

WALBRIDGE, J. (2014). *THE ALEXANDRIAN EPITOMES OF GALEN VOL. 1: ON THE MEDICAL SECTS FOR BEGINNERS; THE SMALL ART OF MEDICINE; ON THE ELEMENTS ACCORDING TO THE OPINION OF HIPPOCRATES. A PARALLEL ENGLISH-ARABIC TEXT TRANSLATED, INTRODUCED, AND ANNOTATED.* UTAH, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY PRESS

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The book is edited, translated, introduced and annotated by John Walbridge, who earned his PhD in 1983 from Harvard University. Nowadays, Walbridge is Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Indiana University Bloomington, his researches are mainly in the area of Islamic Philosophy, Religion and Sciences. Walbridge has been writing books and papers on the Islamic culture, especially on the Islamic reception of the Greek culture in Medieval period. As examples, in 1992 he published *The Science of Mystic Lights: Qutb al-Din Shirazi and the Illuminationist Tradition of Islamic Philosophy*: a monograph about the philosophy of Qutb al-Din Shirazi, an Iranian philosopher of the 13th century who was influenced by Platonism, Avicennian Neoplatonist theory of emanations and Iranian Mythology. In 1996, he published *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*: a very complete work on the Baha'i religion, which began in 19th century Iran. The book fills a great gap offering general information about the sociological features of the religion, its history, law and rites for instance. Last but not least, the book accurately also explains the Baha'i scriptures.

Returning to the theme of the Greek influences on the Islamic Mysticism, in 1996, Walbridge published *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardi and the Heritage of the Greeks*. This book dialogues with the above mentioned book which was published in 1992, since Suhrawardi, the main character here, was the person who mostly influenced the work and thought of Qutb al-Din Shirazi, theme of Walbridge's book of 1992. *The Leaven of the Ancients* consists of a translation of the Suhrawardi dream with Aristotle, accompanied by Dr. Walbridge's commentaries which explain, for

instance, the reasons that made Suhrawardi develop a mystical approach of Islamic religion, leaving the Aristotelian influences on the sciences and advancing a Neoplatonic tradition “leaded” by Pythagoras, Plato and Hermes Trismegistus. The whole context and background of the transmission of Platonic and Neoplatonic thought and philosophy and their reception by Suhrawardi is explained in 2001 in Walbridge’s book: *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardai and Platonic Orientalism*.

In 2013, Walbridge published *God and Logic in Islam: The Caliphate Of Reason*, a very welcomed book, since Walbridge shows that, despite the violence and fundamentalism which are usually thought as inner features of Islamic religion, in Medieval period the Islamic laws and theology were developed through great rational arguments and debates, quite often founded in philosophical grounds, and the same can be said about the sciences. Maybe the *rationalism* is the way for bringing back the Islamic Golden Age and, consequently also stopping the fundamentalism.

Regardless of the quality and importance of Walbridge’s works for the area of the Near Eastern studies, the parallel English-Arabic translation of *On the Medical Sects for Beginners; The Small art of Medicine; On the Elements According to the Opinion of Hippocrates* (in: *The Alexandrian Epitomes of Galen vol. 1*) can easily be considered as his major work, and the main feature which makes the book so outstanding is the excellence: of the introduction, commentaries, translations, appendices, glossary and bibliography, and we must not forget also the high quality of the Arabic typography. In short, the book is very complete as a

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whole and each part is excellent in itself. It is a unique source for comprehending the reception of the Galenism by Medieval Arabic thinkers.

Regarding the current volume of *The Alexandrian Epitomes of Galen*, the introduction offers useful explanations on the issues treated, and it is divided in the following chapters: *The Alexandrian medical curriculum* (subdivided in: *The medical school in Alexandria; The Alexandrian medical syllabus; Alexandria and the Islamicate medical curriculum*); *The Alexandrian epitomes* (subdivided in: *Genre, form, and title; Style and content of the epitomes; History and authorship of the epitomes; Possible authors of the epitomes; Plausibility of the Arabic accounts and dating the epitomes; The Arabic translation; Galen's three texts and their Alexandrian epitomes*); *The edition and translation* (subdivided in: *Previous versions, editions, and translations; Descriptions of manuscripts; Textual history and editing methods; Other editorial policies; Division of the texts; Glosses and scholia; Translation; Annotation*). As usual, this introductory chapters and subchapters are followed by one chapter on *Abbreviations and Conventions*.

After that, we have the complete, parallel and bilingual translation of the following Alexandrian epitomes of Galen: *On the Medical Sects for Beginners; The Small art of Medicine; On the Elements According to the Opinion of Hippocrates*, annotated. This study also provide us with three appendices: the former offers a list of *Greek and Islamicate Physicians*; the second one offers more info on *The Three Schools of Medicine*; and the third one is a brief explanation of *The Structure and Terminology of the Eye in the Epitome of The Small*

Art. Finally we also have a very complete and exciting *Arabic-Greek-English Glossary*; a very useful and updated *Bibliography*; and a very good *Index*.

Obviously, the book is aimed to be read by scholars and professors even if the way the author wrote it as well as the exhaustive amount of information available could make it a “bestseller”. Unfortunately the theme of the book, despite being extremely interesting, is still forgotten by most scholars, even those whose works deal with the History of Medicine or History of Philosophy. I sincerely hope that this great book can fill the huge gap left by the oblivion of the transmission of one of the major trends of Late Ancient thought, Galenism, to Medieval thinkers.

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