

AVICENNA'S DETERMINISTIC THEORY OF ACTION AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR A THEORY OF JUSTICE

By Gabriel Lahood

<https://doi.org/10.15362/ijbs.v12i0.50>

Abstract

In this essay, two issues are critically addressed, namely, the foundation of Avicenna's ethical determinism and its implication for a theory of justice. As to the first issue, it regards the analysis of Avicenna's deterministic theory notwithstanding his rare but ambiguous use of the free will-suggesting terms such as 'will', 'voluntary', and 'choice'. In such a theory, where everything is governed by the laws of pre-established harmony, the ethical evil done by man is viewed in the same way physical evil is, as contingent, minimal, determined by God, and having its proper function within world order and harmony. As to Avicenna's justification of punishment, one must recognize that Avicenna did not address the issue in its socio-juridical context. Rather, he addressed it from a religious point of view, but the implication for a theory of social justice seems to be obvious: because of universal determinism including man's actions, all threats and promises (as well as punishment by human civil courts) have a deterrent function. Objections are raised against this deterministic philosophy to show that it is founded on a misleading argument of order and harmony. More objections are raised to show that Avicenna's conception of justice, based on deterrence, is inhumane and unsatisfactory.

Introduction

Some of the usual questions that come to mind when facing a deterministic ethical theory are: how are, according to this theory, the so-called "voluntary" and related concepts interpreted? And how is, within this theory, man's so-

called “evil-doing” evaluated in view of possible retribution? Avicenna’s ethical writings provide us with such a theory and confront us with these questions. Section I of this paper provides an explanation of Avicenna’s deterministic ethical theory while section II examines some of its implications. In section III, objections to it will be raised. The explanatory part involves clarifying how Avicenna conceived of the voluntary, man’s evil-doing, and punishment and reward. The implications considered here regard Avicenna’s would-be theory of justice as he has nowhere explicitly expressed such a theory. The objections to Avicenna’s deterministic ethical theory are raised in respect to the unsatisfactory solutions it seems to propose in regard to the presumed theory of social justice.

The primary sources that will be referred to here are *Risālat Hayy bin Yaqzān* (abbrev. H), *Risālat al-Qadar* (abbrev. Q), *Risālah fi Sirr al-Qadar* (abbrev. S), and *Ilāhiyyāt* (abbrev. I).

I- Avicenna’s Deterministic Theory

Although Avicenna uses the terms ‘will’ (*irādah*) and ‘voluntary’ (*irādī*), his understanding of these terms differs from that of Aristotle and ordinary people. While ordinary people’s understanding of the voluntary consists in conceiving it, as Aristotle has expressed it -- an act based on knowledge and unobstructed choice -- Avicenna explains both knowledge and choice by reference to causes that are beyond man’s control.

Avicenna describes the will as the faculty to deliberate (*rawiyyah*) (I, 45.), to make choices (*ikhtiyār*) (I, 40), and to perform voluntary movement (*harakah irādīyyah*) (I, 37). However, Avicenna’s description of the will appears to be manifestly deterministic when he uses the term *gharīzah* (instinct) to include the intellectual and volitional faculties as well as the merely animal instincts. In fact, he uses this term in the context of animal behavior (“The animals are endowed with instinctive inspirations.” I, 184) and man’s intellectual process of comprehending the intelligibles (*ma^cqūlāt*) (I, 237). This seems to suggest that the animal’s “will” is moved by the animal’s instinct; and that human will is moved by the “intellect’s instinct” (*gharīzat al-^caql*).

Avicenna clarifies the issue by referring to “causes” (*‘ilal*) that move the will (*‘irāda*), a term that Avicenna, according to Goichon (1938, nr. 282, referring to Avicenna’s *Najāt* (abbrev. N), Cairo’s edition of 1913, page 393), does not specifically define: “*Elle [‘irāda, volonté] n’est définie nulle part, ce qui eut été bien intéressant dans ce système o tout est nécessaire.*” And these causes can be sensual desires (*shahawāt*), anger (*ghadab*), a belief (*zann*), or knowledge (*cilm*). Thus, choice (*ikhtiyār*) occurs, on the one hand, when the will is moved by bodily causes, in which case it is called “sensual will” (*irādah issiyyah*):

‘Ikhtiyār, choix, mais non pas nécessairement libre et volontaire; choix instinctif et choix réfléchi, celui-ci étant ordinairement précisé par un adjectif. Voici quatre sortes d’ikhtiyār: Ce qui cherche la délectation est la volupté; ce qui cherche la victoire est la colère; ce qui cherche le bien et vrai est l’intelligence, et cette recherche s’appelle choix. Goichon (1938, 115, nr. 234). Here, Goichon quotes N (Cairo ed., 1913, 430) and I, IX, 2, f. 103, r.1.

On the other hand, when the will is moved by intellectual causes, in which case it is called “intellectual will” (*irādah ^caqliyyah*), it also triggers choice (See

entries “*volonté sensible*” and “*volonté intellectuelle*,” in Goichon (1938, 147, nr. 282) quoting Ishārāt (ed. J. Forjet, Leide 1892, 135). However, according to Avicenna, the intellect of man is moved by a higher intellect, the active intellect, an angelic or divine intellect that is outside of man and beyond man's control. Thus, when man's will is moved by his intellect, it is essentially moved by the (outside) active intellect, and when the will is moved by bodily faculties, needs, or instincts, it is moved by forces beyond his control also.

The process by which man's will is moved by the bodily, or lower, faculties is illustrated in an allegorical account, H, where the major personage, called Hayy ibn Yaqzān, represents the active intellect. This personage is described there as a wise old man who possesses knowledge of all sciences (al-^Culūm kullaha):

‘Quant mon nom et ma famille,’ me répondit-il, ‘je m’appelle Hayy b. Yaqzān, et ma ville natale est Jérusalem; quant mon métier, il consiste à errer dans toutes les régions de la terre en suivant toujours la direction donnée par mon pre, qui m’a confié les clés de toutes les sciences et m’a guidé sur les sentiers de toutes les contrées du monde jusqu’à ce que j’aie atteint les confins les plus reculés de l’univers.’ H, in *Traité*, I, French paraphrase, page 11 / Arabic text, page 3.

Hayy explains to Avicenna and his companion--both of whom represent two human (passive) intellects--how the emotions, such as pleasure (ladhdhah), anger (ghadab), or imagination (wahm), move the desire (shawq), which in turn causes the will (‘ira-dah) to cause us to act: “Hādha wa-l-qadar min niyyat al-rajul wa ^Camauhu hādha al-qadar...”

*Nous voyons donc que le destin est le moteur de l’intention et l’exécuteur de l’action humaine; c’est lui qui, en maître absolu, s’attaque à la fragile demeure de l’homme, par toutes espèces d’artifices [c’est--dire les tentations du monde sensible], bien que l’entrée en soit défendue par des gardiens [c’est--dire les facultés intellectuelles de l’homme]... Q, in *Traité*, IV, Fr. 5 / Ar. 10. Presently, I am preparing a translation of, with notes and an introduction to, Avicenna's essay *Risālat al-Qadar*, which is expected to be of more service to Avicennian scholarship than this French paraphrase.*

Certainly, man may feel he is and claim to be the exclusive author of his acts, but according to Hayy, man acts like one who is asleep (al-nā'im) believing himself to be self-moving (tahrīkuha minhu): “Wa al-nā'imū qad yuhissu bil-ladhathi ihsāsan... wa sanahātuhu tuharriku min shawqihī tahrīkuha minhu...”

*Ainsi l’homme, en général, se trouve entre l’état de veille et de sommeil; tantôt il est surexcité par la fantaisie, tantôt par une opinion indécise, tantôt enfin par le désir, qui, uni la force de l’intention et secondé par des impulsions, maîtrise tout la fois et produit le mouvement de l’action... Q, in *Traité*, IV, Fr. 6 / Ar. 12-13.*

Thus, there is in man a chain of (unconscious) internal (bātin) processes that determine his will to produce caused acts (wa af^Cāluka natā'ijun): “fakhudh min hādha kullihī anna irādataka mūjabatun wa af^Cālaka natā'ijun...”

*De tout cela il faut conclure que ta volonté est contrainte, et que les actions la suivent... Q, in *Traité*, IV, Fr. 7 / Ar. 16.*

Among these faculties of the soul, there is the highest faculty, being the intellect, and there are the lower faculties, being the other faculties. The lower

faculties are described by Hayy as “companions” (rufaḳā’), with which the human intellect is “traveling” through the worldly life:

Pendant mon séjour dans mon pays, je me sentis disposé faire avec mes amis une petite excursion aux lieux de plaisance du voisinage, et tout en flânant je rencontraï un vieillard, qui, malgré son âge bien avancé, était plein d'une ardeur juvénile... H, in *Traités*, I, Fr. 11 / Ar. 1.

At times, these companions are capricious, exhibiting desires that are not always compatible with the dictates of the intellect. Irascibility is their common attribute, and therefore, they may become wild (ahwāj) and ought to be restrained:

Mais voil ton compagnon de droite [l'irascibilité] il est encore plus impétueux et ses attaques ne se peuvent que bien difficilement repousser par la raison, ou éloigner par la dextérité. Also: *Gardes-toi bien de leur lâcher les brides et de t'abandonner leur volonté.* H, in *Traités*, I, Fr. 13 / Ar. 5.

Consequently, the unavoidability of “traveling” with such “companions” makes the “journey” of the intellect with the other faculties of the soul one of struggle. Sometimes, the intellect has the upper hand, and sometimes the other faculties do: “fatāratān li al-yadu wa tāratān lahā ^Calayya”

Il faut donc te contenter d'un voyage interrompu de temps en temps; tantôt tu feras route, tantôt tu t'abandonneras tes compagnons. H, in *Traités*, I, Fr. 14 / Ar. 6.

Such a deterministic theory of action has serious implications on interpreting man's evil-doing in the context of a theory of justice.

II- Implications for a Theory of Justice

Implications for Man's Evil-Doing and Retribution

There are two major implications of Avicenna's determinism that concern us here: one regards his implied conception of man's good or evil deeds (that man's good and evil deeds are determined), and the other regards his implied justification of the subsequent reward or punishment (that man cannot be rewarded or punished on a retributive basis).

Before investigating why, according to Avicenna, man cannot (freely) choose to do evil and what the implications of such a claim for a theory of justice are, it is important, to understand how he conceived of evil in general. Such an understanding will in turn help clarify Avicenna's conception of evil done by man as being an act that is traceable back to powers beyond man's control, and fitting within Avicenna's principle of universal order and harmony.

According to Avicenna, evil can be metaphysical, physical, or ethical, and among these forms of evil, the evil par excellence is the metaphysical.

The Metaphysical Evil

The metaphysical evil consists in the deprivation of existence. However, the deprivation of existence--and thus the deprivation of any form of actual goodness--cannot be attributed to anything that exists, and therefore, this evil does not exist as such.

As to the physical and ethical evils, they are minor evils. They exist only contingently, and they are integral parts of the universal organization and har-

mony. Among the physical evils, Avicenna identifies pain (alam) and the deprivations (nuqsān) of limbs. And among the ethical evils, Avicenna identifies blameworthy deeds (af^cāl madhmūmah) and worries (gham) (I, 419).

The Physical Evil

The physical evil caused, for example, by fire when it burns the cloth of an honest man, thus causing him pain, does not necessarily make it an evil thing. By its nature, fire is to heat, burn, and possibly cause pain, otherwise it would not be fire (I, 418). Thus, fire is good and has a proper function within world order. It may, however, become relatively evil but only in relation to a specific individual or thing under specific circumstances. Also, the fact that fire can cause a contingent evil would not affect the basic goodness of fire. Similarly, the sun is not an evil thing even though it may cause some individuals to have headaches when they expose their unprotected heads excessively to it. Also, water, which is a source of life, may suffocate living beings. Furthermore, sickness and decay, which are usually labeled as evil occurrences, have their proper function in the world, and therefore they are good as necessary conditions of world order.

The Ethical Evil

As for the ethical evil, Avicenna describes in H how the lower faculties of man can overpower and, thus, corrupt the higher faculties that, in turn, lead man to commit ethical evil. The corruption of the faculties takes place when one of a lower nature overpowers one of the higher faculties. In this case, the faculty that takes the lead, be it a lower or a higher faculty, can be said to cause man to act. Then, man is said to be determined to act either by his intellect or by his other faculties. If, then, man is determined anyway, how would Avicenna justify reward and punishment, whether in the hereafter or in this world?

Avicenna's Justification of the so-called Retribution

Although Avicenna did not address the question as to the function of ethical commandments, threats, promises, and actual administration of punishment or reward in the context of civil law, he addressed it succinctly but insightfully in the religious context. Thus, an understanding of the latter will yield an understanding of the former.

Avicenna wanted to say in S, contrary to what Muslim theologians (mutakallimūn) had believed, that man's actions are determined and that reward and punishment should not be understood in the retributive sense as deserved punishments or rewards that would be imparted by God in the hereafter. Rather, they are mere natural consequences of the actions that man has performed in this life. But if so, how would Avicenna interpret, as a Muslim, the Qur'anic verses that clearly claim the retributive function of the threats of eternal punishment and the promises of eternal reward? The attempt to make sense out of these apparently opposing views would constitute for Avicenna an attempt to unlock "the secret of destiny" (sirr al-qadar). If man is determined, and there is punishment and reward in the hereafter, it would seem that God would be the judge who condemns and rewards. But if this is the case, then God would be unjust in condemning those who are determined to do evil. How, then, could Avicenna profess, as a Muslim, determinism and defend God's justice? His strategy was to deny that God judges, and to do so, he had to reinterpret the Qur'anic "punishments" and "rewards." The Qur'anic threats of punishment and promises of reward are, according to him, causes

that could move man to act in a certain way. Also, the subsequent “punishment” and “reward” are merely natural consequences of deeds done on earth, not consequences imposed by a judging God. In fact, Hayy, the major protagonist of the allegory Q, rejected the belief that God ought to reward with eternal happiness those who do good deeds: “faman ^Cazalaka can al-’irjā’i khā’iban, wa sawwala laka al-qawla bi-t-takhlīdi wā jiban?” (“Who deprived you of hope and left you disappointed, and who allowed you to claim eternal felicity as a duty [of God towards you]?” --translation by the author of the present article-- Q, in Traités, IV, 16-17). The so-called “reward” is a human expression to indicate, though improperly, God’s generosity, not a deserved reward or a returned favor: “innahu ta^Cāla yuthbitu fadlan, lā isqāta fadlin.” (He [God], the Exalted[,], endows favors. [He has] no favors to return [to anybody]. --author’s translation-- Q, in Traités, IV, 22). In other words, God created the universe and man in it out of nothing. Thus, their existence is not a result of their deserving to exist, but a result of God’s generosity. By His act of creation, God also brought about natural laws that run the universe harmoniously towards a specific universal destiny. Similarly, he also created natural laws that run man’s affairs harmoniously towards a specific human destiny. Obviously, God could have created a different universe and a different man with different laws of their destinies. Thus, neither the universe nor man may claim the right to anything other than what each is destined to. Notwithstanding this determinism, ayy reassures us not to give up hope in the possibility of gaining eternal happiness.

The ethical and juridical implications of such a deterministic conception of universal harmony is that one would have to ignore the Qur’anic teaching on (free) choice and final retribution, which is a heresy; and one would always have to absolve the so-called “criminal” from any crime, guilt, and punishment, which would invite more crimes and would be contrary to common sense justice. Avicenna would address such ethical implications saying that what we believe to be self-motivated “choice” is nothing but a psychological cause-effect process similar to the physical cause-effect process, both of which are preordained by the Qur’anic God. He would also address the legal implication saying that human justice would, like divine justice, not have a retributive but a deterrent function. That is, the punishment reaped would not be deserved, but would forcefully direct the individual or the society to avoid future evil-doing. Such a deterministic ethical theory and its implications are not without problems.

III- Objections

Avicennian God’s Justice Questioned

In this Avicennian deterministic framework, God is implied to be not only all-powerful, all-generous, and just, but also sarcastic and unjust. He creates man out of nothing, endows him with knowledge and will, but He capriciously destines him without fault of his own to eternal tribulation. The justification of such a sad destiny is that God’s justice is not to be compared with human justice: “wa laisa ka’l-wāhid minna yun^Cimu liqadā’i haqqin.” (“He is not like us who rewards for the sake of justice” --Author’s translation--) (Q, Ar. 17). Mehren renders this idea in his paraphrase with more details:

La récompense de l’autre vie ne doit pas être considérée comme un salaire, mais comme un don gratuit de la grâce divine, et les menaces de punition s’adouciront et s’effaceront par la clémence de Dieu. (Q, p, 7)

Certainly to hear of “a gratuitous gift on the part of God’s grace” as described

in Q, shows that God is generous, but, God's "gratuitous" punishment shows that He is also sarcastic and unjust.

Avicennian God's Truthfulness and Honesty Questioned

Avicenna's God seems to be also a deceitful God who "blesses" people and induces them into error, which fact, if it were the case, would not be a blessing at all. This seems to be the case of the rationalist friend of Avicenna who would be deceitfully called by Hayy, the active or divine intellect, "blessed" (*mubārak/bārika lahu*) if he were to listen, whether convinced or not, to Avicenna's softer speech. This may be so when in fact he was induced and confirmed in error (in believing that truth is reached by means of reason alone). Hayy said to him:

wa'idha ramaqta [Avicenna] amthālahum [Avicenna's friend and other rationalists] bi^cayn al-rahma wa alqaita ^calahim al-ra'fa būrika laka wa lahum. (Q, 5) (If you [Avicenna] addressed the sick in their souls [Avicenna's friend and other rationalists] softly and gently, you and they would be blessed [in what you would be trying to teach them].) Author's translation.

If this individual would be, "blessed" by God, may, nonetheless, be confirmed in error and possibly into eternal tribulation, he would not truly be blessed in any sense of the word. It would thus be a frightful situation where one struggles (or is led to struggle) to find truth or do good and finally gives up (or is led to give up) just because God decreed for him a specific gloomy destiny, and thus he would end up innocently with an everlasting suffering. Moreover, if God's Qur'anic promises of reward and His threats of punishment were only means to force people to act in a certain way, then these exhortations would in fact be deceitful and thus they would be lies, and God would, therefore, be dishonest:

wa kama lam 'ajidu buddan min al-tahrid...la 'ajidu buddan min at-tarhib.. (Q, 18) -- le maître n'eût promis la récompense en or et émeraudes que comme moyen d'exhortation et menacé des supplices et de la croix que pour éloigner du mal, il se mit à conférer et faire subir les peines. (Q, 8)

God would also be a liar, because He would have promised something which He would not fulfill. And He would furthermore be dishonest because when He promises people who do good eternal happiness, He would not really be promising a reward. Rather He would simply be forcefully leading them by means of natural forces to do good.

Avicenna's Possible Defense and Rebuttal

Suppose Avicenna objects to this by saying that God's justice is totally different from human justice and the two cannot be equated:

'alaysa muftāka alladhi sammaytahu ^caqlan wa jacaltahu 'aslan yaqūlu laka laytaka tawaqqafta qalīlan wa ta'ammalta... lā tadrub lillāhi al-amthāla wa lā taj^calahu gharad... al-qiyās. (Q, 18-19) — Mehren paraphrases this saying: (Maintenant, après avoir entendu cette parabole,) ta raison qui t'a servi de guide, te reprochera probablement de n'avoir pas assez réfléchi... abandonne cette assimilation de l'Être suprême à la créature... (Q, 9).

If so, one should ask him whether, in his opinion, God's rationality, that in turn generates God's sense of justice, is totally different from our rationality and our sense of justice. Contrary to Avicenna's assumption, I think it would make

more sense to assume that man's rationality and his sense of justice should not contradict, or be totally different from, God's rationality and His sense of justice. Avicenna's God, in sharing with man a rationality that is inconsistent with His own rationality, would be inconsistent Himself and, thus, He would be less perfect than He is claimed or expected to be. In other words, if God's rationality is the source of our rationality--as He is the Ultimate Active Intellect that ultimately illuminates all intellects--then His rationality, including His conception of justice, though more perfect than ours, should not be inconsistent with, or totally different from, ours.

Again, Avicenna's God seems to be inconsistent. He is claimed to create purposely but there is one event he created without a purpose, namely, man's consciousness of his own free choice. Avicenna does not justify why God bestowed on man such an apparently useless power to discover the sad "truth" about himself, that he is determined in this world to do evil and is predestined to suffer eternally in the hereafter. Self-consciousness, if it has any purpose, should be a motive for man to change his own conduct and should be a good reason for claiming that man can be the agent of his actions.

Moreover, God appears in Avicenna's theory as an unjust God. In such a theory, a criminal is created criminal. That is, he is destined in this life to be such and, furthermore, he is predestined in the hereafter to suffer eternal pain. Any reasonable person would resent the possibility of God, the supposedly model of justice, determining a man to be a criminal and reserving for him eternal suffering. Human intellect (reason), as an Avicennian emanation of God's intellect, should dictate that such a behavior would, if it were the case, be unjust, and God would be a sadist if He were to allow the innocent to know that he is innocent and nonetheless he is destined to suffer without fault on his part. No doubt, one's ethical evil, such as the creation by God of one born-to-be-condemned individual, may be insignificant in the eyes of God when compared to the good in the universe. But when eternal damnation of an individual endowed with an intellect and a will is at stake, such an insignificance becomes for this concerned individual as important as order and harmony in the whole universe is to God. Consequently, to predestine, or rather to condemn, such a man to "eternal tribulation" would show that God is unjust.

Consequently, the statement by Hayy as to the necessity of not losing hope in gaining eternal felicity is certainly encouraging, but the knowledge that God can be capricious, deceitful, inconsistent, and unjust is so frightful that it can easily overshadow the invitation to hope in God's generosity and mercy:

faman ʿazalaka ʿan al-ʾirjvʾi khāʾiban wa sawwala laka al-qawla bi-t-takhlīdi wājiban[?] Q, 16-17 — Au contraire si tu considères Dieu comme élevé au dessus de toute comparaison humaine, es-tu sûr qu'il t'a privé de tout espoir de salut, ou qu'il t'a garanti sa récompense comme nécessité? (Q, 8).

Also, if the fate of inanimate and animate beings is determined and fits properly within the Avicennian universal order and harmony (where everything has a purpose), what is the purpose, for world order and harmony, of the fact that man resents the punishing of the innocent?

The parable related by Hayy to Avicenna and his friend of the rich landlord

and his servants appears to be misleading as it suggests that man can make choices, while man is nothing but a determined machine. If this landlord rewards those who obey and punishes those who are delinquent, then it must also be assumed that when the landlord ordered them to work and produce, he presupposed the capacity of these servants to choose whether to obey or to disobey. That is, these servants must have some free will to obey or disobey. And it is for this same reason that they are responsible for complying with, or breaking, the landlord's orders.

Furthermore, the order of Hayy at the end of the allegory for men to "act [according to God's dictates], so that [they] will be favored with the success for which they have been created [i.e., destined]" (author's translation) suggests free will:

I'malu fakullun muyassar lahu lima khuliqa lahu. (Q, 25) — Travaillez toujours, chacun de vous sera favorisé du succès, s'il ne force pas sa nature! (Q, 12)

If ethical evil is, like the physical evil, governed by mechanical-like causality, how then is one to interpret the fact that man does in fact feel pain when making certain decisions? Although Avicenna does not seem to have answered this question, he would still be consistent in saying that deliberation and painful decisions are, like anything else, causally ordered. But if this were the case, one might further ask: what is the purpose, for the claimed world order, of one's remorse and belief that one could have acted otherwise? One might presume Avicenna's answer to be that remorse and belief in being able to act otherwise are nothing but determining causes, and these too fit within universal order and harmony. If so, man's belief in his being determined no matter what he does would rather make him follow the easier slope and do evil if he is tempted and he feels like slipping.

When applying Avicenna's teaching about man's so-called "choice" in courts of justice, we may say that on Avicennian grounds, the offender of the law is actually innocent (because he or she has no choice but to do what he or she is compelled to do), and nonetheless the Avicennian prosecutor would think it is reasonable and acceptable to have the offender tried, and eventually punished on the basis that punishment would deter either the offender himself in the future, if there is any future in this world for him, or any other potential offenders. However, the consequence of such a theory of justice is that prosecutors and judges would be allowed to have innocent people punished, if such a punishment would, if ever, deter somebody. Here, one can easily see how many innocent people would thus unjustly be punished.

Such a deterministic outlook suggests that Avicenna would agree to impose, in civil courts of justice, punishment on the individual who is known to be determined. The mentally or physically impaired would, by the way, be liable to punishment as any hardened criminal. Thus, Avicenna would eventually punish the innocent in order to deter others from committing evil-doing. His justification would be that such an evil (punishing the innocent) is insignificant when compared to universal order and harmony.

Conclusion

Having these objections or considerations in mind, one should, contrary to

Avicenna, find man's belief that he can act freely and responsibly not only more likely to be true, but indeed imperatively so, in light of the belief in a just God, a just society, and a more harmonious universal order.

References

- Avicenna, *Risālat Hayy bin Yaqzān*, paraphrased in French by M.A.F. Mehren (1889), as *Traîtés Mystiques... d'Avicenne*, fascicule I: *L'allégorie mystique Hayy ben Yaqzān* (Arabic text included). Leide: E.J. Brill.
- Avicenna, *Risālat al-Qadar*, paraphrased in French by M.A.F. Mehren (1889), as *Traits Mystiques... d'Avicenne*, fascicule IV: *Traîtés sur le destin* (Arabic text included). Leide: E.J. Brill.
- Avicenna, *Risālah fī sirr al-qadar*, translated into English and edited by George F. Hourani (1966) as: Ibn Sinā's 'Essay on the secret of destiny.' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, vol. XXIX, Part 1, 17-23.
- Avicenna, *al-Shifā'*, Book of *Ilāhiyyāt*, edited by F. Rahman (1959) as *Avicenna's De Anima*, Oxford Univ. Press.
- A. M. Goichon (1938), *Lexique*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer

Dr. Gabriel Lahood, Visiting Professor at the College of the Bahamas, has taught Philosophy and Religion at various colleges and universities in the U.S. and overseas. His specialization focuses on the concept of human agency in Aristotle (ancient Greek philosopher) and Avicenna (medieval Muslim philosopher) and on contemporary issues of free will vs. determinism. He has read papers at conferences and published on the subject of agency as well as on Islam and on specific issues within the field of philosophy of religion. He is now pursuing research and teaching, keeping a safe balance between the two.