Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary on the Poetics, or the Ethical Education

Frédérique Woerther

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC ETHICS (2024) 1–25

BRILL

JI ETHICS أخلاق ÉTHIQUE

brill.com/jie

Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary on the *Poetics*, or the Ethical Education

*Frédérique Woerther** | ORCID: 0000-0002-3515-7249
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris, France
frederique.woerther@cnrs.fr

Published online 13 November 2024

Abstract

In his *Talkhīṣ Kitāb Arisṭūṭālīs fī l-Shiʿr* ("Middle Commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*") Ibn Rushd (Averroes, d. 595/1198) strictly defines poetic statements (*al-aqāwīl al-shiʿriyya*) as imaginative (*mutakhayyila*) statements that imitate the good and the evil, and aim at inciting people to virtue and deterring them from vice. Yet the traces of the Aristotelian ethical doctrine in this Commentary are not restricted to this link to virtue ethics, as the entire text follows at different levels the division between virtue/vice and good/evil. Ibn Rushd also refers to the teaching of ethics when discussing the object of poetic imitation (*al-tashbīh wa-l-muḥākāt*), the different natures he distinguishes among poets, and the genres of panegyric (*madīḥ*) and satire (*hijāʾ*). However, recent scholarship tends to view the *Poetics* in the Islamic context as a fundamentally logical treatise. Following the Alexandrian tradition, the *falāsifa* sought, at least since al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), to justify and explain the position of the *Poetics* in the *Organon* by defining, for example, the logical and psychological mechanisms of the poetical syllogism. More specifically, philosophers drew parallels between the role of imagination (*takhayyul*) in the poetical context and the role of assent or conviction (*taṣdīq*) in the other logical arts, and in particular in the *Rhetoric* (*al-Khiṭāba*).

The purpose of this contribution is to demonstrate that the *Poetics*, according to Ibn Rushd, is a treatise that combines logic and ethics and determines in that respect the conditions and the rules of a practical education of the citizens. Like the rhetoric whose political value was already determined, poetics also plays a role in defining the nature and the content of the poetical statements that are to be employed in order

* I thank Steven Harvey for his comments and the corrections he helped me to make to the English version of this article.

to encourage people to virtuous actions – that is, the very condition for a virtuous political, and thus, a happy life. Straddling between logic and ethics, poetry is therefore fundamentally political.

Keywords

Poetics – Ibn Rushd – ethics – logical statements – education – panegyric – satire – virtue

تلخيص ابن رشد الأوسط لكتاب «في الشعر» أو التربية الأخلاقية

فريدريك وورتهر
المركز الوطني الفرنسي للبحث العلمي، باريس، فرنسا
frederique.woerther@cnrs.fr

الخلاصة

في تلخيصه لكتاب أرسطو (ت. 322 ق.م.) «**في الشعر**» يعرّف ابن رشد (ت. 595\1198) "الأقاويل الشعرية" على أنها "أقاويل متخيلة" تحاكي الحسن والقبح، وتهدف إلى تحريض الناس على الفضيلة وردعهم عن الرذيلة. ومع ذلك، فإن آثار العقيدة الأخلاقية لأرسطو في التلخيص لا تقتصر فقط على هذا الارتباط بأخلاق الفضيلة، حيث يتبع النص بأكمله على مستويات مختلفة التقسيم بين الفضيلة\الرذيلة والحسن\القبح. يشير ابن رشد أيضًا إلى تعليم الأخلاق عند مناقشة موضوع "التشبيه والمحاكاة،" والطبائع المختلفة التي يميزها بين الشعراء، وأنواع "المديح والهجاء." ومع ذلك، تميل الدراسات الحديثة إلى النظر إلى كتاب «**في الشعر**» في السياق الإسلامي باعتباره رسالة منطقية في الأساس. وعلى غرار المذهب الإسكندري، سعت الفلاسفة، أو منذ الفارابي (ت .339\950) على الأقل، إلى تبرير وتفسير موقف «**في الشعر**» في «**منطق أرسطو (الأورغانون)**» من خلال تعريف الآليات المنطقية والنفسية للقياس الشعري على سبيل المثال. وبشكل أكثر تحديدًا، رسم الفلاسفة أوجه تشابه بين دور "التخيل" في السياق الشعري ودور الاقتناع أو "التصديق" في الفنون المنطقية الأخرى، وخاصة في «**الخطابة**».

إن الغرض من هذا المقال هو إثبات أن كتاب «**في الشعر**»، وفقاً لابن رشد، هو رسالة تجمع بين المنطق والأخلاق وتحدد في هذا الصدد شروط وقواعد التربية العملية للمواطنين. وكما هو الحال مع "**الخطابة**" التي تم تحديد قيمتها السياسية سابقًا، فإن فن الشعر يلعب أيضًا دورًا في تحديد طبيعة ومحتوى العبارات الشعرية التي ينبغي استخدامها لتشجيع الناس على القيام بأفعال فاضلة—والذي هو شرط أساس

لحياة سياسية فاضلة، وبالتالي لحياة سعيدة. وهكذا، فإن الشعر الذي يقع بين المنطق والأخلاق، هو سياسي في الأساس.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الشعر – ابن رشد – الأخلاق – العبارات المنطقية – التربية – المدح – السخرية – الفضيلة

1 Introduction

Ibn Rushd's (Averroes, d. 595/1198) discussion of poetic speech in *Talkhīṣ Kitāb Arisṭūṭālīs fī l-Shiʿr* ("Middle Commentary on Aristotle's [d. 322 BC] *Poetics*," henceforth, *MCPoet*), is structured around a set of ethical contraries premised roughly on the value of good *vs.* evil (laudable *vs.* disgraceful). The most obvious examples are the "poetic statements" (*al-aqāwīl al-shiʿriyya*) that are defined as "imaginative" (*mutakhayyila*) statements, imitating the good and the evil, and that aim at spurring people to virtue or deterring them from vice. Such polarity between good and evil seems to unfold at various levels in the text, especially in Ibn Rushd's discussion of the objects of "comparison and imitation" and the various natures of poets engaged in "panegyric" (*madīḥ*) and "satire" (*hijāʾ*).

However, recent scholarship tends to view the *Poetics* in the Islamic context as a fundamentally logical treatise. Following the Alexandrian tradition, the *falāsifa* sought, at least since al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), to justify and explain the position of the *Poetics* in the *Organon* (Aristotle's corpus of logical treatises) by defining, for example, the logical and psychological mechanisms of the poetical syllogism. More specifically, philosophers drew parallels between the role of imagination (*takhayyul*) in the poetical context and the role of assent or conviction (*taṣdīq*) in the other logical arts, and in particular in the *Rhetoric* (*al-Khiṭāba*).

My intention here is to uncover the fundamental ethical basis of the *Poetics* in Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary by first drawing a link between the ethical edifice rooted in his opposition between good and evil in his discussion of poetic speech and Ibn Rushd's conceptual framework in his Middle Commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (henceforth, *MCNE*).[1]

1 The Middle Commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is only extant in its Latin and Hebrew versions, except for small fragments in Arabic. I quote here my English translation, made from the two manuscripts of the Latin traditions that also turned out to be the best ones of the tradition (see Woerther 2018a, 23, 32–36, 42–58): **O** (Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque

In uncovering this link, it should become evident that Ibn Rushd's *Poetics* is an ethical political treatise that sets the rules for the composition of poetry that gives souls the necessary impulse to realise virtuous actions. The following discussion will thus also raise questions such as how does such a mechanism unfold. And what is the relationship between poetical statements, rhythms, and melodies in the panegyric?

Such issues, which occur throughout the entire *MCPoet*, cannot be examined thoroughly in the present study. My main aim here shall be restricted to mapping out the scattered elements of Ibn Rushd's *MCPoet* in order to rearrange them, draw links between them, and put forth a reading of the ethical basis of Ibn Rushd's poetics that is coherent and not fragmentary. In doing so, I shall take into consideration only Ibn Rushd's *MCPoet* to reconstruct its rationale and its original meaning – a rationale and meaning that, according to Ibn Rushd, should be drawn from the *MCPoet* alone, and without focusing on the Arabic translation by Abū Bishr Mattā (d. 328/940), which he used, or Ibn Sīnā's (Avicenna, d. 428/1037) *al-Shiʿr fī l-Shifāʾ* ("Poetics of the [Book of] Healing," which was also clearly a source of inspiration for Ibn Rushd). Far from pointing out the discrepancies or the misunderstandings generated by the Arabic version of the *Poetics*, I will use the texts of Abū Bishr Mattā and Ibn Sīnā only when they clarify the meaning and the assumptions of Ibn Rushd's *MCPoet*.

2 The Ethical Edifice of the *MCPoet*

While the structure of the *MCPoet* consists of five distinct sections,[2] Ibn Rushd's Commentary is also built around a set of ethical dichotomies, rooted in the contraries of virtue and vice. My claim is that such dichotomies seem

Municipale, 623, thirteenth century), **T** (Toledo, Biblioteca Capitulares 94.14, thirteenth century).

2 The *MCPoet* is divided into six parts: an introduction, followed by five primary sections, described by Puerta Vílchez (2017, 326) in the following way:

> To carry out his task Ibn Rushd takes Aristotle's *Poetics* as he knew it, divided into five essential sections (preface; on tragedy and its parts; on epic; on errors by the poet; comparison between tragedy and epic; conclusion), and comments on it in two ways: (1) theoretical, which includes the preface (*Talkhīṣ*, Chaps. I–III) and the division of the poem into parts (Chap. IV), and (2) practical, which comprises Chaps. V, VI, and VII; these treat good poems, emotion, characters, etc., the elements of elocution, the use of names, and errors by the poet, plus a brief epilogue.

In spite of this description, the text actually shows a more complex structure, as Ibn Rushd takes back some topics that he already approached, and introduces in his Commentary new subdivisions that he had not announced. It will suffice to mention the Italian translation by

to form the edifice for the conceptual basis of the Commentary. They may be listed as follows:

1. Ibn Rushd's distinction between panegyric and satire is structured around the ethical opposition between virtue and vice. In fact, while panegyric is defined as the imitation of virtue, satire is defined as the imitation of vice. Such a view of virtue and vice is, therefore, easily equated to the objects examined in ethics, inasmuch as they belong to the sphere of action and are attributable to the will of the agent.
2. The role of virtue and vice also determines the kind of transformation (whether positively, in a negative way, or envisaged as a neutral transformation, that is a mere correspondence) brought about through poetical imitation.
3. The ethical opposition is also used to go back to the different ethical characterisations of the poets, understood as being at the origin of the two poetical genres, panegyric and satire.
4. Finally, the ethical division between what is virtuous and what is vicious gives their specific shape to the effects produced by the poetical imitation, that is, the encouragement of virtue and the discouragement of vice.

2.1 *The Distinction between Panegyric and Satire*

Ibn Rushd outlines how the nature of poetical speech rests upon three fundamental considerations: (1) the subject matter of poetic speech is voluntary actions; (2) the object of poetical imitation exists, or its existence is possible; (3) there is a relation between knowledge (*ʿilm*) and the actions that the poet aims to praise.

First, borrowing the Aristotelian opposition of tragedy and comedy from the Arabic translation of the *Poetics* by Abū Bishr Mattā, Ibn Rushd understood these two terms, *hijāʾ* and *madīḥ*, to refer respectively to satire and panegyric, and he distinguishes between these two kinds of poetry:

> Every poem and poetical statement is either satire or panegyric.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 59. 20–21, slightly revised

For our present purpose, the question that raises itself here is to what extent is this distinction between two poetical species an ethical distinction? Panegyric and satire are defined by the objects they imitate, which are "voluntary matters, I mean … the noble and the base" (Ibn Rushd 1986b, 60. 2–3), i.e., the

Carmela Baffioni who inserted in the text headings that make this complexity even more palpable and concrete (Ibn Rushd 1991).

voluntary matters that practical (ethical and political)[3] science deals with as also mentioned at the beginning of Ibn Rushd's *Talkhīṣ al-Siyāsa li-Aflāṭūn* ("Commentary on Plato's *Republic*," henceforth, *CRep*):

> This science, known as practical science, differs essentially from the theoretical sciences. … This is because the subject of this science is volitional things, the doing of which is within our power, and the principle of these things is will and choice.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1974, 3. 7–13

If panegyric is defined as the imitation of good things, its counterpart, satire, which will not be examined in the *MCPoet* – as these considerations can be drawn from the contrary of what is said about panegyric – is defined as the imitation of what is evil or base:

> In the art of satire, the intention is not to represent only everything that is evil and base, but rather everything that is ridiculously evil – that is, everything that is vicious and ugly but does not cause grief.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 71. 29–72. 2

The ethical qualification of panegyric returns and is refined in the third section of the *MCPoet*, opening with the definition of panegyric:

> The definition that makes the essence of the art of panegyric understood: it is a comparison and imitation of a complete, virtuous, voluntary deed that has a universal power in the virtuous matters, not a particular power in one of the virtuous matters;[4] [it is an] imitation that affects souls moderately by engendering pity and fear in them. It does this by imitating the

3 On the notion of "practical philosophy" and the relationships between ethics and politics in Ibn Rushd, see Woerther (2018b), and Woerther (forthcoming).

4 The passage that defines panegyric as the imitation of a virtuous deed "that has a universal power in the virtuous matters, not a particular power in one of the virtuous matters" is given here without any further explanation. The Greek original text has: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is noble, complete, and of a certain magnitude, in a language embellished with each kind or artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play" (Aristotle tr. Butcher 1895, slightly revised). Abū Bishr Mattā's translation, from which Ibn Rushd wrote his Commentary has the following text (Tkatsch 1932, 230. 16–18 = 6, 1449b 25–27):

فصناعة المديح هي تشبيه ومحاكاة للعمل الإرادي الحريص والكامل التي لها عظم ومداد في القول النافع ما خلا كل واحد من الأنواع التي هي فاعلة في الأجزاء لا بالمواعيد.

> purity and immaculateness of the virtuous. Indeed, imitation pertains to [exterior] attitudes that follow the virtues, not the dispositions, for these cannot be imagined.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 73. 9–21, slightly revised

Panegyric is here defined as "the comparison and imitation" (*al-tashbīh wa-l-muḥākāt*, in Abū Bishr Mattā's translation of *mimèsis* upon which Ibn Rushd commented) of a "complete, virtuous, voluntary deed," which refers to human deeds as they are envisaged in the ethics, which is the achievement of a deliberate choice (Gr. *proairesis*), defined in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as the synthesis of a good desire and a correct reflection; in other words, as the close association of ethical virtue in the full sense of the term (supported by reason, and not merely natural ethical virtue), and dianoetical or rational virtue (see Aristotle 1894, VI 2).

The object of an imitation that is panegyric is developed further in the *MCPoet*, where Ibn Rushd mentions the six constitutive parts of panegyric, among which the most important ones are the "habits" (*ʿādāt*) and the "beliefs" (*iʿtiqādāt*), which together with "observation" (*naẓar*) constitute the objects of imitation (in contrast to the means of imitation, which are poetical statement, melody, and rhythm):

(The art of panegyric is therefore a comparison and imitation of a voluntary deed, that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude and extension, in the useful statement apart from each of the species that are acting in the parts, not by means of promises).

Compare with Ibn Sīnā's Commentary that Ibn Rushd also used:

> Tragedy is an imitation of an action complete and noble (*faḍīla*), and elevated in rank (*wa-ʿāliyy al-martaba*); in very appropriate speech (*bi-qawl mulāʾim jiddan*), not devoted to every particular part (*lā yakhtaṣṣ bi-faṣīla faṣīla juzʾiyya*); affecting the particulars (*tuʾaththir fī l-juzʾiyyāt*) not with respect to quality (*lā min jihat al-malaka*) but with respect to action (*bal min jihat al-fiʿl*).
>
> TR. DAHIYAT 1974, 88. 15–89. 3

See also Dahiyat 1974, 89n1:

> The word 'particulars' is a translation of the Arabic *juzʾiyyāt* which contrasts, in Avicenna's philosophical terminology, with *kulliyyāt* ('universals'). In this context, he probably means it in the sense of 'individuals,' as he does later in the Commentary (V 7). It is clear, however, whether 'individuals' refer to those *imitating* or those *imitated*. If it refers to the imitators, then what follows ('not with respect to quality but with respect to actions') may be interpreted this way: the imitators do not directly *tell* of the moral qualities of those imitated, they *enact* a mode of action that reveals the character of those imitated. On the other hand, Avicenna may have meant 'individuals' to refer to those imitated and in that case he is not speaking of the mode of representation in tragedy (i.e., dramatic not narrative) but the 'objects' of imitation – actions not qualities.
>
> cf. Aristotle 1895, VI 9, 1450a 15–19

> Now habits and beliefs are the major parts of panegyric, for the art of panegyric is not an art that imitates people themselves insofar as they are individual human beings perceptible to the senses. Instead, it imitates them with respect to their beautiful habits, noble actions, and felicitous beliefs.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 76. 12–17, slightly revised

The habits, deeds, and beliefs mentioned here are entities that are ethically qualified through the use of the adjectives *jamīla*, *ḥusnā*, and *saʿīda*.[5] This imitation affects human souls by raising affections in them and triggering a specific process – the process of imagination – in the intended hearers. Yet how can the poet imitate a virtue, which is a disposition of the soul, which is by definition invisible, as it belongs to the soul? Ibn Rushd provides an answer at the end of the passage when he distinguishes the "disposition" (*malaka*) on the one hand, which is internal (corresponding to Aristotelian *hexis*), from the "attitude" (*hayʾa*) on the other hand, which refers to the external and visible expressions of an internal disposition. In the fifth section of the *MCPoet*, the verses of al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965) quoted by Ibn Rushd enable us to understand that poetry can make one imagine a person's character, that is, his or her ethical disposition by means of a physical description:

> Just as the skilled painter depicts something the way it exists even to the point of depicting the angry and the lazy despite their being attributes of the soul, so too must the poet in his imitation depict everything just as it is even to the point of imitating the characters and the states of the soul. (…) Of this sort of imitation – I mean, that which imitates a state of the soul – is the statement of Abū l-Ṭayyib [al-Mutanabbī] describing the arrival of the Byzantine emissary to Sayf al-Dawla [d. 356/967]:
>
> He came to you his head almost denying his neck
> and in his terror his joints trembling;
> The straightness of the two rows of guards
> directed his progress

5 Compare similar terms used by Ibn Rushd in the *CRep*, when he mentions the objects that are to be imitated through music in the education of the future guardians: "But as they undoubtedly choose to imitate something, they should – from their youth – imitate what is becoming to them, patterning themselves after those who possess strength, a sound mind, freedom, and other such dispositions. But, they ought not to approach the imitations of the base and vicious because the prolonged continuance of imitations dating back to youth will establish a disposition and nature in both body and soul" (Ibn Rushd 1974, 26. 6–14), which he qualifies further as: "in general, the moral virtues" (Ibn Rushd 1974, 27. 15–16).

> toward you, whenever his tremors made
> him swerve.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 96. 27–97. 12, slightly revised

These verses provide an example of how the states of the soul are represented by "the way they exist", i.e., according to how they appear concretely. In this instance, the terror of the Byzantine emissary walking towards Sayf al-Dawla is depicted by his posture and movements: his head bowed, ready to come off as if anticipating decapitation, and the irrepressible tremors that prevent him from walking straight towards the emir between the two ranks of guards.

Secondly, the objects imitated in poetry are defined strictly by Ibn Rushd inasmuch as they belong to the ethical realm, that is, they are qualified as either good and virtuous or evil and vicious. Two further features allow us to identify the objects that are imitated in poetry and examined in the poetics with the objects considered in ethics.

The objects imitated in panegyric are, according to Ibn Rushd, *existing* objects or objects *whose existence is possible*. In other words, they must have a reference in the realm of human action as it is studied in ethics, which means that they are either real or possible:

> He said: "From what has been said about the intention of the poetical statement, it is clear that imitation that comes about by means of false inventions – namely, the things called parables and stories like what is in *Kalīla and Dimna* – is not part of the poet's activity. Indeed, the poet speaks only about existing or possible matters, because these are the things he seeks to have people flee or pursue or for which he seeks a congruous comparison as was said with respect to the headings of imitation."
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 83. 15–84. 1, slightly revised

Those who invent are not fully poets. For the imitation of existing objects is the only condition, according to Ibn Rushd, to urge one towards or deflect one from voluntary actions. The difference here is important with regard to what Aristotle says in *Poetics*, chapter 9, where he asserts that poetry is more philosophical than history insofar as

> it is not the function of the poet (*ergon tou poiètou*) to relate what has happened (*ta genomena*), but what may happen (*all'hoia an genoito*) – what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity (*kai ta dunata kata to eikos è to anagkaion*).
>
> ARISTOTLE 1895, 7, 1451a 36–38

For Aristotle, the boundary lies between events that actually happen – and thus constitute the subject matter of the history – and events that may happen – that are likely, and therefore are universal and belong to philosophy. For Ibn Rushd, the distinction between what actually happens or may happen on the one hand, and what is the product of the activity of the poet who invents a story on the other hand, refers to the realm of actual or possible deeds, that is, the ethical realm in which deeds do occur, as opposed to deeds that do not belong to the actual world but to the fictive world and are thus the product of poetical invention.

The referential, non-fictive, nature of the matters imitated in poetical statements are defined in this way for an obvious reason: poetical statements urge people towards voluntary and virtuous deeds (panegyric) or deter them from voluntary vicious deeds (satire)[6] through the images they produce. For that reason, they must refer to possible or actual deeds:

> He said: "In the art of panegyric one must above all have recourse to existing matters and not to those with invented names for representations of things, for panegyric is directed towards provoking voluntary actions. When the actions are possible, persuasion with respect to them – I mean, the poetic conviction that provokes the soul to pursuit or to flight – takes place more readily."
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 84. 20–27, slightly revised

Consequently, if the ultimate goal of panegyric is to encourage virtues, it must be the imitation of an actual matter or a matter that can be imitated, with a name that is proper to it. In contrast, using fictional statements loses any link with the actual action which is the goal of the poetic imitation.

A third and final feature that needs to be underlined is the role of knowledge (*'ilm*) that accompanies action meant to be praised in panegyric.

> He said: "Praise ought to be about virtuous actions that originate from will and knowledge. For some things are done due to will and knowledge, some are done due neither to will nor to knowledge, and some are done due to knowledge but not to will or due to will but not to knowledge. Similarly, some actions are by someone who knows and others by someone who does not know. Now when an action originates from lack of

6 In the same vein, Ibn Rushd rejects in the *CRep* music (that is poetry) that is specific to women (Ibn Rushd 1974, 23), and more generally poetry that deals with pleasures and that prevails in the poems of the Arabs (Ibn Rushd 1974, 24–25).

> knowledge and will, it does not fall under the heading of praiseworthy. The same holds when it originates from an unknown person, because it then has greatest affinity to lies than to poetry, and must not be imitated."
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 95. 4–17, revised

The expression used here echoes the beginning of Book III of the *MCNE* where, following Aristotle, Ibn Rushd discusses the notions of voluntary and involuntary actions – and among involuntary actions those that are done *because of* ignorance and those done *in* ignorance – and where he also examines to what extent actions must be qualified as "voluntary" and "involuntary" when they are due to ignorance.

If praise or blame is bestowed on voluntary actions, pardon and sometimes also pity are bestowed on involuntary actions, for they take place under compulsion or owing to ignorance; in the case of compulsion, the moving principle is outside the person. However, among involuntary actions that are done through ignorance, one can distinguish those whose agent repents – and in doing so acts voluntarily – whereas the man who does not repent, being different, may be called a "non-voluntary agent." Finally, one must grasp the difference between acting because of ignorance and acting in ignorance: every wicked man is ignorant of what he ought to do and what he ought to abstain from, and it is by ignorance of this kind that men become bad: the corrupt nature of the rational element plays a role in the deliberate choice leading up to action. One cannot therefore qualify such an action as "involuntary." But the person who acts without being aware of the particular circumstances of his action, yet knows what he has to do, acts involuntarily, for it is on such actions that both pity and pardon depend.

Voluntary action as it is defined in the Aristotelian ethical framework is, therefore, not only an action whose principle resides in the agent himself or herself, but an action whose agent knows the particular circumstances of his action:

> Thus, as one says that everything that is done under coercion or by ignorance is involuntary, it is evident that in the case of what is done voluntarily the principle of action itself resides in the agent, and the agent himself or herself knows the particular [circumstances] in which the action is produced.
>
> IBN RUSHD n.d., ad *NE* 1109b 35–1110a 3

One may conclude from this subsection, 2.1, that the Aristotelian ethical doctrine permeates Ibn Rushd's *MCPoet*, especially in the discussion on the

definition of the two poetical genres, panegyric and satire. Such outlook is not limited to the ethical function of poetic speech and the need to praise good actions but also is construed on key ethical doctrines such as the definition of will and specifically voluntary action as demarcated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the following subsection more evidence will be given to support our claim.

2.2 *The Transformative Basis of Poetic Imitation*

Another ethical foundation may be found in the *MCPoet*, namely, the poetic transformation that occurs in the imitation itself, when the poet imitates a matter either as it is, without modifying its ethical value, and that is what Ibn Rushd calls "correspondence" or "congruity" (*muṭābaqa*); or while producing an imitation that embellishes it (cf. *taḥsīn*); or while producing an imitation that depreciates it (cf. *taqbīḥ*):

> There may be a third heading for the comparison that occurs by statement only, namely the comparison in which the only thing sought is congruity between the thing compared and what it is being compared with, not embellishment or depreciation, but only congruity itself. This kind of comparison is like matter ready to be transformed into either of the two extremes – I mean, that through some addition it may at one time be transformed into embellishment and at another time into depreciation, also through addition.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 67. 7–16, revised

Any imitation realised in a poetical statement is, therefore, either accompanied by the poet's moral intention or not. This transformation may be morally neutral – in which case congruity with the imitated object alone is sought, as in the verses where the Arabs "describe inanimate bodies a great deal, as well as animals and plants" (Ibn Rushd 1986b, 68. 9) – or it may be positive or negative, for it is accompanied by a moral intention aiming at embellishing or depreciating the imitated object. Ibn Rushd says that many examples of these latter kinds can be found in the poems of the Arabs, but he does not give any illustrations.

2.3 *The Impact of the Poet's Character on the Soul*

Following the dichotomy panegyric *vs.* satire, which is defined as an imitation of virtues and vices respectively, Ibn Rushd introduces another kind of opposition, distinguishing between different types of souls of poets, that is, between virtuous souls and more contemptible ones:

> For example, it is the naturally virtuous and honourable souls who first engender the art of panegyric – I mean, the eulogising of fine actions – and it is the more contemptible souls who engender the art of satire – I mean, the satirising of base actions. It may be necessary, however, that someone whose intention is to satirise evil people and deeds praises good people and virtuous actions in order to make the baseness of the evil deeds more obvious – I mean, when he mentions those and then mentions base actions in contrast to them.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 70. 21–30, slightly revised

In this way, Ibn Rushd explains the origin of the different poetic genres, attributing and deriving them from the respective good and bad characters that can be found among poets.

2.4 *Poetry as a Spur to Virtue and a Dissuasion from Vice*

A final ethical distinction in the *MCPoet* allows us to notice the ethical effect produced by poetical imitation. This imitation has a pedagogical effect on the souls of the hearers, as it is aimed at spurring people to virtue and deterring them from vice. Ibn Rushd writes:

> He said: "Because those who make imitations and comparisons seek thereby to encourage the performance of some voluntary actions and discourage others, the things one seeks to imitate must necessarily be either virtues or vices. That is to say, every action and every character follows from one of these two – I mean, from virtue and vice. Since each of the voluntary actions whose imitation is sought is either a virtue or a vice, the virtues must necessarily be imitated only by virtues and two virtues, and the vices only by vices or two vices. Since every comparison and narration is concerned only with the noble and the base, it is clear that in every comparison and narration, only embellishment and depreciation are sought. In addition, those who imitate virtues – I mean, those who are naturally inclined to imitate them – must necessarily be more virtuous and those who imitate vices are naturally more deficient and more proximate to vice. Panegyric and satire – I mean, eulogizing the virtues and satirizing the vices – arise from these two sorts of people. This is why some poets excel at panegyric but not at satire, whereas with others it is the converse – I mean, they excel at satire but not at panegyric. Therefore, these two headings – I mean, embellishment and depreciation – are necessarily found in every comparison and imitation. Indeed, these two

> headings are only found in the comparison and in the imitation that occur by statement, not in the imitation that occurs by meter nor in that which occurs by melody."
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 66. 2–67. 7, slightly revised

In this passage, the two terms, *taḥsīn* and *taqbīḥ*, respectively "embellishment" and "depreciation," refer to the effects produced by panegyric and satire on the souls of those to whom these poetical statements are addressed. This passage explains clearly how a "poetical statement" (*al-qawl al-shiʿrī*) is envisaged. First of all, it is defined as the comparison and imitation of a virtue (or a vice), and draws its ethical qualification from the natural disposition of the poet who produced it. The poets who are morally most excellent are more capable of producing comparisons and imitations of virtues, whereas the poets who are morally most deficient are more capable of producing comparisons and imitations of vices. The distinction between panegyric envisaged as an imitation of virtue, and satire, as an imitation of vice, follows the ethical distinction between the virtuous poet who may have produced it and the vicious, or unvirtuous, one who may have done so. Secondly, the ethical and aesthetic divisions between panegyric and satire lead to the ethical division of the effects produced by the two kinds of poetical statements: if panegyric contributes to "embellishment" (*taḥsīn*) as it aims at spurring virtuous voluntary actions (cf. *an yaḥuththu ʿalā ʿamal baʿḍ al-afʿāl al-irādiyya*) by providing hearers with imitations of virtue, its counterpart – satire – aims at deterring from voluntary unvirtuous actions by supplying imitations of vice to the hearers.

These ethical contraries, which pervade the entire text of the *MCPoet*, as well as the obvious references to definitions that originate from Aristotelian ethics (through the *MCNE*), allow us to link the perspectives proper to ethics and poetics. This may be seen from the following two considerations.

First, this relationship between ethics and poetics, which is already found in Aristotle's *Poetics*,[7] is emphasised even further by Ibn Rushd in his *MCPoet*. When he seeks to determine the magnitude and perfection of panegyric, he uses the vocabulary employed by Aristotle to define ethical virtue, which he draws from his own *MCNE*:

> Thus we say: "The art of panegyric must fully attain the ends of its activity … That comes about by various means. One of them is for the

7 See for example Verdenius (1944); Schütrumpf (1970); Held (1985); Blundell (1992); Woerther (2007, 183–195); Destrée (2003–2004); Donini (2003). More generally, the notion of tragic *katharsis*, intended to have an effect on the souls of the spectators/readers, closely links the ethical and the poetical realms.

> *qaṣīda*[8] to be of a magnitude such that it is whole and complete. Something that has a beginning, a middle, and an end is whole and complete. The beginning is before and must not occur with the things for which it is a beginning. The end is with the things for which it is an end, and it is not before. The middle is before and with and, because it is in the position of being before and after, the middle is better than the two extremes. Indeed, the courageous are those whose position in warfare is between that of the cowardly and that of the rash, which is the mean position. Similarly, the excellent definition in composition is the mean; it is composed of the two extremes, whereas they are not composed of it. That which is in the middle must not be a mean – that is, an optimal thing – with respect to composition and order alone, but also with respect to quantity."
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 80. 11–81. 11, slightly revised

Whereas Aristotle defines tragedy as an imitation of an action that is complete and whole (that is, having a beginning, a middle, and an end) (Aristotle 1980, 7, 1450b 21 *sq.*), Ibn Rushd takes back the idea of "middle" (Gr. *meson*, Ar. *wasaṭ*) and interprets it as a "mean" (Gr. *mesotès*), by which ethical virtue is defined as a mean between two extremes, each of which is a vice, one by excess, the other by deficiency – a mean that is also an excellence:

> This being so, virtue is a disposition capable of choice or a voluntary [disposition], lying in a mean that is a mean because it was determined with respect to us by reason in relation to those of the people who are virtuous. … For this reason, virtue, in respect of its substance and the definition which states its essence, is a mean, and with regard to what is noble and best, an extreme and an end, as the ends are better than the middles.
>
> IBN RUSHD n.d., ad *NE* 1106b 36–1107 8

Ethics permeates the *MCPoet* to the point that Ibn Rushd refers to it as a way of mentioning the magnitude of the *qaṣīda*, whereas the mention of ethics in this passage is absent in the Arabic text of Aristotle.[9]

8 The *qaṣīḍa* is a conventional piece of verse, represented ideally by the pre-Islamic poems, that consists essentially of three parts of variable length: a prologue in which the poet sheds some tears over what was once the camping place of his beloved now far off; the poet's narration of his journey to the person to whom the poem is addressed, and where the descriptions of the desert are intertwined with some lyrical flights of eloquence; the panegyric of a tribe, a protector or a patron, or the satire of their enemies (see Krenkow and Lecomte 1976).

9 Compare Abū Bishr Mattā (Tkatsch 1932, 236. 3–8 = 7, 1450b 21–31). The underlying idea in this passage of the *MCPoet* is the identity of ethics and poetics. The *qaṣīda*, defined as

Secondly, those ethical contraries, deeply anchored in Aristotelian ethics, give structure and meaning to the *MCPoet*. But there is also Islamic and, in particular, Qurʾānic influence here, with the clear omnipresent opposition between Good and Evil.[10] Yet, the Qurʾān continually builds cause-and-effect relationships between these multiple variations of good and evil; thus, faith leads to good action, which ends up with a reward as a result, whereas impiety leads to bad action, which ends up with punishment in the hereafter. The link between conviction, action, and retribution is not expressed anywhere in the Qurʾān, and "good and evil are presented [here] as preexisting qualities in the creatures and are like a distinctive feature, or rather a 'seal' that goes far beyond the will of the creature" (Zilio-Grandi 2007, 132, my translation).

However, all these features play a key role in the *MCPoet* which calls into question the notion of "natural vice" and in contrast assumes the power and the efficiency of a pedagogy of virtue.

3 How to Spur People to Virtue?

The *MCPoet* also incorporates elements of the ethical and political framework of the philosophy that would later be further developed by Ibn Rushd in the *MCNE* and the *CRep* (see Woerther forthcoming).

Virtue is defined in these commentaries as a disposition that can be identified as a natural disposition in some individuals. It gets its full power and efficiency in a practical situation when it has been acquired and developed by means of reason that endows it with stability, which enables it to be strictly designated as an "ethical virtue." Yet virtue that was acquired after a long pedagogical process that starts in childhood (see Aouad and Woerther 2009) can also be taught by and through the social environment: this is what Ibn

beautiful when it strikes a balance that is analogous to the means by which ethical virtues are defined, achieve its goal through its own mimetic and figurative means: to attain the truth (see Puerta Vílchez 2017, 697 *sq*).

10 As pointed out by Ida Zilio-Grandi, the letter and the thought in the Qurʾān often proceed according to strong correlations and oppositions, namely by means of the opposition between good and evil (designated in Arabic with several different terms). Yet if in this case "the good is what is known and acknowledged as what falls within the divine Law (and thus in the Qurʾānic message), whereas the evil is its opposite, that is what is negated or not acknowledged by the Law" (Zilio-Grandi 2007, 131), the *MCPoet* does not make an explicit reference to the metaphysical basis through which good and evil (or bad) would be ultimately distinguished. For in the poetical context, Ibn Rushd only examines how virtue and vice – whatever be their origin, their nature, and their relation to the revealed Law – can and must be imitated in poetry to penetrate the souls of the hearers who are intended to perform virtuous actions.

Rushd indicates in the *MCPoet*. As virtue can be imitated by means of poetic statements through an imitation that is capable of providing its object with additional ethical qualification, it is considered as the result of a "comparison" (*tashbīh*) and an "imitation" (*muḥākāt*) in a poetic statement (*qawl shiʿrī*) and has therefore a particular power that no other statement can produce according to Aristotelian logic has: the power to induce in the souls of its hearers an imaginative capacity that will spur them to virtuous actions. In that sense, poetics extends and develops the ethical teaching of Aristotle, as it provides the philosopher with a valuable tool: the poetic or imaginative statement that allows him to accomplish the highest political mission: providing the citizens with the power to do good and avoid evil.

What is the mechanism through which a poetic statement spurs human souls to virtuous actions? The role played by the Qurʾān remains of course implicit: it requires what is good and prohibits what is wrong. We will now examine the way Ibn Rushd describes and explains this mechanism based on Aristotle's teachings.

3.1 *The Role of the Imagination as a Source of Pleasure*

The first lines of the second section of the *MCPoet*, where Ibn Rushd mentions the natural causes of poetry, can help reconstruct a part of this spur to virtue. The first cause is the natural pleasure that people take in imitating the things they perceive. To illustrate this idea, Ibn Rushd develops the example of "illustrations" or "symbols" (*ishārāt*) that are used in instruction. He explains that this example allows one to consider the effect produced by poetic statements:

> Because of this, illustrations are used in instruction and in conversation to foster understanding. Indeed, due to the pleasure existing in illustrations as a result of the imitation in them, they are a tool that tends to produce understanding about the intended object. Through the pleasure the soul takes in them, it (*sc.* the soul) becomes more completely receptive to that object. … Now when there are illustrations that are comparisons of objects already perceived by the senses, it is evident that they are used for quickness of understanding and for reception, and that they are understood only by means of the pleasure they contain because of the imagination that is in them.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 69. 18–70. 6, revised

This passage suggests a comparison of the process of education that uses illustrations (*ishārāt*) on the one hand, and the spur to virtuous actions by means of panegyric on the other. By employing "illustrations" of things – that is, it is

not the things themselves that are to be taught, but signs referring to these things and that replace them (on the condition that the *ishārāt* are a particular case of imitation, as Ibn Rushd tends to suggest) – an image is created that is accompanied by pleasure, according to the idea that people usually take pleasure in imitations (since it was recalled earlier that they take pleasure in imitated things when they cannot take pleasure in the things themselves). The pleasure taken in imitations is a pleasure of recognition that belongs to the intellect, which links the imitated form with a natural object that is already known. This kind of pleasure can be explained by the fact that the imitation thus produced is not a mere replica: "by abstracting from the model its *specific form*, the picture requires reasoning abilities … and provides, in the recognition, the pleasure of discovering that is at the same time the pleasure of wondering … and the pleasure of learning" (Lallot and Dupont-Roc in Aristote 1980, 165, my translation).[11]

The pleasure created by an imitation plays a prominent role in instruction in general and in ethical education in particular (see Puerta Vílchez 2007, 356–359). This is what Ibn Rushd suggests in the Middle Commentary on the *Rhetoric* (henceforth, *MCRhet*), in the Chapter 11 of Book 1. Among the pleasurable objects, there is the desire to learn – which is a rational desire – as well as the idea of future improvement due to this instruction:

> [Aristotle] said: "Learning is also pleasurable in most of the cases. The desire of learning takes place, in the people, only because the human desires to become admirable or such as to be admired – both things are pleasurable in themselves. Furthermore, since learning pertains to the genre of comprehension, which turns from potency to act and completion, it is also [for this reason] pleasurable."
>
> IBN RUSHD 2003, I, 99. 1–5, adapted translation from Aouad

Imitation and the instruction that is based on imitations are sources of pleasure because they allow us to grasp the relations between things and to understand these relations, which people desire by nature:

> Imitating and instructing became pleasurable only because they are due to the comprehension of the relations that are between things, and because the knowledge of the relations that are between beings is sought by nature by the human being. This is why likenesses and examples are pleasurable. For the human being takes pleasure in the human being who

11 This passage that pertains to the beginning of Chapter 4 of Aristotle's *Poetics* can also apply to Ibn Rushd's Commentary.

> is like him or her, the horse takes pleasure in the horse that is like it, and the young man takes pleasure in the young man who is like him.
>
> IBN RUSHD 2003, I, 100. 6–10, adapted translation from Aouad

The pleasure thus induced by means of the imagination that is created by illustrations will make the learning and the reception of these objects by the soul quicker and easier. Similarly, the use of panegyric – defined as the imitation of virtue – in a poetic statement engenders the same effects according to the same mechanism: due to its imitative status, panegyric triggers the imagination of the hearers – imagination that is accompanied by pleasure and that brings about an imprint of these virtuous imitations that is quicker and more efficient in the souls of those to whom the poetic statement is addressed.

3.1.1 The Secondary Role Played by Melody and Rhythm

Although the imitative dimension of poetic statements is paramount, Ibn Rushd adds that melody (*laḥn*) and rhythm (*wazn*), when they accompany these statements, can make their reception easier. As in the *CRep*,[12] rhythm and melody play an auxiliary and preparatory role, but in their own are not sufficient to leave an imprint on the souls of hearers.

> In making poetic panegyric, the first part of the art consists of enumerating the honourable matters that are to be imitated, then adorning those matters with the melody and meter appropriate for the object spoken about. The function of melody in poetry is to prepare the soul to accept the image of what one intends to imitate. It is as though melody provides the soul with the preparation through which it accepts the comparison and imitation of the thing whose comparison is intended.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 74. 5–14, slightly revised[13]

12 According to the *CRep*, music refers to imitative statements that are, only secondarily, accompanied by melody (and rhythm):

> this discipline – i.e., discipline through music – is usually prior in time because the faculty for understanding precedes the faculty for exercise. By 'music' I mean imitative arguments having a melody from which the citizens receive discipline (*sc.* discipline through music). It is only intended that they (*sc.* the arguments) have a melody because thereby they become more thoroughly effective and more fully moving to the souls. For the art of music, as has been made clear, only serves the poetical art and carries forward its intention.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1974, 17

13 See also the same idea further in the text (Ibn Rushd 1986b, 78. 29–31). The fifth part in order is the melody. Of these parts, it has the greatest influence on souls and is the most effective.

Rhythm and melody provide pleasure and make the reception of poetic statements that produce imagination by the soul easier. The notion of pleasure that is central to the reception of poetic statements through the imagination they produce on the one hand, and through melodies and rhythms that are pleasurable on the other, plays a key role in the mechanism for the acquisition of ethical virtues as set out in the first two chapters of Book II of the *MCNE*.

Defined as what naturally accompanies any free activity, pleasure is omnipresent in human life and gives any activity its perfection (on the notion of pleasure in Book X of the *MCNE*, see Woerther 2018a). A virtuous action in the strict sense of the term is necessarily accompanied by pleasure, and an education in ethical virtue consists, for Aristotle and Ibn Rushd, of encouraging youth from childhood[14] to take pleasure in being virtuous and feel sorrow in being vicious.

> For this reason it is necessary, as Plato said, to proceed with the human from childhood by means of a way that leads him to take pleasure in the things that he ought to take pleasure in, and leads him to feel sorrow at the things that he ought to feel sorrow at. Indeed, this is the sane and right instruction.
>
> IBN RUSHD n.d., ad *NE* 1104b 11–13

Education thus is defined as a steady habituation that is supported by the control of reason (the Law or the authority of a teacher) and becomes a "second nature" according to which virtue is definitively pleasant and vice is irremediably painful.

3.2 *The Role of the Affections*

Yet poetic statement is not characterized only by the mimetic status that makes it pleasant and therefore more easily accepted by the souls of hearers. Affections too must be considered. At the end of the fourth section of the *MCPoet*, after Ibn Rushd distinguishes between "reversal" (*idāra*) and "discovery" (*istidlāl*), the two abovementioned parts of panegyric, he introduces a third part, the "affections" (*infiʿālāt*).

14 Ibn Rushd notes in the *CRep* that, since they trigger imagination and pleasure, poetic statements are more appropriate for the education of young people: "The poetical arguments are more particularly for the youths …, the poetical (*sc.* arguments) being more widely common and more particularly fit for the youths" (Ibn Rushd 1974, 18).

> He said: "These two parts (*sc.* reversal [*idāra*] and discovery [*istidlāl*]) that we have told about are both parts of the art of panegyric. There is a third part, namely, the part that engenders psychological affections – I mean, the affections of pity, fear, and sorrow. It comes about the mention of the disasters and calamities that afflict people, for these are the things that evoke pity and fear. It is one of the major parts for inciting the actions intended by them in panegyric."
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 88. 28–89. 5, slightly revised

Like the use of melody and rhythm that facilitates the reception of poetic statements by the soul, the affections of pity, fear, and sorrow are introduced as constitutive parts of the art of panegyric. The imitation of ethical virtue as well as the imitation of what raises fear and sorrow in panegyric – such as disasters that afflict those who do not deserve them – strengthens the reception of poetic statements by the soul. Ibn Rushd explains:

> That is because by means of these things, the soul is more intensely moved to accept the virtues.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 91. 21–92. 1

Indeed, a panegyric turning from an imitation of virtue to an imitation of misery and bad luck that befalls virtuous people, or turning from this to an imitation of virtuous people "makes souls become tender and prompts them to accept the virtues" (Ibn Rushd 1986b, 92. 13–14).

How do affections such as fear, pity, and sorrow help souls to generate ethical virtues and to be imitated in panegyric? Ibn Rushd does not give an explanation, and it seems that the beginning of the third chapter of Book III of the *MCNE*, where he shows the central role of the affections in acquiring and performing ethical virtue, also does not provide any clarification on this point.

First and foremost, Ibn Rushd only mentions here fear, pity, and sorrow among the affections, whereas the affections that allow us to identify the true practice of virtue are the pleasures and sorrows that accompany the practice of virtuous action.[15]

15 See Ibn Rushd (n.d., ad 1104b 4–9):

> He said: It is necessary that we establish as a sign of the existence of virtuous dispositions in ourselves what, among pleasure and sorrow, follows our actions. Indeed, who rejoices at abstaining from bodily pleasures has the disposition according to which he must be called temperate, while who grieves over abstaining from them is

Secondly, the examples provided by Ibn Rushd show that these are particular affections that create the sorrow or sadness that they feel due to undeserved calamities – and no joy, shame, or gentleness (these are other examples of affections mentioned in Ibn Rushd's *MCRhet*).

An example of such imitations is the story of Joseph and his brothers quoted by Averroes in the *MCPoet* (see Ibn Rushd 1971, 101. 1–3; see also Q 12). The different events that punctuate Joseph's life – thrown into a well, sold for a small price in Egypt, accused of seducing his master's wife, and imprisoned, but when he interpreted the King's dreams and saved the country from hardship, he retrieved his father and his brothers who ask forgiveness – will strike the hearers. They will feel sorrow, fear, and pity since they imagine that such calamities should rather befall them. More generally Ibn Rushd writes:

> Examples of the former things are the calamities and disasters that are voluntarily inflicted by one friend on another, not those that are inflicted by one enemy or another. For a man does not become sad or feel pity about the evil that one enemy inflicts upon another in the way he becomes sad and fearful about the evil inflicted by one friend upon another. Even if the former is accompanied by sorrow, it is not like the sorrow that accompanies the evil loved ones inflict upon one another – like brothers killing one another, fathers killing sons or sons fathers. Regarding what he mentions here, the story of Abraham, may peace be upon him, and what he was ordered to do to his son is a statement that most inspires sorrow and fear.
>
> IBN RUSHD 1986b, 94. 27–95. 3

Affections in a poetic context play the same role as affections in rhetoric since they prepare souls to accept poetic statements. The feelings of pity, fear, and sorrow thus raised in and through poetry pave the way to imagination. Outlining a spiritual pedagogy, they find an easier and more direct way to move the souls of hearers.

---

self-indulgent. Likewise, who bears great dangers and rejoices at it or does not grieve over it is courageous, while who suffers from it and grieves over it is a coward. This is so because moral virtue consists in finding pleasant, for a human, the things that it is necessary for him to find pleasant, and in finding unpleasant the things that it necessary for him to find unpleasant.

4 Conclusion: The Political Nature of Poetic Pedagogy

Since Aristotle's *Poetics* was a part of the expanded *Organon*, the *falāsifa* studied it in their commentaries on the *Organon* and, like certain later Islamic scholars, through the lens of logic, in particular, the central notion of "poetic syllogism." Yet a closer reading of Ibn Rushd's *MCPoet* can reveal strong similarities between this "logical" treatise and the ethical and political philosophy of Ibn Rushd as developed in the *MCNE* and the *CRep*; in particular, the notions of vice and virtue, an omnipresent axiology, and ethical contraries that invite an ethical and political reading of the *Poetics*. Such a reading needs to attend to a commentary whose structure is not always clear, for its subjects are raised, then reviewed and developed, refined, and studied in depth in almost all of its sections.

Aristotelian ethics permeates the doctrinal framework of Ibn Rushd's *MCPoet*. While rhetoric (through the *MCRhet*) is meant to lead the citizens/believers to virtue by means of persuasive arguments, poetics is intended to encourage them to virtue and virtuous actions, and to dissuade them from vice and base actions by means of poetic or imaginative statements. Such an effect in the souls of hearers is not raised through conviction or assent (*taṣdīq*) – as in the demonstrative, sophistic, dialectical, or rhetorical statements – but by means of an "image" (*takhayyul*) – that is, by a more powerful and efficient weapon which is not restricted to an elite audience used to reasoning, but addressed to everyone. The "poetic statement" (*al-qawl al-shiʿrī*) or "panegyric" (*madīḥ*), defined as an imitation of virtue, is supported by melody (*laḥn*) and rhythm (*wazn*) as well as by the imitation of affections like fear, pity, and sorrow, and allows one to acquire ethical virtue, which is the absolute precondition for performing truly virtuous actions and the foundation of a happy city.

In this respect, Ibn Rushd defines poetry strictly and frequently dismisses the "poetry of the Arabs." This poetry is the most excellent means for a political pedagogy through which any citizen will find his place in the virtuous, hence truly happy community. The ultimate goal of the *MCPoet* as envisaged through the lens of its ethical foundation is thus the attainment of the virtuous city discussed in the *CRep*.

These suggestions are not intended to – and cannot in any way – exhaust a text that still has not been sufficiently studied. From its logical, ethical, psychological, and poetic perspective, the *MCPoet* raises many questions, such as: What are the specific powers that persuade the soul to accept the imitations of virtue conveyed by poetry? How is the role of emotions in the acquisition of ethical virtue to be explained? How does the imagination work in terms of the

effect produced by poetic statements and in terms of the mimetic nature of poetry, which is distinguished from the discursive nature of logical statements? How is the role played by melody and rhythm to be explained, since Ibn Rushd mentions them only rarely in his *MCPoet*? Do they involve the same homoeopoetic process that arises in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*, where the "characters" of music inform the "characters" of the soul (see Woerther 2008)? The answers to these questions may well give rise to new interpretations that, it is hoped, will build upon those in the present study.

Bibliography

Abdel Haleem, M.A.S., trans. 2004. *The Qur'an*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aouad, Maroun and Frédérique Woerther. 2009. "Le commentaire par Averroès du chapitre 9 du Livre X de l'*Éthique à Nicomaque*: pédagogie de la contrainte, habitudes et loi." *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 62: 353–380.

Aristotle. 1895. *Poetics*, translated by Samuel Henry Butcher. London: Macmillan.

Aristotle. 1980. *La Poétique*, edited and translated by Jean Lallot and Roselyne Dupont-Roc. Paris: Le Seuil.

Aristotle. 1894. *Nicomachean Ethics*, edited by Ingram Bywater. Oxford: Oxford Classical Texts.

Blundell, Mary Whitlock. 1992. "Ethos and Dianoia Reconsidered." In *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg-Rorty, 155–175. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Dahiyat, Ismail. 1974. *Avicenna's Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle*. Leiden: Brill.

Destrée, Pierre. 2003. "Éducation morale et catharsis tragique." *Les Études philosophiques* 4: 518–535.

Donini, Pierluigi. 2003. "Mimèsis tragique et apprentissage de la phronèsis." *Les Études philosophiques* 4: 436–450.

Held, George F. 1985. "The Meaning of ἦθος in the *Poetics*." *Hermes* 113(3): 280–293.

Ibn Rushd. n.d. *Averroes' Middle Commentary on Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics, personal critical edition of the Latin version by Hermann the German, made from MS Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque Municipale 623, thirteenth century and MS Toledo, Biblioteca Capitulares 94.14, thirteenth century.

Ibn Rushd. 1953. *Talkhīṣ Kitāb Arisṭūṭālīs fī l-Shiʿr*, edited by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī. Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya.

Ibn Rushd. 1971. *Talkhīṣ Kitāb Arisṭūṭālīs fī l-Shiʿr*, edited by Muḥammad Salīm Sālim. Cairo: Lajnat Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-Islāmī.

Ibn Rushd. 1974. *On Plato's Republic*, translated by Ralph Lerner. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Ibn Rushd. 1986a. *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Shiʿr*, edited by Charles Butterworth and Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Majīd Harīdī. Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb.

Ibn Rushd. 1986b. *Middle Commentary on the Poetics*, translated by Charles Butterworth. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ibn Rushd. 1991. *Commento al Peri Poietikès*, edited by Carmela Baffioni. Milano: Coliseum.

Ibn Rushd. 2001. *The Book of the Decisive Treatise, Determining the Connection between Law and Wisdom*, translated by Charles Butterworth. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

Ibn Rushd. 2003. *Commentaire moyen à la Rhétorique d'Aristote*, edited and translated by Maroun Aouad, 3 vols. Paris: Vrin.

Krenkow, Fritz and Gérard Lecomte. 1976. "Ḳaṣīda. 1. In Arabic." In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, 4:713b–714a. DOI: 10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0461.

Puerta Vílchez, José Miguel. 2017. *Aesthetics in Arabic Thought from Pre-Islamic Arabic through al-Andalus*. Leiden: Brill.

Schütrumpf, Eckart. 1970. *Die Bedeutung des Wortes Ethos in der Poetik des Aristoteles*. Munich: C.H. Beck.

Tkatsch, Jaroslaus. 1932. *Die arabische Übersetzung der Poetik des Aristoteles und die Grundlage der Kritik des griechischen Textes*, II. Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky A.G.

Verdenius, Willem Jacob. 1944. "The Meaning of ἦθος and ἠθικός in Aristotle's *Poetics*". *Mnemosyne* 12: 241–257.

Woerther, Frédérique. 2007. *L'èthos aristotélicien. Origine d'une notion rhétorique*. Paris: Vrin.

Woerther, Frédérique. 2008. "Music and Education of the Soul in Plato and Aristotle: Homoeopathy and the Formation of Character." *Classical Quarterly* 58: 89–103.

Woerther, Frédérique. 2018a. *Le plaisir, le bonheur, et l'acquisition des vertus*. Leiden: Brill.

Woerther, Frédérique. 2018b. "Le statut scientifique de l'éthique d'après le Commentaire moyen d'Averroès à *l'Éthique à Nicomaque* d'Aristote." *Oriens* 46: 332–378.

Woerther, Frédérique. forthcoming. "How Did Averroes (d. 1198) Conceive the Relation between Ethics and Politics?" In *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Ethics*, edited by Mustafa Shah. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zilio-Grandi, Ida. 2007. "Bien et Mal." In *Dictionnaire du Coran*, edited by Mohammed Ali Amir-Moezzi, 131–134. Paris: Robert Laffont.