



Yehuda Halper (Hg.), *The Pursuit of Happiness in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Thought. Studies Dedicated to Steven Harvey (Philosophy in the Abrahamic Traditions of the Middle Ages 1)*. Turnhout, Brepols 2021. 432 S.

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Throughout history, scholars of different denominations and cultures have been concerned with the pursuit of happiness. Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes and Maimonides—all following Aristotle—agree that human happiness is rooted in intellectual knowledge of the ‘Good’ in itself, which is usually equated with God. However, the deeds and practical activities advocated for pursuing happiness differed among philosophers from different political, religious, and ethnic backgrounds.

The first volume of the new Brepols publication series ‘Philosophy in the Abrahamic Traditions of the Middle Ages’ tackles the centuries-old question of human happiness in twenty articles and contributes greatly to an under-researched topic. This anthology was compiled on the occasion of Steven HARVEY’s retirement and covers a wide range of medieval authors and texts of Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin origin, all closely related to HARVEY’s own research interests.

The general introduction by Yehuda HALPER and Resianne FONTAINE is followed by three essays by Cristina D’ANCONA, Giuseppe VELTRI, and Mauro ZONTA, which give an overview of the concept of intellectual happiness and its pursuit in different medieval cultures. ZONTA’s posthumously published contribution analyses the term ‘happiness’ and its interpretation in more than ten languages and thus functions as a terminological basis for a philosophical debate of the notion across linguistic boundaries.

The following contributions are arranged chronologically based on the lifetimes of the thinkers discussed. Charles E. BUTTERWORTH and Thérèse-Anne DRUART examine Alfarabi’s interpretation of happiness based on Plato and Aristotle. Y. Tzvi LANGERMANN highlights the pursuit of human happiness from a medical point of view as it is presented in Avicenna’s ‘Cardiac Drugs’. Contributions by

Hannah KASHER together with Ariel MALACHI, Dong XIUYUAN, Charles MANEKIN, and Resianne FONTAINE are devoted to Maimonides' philosophical concepts and the interpretation of his works by Jewish thinkers. Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics' are interpreted by Averroes who comments on intellectual erotic desire as well as the notion of amusement in contrast to happiness, which is explored by Yehuda HALPER and Frédérique WOERTHER. Binyamin ABRAHAMOV sheds light on Ibn al-'Arabi's pursuit of spiritual freedom as a form of happiness that can be reached through his theology of prayer. The debate is then shifted to medieval Italy and France by Katja KRAUSE and Ruth GLASNER in their exploration of happiness in the writings of Thomas Aquinas and Levi Gersonides. Joseph b. Shem-Tob, greatly influenced by Aquinas and his use of Talmudic as well as biblical examples, is analyzed in Chaim M. NERIA's essay. Warren Zev HARVEY examines the use of the concept by Hasdai Cresca, the only philosopher who deviates from Aristotle's interpretation of intellectual happiness. Dov SCHWARTZ explores happiness as a form of asceticism in late medieval Byzantine Jewish writings. Yitzhak Y. MELAMED then moves the debate to the 17th-century Netherlands discussing Spinoza. The final essay by John WALBRIDGE functions as a literary epilogue for this anthology as it contrasts the pursuit of good living in the Athens of Euripides and the madrasas of Pakistan.

Each contribution is followed by a well-structured bibliography listing the manuscripts, primary and secondary sources used. The book concludes with an extensive publication list of Steven HARVEY's writings and a series of indices provided for the reader's convenience.

Readers may notice that the handling of foreign-language terms was left to the individual authors, some of whom opted for the transcription of the terms, while others chose the script of the source language. In individual cases, this led to formation errors (219). Different transcription principles are also reflected in the index. This concerns some Arabic letters (e.g., 'Ain and Shīn are represented by different Unicode characters) as well as unclear standards for abbreviating *ibn* to *b.* when it appears as part of a name's designation.

Overall, this publication is a valuable and enjoyable contribution to the history of philosophy. Despite the subject's complexity and the diversity of approaches, the reader is presented with a plethora of concepts and doctrines for the study of the pursuit of happiness. From ancient Greece to Medieval Islam and the Renaissance Netherlands—the book's transcultural nature makes it an important read across a wide range of disciplines.