

Revista Filosófica de Coimbra

VOL. 8 • N.º 15 • MARÇO 99

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CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN MEDIEVAL IBERIAN
PENINSULA: REVIEW ARTICLE

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While the conferences on «Medieval Religious and Philosophical Dialogue between Christianity, Judaism and Islam in the Iberian Peninsula» held in June 23 - 26, 1991, in San Lorenzo de El Escorial were published under a same title by Brepols¹, the papers presented at that occasion were assembled in one volume of the Portuguese series «Mediævalia. Textos e Estudos» with a Foreword by H. Santiago-Otero².

The sixteen different essays provide a good example of the asymmetrical and unsystematic approach to Iberian history of Ideas. Most of the papers in the present issue are written in Spanish, but there are also four in French and one in Italian³. Portuguese themes⁴ as well as specific Iberian ones (covering all the three religions) contrast with papers dealing with major figures such as Raymond Lull⁵, Averroes and Thomas Aquinas (by Léon

¹ *Diálogo Filosófico-religioso entre Cristianismo, Judaísmo e Islamismo durante la Edad Media en la Península Ibérica. Actes du Colloque international de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, 23-26 juin 1991*, édités par Horacio-Santiago Otero, Turnhout, 1994, 508 pp.; see ID. — «Presentación», *Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval* 3 (1996) 196-200.

² *Diálogo Filosófico-religioso entre Cristianismo, Judaísmo e Islamismo durante la Edad Media en la Península Ibérica. Comunicações (Mediævalia. Textos e Estudos, 5-6. Porto, 1994)*, 340 pp. Henceforth: DFRC.

³ See Maria Lodovica Arduini — «'Potere' e 'ragione' nel "Dialogus" di Pietro Alfonsi (Mosè Sefardi). Linee preliminari per una ipotesi interpretativa», DFRC 21-97.

⁴ J. Cerqueira Gonçalves — «Las religiones no cristianas en 'Los Lusíadas' de Luís de Camões», DFRC 165-171; Maria Sirgado Ganho — «Une Œuvre de Théologie 'Adversus Judæos' d'un auteur portugais anonyme du milieu du XIV^e siècle», DFRC 99-108; and António Losa — «Le statut légal des maures et des juifs portugais pendant les XII^e-XV^e siècles», DFRC 277-307.

⁵ Walter W. Artus — «Judaísmo e Islamismo en la autobiografía y en algunos escritos de Raimundo Lulio», DFRC 191-203.

J. Elders), Ibn Gabirol ⁶, Gerbert of Aurillac ⁷, and Alvarus Pelagius ⁸. The Spanish contribution also covers a wide range of themes: Jean-Pierre Rothschild deals with the figure and the work of 'Eli 'Habilio (p. 9-20); Jorge M. Ayala with mudejar art (p. 109-118); Arie Schippers with hebrew and muslim poetry (p. 119-127); Ana Echevarría with 15th century castilian literature (p. 231-246); Andrés Martínez Lorca tries to explain how philosophy arose in Al-Andalus (p. 173-189), while Iluminado Sanz Sancho studies the relationship between Jews and Converts in Córdoba (p. 129-163).

There is no need for us to justify the interest in having an examination of cultural interactions within such a restricted geographical frame. The Iberian peninsula had its own specificity in the complex dialogue of the three religions that one could partially assess through the article of Andrés Martínez Lorca («¿Como fue posible la germinación de la filosofía en Al-Andalus?»). A spirit of tolerance, an attitude that will receive more attention from us in the pages that follow; and specially, an unusual inter-racial atmosphere allowed a particular Western Jew and Muslim Thought. Yet, Al-Andalus is only one of the Spanish nations. Since Castile and Portugal are also represented in this volume, we regret the absence of studies dealing with Aragonese and Catalonian realms. For plausible yet incomplete surveys of such a trend, in its particularity, it is advisable to consulte both Miguel Cruz Hernández, «Islamic Thought in the Iberian Peninsula» in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. by Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Leiden, 1994, vol. II, p. 777- 803, and J. Pinharanda Gomes' two titles, *A Filosofia Árabe-Portuguesa* (Lisbon, 1991) and *A Filosofia Hebraico-Portuguesa* (Oporto, 1981).

Martínez Lorca insists upon the social factors (mainly the intrinsic pluralism of Islam) instead of referring to the traditional paths that served philosophy to penetrate in Al-Andalus. If he is right in such a plea, it seems to us that this volume testifies to the amount of problems connected with a precise definition of such an «Iberian dialogue». In short, it is our conviction that the assessment of that problem, in its geographical particularity, needs to be carried out with fully detailed analyses of the entire documental and monumental «corpus», paying special attention to local and diachronical discrepancies. Therefore, it is too soon to have a

⁶ Celina Lértora Mendoza — «Un aporte a la filosofía judeo-cristiana», DFRC 259-275; Maria P. Ferrer Rodríguez — «Relación transcendental 'materia-forma' en el "Fons Vitae", DFRC 247-258.

⁷ M^a Pau Ginebra i Molins — «La ciencia como vehículo de diálogo entre cristianismo e Islamismo: Gerberto de Aurillac y la cultura hispánica», DFRC 205-218.

⁸ J. Chorão Lavajo — «Alvaro Pelagio dans le contexte médiéval, islamo-chrétien ibérique», DFRC 309-340.

plausible answer given the meagre and unsystematic work already done. Meanwhile, let us salute the presence of non-hispanists (but regret the absence of more representatives of Muslim and Jewish scholarship) among the speakers at this event and the fine choice of the theme of pacific confrontation — «diálogo» — which is strange to an obsolete compartmentalized perspective, although in its own terms not entirely impartial.

One must recognise from the start the significance of Rothschild's contribution to this volume given the importance of the work of the almost unknown 15th century translator 'Eli b Joseph 'Habilio⁹. The author of this paper announces a forthcoming article on the same subject in the french review *Archives d'Histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* and here he gives a list of 'Habilio's translations and own works, based on his research amidst catalogs and bibliographies. After an introduction where he establishes 'Habilio's castilian origin he tries to explain how he studied Latin in order to translate Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham and John Versoris, and how he made these translations. Another example of a study presented as an occasion to resume and to publicize a more important work is the fine paper of Lodovica Arduini. Indeed she provides a very thorough investigation (in fact the richest of them all) in order to convey to us the *Dialogus* of Petrus Alfonsus (before his conversion in June 29, 1106, his godfather being King Alfonsus VI of Castille and Léon, a Sefardic Jew called Mosè) as a text that deserves to be read not only as an example of the *disputatio/controversia* literature but also (and mainly) because of its philosophical nature: his Hebrew and personal path to the Christian religion helped him to develop a particular type of rational demonstration of the only and unique truth of the Christian faith.

Different from this trend is the work studied by Sirgado Ganho's article on what appeared to her to be a third exemplar of medieval Portuguese *adversus judaeos* literature (along with the *Livro da Corte Enperial* studied by Cruz Pontes in 1957 and Friar John of Alcobaca's *Speculum Hebraeorum*, BNL Cod. Alcob. CCXXXIX/236 and CCXL/270). In spite of what Ganho says, that work is only a translation of the Spanish *Libro de las tres creencias*¹⁰. One has to observe that such a text (unpublished for the time being) is not the only piece written in Medieval Portuguese language belonging to that kind of literature; very recently Aires do Nascimento has published and translated the *Horologium Fidei* of Friar Andrew of Prado

⁹ Jean-Pierre Rotschild — «'Eli 'Habilio, Philosophe juif et traducteur de latin en hébreu — Flor. Ca 1465, Post 1477», DFRC 9-20.

¹⁰ See José Antunes' Ph. D. Thesis, *A cultura portuguesa nos séculos XIII e XIV (Juristas e Teólogos)*, pro manuscripto, Coimbra, 1995.

(Lisbon, 1994, 493 pp.) allowing us to trace an apologetical characteristic in Portuguese medieval culture¹¹.

If the present volume is poor in dealing with unpublished materials it is rich enough in a hermeneutical perspective. In this respect, we may separate the more philosophical themes from those treating with the various kinds of culture. To begin with this last aspect, the volume deserves special attention of those interested in art and literature. Naturally, we are speaking, first, of art as a testimony of social intercourse. In fact, studying mudejar art as a kind of architecture neither specifically Muslim nor Christian, Jorge Ayala underlines what in his opinion must be considered as the only true Spanish art. We need not pinpoint the difficulty attached to a distinct definition of mudejar art, but the author intends to stress the idea of a style wholly created and developed in Spain and for «Spanish» people, that is to say, an art that only an intercultural and interreligious atmosphere could create. Going from architecture to poetry and philology, although not with any kind of nationalistic tone, let us pass to the paper of Arie Schippers («Problemas de la adaptación de la poesía hebrea a la poética árabe en España musulmana») dealing with Yehudah ha-Levi's (1075-1141) objections to the use of Arabic versification. In such a brief paper as this one it is almost impossible to examine all the implications of the two purposes that the author announces: a study of the adaptation of Hebrew to Arabic poetry as it occurred in the *Kitab al khazari*, and erotic and bachic poetry as a reflection of the spirit of interchange as exemplified by Samuel han-Nagid's Poem 160 (D. Yarden's edition). One would expect some more details on these two complex subjects but it is obvious that the author exhibits the necessary scientific preparation as it is shown by his book *Arabic Tradition and Hebrew Innovation: Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry* (Amsterdam, 1988).

15th century Castilian literature has shown to Ana Echevarría («El Mi'raj en la literatura castellana del siglo XV») the permanence of Islamic culture. Studying the use of the *mi'raj* (the ascension to Heaven made by the Profet Muhammad during a nightly voyage, according to the Sura 17.1) in a period when Islam is far from his highest point, the author gives us a fine example of the ambivalent use of an eschatological legend. Here is a line of investigation in literature that needs to be carried out.

By now it is obvious that this section of the contributions faces the vast problem of relationships among the three monotheistic religions by dimensions others than historical ones. This bias is balanced by two essays

¹¹ See M. S. de Carvalho — «Conspecto do Desenvolvimento da Filosofia em Portugal (Séculos XIII-XV)», *Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval* 4 (1997), 131-155.

studying regional interactions but they are very different in their own way. After researching in the Archives of Córdoba Cathedral, Sanz Sancho confirms Suárez Fernández investigations¹² regarding the prejudiced view the society of Córdoba demonstrated towards the Jewish people; unfortunately Sanz Sancho's investigation covers a very long period of time (1250-1510) but is well grounded in information on 183 persons precisely situated (see the Appendix, pp. 147-63). His final thesis is the following: as a more mature Christian society has a greater consciousness of herself, so increases the violence (although more spiritual than physical) against Jewish neighbours. We are faced with a type of investigation that deserved to be more articulated in this present volume as numerous essays from Maria José Pimenta Ferro have shown us¹³. Regrettable is the absence of such scholars as Maria José, Manuel A. Rodrigues or António Dias Farinha, and it is advisable not to envisage Iberian scholarship as completely represented in this volume; at least, one had to add the list of the contributors of the volume referred at the very beginning of this note.

During the same vast period of time, but in a different region, Portugal, and with a different material, the Law, and considering both the Jewish and Islamic communities, is studied by António Losa. It is well known that in 1492 the Jews and Muslims were expelled from that country, this decision being also a consequence of the Spanish politics of Dom Fernando and Doña Isabel. What struck the author was the fact that examining Portuguese Laws nothing would expect such an outcome. Is it however possible to conclude, we may ask, that the examination of jurisprudence is adequate enough to testify to a distinct regional approach to the two religions? That being as it may, Losa's article is a plea (with nothing new) for the common thesis of a specificity in Portuguese attitudes towards Jews and Muslims when compared with the contemporary Spanish idiosyncrasy. One has to be prudent in such a general conclusion and more attentive to changing attitudes throughout the centuries and several politics. Therefore, the Bishop of Silves (southern Portugal) Alvarus Pelagius is a very good example of juridical intolerance. That is why we can not fully agree with J. Chorão Lavajo who in his study of the Bishop Pelagius (14th Century) insists upon his defence of freedom of religion. Lavajo's study, which does not pay any attention whatsoever to recent literature, mainly to João Morais Barbosa's *O "De Statu et Planctu Ecclesiae". Estudo Crítico* (Lisbon, 1982), but also to those studies trying to read Pelagius' works within canon law¹⁴,

¹² See his *Los judíos españoles en la Edad Media*, Madrid, 1980.

¹³ See M^a J. Pimenta Ferro — *Os Judeus em Portugal no século XV*, Lisbon, 1980.

¹⁴ See *Revista da Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas*, 7, 1994, Lisbon, pp. 255-84 with extensive bibliography.

ought to have been more sensitive to the fact that Pelagius was more of a canonist than a theologian. Indeed, more than theology, that was the subject conditioning his semantics of relationships.

Although not medieval, an epic poem such as *Os Lusíadas* by Luís de Camões (died 1580) shares a medieval religious atmosphere. Cerqueira Gonçalves examines Camões' attitude towards the Muslims and finds an asymmetric posture in the way the Poet speaks of them when compared to the other religions that the Portuguese had found during their Maritime Discoveries. It is too soon to try to give a plausible explanation for such a particularity if indeed it is a real one and not only a geopolitical consequence.

We shall finish this survey, intended to notice an edition and a series that needs to be taken into consideration when studying the Middle Ages, by only mentioning the main lines of the contributions attached to major philosophical figures. One should not expect any novelties in these essays and this is (by now this will be a non polemical opinion) only one of the different and possible manners to judge the theme of the Colloquium.

Gerbert of Aurillac, a sage of the 10th century and future Pope, testifies in his letters, a few of them studied by Ginebra i Molins, to an open mind and a vivid interest for works issuing from cultures other than his own. Molins claims that Gerbert is responsible for the transmission (we would add: *partaked*) of both mathematical and technical Arabic science to the West.

Two distinct papers deal with Ibn Gabirol. The first one by Maria Ferrer Rodríguez is nothing but a common article with nothing new on the subject of the matter-form transcendental relation. The second one is more in accordance (although not interely) with the spirit of the volume we are reviewing, and it is concerned with presenting Gabirol's thinking as a synthesis of Greek and Semitic thought, both regarding his universal hylemorphic theory and of will.

How did Thomas Aquinas make his own approach to the work of Averroes? Following the important article by C. Vansteenkiste (in *Rivista degli studi orientali* 32, 1957, 585-623), to whom Léon Elders is much indebt, the author has commented again on a small part of the five hundred quotations of Averroes in Thomas Aquinas' work and reaches the conclusion that Aquinas' critiques do not fundamentally go against the recognition of Averroes' contributions to the truth. Léon Elders' paper is just a résumé of a more detailed study, but we are struck by the importance Averroes has in the *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* (cited 56 times), mainly in the area of epistemology.

The famous *Vida Coetanea* of Raymond Lull written in 1311 was again explained by Walter Artus although not with his customary vigour. The

paper is mainly a summary of the *Vida* which the author reads under the perspective of Raymond's three purposes: to convert the infidels, and Muslims in particular; to write the best possible book in the world conveying necessary reasons for the truth of Catholic faith against the attacks and errors of the infidels; to ask Popes and Kings to favour the erection of schools where learning of Arabic would be made possible.

Gerard of Cremona, Robert of Chester, Adelard of Bath, and Michael Scot are only a few of the major figures that the contributors ignore.

Projects such as this Colloquium at El Escorial help to put the history of Iberian civilisation back in its rightful place. However, the result is meagre in historical details and sources. Nevertheless, despite omissions, our few criticisms, and the lack of a style-editor, looking for different methods of scholarship, this volume is extremely significant, and no future scholarship may ignore this collection.