean for the reception of a text, i.e. what happens once problematic translations become part of literary traditions, are read and commented on? In addition to an analysis of a translated text, I will attempt to trace examples for such 'problematic' translations and determine their influence on the subsequent philosophical tradition.

The examples discussed below are drawn from two sources: the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Ibn Rushd's (d. 595/1198) so-called "Middle Commentary,"[5] the last in a long line of Arabic commentaries on the *Rhetoric*. Ibn Rushd's understanding of the text is informed by the philological and philosophical efforts of generations of scholars, most prominently al-Fārābī (d. 339/950)[6] and Ibn Sīnā (d. 429/1037).[7] At the same time, he attempts to strip the *Rhetoric* of some of the

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[5] Thanks to its subject matter and its long transmission and commentary history, the Arabic *Rhetoric* contains a wealth of material with which to illustrate translation problems and their influence on the reception of a text. Also, since it belongs to an earlier stratum of the Greek-Arabic translation movement, it functions as something of a 'translation laboratory' in which the translator tested a range of solutions to what he himself clearly perceived as substantial problems.

[6] E.g. his *Kitāb al-Khaṭāba* (Book of Rhetoric) and the Latin remains of a long commentary known as *Didascalia in Rhetoricam Aristotilis ex Alpharabii glosa*, both edited by J. Langhade and M. Grignaschi, *Al-Fārābī. Deux ouvrages inédits sur la Rhétorique* (*Recherches publiées sous la direction de l'Institut des lettres orientales de Beyrouth, première série: Pensée Arabe et Musulmane*, 48), Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1971.

[7] Especially the relevant parts of his *al-Ḥikma al-ʿarūḍiyya* (Philosophy for al-ʿArūḍī; the two key chapters were edited by Muḥammad Salīm Sālim: Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ aw al-ḥikma al-ʿarūḍiyya fī maʿānī Kitāb Rīṭūrīqā*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1945 and D. Remondon, *al-Akhlāq wa-l-Infiʿālāt al-Nafsānīya*, in: *Mémorial Avicenne*, 4, Cairo: Publications de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1954, pp. 19-29) and his monumental *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ* (The Cure; the book on

philosophical accretions of previous centuries and recover what he regarded as the authentic thought of Aristotle. His commentary gives us a panoramic view of the preceding commentary tradition and also a good idea as to how one (albeit particularly qualified) reader understood the translation, because this is what he comments on: not the elusive Aristotelian 'original,' to which he did not have access, but the Arabic *Rhetoric*, the *Rhetoric* passed through the filter of translation. Often enough, the two are not the same.

The Islamic philosophical tradition operated with several different types of commentaries, many of them derived from the commentary practices of late antique Hellenism.[8] They ranged from succinct abridgements to voluminous

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rhetoric was edited by Muḥammad Salīm Sālim: Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ. La Logique. 8. Rhétorique* [*al-Khaṭāba*], Cairo: Imprimerie Nationale, 1954).

[8] The genealogy and sometimes complicated relations between commentary practices of Islamic philosophers are explained in detail in D. Gutas, "Aspects of Literary Form and Genre in Arabic Logical Works," in: *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts: The Syriac, Arabic and Medieval Traditions* (*Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts*), ed. Ch. Burnett, London: Warburg Institute, 1993, pp. 29-76. For a sketch of the commentary tradition on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, cf. M. Aouad, "La Rhétorique. Tradition syriaque et arabe," in: *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, ed. R. Goulet, I, Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989, pp. 455-472, together with M. Aouad, "La Rhétorique. Tradition syriaque et arabe (compléments)," in the 2003 *Supplément* to the *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, pp. 219-233 and U. Vagelpohl, *Aristotle's* Rhetoric *in the East. The Syriac and Arabic*

lemmatized elaborations of the complete text of the original together with the commentator's often lengthy discussions. Ibn Rushd's works include commentaries of various types which sometimes overlap in character, length and purpose. Of his commentaries on the *Rhetoric*, two are extant: the Middle Commentary or *mukhtaṣar* and the Short Commentary or *jawāmiʿ*. The latter only covers a small part of the text of the *Rhetoric* and focuses on theoretical principles of rhetoric relevant to the wider field of logic. The Middle Commentary, on the other hand, is an extended paraphrase of the Aristotelian text following the sequence of the *Rhetoric* and expanding the text with frequent theoretical discussions and digressions.[9]

In paraphrasing the *Rhetoric* in his Middle Commentary, Ibn Rushd's intention was not simply to gloss the text and facilitate its comprehension; he wanted nothing less than to return to the original intention of Aristotle by concentrating on the sense of the text rather than its wording.[10] In this respect, his

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Translation and Commentary Tradition (*Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies*, 76), Leiden: Brill, 2008, pp. 181-204, esp. 197-200.

[9] M. Aouad, "Manāhij Ibn Rushd fī l-qawl fī l-aqāwīl al-khiṭābiyya wa-talkhīṣ al-khiṭāba," in: *Ibn Rushd faylasūf al-sharq wa-l-gharb*, ed. Miqdād ʿArafa Mansiyya, II, Tunis: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999, pp. 41-55 explains the different methods of commenting and the difference between the particular texts.

[10] Cf. M. Aouad, "Les fondéments de la Rhétorique d'Aristote reconsidérés par Averroès dans l'abrégé de la Rhétorique, ou le développement du concept de 'point de vue immediat'," in: *Peripatetic Rhetoric after Aristotle* (*Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities*, 6), ed. W. Fortenbaugh and D. Mirhady, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994, pp. 261-313 (pp. 263-264).

method was less 'radical' than that applied by his most prominent predecessors, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, who often either worked only on those sections of the *Rhetoric* that suited their purposes or read it through the lens of their own logical and ethical concerns.[11]

In some respects, then, Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary on the *Rhetoric* represents the culmination of the philosophical commentary tradition. As such, it is highly interesting for our purposes: it illustrates particularly well how a widely read and experienced individual dealt with a text as problematic as the Arabic *Rhetoric*, including those issues we have filed under the label 'translatability.'

'TRANSPOSITION': FROM VOICE TO MUSIC AND BACK

Book Three of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* discusses practical aspects of oratory such as the style and arrangement of speeches. In the first chapter, Aristotle introduces some of the important stylistic concepts he elaborates in the first half of the book. Among others, he touches on the subject of *delivery* and describes how an orator's voice helps in influencing an audience. The passage I am interested in lists a number of

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[11] On al-Fārābī and his emphasis on the relevance of rhetoric for the field of logic, cf. Langhade and Grignaschi, *Deux ouvrages inédits*, p. 26. Ibn Sīnā was interested both in the practical use of rhetoric and in its importance for logic; cf. *Averroès (Ibn Rushd), Commentaire moyen à la* Rhétorique *d'Aristote*, ed. M. Aouad, I, Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2002, p. 6.

vocal qualities employed to elicit emotions, e.g. volume or intensity, rhythm and intonation.[12]

The Arabic Rhetoric

Aristotle starts by stressing the role of the voice in delivery. The first vocal characteristic he takes up is volume or intensity: whether the voice of the orator be loud, soft or in between. The corresponding Greek terms are rendered with their nearest Arabic equivalent, i.e. φωνή (voice) as *ṣawt*, qualified by the adjectives μεγάλη (loud), *kubrā*; μικρά (soft/quiet), *ṣughrā*; and μέση (intermediate), *wusṭā*.

Both the Greek and Arabic terms are adjectives with a wide variety of meanings and match well with one slight exception: in the context of voice and vocal qualities, *ʿulyā* would have been a better match than *kubrā*. For the various forms of μέγας occurring throughout the *Rhetoric*, the translator modulates his terminology according to context and picks from a variety of Arabic equivalents such as *ʿaẓīm*, *ḍakhm* and *ṭawīl*. The somewhat unexpected grammatical form of the Arabic adjectives (elative instead of positive; feminine in spite of their linkage with *ṣawt*) remains puzzling. The translator either did not know that the adjectives refer to φωνή or, perhaps more likely, that he consciously chose the gender of the Greek

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[12] The passage is relatively short, it runs from 1403b27-32 (corresponding to volume 1, p. 172, ll. 8-14 in the Arabic translation: M. Lyons, *Aristotle's Ars Rhetorica: The Arabic Version*, Cambridge: Pembroke Arabic Texts, 1982) and forms part of a wider discussion of oratorical *delivery* (ὑπόκρισις), translated as *al-akhdh bi-l-wujūh* (the taking of faces). I have discussed this strange expression in Vagelpohl, *Aristotle's Rhetoric*, pp. 77-83; for my remarks on the passage in question, cf. pp. 84-88.

forms in spite of the fact that *ṣawt* is masculine. The question arises whether the translator understood the meaning intended here or played it safe and picked the most general meaning of the term. We will come back to this idea in a minute.

A gloss in the Arabic manuscript on *al-ṣughrā wa-l-wusṭā* (the quiet and intermediate [sc. voice]) explains that *kull hādhā min asmāʾ al-naghm fī l-mūsīqī*, "all of these are terms for [kinds of] melodies in music." As we will see, this note anticipates the following re-interpretation of the text through the terminology chosen by the translator.

The next clause adds "pitch accent" or τόνος to the vocal qualities an orator should consciously employ to modulate his emotional appeal. The corresponding qualities are ὀξύς, βαρύς and, again, μέσος. The first of these terms means "intense," "high" or, more specifically, "acute accent" or "rising pitch," the second means "deep" or "with a falling pitch" or "grave accent." The third again denotes an intermediate quality between the two or a "circumflex accent." The system of pitch accent referred to in these lines does not correspond to any vocal category in Arabic or Syriac, a major problem for the translator.

Owing to the deterioration of the (unique) Paris manuscript of the Arabic *Rhetoric*, the translation for the key term τόνος is very difficult to read. Lyons suggested *al-hādiyāt*, probably derived from the verb *hadā*, "to drive camels with song."[13] Badawī, a previous editor of the text,[14] and Sālim, who compared the

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[13] Cf. F. Shehadi, *Philosophies of Music in Medieval Islam*, Leiden: Brill, 1995, p. 60. He also makes the somewhat unlikely claim that it may be related to the term *ḥudāʾ*, the humming or singing to camels in the rhythm of the movement of the animals and

manuscript with the lemmata in Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary,[15] proposed *al-hādimāt*, "the destroying," a reading that does not seem to make much sense.

For the three types of pitch accent, the translator chose the translations *al-ḥādda*, *al-thaqīla* and *al-wusṭā*. Although the first two of these terms may have some sort of musical connotation—*al-ḥadd* is the name of the last and highest string of the ʿūd and *al-thaqīl* occurs in the names of some rhythmic modes listed by al-Kindī[16]— the connection to music seems tenuous enough to use the general, non-technical meaning of the words (e.g. "vivacious", "serious" and "intermediate") which make good sense in this context.

The next vocal quality Aristotle introduced is ῥυθμός, the "measure" or "rhythm" of the voice. The translator rendered it with the phrase *al-naghm aw al-nabarāt*. Both terms belong to the field of music. The former means "mode", "voice" or "note," the latter "intonation", "cadence" or "interval." The use of collocations in translation is a well-known translational strategy we frequently encounter in the *Rhetoric* but also in later, more sophisticated translations. It can serve two purposes:

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notes that this genre stands at the very beginning of the history of Arabic music (Shehadi, *Philosophies*, p. 5-6).

[14] *Arisṭūṭālīs: al-Khiṭāba. Al-Tarjama al-ʿarabiyya al-qadīma* (*Dirāsāt Islāmiyya*, 23), ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1959.

[15] *Talkhīṣ al-khaṭāba*, ed. Muḥammad Salīm Sālim, Cairo: al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li-l-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, Lajnat Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1967.

[16] Cf. A. Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam: A Socio-Cultural Study*, Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995, p. 111, 120 and H. Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music to the XIIIth Century*, London: Luzac & Co., 1929, p. 111.

to render a translation more precise by reproducing the semantic scope of a Greek term as fully as possible; or to mask the uncertainty of the translator about the exact meaning of a term by covering as much semantic ground as possible with two related Arabic terms.[17] The case above probably falls into the second category; only one of the terms proposed, *al-nabra*, comes close to the meaning of ῥυθμός. Elsewhere in the Arabic *Rhetoric*, ῥυθμός is translated either with the single term *nabra* (7 times), twice with the collocations *naghma aw nabra* and once with *nabra aw naghma.* Conversely, throughout the text, both of these terms are exclusively used for ῥυθμός.

While *nabra/nabarāt* also includes tonal qualities of the spoken voice, it seems (like *naghma*) more appropriate for describing song and singing voices. This association clearly was in the mind of the glossator of the manuscript when he added the note on *al-ṣughrā wa-l-wusṭā* mentioned above (*kull hādhā min asmāʾ al-naghm fī l-mūsīqā*). The link is less pronounced in a further gloss on *al-shayʾ min al-naghm* which reads: *mithl al-raḥma wa-l-ghaḍab wa-ka-mā yarfaʿu-hu*[18] *yakhfiḍu al-ṣawt wa-bi-ghaḍabi-hi yarfaʿu l-ṣawt wa-mā ashbaha dhālika.*[19] It might indicate that the glossator noticed the ambiguity between vocal qualities in music and spoken discourse introduced by the translator. However, if this was the same person who

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[17] Cf. Vagelpohl, *Aristotle's Rhetoric*, p. 143 with n. 171 and p. 147 with n. 175 (with further references).

[18] Lyons: *bi-raḥma.*

[19] "Such as compassion and anger just as it raises it [according to Lyons' reading: 'in compassion'] the voice is lowered and in anger the voice is raised and what is similar to that."

added the first gloss above, he may have thought that the section continues to discuss singing voices.

Concluding his short digression on the voice and its role in rhetoric, Aristotle again stressed the importance of these three vocal qualities in delivering public speeches in terms which are already familiar: μέγεθος (volume), ἁρμονία ("harmony" or "change of pitch") and ῥυθμός (rhythm). By translating μέγεθος with *al-ʿiẓam* (magnitude/power), the translator reproduced the most general meaning of the term. It has little if any musical connotations but would fit both a vocal and a musical context. The same applies to ἁρμονία, rendered as *al-tawfīq* (adaptation/mediation). The link between ἁρμονία and τόνος (the former denotes well-placed changes in τόνος) seems to be lost. For ῥυθμός, he picked *al-nabra*, one of the components of the expression he had used just two lines earlier for the same Greek term.

This short passage exemplifies a range of strategies to deal with obvious cross-cultural translation issues. The translator identified the vocal and/or musical aspect of the discussion but tried at the same time to hedge his bets by picking terms that are very broad and correspond to the more general meaning of the Greek vocabulary rather than their narrowly musical or vocal connotations. Most likely, the translator did not fully understand the text at this point. He tried to retain as much of its sense as possible by opting for a generic translation covering the more general meanings of the Greek terms. At the same time, he adapted his translation by transposing a (poorly understood) discussion of vocal qualities onto the field of music, if only half-heartedly: many of the Arabic terms suggest that the translator wanted to keep his options as open as possible.

Ibn Rushd

Since Ibn Rushd's procedure involved paraphrase rather than verbatim quotation of lemmata, it is not always easy to establish direct correspondences between particular terms. Also, the discussion of vocal qualities in the Middle Commentary is embedded in an argument about the passions of the soul and their role in rhetoric: the voice becomes one more instrument to arouse emotions and influence an audience. Keeping these limitations in mind, we can identify the following concepts Ibn Rushd picked from our passage and elaborated on: *naghm*, "intonation" and *ḍarb*, "rhythm." The concepts of ἁρμονία and τόνος are either dropped or folded into the more general idea of *naghm*.[20]

Concerning *al-naghm*, Ibn Rushd explains that it operates by "softening" (*raqqaqa*) or "raising" (*ʿaẓẓama*) the voice (*ṣawt*) to evoke emotions such as pity and anger. With some changes in terminology, this paragraph matches the beginning of the translation and reflects the vocal qualities associated with μέγεθος and perhaps also τόνος—instead of ῥυθμός, as in the Arabic *Rhetoric*.[21] Ibn Rushd's comment strongly resembles the marginal gloss in the Paris manuscript referred to above which also links the evocation of emotions such as pity and anger with the raising and lowering of the voice.

"Rhythm" is introduced as another aspect of intonation necessary in speech-making and immediately linked to poetry (in phrases such as *ḍarb min al-wazn* and

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[20] Cf. Aouad, *Commentaire moyen*, II, p. 266 = par. 3.1.7-9.

[21] Aouad, *Commentaire moyen*, II, p. 266 = par. 3.1.7, commenting on Lyons, *Aristotle's Ars Rhetorica*, vol. 1, p. 172, ll. 8-11. This corresponds to 1403b27-29.

awzān ashʿār etc.)[22] Ibn Rushd explains this digression on poetry (which Aristotle does not mention at all) with its relevance in speeches: verses are useful to start or end speeches or to mark pauses.[23]

Ibn Rushd seems to have had a better idea about the subject of this passage than the translator: while he, like the translator, did not (and most likely could not) pick up on the references to the Greek pitch accent system, he understood that the subject is the speaking voice and not music. Also, he correctly identified intonation and cadence or rhythm as the central vocal qualities discussed in this passage. His digression on poetry and its role in speech may have been motivated by his knowledge of Aristotelian poetics and triggered by the appearance of the term *naghm*; the term *wazn* links *ḍarb* and *shiʿr*.

By streamlining the terminology, limiting the discussion to two central terms and inserting his remarks on vocal qualities into a wider discussion of the role and evocation of emotions in public speech, Ibn Rushd sidestepped some of the problems of the translation. Helped by the commentary tradition that had evolved over the preceding centuries, he arrived at an understanding of this passage that was at least in parts closer to the argument made by Aristotle than the more complete but sometimes misleading translation. Keeping in mind that the translation and secondary texts written on the basis of the translation were his only source, he was surprisingly successful in his "return to Aristotle."[24]

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[22] Aouad, *Commentaire moyen*, par. 3.1.8.

[23] Aouad, *Commentaire moyen*, par. 3.1.9.

[24] The "Rückwendung zu Aristoteles," as G. Schoeler, "Averroes' Rückwendung zu Aristoteles. Die 'Kurzen' und die 'Mittleren Kommentare zum Organon'," *Bibliotheca*

GENERALIZATION: GREEK COURTS AND THE 'LEGALIZATION' OF LOGIC

The section of text discussed above is relatively short, consisting of little more than half a dozen lines. It illustrated two mechanisms to overcome a cross-cultural gap, the adaptation of a target language text by either generalization or transposition. The former attempts to preserve as much of a source as possible with target language terms that cover more general aspects of the source language vocabulary, either because the translator barely understood the text or encountered phenomena which had no parallel in the target culture and/or language. The latter transposes an argument into categories a target language audience could comprehend. It requires the translator to understand his source well enough to make an informed decision about the field or categories he wants to transpose it into.

The next example is based on a larger text sample, the first and third chapters of Book One of the *Rhetoric*.[25] In the first chapter, Aristotle outlined the relation between rhetoric and dialectics. He then criticized handbooks of rhetoric written by his predecessors and concluded with a discussion of the usefulness of rhetoric. In the third chapter, Aristotle distinguished between three types of public speeches and their respective subject matter.

Orientalis 37 (1980): 294-301, calls the development in Ibn Rushd's own thought away from an early reliance on al-Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's creative elaboration of Aristotelian ideas and toward a 'purer' Aristotelianism.

[25] Corresponding to 1354a1-1355b25 and 1358a36-1359a29 of the Greek text and p. 1-5 and 16-18 of Lyon's edition of the Arabic translation.

What I am mainly interested in are references to the Greek judicial system.
Since judicial oratory (δικανικόν) is one of the three species of rhetoric described in
the book, Aristotle frequently referred to legal offices and institutions he expected
his readers to be familiar with. In a society largely regulated by Islamic law, the
institutional framework described must have been strange, even incomprehensible,
as were those of the other two types of public speech Aristotle discussed,
συμβουλευτικόν (deliberative/political) and ἐπιδεικτικόν ("demonstrative" speech
assigning praise or blame).[26]

The Rhetoric

With a handful of exceptions, Aristotle's legal terminology in these chapters is
derived from three word groups: firstly, δικάζω/δική, conveying the general notion
of justice and its application; secondly, κρίνω/κρίσις, drawing distinctions and
making decisions, both in a general and a legal sense; and thirdly, νομίζω/νόμος,
acting according to or enforcing customs and laws.

Among the terms from the first group, the verb δικάζω and its derivatives,
particularly the middle participle δικαζόμενος, play a key role. Aristotle used the
verb δικάζω in its strictly legal sense of "judging" or "speaking in a court." The
translator rendered its two occurrences as *waḍaʿa l-ḥukm* and *al-ḥukūma*
(dispensation of justice). This term also occurs in a marginal gloss at the beginning

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[26] Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetorik* (*Aristoteles: Werke in deutscher Übersetzung*, 4), ed. Ch. Rapp, II,
Berlin: Akademie Verlag , pp. 257-258.

of the *Rhetoric* which explains *al-rīṭūrīqā* as *balāgha fī l-ḥukūma*, "eloquence in the dispensation of justice."[27]

The medium participle δικαζόμενος denotes the speaker in front of the court. Instead of *ḥakama* (to judge/decide) and its derivatives, the translation relies on forms of *nāzaʿa* and *tashājara* (to dispute/fight). They reflect the conflictual nature of the situation described by Aristotle but do not carry the strong legal connotations inherent in δικάζω and particularly in δικαζόμενος. In the neuter plural, the adjective δικανικός serves as the technical term for judicial oratory, one of the three oratorical genres around which the practical parts of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* revolve. In the two chapters we are discussing, the translator rendered this central term as *al-tashājur* ([mutual] dispute/argument) or *mushājirī* (disputing), again emphasizing the adversarial nature of the exchange between two parties at the expense of its very specific legal meaning.[28] He also missed the fact that the infinitive τὸ δικολογεῖν, which occurs once in our sample, was little more than a synonym for [τὰ] δικανικά. Unsure about its meaning, he coined the calque *yanṭuqūn bi-l-ʿadl*, "they pronounce justice."

The remaining terms of this group cover the institutional side of the Greek legal system. Δική can mean either the court of law itself or the trial or lawsuit taking place in front of it. In our sample, it was translated with the infinitives of the

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[27] Lyons omits the note; it is mentioned in Aouad, *Commentaire moyen*, III, p. 1. See also his following discussion of the meaning of *ḥukūma* on pp. 1-2.

[28] Elsewhere in the Arabic *Rhetoric*, he also makes use of the terms *khuṣūmī* and *al-khuṣūma*, "dispute" or "argument" or, more specifically, "lawsuit" which reproduce the legal flavor of δικανικός much better.

VI and III forms, *al-tashājur* and *al-mushājara* (dispute/argument), dropping the contextual distinction between legal institution and legal proceeding. The term δικαστής presents an interesting problem the translator may have been aware of: together with the term κριτής discussed below, it means judge—except in Athens, where it was used for members of the jury. Modern translations of the *Rhetoric* reflect this ambiguity, some opting for one meaning, some for the other. The translator largely respected the distinction Aristotle seemed to make; with a single exception, he translates δικαστής with *fāḥiṣ*, "investigator." The root *f-ḥ-ṣ* expresses the notion of inspection and investigation and may be an intelligent attempt to reproduce aspects of the role of the jury in legal proceedings, but it is not a legal term. Its wider scope is illustrated by its use for ἐξετάζειν ... λόγον (to test an opinion) in the first paragraph of chapter 1. This is another example for a translation that captures at least part of the general meaning of the Greek source term but sheds its more narrowly legal focus.

Aristotle's use of the second group of terms, those linked to the verb κρίνω, oscillates between its general (to distinguish/decide) and more specifically legal meaning (to decide [in legal matters] = to judge). The root *ḥ-k-m*, from which the translator took his terminology, covers both aspects. His translation for the verb κρίνω is *ḥakama* (to judge/decide), for the noun κρίσις *ḥukm* (ruling/decision) and for both the participle κρίνων and the noun κριτής the corresponding active participle *ḥākim* (ruler/judge). In the Greek and the Arabic, the context allows us to distinguish between the concrete legal meaning of κρίσις and κριτής and its general, metaphorical use for various forms of decision-making, including the "judgments" of political advisers and lawmakers concerning future events.

The vocabulary of the third group, mainly represented by νόμος and νομοθέτης, is remarkably uniform in both languages. Aristotle spoke of the "law" as the basis for judicial decisions and introduced the "lawmaker" as the person who judges on the merits of "deliberative" speeches and also creates the legal framework for judicial decisions. The translator's choice of terms has an Islamic ring to it: the former is translated as *al-sunna* (norm/precedent) or the plural *al-sunan*, the latter with the related calque *wāḍiʿ al-sunna* ("one who establishes the norm", i.e. a "lawgiver"?).[29] In the same vein, he translated the isolated instances of the infinitive νομοθετεῖν and the noun νομοθεσία with the calque *waḍʿ al-sunan*, "establishment of the norms." While alluding to its terminology, the translator did not seem have a transposition of Aristotle's discussion into the world of Islamic law in mind; few, if any, of his other terminological decisions would fit such a scenario.

Other important legal terms include κατηγορία (accusation) and ἀπολογία (defence). The former is rendered as *shikāya* ("complaint," a broad notion that includes legal aspects), a term the translator also regularly used for forms of the verb κατηγορέω. The same verb is also translated several times with forms of the verb *shakā* (to complain).[30] For ἀπολογία, the translator selected *iʿtidhār* (plead in

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[29] Elsewhere, *sunna* also translates a few additional Greek terms derived from νόμος/νομίζω and, strangely, a term with strong religious, New Testament undertones, ἐπάγγελμα (promise).

[30] Outside of our sample, we also find the more general verbs *dhamma* (blame/criticize) and *qarafa* (loathe). The noun *shikāya* and the verb *shakā* also translate one instance each of δική and ἔγκλημα/ἐγκαλέω (blame/accuse), terms that are even more narrowly legal in their application than κατηγορία.

defence)[31] which fits both legal and more general 'argumentative' contexts; forms of *iʿtadhara* also render the verb ἀπολογέομαι.[32]

Aristotle called the parties variously accusing or defending themselves in a court of law ἀμφισβητοῦντες, a legal term for the opposing sides in litigation. The translator apparently attempted to elaborate on what exactly these parties did in front of the court, i.e. to demonstrate or establish the merits of their case. He first called them "the one who demonstrates or proves" (*alladhī yurī aw yuthabbit*), then *alladhī yurī* or *alladhī yuthabbit*, each time in the singular. In the final occurrence (of our sample), they are "those who dispute," *alladhīna yatashājarūn* (plural at last), evoking the terminology he used to render δικαζόμενος and other terms derived from δικάζω.[33] Finally, our sample contains a single example for straightforward transliteration of a Greek legal term: Ἄρειος πάγος was rendered as *ahl aryūs fāghūs*, "people of Aryūs Fāghūs."

Overall, it seems to be the case that the legal character of Aristotle's remarks becomes substantially blurred in the process of translation. The translator understood that the discussion had something to do with legal matters and

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[31] Also translated as *ḥujja* (plea/argument) in the remainder of the Arabic *Rhetoric*.

[32] In the rest of the *Rhetoric*, he variously used *ajāba* (reply/react) and two isolated instances each of *radda* (reply) and *iḥtijāj* (plea). Some of the Arabic terms listed above carry legal connotations, albeit less pronouncedly than Aristotle's Greek. Other terms express little more than the general idea of arguing for or against a claim.

[33] The same root translates ἐπεξέρχομαι, also a legal term for charging someone with a crime.

correctly identified such legal categories for which there were straightforward

equivalents such as *ḥākim* and *sunna.* On the other hand, there are specific legal

categories without an equivalent in the Arabic language or Islamic culture such as

ἀμφισβητοῦντες, δικαστής, δικαζομένος etc.; in such cases, he picked Arabic terms

that reflect their more general (and less specifically legal) meaning. As a result, the

concrete court scenario depicted by Aristotle becomes a generic process of debate

and decision according to a framework created by a *wāḍiʿ al-sunna.*[34]

The picture that emerges from the translation bears enough resemblance to

legal proceedings to be understood as such (the glosses tell us as much), but is

strangely removed from (and incompatible with) actual Islamic legal practice. It

must have been obvious to the reader that Aristotle's argument takes place in a

world that was substantially different from his own. If we had more evidence to

credit the translator with a satisfactory understanding of the text, we would have to

commend him for his technique of stressing the 'otherness' of Aristotle's scenario

and, by implication, the inapplicability of Aristotelian legal oratory to a world

regulated by Islamic law. However, it is much more likely that the translator simply

lacked the necessary background knowledge—he had to resort to transcription to

translate the name of the highest Athenian court, the Ἄρειος πάγος (*ahl aryūs*

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[34] For final confirmation of my claim that the translation moves away from

Aristotle's predominantly legal terminology toward a more general frame of

reference, it would be necessary also to compare the vocabulary of the translation

to the technical terminology of other legal areas, e.g. that of *maẓālim* courts which

were administered by state authorities instead of the Islamic legal hierarchy, or

those altogether outside the purview of Islamic law, e.g. Christian jurisprudence.

fāghūs)—and attempted to rescue as much of the meaning of the terminology as possible by relying on more general Arabic terms. The resulting argument describes a much more generic form of decision-making about things past and future that seeks to establish truth or falsehood and justice or injustice of a proposition or action.

The legal terminology in the *Rhetoric* to some degree facilitated such a reading because many terms either also had more general, less specifically legal meanings to do with decision-making and verification or could be read as such on the basis of cognate, more general terms (as e.g. in the case of the relatively specific κριτής).

The translator's understanding of the first chapters of Book One and indeed the entire *Rhetoric* was probably also highly influenced by its inclusion (already in late antiquity) in the canon of Aristotle's logical writings, the *Organon*.[35] It is supported by his reading of the very first words of Book One which link the discipline of rhetoric to dialectics.[36] Dialectics, Arabic *jadal*, was also the title of the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Topics*, allegedly one of the earliest officially commissioned translations from Greek into Arabic.[37] Since dialectics is a branch of

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[35] On the subject of the 'logical' interpretation of the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, see Schoeler, 'Averroes' Rückwendung,' p. 296 and D. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (*Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 7), Leiden: Brill, 1990, esp. pp. 1-13.

[36] Ἡ ῥητορική ἐστιν ἀντίστροφος τῇ διαλεκτικῇ (1354a1), translated as *inna l-rīṭūriyya tarjiʿ ʿalā l-diyāliqṭīqiyya* (Lyons, *Aristotle's Ars Rhetorica*, p. 1, l. 1).

[37] Cf. D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, London, 1998, pp. 61-69.

logic, rhetoric (its ἀντίστροφος, "counterpart")[38] also qualified as a branch of logic. The translator rendered ἀντίστροφος as *tarjiʿ ʿalā*, which can mean "derives from." Apparently, the relationship he envisaged was one of dependency rather than opposition (which is one of the other possible meanings of ἀντίστροφος).[39] The relationship between rhetoric and logic is spelled out in detail a little further down.[40] There could be little doubt for the translator that the subject matter of this text was logic, albeit a specific and perhaps 'lesser' branch; in this, he followed a mode of interpreting the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* that stretches back to the late antique commentary tradition.[41]

In sum, there is a connection between the tendency of the translator to drain the text of some of its legal content by 'generalizing' its terminology and the tradition of 'logical' readings of the *Rhetoric* which is such a prominent part of its reception in the Islamic world. There may even have been a causal link, either in the form of the general terminology suggesting or helping a logical reading and/or the

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[38] On this key term, cf. G. Kennedy, *Aristotle, On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 28, n. 2.

[39] See Aouad, *Commentaire moyen*, I, p. 7 on the relation between dialectic and rhetoric on the one hand and logic on the other according to Ibn Rushd.

[40] E.g. 1355a3-14 = Lyons, *Aristotle's Ars Rhetorica*, p. 4, l. 15-5, l. 3. Rapp, *Aristoteles: Rhetorik*, II, p. 19-25 gives a detailed overview of the relevance of the ἀντίστροφος remark and its elaboration in the first two chapters of Book One for the interpretation of the relationship between rhetoric and dialectics and their treatment in the antique, medieval and Renaissance commentary tradition.

[41] Cf. Vagelpohl, *Aristotle's Rhetoric*, pp. 52-54.

expectation of logical content disposing the translator towards a more general interpretation of the text.

Ibn Rushd

As a paraphrase, Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary does not replicate the terminology of the translation in a straightforward fashion: the author expanded the text, left out some parts and systematized both the terminology and the structure of the argument of the two chapters. As a result, his commentary seems much more transparent and consistent than the translation. Ibn Rushd retained both the three-fold distinction of 'occasions' or types of oratory and the term for the category which interests us most, legal speeches. They were called *tashājur* or *mushājiriyya.*

On the whole, the legal vocabulary seems less ambiguous than that of the translation without, however, transposing Aristotle's discussion into Islamic legal terms. As a result, the discussion remains abstract. Ibn Rushd adopted key terms of the translation, e.g. *ḥākim*, *sunna/sunan* and *iʿtidhār*, or used a different form of the same root (e.g. *shakwā* instead of *shikāya*).

Instead of the term *fāḥiṣ* the translator used to render δικαστής, "the juryman" or "judge," Ibn Rushd apparently preferred *munāẓir* (opponent/interlocutor) and *tanāẓur* (difference of opinion). In addition to the notions of discussion or debate, it also evokes the kind of disputes called *munāẓara* (dealing mostly with theological or legal issues) and also a popular literary genre of medieval prose in which animate and inanimate objects debate their relative

superiority (e.g. different varieties of flowers; vices and virtues).[42] It is also

interesting to see that the term *ḥukm* ([legal] decision) is replaced by the term *taṣdīq*

(conviction/assent), a key technical term of logic in Islamic philosophy.[43] The

remaining terminology is a strong reminder of the judicial context of the discussion

but in the end, the point Ibn Rushd stressed is the universality of the mechanisms

described for generating "conviction" in a psychological rather than legal sense—

his concerns were logical, not judicial.

Neither the translator nor Ibn Rushd made much use of the rich terminology

of Islamic law. Both understood the legal thrust of the source text. But the

translator was confronted with the incompatibility between native Arabic linguistic

and Islamic legal categories and the phenomena described in the *Rhetoric.*

Transposing the discussion into Islamic legal terms was close to impossible: the

institutionalized form of oratory Aristotle described could not be understood in an

Islamic legal context. Merely transcribing terms only made sense wherever the

number of transcriptions remained small and informed readers were able to infer at

least part of their meaning from the context. Thanks to its wide variety of legal

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[42] Cf. Aouad, *Commentaire moyen*, III, pp. 9-10.

[43] For its use in various Arabic philosophical sources, see H. Wolfson, "The Terms
Taṣawwur and *Taṣdīq* in Arabic Philosophy and their Greek, Latin and Hebrew
Equivalents," *The Moslem World* 33 (1943): 114-128; for a definition, cf. H. Gätje,
"Logisch-semasiologische Theorien bei al-Ġazzālī," *Arabica* 21 (1974): 151-182 (p.
163). Black, *Logic*, pp. 71-78 explains the centrality of the concept of *taṣdīq* and its
counterpart, *taṣawwur* (conception), in the context of the 'logical' reading of
Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* in the Arabic philosophical tradition.

terms, widespread transcription would have made the relevant chapters of the *Rhetoric* unreadable. The translator used it only once for Ἄρειος πάγος. His choices were probably ad-hoc rather than based on a conscious decision to follow a particular translation strategy.

The apparent attenuation of the legal flavour of the text through its translation and commentary history was not as linear a process as it seems on the basis of the translation and Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary. As we have seen above, *ḥukūma* is one of the terms the translator used to render forms of δικάζω. This choice and the gloss on *rīṭūrīqā* at the beginning of the translation (*al-balāgha fī al-ḥukūma*, "eloquence in the dispensation of justice") counteract the apparent tendency of the translator to downplay the legal character of the relevant portions of the text.[44] The same formulation also re-appeared at the beginning of the chapter on rhetoric in Ibn Sīnā's *al-Ḥikma al-ʿarūḍīya* entitled *Fī maʿānī kitāb rīṭūrīqā* (On the ideas of the *Rhetoric*): its full title is *Fī maʿānī kitāb rīṭūrīqā ay al-balāgha fī l-ḥukūma wa-l-khiṭāba* (On the ideas of the *Rhetoric*, i.e. eloquence in the dispensation of justice and in oratory).[45] The somewhat muted legal tone of the translation with its often ambiguous terminology was amplified well before the time Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd commented on the text; the former at least clearly picked up on this tendency.

CONCLUSIONS

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[44] They also illustrate the fact that the glossator was still very much aware of the legal relevance of the subject matter, apparently more so than the translator himself.

[45] Cf. Sālim, *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ*, p. 15, n. 1 and Aouad, *Commentaire moyen*, III, p. 1.

So far, we have looked at two examples for strategies a particular translator employed to deal with the class of translation problems I have subsumed under the label 'translatability.' The first one is at work in the attempt of the translator to clarify Aristotle's discussion of the use of the voice in public speaking. Reproducing his remarks on the system of Greek pitch accents was impossible: they cannot be described and understood in terms of an Arabic linguistic and phonetic frame of reference. Hence, the translator attempted to transpose them into categories that fit Arabic linguistic phenomena, in this case those of Arabic song. The second strategy consisted of de-emphasizing the cultural and linguistic specificity of source language concepts and translating them with broader target language terms. To communicate at least a substantial part of the meaning of the text, perhaps also in an attempt to support a trans-cultural logical interpretation, the translator shed exactly those semantic details that firmly anchor a term in its culture and language of origin.[46]

Admittedly, the amount of evidence presented so far is rather slim. However, I believe the cases above are representative of a wider phenomenon. 'Untranslatability', in particular the translation of linguistic elements (concepts,

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[46] These two strategies for translating culturally specific terms into a target language and culture that do not share them are a well-known phenomenon in translation studies. They are not the only possible methods to deal with the issue (others include transcription, the introduction of neologisms or outright description or explanation). Cf. S. Florin, "Realia in translation," in: *Translation as Social Action: Russian and Bulgarian Perspectives*, ed. P. Zlateva, London-New York: Routledge, 1993, pp. 122-128 (pp. 125-126).

things or institutions) intimately bound up with the "universe of reference of the original culture," is a universal problem. Irrespective of the source and target language, their relationship and degree of closeness to each other, their respective "universes of reference" never completely coincide. These linguistic elements can be circumscribed and sometimes even understood by a target language audience, but even under optimal circumstances, there remains a residue of meaning that cannot be transmitted.[47] This issue becomes particularly acute whenever translators have to bridge vast differences in culture, space and time. Even on the basis of this limited set of examples, I am convinced that the products of the Greek-Arabic translators are ideally suited to illustrate the problem of dealing with semantic disparities between languages and to study the various strategies translators employed in dealing with them. To confirm and extend our findings, we would need to examine a wider range of texts.[48]

The strategies of 'accommodation' identified above correspond well with the 'ethos' of translation expressed in our handful of contemporary sources such as statements by translators on their methods.[49] Both these and the translations

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[47] Cf. André Lefevere's introduction to Florin, *Realia*, pp. 122-123.

[48] Among others, Aristotle's *Poetics* is probably an extremely rich source for relevant examples. Since the subject matter of the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* partially overlap and the texts at the same time represent different stages of the translation movement, a comparison between the two would be highly desirable.

[49] Pride of place belongs to the discussion of Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq in his *Risāla* (G. Bergsträsser, "Ḥunain b. Isḥāq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen," *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 17 (1925): 1-49 with

themselves, at least those of the mature phase of the Greek-Arabic translation movement associated with Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq and his associates, suggest that translators privileged the sense of a text over its wording, up to and including the freedom to delete material that was deemed to be irrelevant or to reconstruct missing chunks of text in the process of restoring as complete a Greek version as possible before translating it into Syriac and/or Arabic.[50]

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additions in G. Bergsträsser, "Neue Materialien zu Ḥunain b. Isḥāq's Galen-Bibliographie," *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 19 (1932): 1-108. Cf. also Vagelpohl, "The ʿAbbasid Translation Movement," pp. 248-263, for a compilation and discussion of other such pronouncements by translators and contemporary scholars.

[50] For the deletion of difficult literary quotations which, according to Ḥunayn, did not add to the medical discussion at hand, cf. M. Meyerhof and J. Schacht, "Galen über die medizinischen Namen," *Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 3 (1931): 32. In Bergsträsser, *Ḥunain b. Isḥāq*, no. 122, Ḥunayn explains that, after translating a particular text into Syriac, he filled a lacuna at the beginning before producing an Arabic version. Another interesting example for an attempt to reconstruct missing material is preserved in his translation of Galen's commentary on Hippocrates' *Epidemics*, where Ḥunayn filled in a Hippocratic lemma from another source and added his own commentary "which I thought would be similar to that of Galen in doctrine and what is connected with it" (*aḍaftu ilay-hi min al-tafsīr mā ẓanantu anna-hu yushākilu madhhab Jālīnūs fī tafsīri-hi la-hu wa-mā yattaṣilu bi-hi*); ms. Escurial 804, fol. 53a, l. 8f; cf. P. Pormann, "Case Notes and Clinicians: Galen's Commentary on the Hippocratic

As with other potential pitfalls of translation, the translators and some of their scholarly audience shared an acute awareness of the problem of 'translatability' and its potential to undermine the value and even the very possibility of translation: in his *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa* (Book of Enjoyment and Conviviality), Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023) recalled a debate between the grammarian Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī (d. 368/979) and the translator and philosopher Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus (d. 328/940) set in Baghdad in the year 331/932, in which the former maintains that, rather than referring to the same "universe of reference," each language operates within its own semantic world and even its individual system of determining the truth of a statement.[51] In his scathing criticism of contemporary translators and translation in general, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868-9) focused more on practical than theoretical issues, blaming the deficiencies of available Greek-Arabic translations on the translators' flawed understanding of their sources and inadequate linguistic training. In addition, he claimed that even an ideally qualified translator would find it next to impossible to avoid linguistic interference between the source and target languages, i.e. the contamination of a target text with grammatical and terminological relics of the source language.[52]

Epidemics in the Arabic Tradition," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 18 (2008): 247-284 (p. 256).

[51] Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-Muʾānasa*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad al-Zayn, I, Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1939-1942, pp. 110, 112.

[52] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, I, Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1965[2], pp. 76-77.

Given these obstacles, it is surprising how successful translators often were and how much of a source text they were able to communicate. They sometimes had to go to extraordinary lengths to achieve their goals: even early translations such as the Arabic *Rhetoric* display a translational flexibility that belies any description of the translation process based on schematic classifications such as 'literal' and 'free.'[53]

The process of transmitting information across such vast distances in time and space required a degree of independence and license in the handling of the sources that also undermines a static notion of authorship: the resulting texts were a creation as much of the author of the source text as of its translator(s). The more we learn about the details of the Greek-Arabic translation process and the nature of its results, the more we have to address them as independent literary creations which gave rise to scientific and philosophical ideas that were sometimes only implicit or not at all present in the sources.

However—and this is the main issue I wanted to raise by comparing the translation with Ibn Rushd's commentary—the subsequent philosophical and scientific tradition continued to produce new re-readings and re-writings of the translations, some of which were closer to the ideas expressed in the sources than the translations themselves. With his experience in understanding philosophical translations and identifying later accretions, Ibn Rushd was able to 'return' to a reading of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* that in some respects proved to be more faithful than the preceding commentaries and the understanding of the translator.

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[53] For a more detailed criticism of these *topoi* of translation analysis, cf. Vagelpohl, *Aristotle's Rhetoric*, pp. 219-221.

In sum, the creativity and independence of the translation process does not necessarily result in irreversible departures from the thought of the original author (however fruitful and valuable they may turn out to be), but are just the beginning of a process that can lead in both directions: further away from the ideas of the original author and also back to the 'original.' Ironically, in the case of Aristotle, most commentators insisted that it was they rather than anyone else who presented his thought in its 'purest' form.