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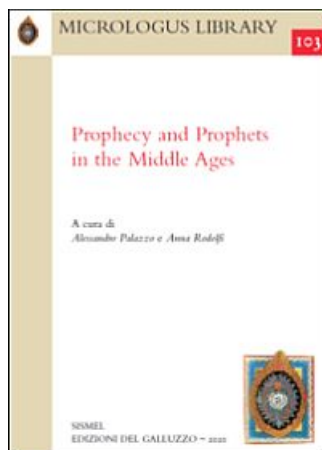
[Alessandro Palazzo / Irene Zavattero](#) (eds.): *Geomancy and Other Forms of Divination*, Firenze: SISMEL. Edizioni del Galluzzo 2018

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Alessandro Palazzo / Anna Rodolfi (a cura di): *Prophecy and Prophets in the Middle Ages*

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The volume edited by Alessandro Palazzo and Anna Rodolfi collects eleven contributions, focused on the theme of prophecy, investigated under different aspects from the historical-philosophical and historical-theological point of view. Most of them are papers presented at a conference organised by the volume's editors at the University of Florence in 2019. The phenomenon of prophecy has long been a focus of interest in medieval studies and medieval philosophical studies in particular (not only as regards the Latin context). In their introduction presenting the works collected in the volume, the editors provide a useful bibliography on the

subject, with an emphasis on the Latin Christian tradition.

The volume is divided into two sections. The first, entitled "Islamic and Jewish Traditions", includes three contributions on the Arabic-Islamic area (on al-Fārābī, Avicenna and al-Ghazālī) and a single paper on the Jewish tradition. The latter paper, dedicated to Maimonides, is placed after the articles on the Islamic tradition, presumably for chronological reasons. The second section is more conspicuous (it includes seven contributions) and assembles the papers on the Latin-Christian area. The intention of the editors is therefore undoubtedly to include the three religious cultures in the same "Middle Ages". This is usual in contemporary studies on medieval philosophy. Nonetheless, this distinction suggests a comparison between spheres rather than a common history: on the one hand, the Jewish and Islamic worlds, on the other, the Latin Christian one. In addition to inadvertently recalling an outdated conception of medieval philosophy, the distinction entrusts philosophy with an epigonic role, at the risk of not highlighting the continuity of the themes dealt with by the different contributions, and thus the line of a history of prophetology. To what extent this separation reflects the distinction proposed by the editors between the Christian conception of prophecy as divine inspiration and the fundamentally Aristotelian and "Arabic" conception of so-called "natural prophecy" (X-XI) is a matter of discussion. As the editors themselves state, the two conceptions of prophecy interact with each other; moreover, "natural" prophecy includes the very idea of divine inspiration, precisely because "natural" prophecy intends to explain it.

The first section ("Islamic and Jewish Traditions") privileges - as we have said - the tradition of Islam. It opens with a work by Cecilia Martini Bonadeo on al-Fārābī. Carefully distinguishing the concepts (and terms) al-Fārābī uses to define revelation and prophecy, Martini Bonadeo examines several texts in order to restore the architecture of the "second master's" prophecy in detail. The result is a precise overall picture that highlights the different modulations of imagination in the prophetic vision and offers important hints to understand some of the key elements of al-Fārābī's thought that are substantiated by the doctrine of prophecy: politics, to give one example, and the relationship between philosophy and prophecy, which is moreover a central node of the medieval prophetological reflection up to Dante. The second contribution, by Amos Bertolacci, examines the place reserved to prophethood in Avicenna's thought. Bertolacci's essential point is that the systemic character of prophethood would be reflected in Avicenna's

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theory of prophecy: founded in metaphysics, prophecy is defined in relation to the qualities or properties of the prophet in psychology (which is part of natural philosophy) and assumes, in the last part of the *Metaphysics* of the *Book of the Healing* (K. *al-Shifā*), the true character of an articulation of practical philosophy. While also offering some detailed interpretations (the "holy spirit" as the holy intellect and the idea of the term "property" used ambiguously by Avicenna), the paper emphasises above all the systematic nature of Avicenna's discourse. The *Metaphysics* (*Ilāhiyyāt* X, 1 and X, 2) completes what we read in the *De anima*, confirming how, for Avicenna, the real reason of prophecy is metaphysical. It is in fact philosophy that explains prophecy, so that one might ask Bartolacci himself whether the philosophical legitimation of prophecy provided by Avicenna does not end up removing the phenomenon from the domain of religion. Marco Signori's "Prophecy and the authority of the Prophet in al-Ghazālī" dwells on the fifth question of the *Physics* of the *Maqāyid al-falāsifa* ("The intentions" or "Doctrines of the philosophers") - to show how al-Ghazālī's philosophical and religious argumentations are mixed. The paper thus confirms that Avicenna is an important source of al-Ghazālī's work (84-85). In Marco Signori's reading, al-Ghazālī has the great ability to cross one perspective with the other ("cultural crosspollination between philosophy and revelation", 80). The result, although not without difficulties, would be that of a synthesis ("doctrinal convergence", "troublesome harmony between the prophethood of *falsafa* and the Prophet of the Qur'ān", 98). To tighten the argument, one would note how, by drawing legitimacy from revelation (as well), al-Ghazālī's discourse ultimately reduces its philosophical character, assuming it is true that, as it is based on the prophetic tradition, religious discourse cannot but be of authority. However, the possibility of crossing the philosophical and religious perspectives perhaps lies precisely in the character of tradition that belongs to both philosophy and religion and that allows al-Ghazālī to consider Avicenna as an authority.

Marienza Benedetto focuses on the issue of divination and false prophecy in Maimonides, comparing some passages of *Mishna Torah* with passages from *The Guide of the Perplexed*. The great questions of Maimonides' prophetology - the auditory vs. visual experience of imagination, the definition of prophecy and the hierarchy it implies, the conceptual relation between revelation and rational monotheism or philosophy - remain in the background. The comparison between the two different writings nonetheless allows us to see how 'prophecy' is for Maimonides an equivocal term ("in an equivocal sense", "polysemous nature", 109). On the one hand, only Moses is the true prophet; on the other hand, the prophetic tradition as a whole must be recognised and divination must be explained as well. The paper allows us to see that for Maimonides the effort of deciphering the phenomenon of prophecy has a meaning (and this is the case with every phenomenon) only in a scientific-rational perspective, i.e., ultimately by resorting to a metaphysical principle, which is flow (110).

The second part of the volume collects seven contributions on various authors, from the early Middle Ages to the 14th century. Renato De (or de?) Filippis seeks to present the question of the criterion of the truth of prophecy from Augustine up through the early Middle Ages. Two contributions deal with the 12th (Maria Valeria Ingegno) and the 13th century (Anna Rodolfi). The other contributions present early medieval theories. The different aspects of prophecy in focus intertwine with each other: truth and the question of language, the definition of prophecy and the question of charisma, the status of Caiaphas' "prophecy" and then - this is more specifically the case of three contributions (Palazzo, Bonini, Fedriga and Limonta) - the relation between divine foreknowledge and prophetic premonition and therefore the question of future contingents. The authors examined are central figures of the Christian theological-philosophical tradition, such as Thomas Aquinas or Eckhart, and peripheral authors with respect to the best-known paths of the history of medieval philosophy, such as Augustine of Trent and Hugh of Saint-Cher. Michele Lodone's reconstruction of the profile of the author hidden behind the pseudonym of Telesforo da Cosenza ("he who announces the end") is interesting: Telesforo wants to be a mere "spokesman" ("nihil de meo ponens") of contents taken from what is defined as a "prophetic bibliography" in which the *Oraculum Cyrilli* and the writings of Gioacchino da Fiore stand out.

The variety of the aspects dealt with and the chronological breadth of the research presented in the volume render it of interest for all those who deal with philosophy and the history of ideas in the Middle Ages. (In this regard, an index of terms or themes would have been helpful.) The topics most covered are language and prediction (*i.e.* the literal sense of the term "prophecy"): both Renato De (or de?) Filippis and Maria Valeria Ingegno investigate the question of the language of the prophet, while Anna Rodolfi examines the definition of prophecy and the paradox that "prophesying" or predicting is not enough to define the prophet, who is a prophet only to the extent that - in his prediction - he is inspired by God. The subject of the paper is the case of Caiaphas in discussions from Hugh of Saint-Cher to Thomas Aquinas: not invested with divine inspiration, Caiaphas "prophesies" the ultimate meaning of Christ's death, but cannot be called a 'prophet'. The question of foreknowledge comes up again in Alessandro Palazzo's contribution, and Francesca Bonini's article on Augustine of Trent's treatise on the plague (14th century) is likewise dedicated to the ability to foresee (*pronosticatio*). Prescience and language are both examined in Fedriga and Limonta's work.

Presenting the work of Italian scholars and in some cases doctoral research, the volume enriches the panorama of studies on prophecy and its related themes (with a surprising omission of Dante).

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