



Le terme de « ma'nā » dans la tradition arabe – entre *kalām*, *falsafa* et grammaire - 13th of October 2022
« Science et philosophie de l'Antiquité à l'âge classique » Chspam-Seminars
 Journée d'études organised by Miriam Rogasch (Paris 1/Universität zu Köln) & Lucie Tardy (Paris 1)

ABSTRACTS

FEDOR BENEVICH (University of Edinburgh) - Between Meaning and Reference: *Ma'ānī* in Post-Avicennan Philosophy

In my presentation, I will explore two philosophical issues discussed in post-Avicennan philosophy with respect to the notion of *ma'nā*: 1) the logical structure of predication and 2) the reality of divine attributes. I will argue that the predominant understanding of *ma'nā* in post-Avicennan tradition (probably developed under the influence of Avicennan conceptualist essentialism) is of an intensional object. Intensional objects are meanings of words that exist in the real world outside our minds without being distinct objects, unlike referents. So, speaking of the logical structure of predication, post-Avicennans argue that predication implies the identity of the external referent without the identity of the *ma'nā* and the *ḥaqīqa* of the subject and the predicate. Likewise, the discussion of the divine attributes amounts to the question whether the presence of distinct intensional objects (*ma'ānī*) next to the divine essence implies that there is more than one referent in our discourse of God. Al-Sāwī, Abū l-Barakāt, Ibn al-Malāḥimī and al-Šahrastānī are among the authors discussed in my presentation.

LUCIE TARDY (Paris 1) - The *ṣifāt ma'nawiyya* in al-Juwaynī's *Kitāb al-Irshād*

The Ash'arī theologian al-Juwaynī draws a distinction between two types of divine attributes (*ṣifāt*): the “attributes of self” (*ṣifāt nafsīyya*) and the “qualifying attributes” (*ṣifāt ma'nawiyya*). While the first type of *ṣifāt* is God's, in and of Himself, the attributes *ma'nawiyya* are identified with characteristics (*aḥkām*) caused by *ma'ānī* which inhere in the essence of God. Thus, ‘being willing’ or ‘knowing’ are characteristic properties that indicate the existence, within God, of their corresponding *ma'ānī* (the *ma'nā* of Will, the *ma'nā* of Knowledge).

What does the concept of *ma'nā*, in this context, refer to? The aim of this presentation is to give a clearer account of this concept, given that the theological context – the problem of God's attributes– engage both the issue of attribution in its epistemological dimension and some of the most singular features of Juwaynī's ontology.

Two main questions will be discussed. First, we will try to clarify the causal relation existing between the *ma'ānī* and their corresponding *ṣifāt* (*ṣifāt ma'nawiyya*) or grounded (*mu'allal*) modes (*aḥwāl*). Second, we will focus on the ontological status of the *ma'nā* inhering in God's essence. How should the existence of an entitative causative factor be understood in God? This last problem is among the most difficult of Juwaynī's theology, since it requires to be solved to identify whether or not these *ma'ānī* are to be conceived as real and existing entities.

BEATA SHEYHATOVITCH (Tel Aviv University) - When meanings have gender and number

The term *ma'nā* lit. ‘meaning’ is very important and frequent in various Islamic disciplines. *Ma'nā*, usually used as an opposite of *lafz* ‘(linguistic) form/expression’, is employed in many diverse contexts and is found with a variety of referents. It may refer, for instance, to the speaker's intention, the word's referent, the word/phrase/sentence that are semantically equivalent to the



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given ones, the constituent's function, the object's attribute, etc. Alexander Key claims that the interpretation of "mental content" covers this wide range of uses.

Muslim scholars view the purpose of the language as expressing meanings/intentions. However, they recognize that linguistic expressions do not always stand in one-to-one correspondence to meanings: synonyms (*kalimāt mutarādifa*) are viewed (by some scholars) as different expressions with the same meaning, homonyms (*kalimāt muštaraka*) are viewed as expressions that have several meanings; certain meanings are perceived as "being included" (*mutaḍammāna*) in the expression or "being entailed" (*mustalzama*) by it.

In my talk I will focus on cases in which the idea of mismatches between the meaning and the expression is employed in technical grammatical discussions. Grammarians may say of a certain constituent that the grammatical properties of its meaning differ from the grammatical properties of its expression (e.g., the expression may be in the singular whereas its meaning is in the dual/plural), or a certain grammatical construction may be said to exist on the expression-level but not on the meaning-level (e.g., improper annexation is called *'iḍāfa lafẓiyya* lit. 'formal annexation' because it is viewed as existing only on the expression-level). In these contexts, meaning is presented as a constituent/phrase equivalent to the produced one, which is present in the speaker's mind and can explain certain properties of the produced constituent/phrase. In some cases speakers can choose whether they make other speech constituents agree with the expression-level (*al-ḥaml 'alā al-lafẓ*) or with the meaning-level (*al-ḥaml 'alā al-ma'nā*).

DAVID WIRMER (Universität zu Köln) - 'Intermediate Spiritual Forms' and Their Place in Ibn Bāḡḡa's Theory of *Ma'nā*

Although Ibn Bāḡḡa sometimes defines *ma'nā* as "form separated from matter" (*ṣūra munfarida 'an al-mādda*), it can be shown that this thesis does neither imply the existence of separate forms or 'ideas,' nor does it even presuppose the possibility of a purely eidetic consideration of formal content, independent from its logical and physical implications, as it is famously claimed by Ibn Sīnā. Rather, Ibn Bāḡḡa develops the concept of *ma'nā* on the basis of a complex theory of relations that allows him to conceive of different degrees of separateness of a form (or *ma'nā*)—a separation, however, which never becomes total and thus allows to explain the peculiar feature of perception and intellection, i.e. that perception is *of* or *about* something and, hence, at the same time somehow identical with it and different from it.

In his *Governance of the Solitary* (*Tadbīr al-mutawahhīd*) Ibn Bāḡḡa discusses the different relationships that perceived and intellected forms entertain with the real-world objects whose forms they are. Without, here, employing the term '*ma'nā*,' these reflections build on and further develop Ibn Bāḡḡa's earlier remarks on *ma'nā* in several of his commentaries and treatises, and in particular in his *Kitāb al-naḥs*. The new term, used throughout the *Governance*, is that of "spiritual forms" (*ṣuwar rūḥāniyya*). While this newly fashioned concept goes beyond the epistemological considerations bound up with the notion of *ma'nā* and deploys its full meaning only in the practical (political) context, it does contribute one peculiar aspect to the epistemological study. For Ibn Bāḡḡa, here, introduces "intermediate spiritual forms" (*ṣuwar rūḥāniyya mutawassiṭa*) that are not only said to entertain a relationship with the real-world objects different from both that of perception and intellection, but that are also claimed to be the very basis of intellection proper. In my paper I will try to elucidate the concept of "intermediate spiritual forms" by showing how it integrates into Ibn Bāḡḡa's general theory of *ma'nā*.