

Part 3: The Philosophers

(Those who were mainly interested in philosophy and science and were greatly influenced by Greek thought)

Chapter 21: Al-Kindi

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Life

Al-Kindi (c. 185/801– c. 260/873) was the first Muslim philosopher. Philosophical studies in the second/eighth century were in the hands of Christian Syriacs, who were primarily physicians. They started, through encouragement by the Caliph, to translate Greek writings into Arabic. Being the first Arab Muslim to study science and philosophy, al-Kindi was rightly called “the Philosopher of the Arabs.”

His full name is: Abu Yusuf Ya`qub ibn Ishaq ibn al-Sabbah ibn `Imran ibn Isma`il ibn al-Ash`ath ibn Qais al-Kindi. Kindah was one of the great Arab tribes before Islam. His grandfather al-Ash`ath ibn Qais adopted Islam and was considered one of the Companions (*Sahabah*) of the Prophet. Al-Ash`ath went with some of the pioneer Muslims to al-Kufah, where he and his descendants lived. Ishaq ibn al-Sabbah, al-Kindi's father, was Governor of al-Kufah during the reign of the `Abbasid Caliphs al-Mahdi and al-Rashid. Most probably al-Kindi was born in the year 185/801,¹ a decade before the death of al-Rashid.

Al-Kufah and al-Basrah, in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries, were the two rivalling centres of Islamic culture. Al-Kufah was more inclined to rational studies; and in this intellectual atmosphere, al-Kindi passed his early boyhood. He learnt the Qur'an by heart, the Arabic grammar, literature, and elementary arithmetic, all of which formed the curriculum for all Muslim children. He, then, studied *Fiqh* and the new-born discipline called *Kalam*. But it seems that he was more interested in sciences and philosophy, to which he consecrated the rest of his life, especially after he went to Baghdad.

A complete knowledge of Greek science and philosophy required proficiency in Greek and Syriac languages into which latter many Greek works had already been translated. It seems that al-Kindi learnt Greek, but certainly he mastered the Syriac language from which he translated several works. He also revised some of the Arabic translations, such as al-Himsi's translation of Plotinus' *Enneads*, which passed to the Arabs as one of the writings of Aristotle. Al-Qifti, the biographer, says that "al-Kindi translated many philosophical books, clarified their difficulties, and summarized their deep theories."²

In Baghdad he was connected with al-Ma'mun, al-Mu'tasim, and the latter's son Ahmad. He was nominated tutor of Ahmad ibn al-Mu'tasim, to whom he dedicated some of his important writings. Ibn Nabatah says: "Al-Kindi and his writings embellished the empire of al-Mu'tasim."³ He flourished also under the reign of al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–247/847–861). A story related by Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah indicates the great fame of al-Kindi at that time, his advanced knowledge, and his famous private library.

This is the full account: "Muhammad and Ahmad, the sons of Musa ibn Shakir, who lived during the reign of al-Mutawakkil, were conspiring against everyone who was advanced in knowledge. They sent a certain Sanad ibn 'Ali to Baghdad so that he might get al-Kindi away from al-Mutawakkil. Their conspiracies succeeded to the point that al-Mutawakkil ordered al-Kindi to be beaten. His whole library was confiscated and put in a separate place, labelled as the 'Kindian Library."⁴

Al-Kindi's notoriety for avarice was equal to his fame for knowledge. This bad repute was due to al-Jahiz's caricature of him in his *Kitab al-Bukhala'*. However, al-Kindi lived a luxurious life in a house, in the garden of which he bred many curious animals. It seems that he lived aloof from society, even from his neighbours.

An interesting story related by al-Qifti shows that al-Kindi lived in the neighborhood of a wealthy merchant, who never knew that al-Kindi was an excellent physician. Once the merchant's son was attacked by sudden paralysis and no physician in Baghdad was able to cure him. Someone told the merchant that he lived in the neighborhood of the most brilliant philosopher, who was very clever in curing that particular illness. Al-Kindi cured the paralyzed boy by music.

Works

Most of his numerous works (numbering about 270) are lost. Ibn al-Nadim and following him al-Qifti classified his writings, most of which are short treatises, into seventeen groups: (1) philosophical, (2) logical, (3) arithmetical, (4) globular, (5) musical, (6) astronomical, (7) geometrical, (8) spherical, (9), medical, (10) astrological, (11) dialectical, (12) psychological, (13) political, (14) causal (meteorological), (15) dimensional, (16) on first things, (17) on the species of some metals, chemicals, etc.

This account shows to what extent al-Kindi's knowledge was encyclopedic. Some of his scientific works were translated by Gerard of Cremona into Latin and influenced very much the thought of medieval Europe. Cardano considered him to be one of the twelve greatest minds.

Scholars studied al-Kindi, until his Arabic treatises were discovered and edited, merely on the basis of the extant Latin translations. His *De Medicinarum Compositarum Gradibus* was published in 938/1531. Albino Nagy⁵ in 1315/1897 edited the medieval translations of these treatises: *De intellectu*; *De Somno et visione*; *De quinque essentiis*; *Liber introductorius in artem logicae demonstrationis*.

Since the discovery of some of his Arabic manuscripts, a new light has been thrown on al-Kindi's philosophy. A compendium containing about 25 treatises was found by Ritter in Istanbul. Now they have all been edited by different scholars, Walzer, Rosenthal, Abu Ridah, and Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany.⁶ There are other short treatises discovered in Aleppo, but they have not yet been edited. It has become possible, to a certain extent, to analyse al-Kindi's philosophy on more or less sure grounds.

Philosophy

It was due to al-Kindi that philosophy came to be acknowledged as a part of Islamic culture. The early Arab historians called him "the Philosopher of the Arabs" for this reason. It is true that he borrowed his ideas from Neo-Platonic Aristotelianism, but it is also true that he put those ideas in a new context. By conciliating Hellenistic heritage with Islam he laid the foundations of a new philosophy. Indeed, this conciliation remained for a long time the chief feature of this philosophy. Furthermore, al-Kindi, specializing in all the sciences known at his time – of which his writings give sufficient evidence – made philosophy a comprehensive study embracing all sciences.

Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd were first scientists and then philosophers. For this reason Ibn al-Nadim placed al-Kindi in the class of natural philosophers. This is his full account: "Al-Kindi is the best man of his time, unique in his knowledge of all the ancient sciences. He is called the Philosopher of the Arabs. His books deal with different sciences, such as logic, philosophy, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, etc. We have connected him with the natural philosophers because of his prominence in science."⁷

Philosophy is the knowledge of truth. Muslim philosophers, like the Greek, believed that truth is something over and above experience; that it lies immutable and eternal in a supernatural world. The definition of philosophy in al-Kindi's treatise on "First Philosophy" runs like this: "Philosophy is the knowledge of the reality of things within man's possibility, because the philosopher's end in his theoretical knowledge is to gain truth and in his practical knowledge to behave in accordance with truth."

At the end of the treatise, God is qualified by the term "truth," which is the objective of philosophy. "The True One (*al-Wahid al-Haq*) is, then, the First, the Creator, the Sustainer of all that He has created. ..." This view is borrowed from Aristotle's metaphysics, but the Unmovable Mover of Aristotle is substituted by the Creator. This difference constitutes the core of the Kindian system.

Philosophy is classified into two main divisions: theoretical studies, which are physics, mathematics, and metaphysics; and practical studies which are ethics, economics, and politics. A later writer, quoting al-

Kindi, gives the classification as follows: “Theory and practice are the beginning of the virtues. Each one of the two is divided into the physical, mathematical, and theological parts. Practice is divided into the guidance of one's self, that of one's house, and that of one's city.” [8](#)

Ibn Nabata, quoting also al-Kindi, mentions only the theoretical divisions. “The philosophical sciences are of three kinds: the first in teaching (*ta`lim*) is mathematics which is intermediate in nature; the second is physics, which is the last in nature; the third is theology which is the highest in nature.”[9](#) The priority of mathematics goes back to Aristotle, but the final sequence of the three sciences beginning with physics came from the later Peripatetics. Most probably al-Kindi was following Ptolemy, who gave a division of sciences in the beginning of *Almagest*.[10](#) Mathematics was known to the Arabs from that time on as the “first study.”

The definition of philosophy and its classification, as mentioned above, remained traditional in Muslim philosophy. As Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq puts it: “This attitude in understanding the meaning of philosophy and its classification according to subject-matter directed Muslim philosophy from its very outset.”[11](#)

First philosophy or metaphysics is the knowledge of the First Cause, because all the rest of philosophy is included in this knowledge.[12](#) The method followed in the study of first philosophy is the logic of demonstration. From now on, logic will be the instrument of the philosophers in their quest for truth.

Al-Kindi's value as a philosopher was debated in ancient times because of the lack of logical theory in his system. Sa'id al-Andalusi says: “Al-Kindi wrote on logic many books which never became popular, and which people never read or used in the sciences, because these books missed the art of analysis which is the only way to distinguish between right and wrong in every study. By the art of synthesis, which is what Ya`qub meant by his writings, no one can profit, unless he has sure premises from which he can make the synthesis.”

It is difficult for us to give an exact idea concerning this charge until his logical treatises are discovered. But the fact that al-Farabi was called the “Second Master” because of his introducing logic as the method of thinking in Islamic philosophy[13](#) seems to corroborate the judgment of Sa'id just mentioned.

Harmony Between Philosophy And Religion

Al-Kindi directed Muslim philosophy towards an accord between philosophy and religion.[14](#) Philosophy depends on reason, and religion relies on revelation. Logic is the method of philosophy; faith, which is belief in the realities mentioned in the Qur'an as revealed by God to His Prophet, is the way of religion. From the very outset, men of religion mistrusted philosophy and the philosophers. Philosophers were attacked for being heretics.

Al-Kindi was obliged to defend himself against the accusation of religious spokesmen that “the acquisition of the knowledge of the reality of things is atheism (*kufir*).”[15](#) In his turn, al-Kindi accused

those religious spokesmen for being irreligious and traders with religion. “They disputed with good men in defence of the untrue position which they had founded and occupied without any merit only to gain power and to trade with religion. “[16](#)

The accord between philosophy and religion is laid down on the basis of three arguments: (1) that theology is part of philosophy; (2) that the prophet's revelation and philosophical truth are in accord with each other, and (3) that the pursuit of theology is logically ordained.

Philosophy is the knowledge of the reality of things, and this knowledge comprises theology (*al-rububiyyah*), the science of monotheism, ethics, and all useful sciences.

Furthermore, the prophets have ordained the pursuit of truth and practice of virtue. “The totality of every useful science and the way to attain it, the getting away from anything harmful and taking care against it – the acquisition of all this is what the true prophets have proclaimed in the name of God

The prophets have proclaimed the unique divinity of God, the practice of the virtues accepted by Him, and the avoidance of the vices which are contrary to virtues–in–themselves.”

Again, the pursuit of philosophy is necessary for it “is either necessary or it is not necessary. If theologians (those who oppose its pursuit) say that it is necessary, they should study it; if they say that it is not necessary, they have to give the reason for this, and present a demonstration. Giving the reason and demonstration is part of the acquisition of the knowledge of reality. It is necessary then that they should have this knowledge and realize that they must obtain it.”[17](#)

In his treatise on “The Number of the Works of Aristotle,” al-Kindi makes a sharp distinction between religion and philosophy. The fact that he discussed this point in this particular treatise proves that he was comparing the religion of Islam with Aristotle's philosophy. The divine science, which he distinguished from philosophy, is Islam as revealed to the Prophet and recorded in the Qur'an.

Contrary to his general view that theology is a part of philosophy, here we find (1) that theology occupies a rank higher than philosophy; (2) that religion is a divine science and philosophy is a human one; (3) that the way of religion is faith and that of philosophy is reason; (4) that the knowledge of the prophet is immediate and through inspiration and that of the philosopher is by way of logic and demonstration. We quote in full this interesting and very important passage:

“If, then, a person does not obtain the knowledge of quantity and quality, he will lack knowledge of the primary and secondary substances, so that one cannot expect him to have any knowledge of the human sciences which are acquired by man through research, effort, and industry. These sciences fall short in rank of the divine science (*al-ilm al-ilahi*)[18](#) which is obtained without research, effort, and industry, and in no time.

This latter knowledge is like the knowledge of the prophets, a knowledge bestowed by God; unlike mathematics and logic, it is received without research, effort, study, and industry, and requires no period

of time. It is distinct in being obtained by the will of God, through the purification and illumination of souls, so that they turn towards truth, through God's support, assistance, inspiration, and His messages.

This knowledge is not a prerogative of all men, but only of the prophets. This is one of their miraculous peculiarities, the distinctive sign which differentiates them from other human beings. Men who are not prophets have no way of attaining knowledge of the secondary substances or that of the primary sensible substances and their accidents without research and industry through logic and mathematics, and without any period of time.

“Hence, men of intelligence draw the evident conclusion that since this¹⁹ (knowledge) exists, it comes from God; whereas (ordinary) men are unable by their very nature to attain to a similar knowledge, because it is above and beyond their nature and the devices they use. Thus, they submit themselves in obedience and docility to it and faithfully believe in the truth of the message of the prophets.”²⁰

The Muslims follow the Word of God stated in the Qur'an and are convinced by its sure arguments. Philosophers refer to logical demonstration, i. e., their reason. Philosophical arguments depend on the self-evident first principles of demonstration. In al-Kindi's view, the Qur'anic arguments, being divine, are more sure, certain, and convincing than the philosophical arguments which are human. The Qur'an gives solutions of some very important problems, such as the creation of the world from nothing, and resurrection.

Al-Kindi holds that the Qur'anic arguments are “beliefs, clear and comprehensive.” Thus, they lead to certainty and conviction. Hence, they are superior to the philosopher's arguments. An example of such sure arguments is to be found in the answer to the infidels who asked, “Who will be able to give life to bones when they have been reduced to dust?” The answer is: “He who produced them originally will give life to them.”

Thus, al-Kindi opened the door for the philosophical interpretation of the Qur'an, and thereby brought about an accord between religion and philosophy. In his treatise “The Worship (*sujud*) of the *Primum Mobile*,” the verse: “Stars and trees are worshipping” is interpreted by reference to the different meanings of the word “*sajdah*.” It means: (1) prostration in praying; (2) obedience; (3) change from imperfection to perfection; (4) following by will the order of a person. It is this last meaning that applies to the worship of the stars. The heavenly sphere is animated and is the cause of life in the world of generation and corruption. The movement of the *primum mobile* is called worship (*sujud*) in the sense that it obeys God.

To sum up, al-Kindi was the first philosopher in Islam to effect an accord between religion and philosophy. He paved the way for al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd. Two quite different views are given by him. The first follows the way of the logicians and reduces religion to philosophy. The second, considering religion a divine science, raises it above philosophy. This divine science can be known by a prophetic faculty. However, through philosophic interpretation religion becomes conciliated with

philosophy.

God

An adequate and sure knowledge of God is the final objective of philosophy. Philosophy by its very name was a Greek study. For this reason, al-Kindi made a great effort to transmit Greek philosophy to the Arabs. As Rosenthal rightly puts it: "Al-Kindi himself states that he considered it his task to serve as an Arab transmitter and interpreter of the ancient heritage."²¹ In Theon's commentary on the *Almagest* of Ptolemy, we find God described as immutable, simple, of invisible nature, and the true cause of motion.

Al-Kindi in his treatise *al-Sina'at al-'Uzma* ²² paraphrases the same idea. He says: "For God, great is His praise, is the reason and agent of this motion, being eternal (*qadim*), He cannot be seen and does not move, but in fact causes motion without moving Himself. This is His description for those who understand Him in plain words: He is simple in that He cannot be dissolved into something simpler; and He is indivisible because He is not composed and composition has no hold on Him, but in fact He is separate from the visible bodies, since He ... is the reason of the motion of the visible bodies."²³

Simplicity, indivisibility, invisibility, and causality of motion are the divine attributes stated by Theon. When al-Kindi mentions them he is simply a transmitter of the Hellenistic conception of God. The originality of al-Kindi lies in his conciliation of the Islamic concept of God with the philosophical ideas which were current in the later Neo-Platonism.

The basic Islamic notions concerning God are His unicity, His act of creation from nothing, and the dependence of all creatures on Him. These attributes are stated in the Qur'an in a manner which is neither philosophical nor dialectical. Al-Kindi qualifies God in new terms. God is the true one. He is transcendent and can be qualified only by negative attributes. "He has no matter, no form, no quantity, no quality, no relation; nor is He qualified by any of the remaining categories (*al-ma'qulat*).²⁴ He has no genus, no differentia, no species, no proprium, no accident. He is immutable.... He is, therefore, absolute oneness, nothing but oneness (*wahdah*). Everything else is multiple."²⁵

To understand the position of al-Kindi, we must refer to the Traditionalists and the Mu'tazilites. The Traditionalists – Ibn Hanbal was one of their chief representatives – refused to interpret the attributes of God. They simply called them "the names of God." When, for example, Ibn Hanbal was asked whether the Qur'an, being the Word of God, is eternal (*qadim*) or created (*makhluq*), he gave no answer. His only answer was that the Qur'an is the Word (*kalam*) of God. The Traditionalists accepted the literal meaning of the Scripture, i. e. without any further interpretation.

The Mu'tazilites, such as were the contemporaries of al-Kindi, rationally interpreted the attributes of God to establish His absolute unicity. They solved the problem on the basis of the relation between the essence (*dhat*) of God and His attributes (*sifat*). The main attributes in their view amount to three:

knowledge, power, and will. These they negate, for, if affirmed of God, they would entail plurality in His essence. The Mu'tazilites and the philosophers shared this denial of the divine attributes. Al-Ghazali rightly says in the *Tahafut al-Falasifah* that “the philosophers agree exactly as do the Mu'tazilites that it is impossible to ascribe to the First Principle knowledge, power, and will.”[26](#)

Al-Kindi, the first philosopher in Islam, followed the Mu'tazilites in their denial of the attributes. But his approach to the solution of the problem is quite different. First, it is not the essence of God and His attributes with which he is concerned; it is rather the predicability of the categories – as we have seen above – to the substance of God. Secondly, all things can be defined, hence known, by giving their genera and differentiae, except God who has neither genus nor differentia. In other terms, al-Kindi follows in his quest the “way of the logicians.”

The Kindian arguments for the existence of God depend on the belief in causality. Everything that comes to be must have a cause for its existence. The series of causes are finite, and consequently there is a prime cause, or the true cause, which is God. Causes, enumerated by Aristotle, are the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final. In al-Kindi's philosophy, as repeated in many of his treatises, God is the efficient cause.

There are two kinds of efficient causes; the first is the true efficient cause and its action is creation from nothing (*ibda'*). All the other efficient causes are intermediate, i.e., they are produced by other causes, and are themselves the causes of other effects. They are called so by analogy; in fact, they are not true causes at all. Only God is the true efficient cause. He acts and is never acted upon.

Given that the world is created by the action of *ibda'* in no time, it must be in need of a creator, i.e., God. Nothing which is created is eternal; God alone is eternal. Beings come to be and pass away. This is clear in the case of corporeal sensibles which are in perpetual flux and change. Also the world as a whole, the celestial bodies, and the universals, such as genera and species, are not eternal, because they are finite and composed. Everything which is finite in space and time is not eternal. The notion of infinity occupies an important place in the philosophy of al-Kindi, and will be discussed later in detail.

Another proof for the existence of God is the order observed in all natural beings. The regularity inherent in the world, the hierarchical degrees of its parts, their interactions, the most perfect state in every being realizing its highest goodness – all this is a proof that there is a Perfect Being who manages everything according to the greatest wisdom [27](#)

Beings are in continuous need of God. This is so because God, the Creator *ex nihilo*, is the sustainer of all that He has created, so that if anything lacks His sustainment and power, it perishes.[28](#)

[Infinity](#)

The world in Aristotle's system is finite in space but infinite in time, because the movement of the world is

co-eternal with the Unmovable Mover. Eternity of the world was refuted in Islamic thought, since Islam holds that the world is created. Muslim philosophers, facing this problem, tried to find a solution in accord with religion. Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd were accused of atheism because of their pro-Aristotelianism; they assumed that the world is eternal. In fact, this problem remained one of the important features of Islamic philosophy, and al-Ghazali mentioned it at the beginning of his twenty points against the philosophers in the *Tahafut al-Falasifah*.

Al-Kindi, contrary to his great successors, maintained that the world is not eternal. Of this problem he gave a radical solution by discussing the notion of infinity on mathematical grounds.

Physical bodies are composed of matter and form, and move in space and time. Matter, form, space, movement, and time are the five substances in every physical body. (*Res autem quae sunt in omnibus substantiis sunt quinque, quarum una est hyle, et secunda est forma, et tertia est locus, et quarta est motus, et quinta est tempus.*) [29](#)

Being so connected with corporeal bodies, time and space are finite, given that corporeal bodies are finite; and these latter are finite because they cannot exist except within limits.

Time is not movement; it is the number which measures the motion (*Tempus ergo est numerus numerans motum*) for it is nothing other than the prior and posterior. Number is of two kinds: discrete and continuous. Time is not of the discrete kind but of the continuous kind. Hence, time is definable as the supposed instants which continue from the past to the future. In other words, time is the sum of anterior and posterior instants. It is the continuum of instants.

Time is part of the knowledge of quantity. Space, movement, and time are quantities. The knowledge of these three substances and also the other two is subordinate to the knowledge of quantity and quality. As mentioned above, he who lacks the knowledge of quantity and quality will lack knowledge of the primary and secondary substances. Quality is the capacity of being similar and dissimilar; quantity, of being equal and unequal. Hence, the three notions of equality, greater, and less are basic in demonstrating the concepts of finitude and infinity.

The arguments against infinity are repeated in a number of al-Kindi's treatises. We give from his treatise "On the Finitude of the Body of the World" the four theorems given as proofs for finitude: –

- (1) Two magnitudes³⁰ of the same kind are called equal if one is not greater than the other.³¹
- (2) If a magnitude of the same kind is added to one of the two magnitudes of the kind, they will be unequal.
- (3) Two magnitudes of the kind cannot be infinite, if one is less than the other, because the less measures the greater or a part of it.
- (4) The sum of two magnitudes of the kind, each of which is finite, is finite.

Given these axioms, every body, being composed of matter and form, limited in space, and moving in

time, is finite, even if it is the body of the world. And, being finite it is not eternal. God alone is eternal.

Soul And Intellect

Al-Kindi was confused by the doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus concerning the soul, especially because he revised the parts translated from Plotinus' *Enneads*, a book which was wrongly ascribed to Aristotle. He borrowed from Plotinus the doctrine of the soul, and followed the model of Aristotle in his theory of the intellect. In a short treatise "On the Soul," he summarizes, as he says, the views of "Aristotle, Plato, and other philosophers." In fact, the idea expounded is borrowed from the *Enneads*.

The soul is a simple entity and its substance emanates from the Creator just as the rays emanate from the sun. It is spiritual and of divine substance and is separate and distinct from the body. When it is separated from the body, it obtains the knowledge of everything in the world and has vision of the supernatural. After its separation from the body, it goes to the world of the intellect, returns to the light of the Creator, and sees Him.

The soul never sleeps; only while the body is asleep, it does not use the senses. And, if purified, the soul can see wonderful dreams in sleep and can speak to the other souls which have been separated from their bodies. The same idea is expounded in al-Kindi's treatise: "On Sleep and Dreams," which was translated into Latin. To sleep is to give up the use of the senses. When the soul gives up the use of the senses and uses only reason, it dreams.

The three faculties of the soul are the rational, the irascible, and the appetitive. He who gets away from the pleasures of the body and lives most of his life in contemplation to attain to the reality of things, is the good man who is very similar to the Creator.

Another treatise on the intellect played an important role in medieval philosophy, both Eastern and Western. It was translated into Latin under the title *De Intellectu*. The purpose of this treatise is to clarify the different meanings of the intellect (*'aql*) and to show how knowledge is obtained.

Aristotle in his *De Anima* distinguished between two kinds of intellect, the possible and the agent. The possible intellect receives intellection and the agent intellect produces intelligible objects. The latter intellect is described by Aristotle as separate, unmixed, always in actuality, eternal, and uncorrupted.

Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *De Intellectu* holds that there are three kinds of intellect : the material, the habitual, and the agent, thus adding a new intellect which is the *intellectus habitus* or *adeptus*. The *intellectus materialis* is pure potentiality and is perishable. It is the capacity in man to receive the forms. The intellect *in habitu* is a possession, which means that the intellect has acquired knowledge and possessed it, i, e., has passed from potentiality into actuality. To bring a thing from potentiality to actuality needs something else to act as an agent. This is the third intellect, the agent intellect, also called the *intelligencia agens* and considered by some interpreters to be the divine intelligence which

flows into our individual souls.

When we come to al-Kindi we find not three intellects but four. He divided the intellect *in habitu* into two intellects, one is the possession of knowledge without practising it and the other is the practising of knowledge. The first is similar to a writer who has learnt handwriting and is in possession of this art; the other is similar to the person who practises writing in actuality.

We quote the opening paragraph of his treatise:

“The opinion of Aristotle concerning the intellect is that it is of four kinds:

- (1) The first is the intellect which is always in act.
- (2) The second is the intellect which is potentially in the soul.
- (3) The third is the intellect which has passed in the soul from potentiality to actuality.
- (4) The fourth is the intellect which we call the second.”[32](#)

What he means by the “second” is the second degree of actuality as shown above in the distinction between mere possession of knowledge and practising it.

A complete theory of knowledge is expounded in the rest of the treatise. There are two kinds of forms, the material and the immaterial. The first is the sensuous, because the sensibles are composed of matter and form. When the soul acquires the material form, it becomes one with it, i. e., the material form and the soul become one and the same. Similarly, when the soul acquires the rational forms which are immaterial, they are united with the soul. In this way, the soul becomes actually rational. Before that it was rational in potentiality. What we call the intellect is nothing other than the genera and species of things.

This intellectual operation is again illustrated in al-Kindi's treatise on “First Philosophy.” He says: “When the genera and species are united with the soul, they become intellectibles. The soul becomes actually rational after its unity with the species. Before this unity the soul was potentially rational. Now, everything which exists in potentiality does not pass to actuality save by something which brings it from potentiality to actuality. It is the genera and species of things, i. e., the universals... which make the soul which is potentially rational to be actually rational, I mean, which get united with it.”[33](#)

Al-Kindi abruptly passes from the above epistemological discussion to an ontological one concerning the oneness of the universals and their origin. The universals are the intellect in so far as they are united with the soul. Thus the question arises whether the intellect is one or many. It is one in one respect and many in another.

This is his full account: “And as universals are many, as shown above, so is the intellect. It seems to us that the intellect is the first plurality. But it is also one, because it is a whole, as shown above and oneness is applied to the whole. But the true oneness (*wahdah*)[34](#) is not of the intellect.”

Following the doctrine of Plotinus, al-Kindi passed on to the metaphysical plane of the One. As

mentioned above, he confused Aristotle's metaphysics of Being with that of Plotinus.¹ For this reason he was unable to elaborate a coherent system of his own. This was what al-Farabi, the Second Master, was able to do.

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L. Gauthier, *Antecedents Grieco-Arabs de la Psychophysique (Al Kindi De rerum gradibus)*, Beyrouth, 1939; *Die philosophischen Abhandlungen des al-Kindi*, first published by von Albino Nagy, *Beitr. zur Gesch. d. Philos. des Mittelalters*, Vol. II, Munster, 1897. This contains the following medieval translations (some at least by Gerard of Cremona): *De intellectu*; *De somno et uisione*; *De quinque essentiis*; *Liber introductorius in artem logicae demonstrationis*; and also a study of the original texts and the translations and elaborate notes;

G. Flugel, *Al-Kindi genannt "der Philosoph der Araber,"* Abhdl. f. die Kunde des Morgenlandes, Leipzig, 1857.

¹ Mustafa `Abd al-Raziq, following de Boer, gives this date. On the biography of al-Kindi the best article is that of Mustafa `Abd al-Raziq in *Failasuf al-`Arab w-al-Mu`allim al-Thani*, Cairo, 1945, pp. 7-50. See also Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany's "Introduction" to the edition of al-Kindi's treatise on "First Philosophy," Cairo, 1948, pp. 3-49, and Abu Ridah's "Introduction" to *Rasa'il al-Kindi*, Cairo, 1950, pp. 1-80.

² Al-Qifti, *Tarikh al-Hukama'*, Cairo ed., p. 241

³ Ibn Nabatah, *Sharh Risalah Ibn Zaidun*, Cairo, p. 113.

⁴ Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah, *Tabaqat al-Atibba'*, Cairo, Vol. I, p. 207.

⁵ Albino Nagy, *Die philosophischen Abhandlungen des al-Kindi*, 1897

⁶ Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany edited his important and long treatise on "First Philosophy" in 1948; his *De Intellectu* with *Kitab al-Nafs* of Ibn Rushd in 1950; his treatise "On the Soul" in *al-Kitab*, 1949. Abu Ridah edited all the treatises in two volumes in Cairo, the first in 1950, the second in 1953. M. Guidi and R. Walzer edited in 1940 his treatise "On the Number of Aristotle's Books," and translated it into the Italian, in *Real Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, ser. VI, Vol. VI, fasc. 5. Rosenthal in 1956 edited in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXVI, No. 1, pp. 27-31, his treatise "On

Atmospheric Phenomena” (Risalah fi Ahdath al-Jaww).

[7.](#) Ibn Nadim, al-Fihrist, Cairo, p.255.

[8.](#) Rosenthal, op.cit, p.27.

[9.](#) Ibn Nabatah, op. cit., p. 125

[10.](#) A full discussion of this question is found in the article of Rosenthal referred to above.

[11.](#) Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq, op. cit., p. 47.

[12.](#) El-Ehwany. Ed..”First Philosophy,” Cairo, 1948, p. 79

[13.](#) El-Ehwany, Islamic Philosophy, Cairo, 1957, pp. 35–36

[14.](#) Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq, op. cit., p. 47

[15.](#) “First Philosophy,” p. 82.

[16.](#) Ibid.

[17.](#) Ibid.

[18.](#) In Oriens, Vol. X, No. 2, 1957, “New Studies on al-Kindi,” Walzer translates this term by “divine knowledge.” We guess what is meant in this context is the divine science as compared with human science. Guidi and Walzer edited this manuscript and translated it into Italian: Il Numero dei Libri di Aristotle. In the Italian translation the term is scienza divina which corresponds to divine science.

[19.](#) “This” either refers to the divine science, the divine knowledge of the prophet, or the prophetic faculty. Walzer in his translation of this passage gives the latter interpretation. Cf. Oriens, p. 206.

[20.](#) M. Guidi and R. Walzer, op. cit., p. 395. Except at some places, we follow in the main the translation given by Walzer in Oriens, p. 206.

[21.](#) Rosenthal, “Al-Kindi and Ptolemy,” Studi Orientalistici, Vol. II, Roma, 1956, p. 455. The view that al-Kindi was not a true philosopher, but simply a translator, was held by some ancient writers. Madkour, in his book La Place d'Al-Farabii dans l'Ecole Philosophique Musulmane, considers him rather a mathematician. Abu Ridah, in his “Introduction” to al-Rasa'il, considers him to be a true philosopher in the full sense of the term. We rather adhere to Rosenthal's view. Cf. Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany's “Introduction” to al-Kindi's “First Philosophy.”

[22.](#) This treatise is not yet edited.. Rosenthal, in the above article on “Al-Kindi and Ptolemy,” gave some excerpts and analysed it.

[23.](#) Rosenthal, “Al-Kindi and Ptolemy,” Studi Orientalistici, p. 449. The author has compared Ptolemy's text with both Theon's commentary and al-Kindi's text

[24.](#) With Abu Ridah we understand this term to be intelligibles or concepts (al-ma'qulat), but categories is more suitable in this .context.

[25.](#) “First Philosophy,” p. 141; in Abu Ridah's edition, p. 160. The term wahdah means either unity or oneness, but in this context it is oneness.

[26.](#) Van den Bergh, The Incoherence of the Incoherence, London, 1954, Vol. I, p. 186.

[27.](#) Abu Ridah, Rasa'il, “On the Efficient Cause of Generation and Corruption,” p. 215.

[28.](#) “First Philosophy”, p. 143.

[29.](#) Liber de Quinque Essentiis. This treatise was translated into Latin in the Medieval Ages.

[30.](#) Magnitudes apply to lines, surfaces, or bodies. A magnitude of the same kind means one applying solely to one of the three kinds mentioned. Cf. Abu Ridah, Rasa'il, Vol. I, “Treatise on the Finitude of the Body of the World,” p. 187.

[31.](#) We quote the example given by al-Kindi and the proof of this theorem as a specimen of his mathematical method.

“Example: Given A and B are magnitudes of the same kind, and the one is not greater than the other, we say that they are equal. Proof: If they are unequal, then one is greater than the other, say A is greater than B. But since A is not greater than B, as mentioned above, this leads to a contradiction. It follows that they are equal.” Ibid., p. 188.

[32.](#) El-Ehwany, Islamic Philosophy, Cairo, 1951, pp. 51–52

[33.](#) “First Philosophy.” p. 134

[34.](#) The term wahdah means here oneness, not unity. At the beginning of this same paragraph he speaks about “the true one,” and says it is not soul.

Chapter 22 : Muhammad Ibn Zakariya Al-Razi

By Abdurrahman Badawi

Life

According to al-Biruni,¹ Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya ibn Yahya al-Razi was born in Rayy on the first of Sha`ban in the year 251/865. In his early life, he was a jeweller (Baihaqi), money-changer (Ibn Abi Usaibi`ah), or more likely a lute-player (Ibn Juljul, Said, Ibn Khallikan, Usaibi`ah, al-Safadi) who first left music for alchemy, and then at the age of thirty or (as Safadi says) after forty left alchemy because his experiments in it gave him some eye disease (al-Biruni), which obliged him to search for doctors and medicine. That was the reason, they (al-Biruni, Baihaqi and others) say, he studied medicine.

He was very studious and worked day and night. His master was 'Ali ibn Rabban al-Tabari (al-Qifti, Usaibi`ah), a doctor and philosopher, who was born in Merv about 192/808 and died some years after 240/855. ² With Ibn Rabban al-Tabari he studied medicine and perhaps also philosophy. It is possible to trace back al-Razi's interest in religious philosophy to his master, whose father was a rabbinist versed in the Scriptures.

Al-Razi became famous in his native city as a doctor. Therefore, he directed the hospital of Rayy (Ibn Juljul, al-Qifti, Ibn Abi Usaibi`ah), in the times of Mansur ibn Ishaq ibn Ahmad ibn Asad who was the Governor of Rayy from 290–296/902–908 in the name of his cousin Ahmad ibn Isma`il ibn Ahmad, second Samanian ruler.³ It is to this Mansur ibn Ishaq ibn Ahmad that Razi dedicated his *al-Tibb al-Mansuri*, as it is attested by a manuscript⁴ of this book, as against Ibn al-Nadim's assumption,⁵ repeated by al-Qifti⁶ and Ibn Abi Usaibi`ah,⁷ that this Mansur was Mansur ibn Ismail who died in 365/975.

From Rayy al-Razi went to Baghdad during the Caliph Muktafi's times ⁸ (r. 289/901–295/907) and there too directed a hospital.

It seems that after al-Muktafi's death (295/907) al-Razi came back to Rayy. Here gathered round him many students. As Ibn al-Nadim relates in *Fihrist*,⁹ al-Razi was then a Shaikh “with a big head similar to a sack”; he used to be surrounded by circle after circle of students. If someone came to ask something in science, the question was put to those of the first circle; if they did not know the answer, it passed on to those of the second, and so on till it came to al-Razi himself if all others failed to give the answer. Of these students we know at least the name of one, i. e., Abu Bakr ibn Qarin al-Razi who became a doctor.¹⁰

Al-Razi was generous, humane towards his patients, and charitable to the poor, so that he used to give them full treatment without charging any fee, and even stipends.¹¹ When not occupied with pupils or patients he was always writing and studying.¹² It seems that this was the reason for the gradual

weakening of his sight that finally brought blindness to his eyes. Some say¹³ that the reason for his blindness was that he used to eat too much of broad beans (*baqilah*). It began with cataract¹⁴ which ended in complete blindness.

They say that he refused to be treated for cataract saying that he “had seen so much of the world that he was fed up.”¹⁵ But this seems to be more of an anecdote than a historical fact. It was one of his pupils from Tabaristan that came to treat him, but, as al-Biruni says, he refused to be treated saying that it was useless as his hour of death was approaching.¹⁶ Some days after, he died in Rayy, on the 5th of Sha'ban 313/27th of October 925. ¹⁷

Al-Razi's Masters and Opponents

We have already mentioned that al-Razi studied medicine under 'Ali ibn Rabban al-Tabari. Ibn al-Nadim says¹⁸ that he studied philosophy under al-Balkhi. This al-Balkhi, according to Ibn al-Nadim had travelled much, and knew philosophy and ancient sciences well. Some even say that al-Razi attributed to himself some of al-Balkhi's books on philosophy. We know nothing else about this al-Balkhi, not even his full name.

Al-Razi's opponents, on the contrary, are known better. They were the following:

1. Abu al-Qasim al-Balkhi, chief of the Mu'tazilah of Baghdad (d. 319/931), was a contemporary of al-Razi; he composed many refutations of al-Razi's books, especially his *'Ilm al-Ilahi*.¹⁹ He had controversies with him especially on time.²⁰
2. Shuhaid ibn al-Husain al-Balkhi,²¹ with whom al-Razi had many controversies;²² one of these controversies was on the theory of pleasure.²³ His theory of pleasure is expounded in his *Tafdil Ladhdhat al-Nafs* from which Abu Sulaiman al-Mantiqi al-Sijistani gives some extracts in *Siwan al-Hikmah*.²⁴ Al-Balkhi died before 329/940.
3. Abu Hatim al-Razi, the most important of all his opponents (d. 322/933–934) and one of the greatest Isma'ili missionaries.²⁵ He reproduced controversies between him and al-Razi in his *A'lam al-Nubuwwah*.²⁶ Thanks to this book, al-Razi's ideas about prophets and religion are preserved for us.
4. Ibn al-Tammar, whom Kraus believes to be perhaps Abu Bakr Husain al-Tammar.²⁷ He was a physician and had some controversies with al-Razi as is reported by Abu Hatim al-Razi in *A'lam al-Nubuwwah*.²⁸ Ibn al-Tammar refuted al-Razi's *al-Tibb al-Ruhani* and al-Razi answered this refutation.²⁹ In fact, al-Razi wrote two refutations: (a) refutation of al-Tammar's refutation of Misma'i concerning matter; (b) refutation of al-Tammar's opinion on the atmosphere of subterranean habitations.³⁰
5. Those of whom we know from the titles of the books written by al-Razi: (a) al-Misma'i, a Mutakallim who had written against the materialists and against whom al-Razi wrote a treatise;³¹ (b) Jarir the doctor

who had a theory about the eating of black mulberry after water-melon;³² (c) al-Hasan ibn Mubarik al-Ummi, to whom al-Razi wrote two epistles;³³ (d) al-Kayyal, a Mutakallim, against whose theory of the Imam, al-Razi wrote a book; ³⁴ (e) Mansur ibn Talhah, who wrote a book on “Being” refuted by al-Razi;³⁵ (f) Muhammad ibn al-Laith al-Rasa'ili whose writing against alchemists was answered by al-Razi.³⁶

6. Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi (d. 286/899), an elder contemporary of al-Razi. Al-Razi refuted him on the question of bitter taste;³⁷ Al-Razi refuted also his master, Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi, who had written against the alchemists.³⁸

7. We should add to all those known by names many others who were refuted by al-Razi, especially the Mu'tazilah and different Mutakallimin.³⁹

Works

Al-Razi's books are very numerous. He himself prepared a catalogue of his books, reproduced by Ibn al-Nadim.⁴⁰ Here we find: 118 books, 19 epistles, then 4 books, 6 epistles, and one *maqalah*, the total being 148 works.

After Ibn al-Nadim, al-Biruni wrote an epistle on the bibliography of al-Razi. This epistle, found in a unique manuscript in Leiden,⁴¹ was edited by Paul Kraus,⁴² and translated into German by J. Ruska in his article: “al-Biruni als Quelle fur das Leben and die Schriften al-Razi's.”⁴³ This catalogue is preceded by a short note on al-Razi's life.

The books are classified as follows: (a) on medicine (1-56 books); (b) physics (57-89); (c) logic (90-96); (d) mathematics and astronomy (97-106); (e) commentaries, abridgments, and epitomes (107-13); (f) philosophy and hypothetical sciences (114-30); (g) metaphysics (131-36); (h) theology (137-50); alchemy (151-72); (i) atheistic books (173-74); (j) miscellaneous (175--84). In al-Nadim's and al-Biruni's lists, there are some common and some non-common titles.

Ibn Abi Usaib`ah (Vol.I, pp.315-19) mentions 236 works of which some are certainly apocryphal.

The different titles given by al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nadim, al-Qifti, and Ibn Abi Usaib`ah were assembled by Dr. Mahmud al-Najmabadi in his book: *Sharh Hal Muhammad ibn Zakariya* published in 1318/1900. He gave 250 titles.

As extant manuscripts of al-Razi's books, Brockelmann (Vol. I, pp. 268-71, *Suppl.*, Vol. I, pp. 418-21) gives 59 titles.

Of his philosophical works, we have: -

1. *Al-Tibb al-Ruhani* (Brit. Mus. Add. Or. 25758; vat. Ar. 182 Cairo 2241 Tas).

2. *Al-Sirat al-Falsafiyyah* (Brit. Mus. Add. Or. 7473).
3. *Amarat Iqbal al-Daulah* (Raghib 1463, ff. 98a–99b, Istanbul).

These three were published by Paul Kraus: “Abi Bakr Mohammadi Filu Zachariae Raghensis,” *Opera Philosophica*, fragmentaque quae supersunt, Collegit et edidit Paulus Kraus. Pars Prior. Cahirae MCMXXXIX. In this edition Kraus published also fragments or exposes of the following books: –

4. *Kitab al-Ladhdhah*.
5. *Kitab al-’Ilm al-Ilahi*.
6. *Maqalah fi ma ba’d al-Tabi’ah*.

The last one is spurious; it is attributed falsely to al-Razi in a manuscript (Istanbul, Raghib 1463, f. 90a–98b). Kraus gives also the exposes of different authors of al-Razi’s ideas on: (a) The five eternal (God, universal soul, first matter, absolute space, and absolute time); (b) matter; (c) time and space; (d) soul and world. At the end of the volume he gives extracts from *A’lam al-Nubuwwah* of Abu Hatim on prophecy, followed by extracts from *al-Aqwal al-Dhahabiyyah* of Ahmad ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Kirmani on the same subject.

7. Besides these books and extracts contained in the first volume (the only one published by Kraus), Kraus published in *Orientalia* some other extracts concerning al-Razi’s ideas on prophecy (Vol. V., Fasc. 3/4, Roma, 1936).

8. *Al-Shukuk ‘ala Proclus* which was prepared by Kraus to be edited and was found among the papers he left after his suicide.

Nothing of these philosophical books was translated into Latin. All Latin translations of his works were confined to medicine and alchemy.

Philosophy

1. Method

Al-Razi is a pure rationalist. He believes in reason, and in reason alone. In medicine, his clinical studies reveal a very solid method of investigation based on observation and experimentation. In *Kitab al-Faraj ba’d al-Shiddah* by al-Tanukhi (d. 384/994) and *Chahar Maqalah* of Nizami ‘Arudi Samarqandi written about 550/1155, we find a lot of cases attributed to al-Razi where he shows an excellent method of clinical investigation. E. G. Browne, in his *Arabian Medicine*, has translated a page supposed to be taken from al-Razi’s *Hawi* [44](#) which shows this method. It runs as follows:

Al-Razi’s exaltation of reason is best expressed on the first page of his *al-Tibb al-Ruhani*. He says: “God, glorious is His name, has given us reason in order to obtain through it from the present and future the utmost benefits that we can obtain; it is God’s best gift to us.... By reason we perceive all that is

useful to us and all that makes our life good – by it we know obscure and remote things, those which are hidden from us. .. by it, too, we succeed to the knowledge of God, which is the highest knowledge we can obtain.... If reason is so highly placed and is of such an important rank, we should not degrade it; we should not make it the judged while it is the judge, or controlled while it is the controller, or commanded while it is the commander; on the contrary, we should refer to it in everything and judge all matters by it; we should do according as it commands us to do.”[45](#)

Even the most rationalistic mind could not exalt reason so clearly and so highly. There is no place for revelation or mystic intuition. It is only logical reason which is the unique criterion of knowledge and conduct. No irrational force can be invoked. Al-Razi is against prophecy, against revelation, against all irrational trends of thought.

Men are born with equal dispositions for knowledge. It is only through cultivation of these dispositions that men differ, some cultivating them by speculation and learning, others neglecting them or directing them to a practical way of life.[46](#)

2. Metaphysics

When one begins to expound al-Razi's metaphysics, one at first comes across a small treatise attributed to him: *Maqalah li Abi Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariya al-Razi fi ma ba`d al-Tabi'ah* (Raghib MS. No. 1463, ff. 90a–98b, in Istanbul). There is much doubt about the authenticity of this treatise, because its contents do not agree entirely with al-Razi's otherwise known doctrines. So, either it may belong to another period of al-Razi's intellectual development, as Pines supposes,[47](#) or it may contain only a systematic historical expose of other people's ideas without reference to his own,[48](#) or it may not be by al-Razi at all.

Anyhow, the main points treated here are: (1) nature, (2) foetus, and (3) eternity of movement. The author refutes the partisans of the idea of nature as principle of movement, especially Aristotle and his commentators: John Philoponos, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Porphyry.

At first he denies that there is no need to prove the existence of nature, because it is not evident by itself. If nature is one and the same, why does it produce different effects in stone and in man? If nature permeates the body, does not that mean that two things can occupy one and the same place? Why do those partisans say that nature is dead, insensible, impotent, ignorant, without liberty and choice, and at the same time attribute to it the same qualities as to God? Against Porphyry the author says: You admit that nature acts in view of something and not by hazard or mere chance; why then do you say that nature is dead and not a living agent?

It seems that the author wants to refute all doctrines which pretend that nature is the principle of movement and creation, by showing the contradictions to which these doctrines necessarily lead. His standpoint is that there is no place for admitting the existence of nature as principle of action and

movement. But he does not define his attitude; his expose is negative and destructive.

As for the question of eternity of movement and time, the author discusses especially the ideas of Aristotle and Proclus.⁴⁹ He refers to his refutation of Proclus. We know that al-Razi has written a treatise entitled “Doubts about Proclus,” and Kraus⁵⁰ thinks that this is an argument in favour of the authenticity of the attribution of the treatise to al-Razi, but we think that this is a weak argument, because Proclus' *de aeternitate mundi* was much discussed by Arab thinkers after it had been translated by Ishaq ibn Hunain.⁵¹

The author's idea is that time is finite and not eternal, that the world is also finite, that there is only one world, and, lastly, that outside that one world there is no element and nothing (except God). Here he reproduces the ideas of Metrodorus and Seleucus taken from pseudo-Plutarch's *Placita Philosophorum*.

The general trend of this treatise is polemical and dialectical. It cannot be reconciled with al-Razi's ideas on time, space, and Deity. Therefore, we think that it is spurious and cannot even belong to another period of al-Razi's spiritual development.

The real doctrine of al-Razi should be searched for in his *Kitab al-'Ilm al-Ilahi*. Unfortunately, that work is lost and we have only refutations of some passages from it collected by Kraus.⁵² We do not even have textual fragments of al-Razi's book. With all the inconveniences of adversaries' exposes, we have nothing more to do than to content ourselves with these refutations. What we can conclude from these is that al-Razi treated in this book: space, vacuum, time, duration, matter, metempsychosis, prophecy, pleasure, and Manichaeism.

Al-Razi's philosophy is chiefly characterized by his doctrine of the Five Eternals. Al-Biruni says⁵³ that “Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi has reported from the ancient Greeks the eternity of five things: God, the universal soul, first matter, absolute space, and absolute time, on which he founded his doctrine. But he distinguished between time and duration by saying that number applies to the one and not to the other, because finiteness attains numerality; and, therefore, the philosophers have defined time as the duration of what has a beginning and an end, whereas duration (*dahr*) has neither beginning nor end.

He said also that in Being these five are necessary: the sensible in it is the matter formed by composition; it is spatial, so there must be a space; alternation of its modes is a characteristic of time, because some precede and others follow, and it is by time that oldness and newness, and older and newer and simultaneous are known; so time is necessary. In Being there are living things, so there must be soul; in it there are intelligibles and their constitution is absolutely perfect; there must be then a creator, wise, omniscient, doing things as perfectly as possible, and giving reason for the sake of salvation.”

Out of the Five Eternals, two are living and acting: God and soul; one is passive and not living: matter from which all bodies are made; and two are neither living and acting, nor passive: vacuum and duration.⁵⁴ Sometimes we find vacuum (*khala'*) instead of space (*makan*), and duration (*dahr*) instead of

time (*zaman*) or duration in the limited sense (*muddah*).

This doctrine is attributed, in, some sources (al-Fakhr al-Razi, al-Shahrastani, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi), to the so-called Harraniyyah. Who were these Harraniyyah? The word comes from Harran, the famous city of the Sabians and a centre of learning immediately before Islam and in the first four centuries of the Islamic era. Massignon⁵⁵ thinks that these Harraniyyah are fictitious persons, and that what we find about them in our sources is a mere “literary romance” (*roman litteraire*).

Kraus is also of the same opinion, and he gives his reasons⁵⁶ as follows: (a) before al-Razi we find no one who attributes the doctrine of the five eternal to al-Harraniyyah; (b) al-Razi, in his *'Ilm al-Ilahi* has expounded the doctrines of the Sabian Harraniyyah and also his doctrine of the five eternal. But then Kraus gives a third reason which proves exactly the contrary of what the first two prove: al-Biruni, al-Marzuqi, al-Katibi, and al-Tusi say that al-Razi reported this doctrine from the ancient Greeks, that is to say, the early Greek philosophers, especially Pythagoras, Democritus, etc.

How can we then say that al-Razi attributed this doctrine to a fictitious school, Harraniyyah, when he said expressly in his *'Ilm al-Ilahi* that it was the doctrine of the early Greek philosophers? He was not in need of inventing the Harraniyyah, when he already had declared that it was the doctrine of the early Greek philosophers. For this reason, we cannot admit Massignon's suggestion, nor Kraus' evidence which are very weak. It is not right to identify what is attributed in the different sources to the Harraniyyah with al-Razi's ideas unless this is expressly declared in the sources themselves.

We may now describe these Five Eternals.

(i) God

God's wisdom is perfect No inadvertence can be attributed to Him. Life flows from Him as light flows from the sun. He is perfect and pure Intelligence. From the soul life flows.⁵⁷ God creates everything, He is incapable of nothing, and nothing can be contrary to His will. God knows things perfectly well. But the soul knows only what it experiences. God knew that soul would tend to matter and ask for material pleasure. After that soul attached itself to matter; God by his wisdom arranged that this attachment should be brought about in the most perfect way.

God afterwards poured intelligence and perception upon the soul. That was the reason for the soul to remember its real world and the reason for it to know that so long as it is in the world of matter it will never be free from pain. If soul knows that, and also that in its real world it will have pleasure without pain, it will desire that world and, once separated from matter, it will remain there for ever in utmost happiness.

In that way all doubts can be removed about the eternity of the world and the existence of evil. Since we have admitted the wisdom of the Creator, we must admit that the world is created. If one asks why it was created in this or that moment, we say that it was because soul attached itself to matter in that moment.

God knew that this attachment was a cause of evil, but after it had been brought about, God directed it to the best possible way. But some evils remained; being the source of all evils, this composition of soul and matter could not be completely purified.[58](#)

(ii) Soul

God, according to al-Razi, has not created the world through any necessity, but He decided to create it after having at first no will to create it. Who determined Him to do so? There must be another eternal who made Him decide this.

This other eternal is the soul which was living but ignorant. Matter, too, was eternal. Owing to its ignorance, the soul was fond of matter and formed figures from it in order to get material pleasures. But matter was rebellious to forms; so God intervened in order to aid the soul. This aid was that He made this world and created in it strong forms wherein the soul could find corporeal pleasures. God then created man and from the substance of His divinity he created the intelligence of man to awaken the soul and to show to it that this world is not its real world.

But man cannot attain the real world except by philosophy. He who studies philosophy and knows his real world and acquires knowledge is saved from his bad state. Souls remain in this world till they are awakened by philosophy to the mystery and directed towards the real world.[59](#)

(iii) Matter

The absolute or first matter is composed of atoms. Each atom has volume; otherwise by their collection nothing could be formed. If the world is destroyed, it too is dispersed into atoms. Matter has been there from eternity, because it is impossible to admit that a thing comes from nothing.

What is more compact becomes the substance of the earth, what is more rarefied than the substance of the earth becomes the substance of water, what is still more rarefied becomes the substance of air, and what is still more and more rarefied becomes the substance of fire.

The body of the sphere is also composed of the particles of matter, but its composition differs from the compositions of other bodies. The proof of this is that the movement of the sphere is not directed to the centre of the world, but to its periphery. Its body is not very compact, as that of the earth, nor very rarefied as that of fire or air.

Qualities such as heaviness, levity, darkness, and luminosity are to be explained by the more or less vacuity which is within matter. Quality is an accident which is attributed to substance, and substance is matter.[60](#)

Al-Razi gives two proofs to establish the eternity of matter. First, creation is manifest; there must then be its Creator. What is created is nothing but formed matter. Why then do we prove, from the created, the anteriority of the Creator, and not the anteriority of the created being? If it is true that body is created (or

more exactly: made [*masnu`*]) from something by the force of an agent, then we should say that as this agent is eternal and immutable before: His act, what received this act of force must also have been eternal before it received that act. This receiver is matter. Then matter is eternal.

The second proof is based on the impossibility of *creatio ex nihilo*. Creating, that is to say, making something out of nothing is easier than composing it. God's creating men fully at one stroke would be easier than composing them in forty years. This is the first premise. The wise Creator does not prefer to do what is farther from His purpose to what is nearer, unless He is incapable of doing what is easier and nearer. This is the second premise. The conclusion from these premises is that the existence of all things should be caused by the Creator of the world through creation and not by composition. But what we see is evidently the contrary. All things in this world are produced by composition and not by creation. It necessarily follows that He is incapable of *creatio ex nihilo* and the world came to be by the composition of things the origin of which is matter.

Al-Razi adds, universal induction proves this. If nothing in the world comes to be except from another thing, it is necessary that natures are made from another thing, and this other thing is matter. Therefore, matter is eternal; it was originally not composed, but dispersed.[61](#)

(iv) Space

As it is proved that matter is eternal, and as matter should occupy space, so there is eternal space. This argument is nearly the same as that given by al-Iranshahri. But al-Iranshahri says that space is the manifest might of God. Al-Razi could not follow his master's vague definition. For him, space is the place where matter is.

Al-Razi distinguishes between two kinds of space: universal or absolute, and particular or relative. The former is infinite and does not depend on the world and the spatial things in it.

Vacuum is inside space, and, consequently, inside matter. As a proof of the infinity of space, the partisans (al-Iranshahri and al-Razi) say that a spatialized thing cannot exist without space, though space may exist without spatialized things.. Space is nothing but the receptacle for the spatialized things. What contains the two is either a body, or a not-body. If it is a body, it must be in space, and outside this body there is space or no-space; if no-space, it is a body and finite. If it is not-body, it is space. Therefore, space is infinite. If someone says that this absolute space has an end, that means that its limit is a body. As every body is finite, and every body is in space, so space is infinite in every sense. What is infinite is eternal, so space is eternal.[62](#)

Vacuum has the power of attracting bodies; therefore, water is conserved (or retained) in a bottle submerged in water with the opening turned downwards.[63](#)

(v) Time

Time, according to al-Razi, is eternal. It is a substance that flows (*jauhar yajri*). He is against those

(Aristotle and his followers) who pretend—that time is the number of the movements of the body, because if it were so, it would not have been possible for two moving things to move in one time by two different numbers.

Al-Razi distinguishes between two kinds of time: absolute time and limited (*mahsur*) time. The absolute time is duration (*al-dahr*). It is eternal and moving. As for the limited time, it is that of the movements of the spheres and of the sun and stars. If you imagine the movement of duration, you can imagine absolute time, and this is eternity. If you imagine the movement of the sphere, you imagine the limited time.⁶⁴

Theology

Al-Razi was a theist, but he does not believe in revelation and prophecy. We content ourselves with giving a summary of his main ideas.

Al-Razi contests prophecy on the following grounds:

1. Reason is sufficient to distinguish between good and evil, useful and harmful. By reason alone we can know God, and organize our lives in the best way. Why then is there need for prophets?
2. There is no justification for privileging some men for guiding all men because all men are born equal in intelligence; the differences are not because of natural dispositions, but because of development and education.
3. Prophets contradict one another. If they speak in the name of one and the same God, why this contradiction?

After denying prophecy, al-Razi goes on to criticize religions in general. He expounds the contradictions of the Jews, the Christians, the Manichaeans, and the Majusis. He gives the following reasons for the attachment of men to religion:

- (a) Imitation and tradition.
- (b) Power of the clergy who are in the service of the State.
- (c) External manifestations of religions, ceremonials and rituals, which impose themselves upon the imagination of the simple and the naive.

He shows contradictions between religion and religion in detail.

Al-Razi subjects the revealed books, the Bible and the Qur'an, to systematic criticism. He tries to criticize the one by the aid of the other; for instance, he criticizes Judaism by means of Manichaeism, and Christianity by means of Islam; and then criticizes the Qur'an by means of the Bible.

He denies especially the miraculousness (*ij'az*) of the Qur'an, either because of its style or its contents

and affirms that it is possible to write a better book in a better style.

He prefers scientific books to all sacred books, because scientific books are more useful to men in their lives than all sacred books. Books on medicine, geometry, astronomy, and logic are more useful than the Bible and the Qur'an. The authors of these scientific books have found the facts and truths by their own intelligence, without the help of prophets. Science is drawn from three sources: reasoning, according to logic; tradition, from predecessors to successors according to sure and accurate testimony, as in history; and instinct which guides man without being in need of much reasoning.

After this negative criticism, he goes on to say that it would not even be reasonable of God to send prophets, because they do much harm. Every nation believes only in its own prophets and vehemently denies those of others, with the result that there have been many religious wars and much hatred between nations professing different religions.

These ideas of al-Razi were most audacious. No other Muslim thinker was so daring as he.

Moral Philosophy

Razi's moral philosophy is to be found in the only extant philosophical works of his, *al-Tibb al-Ruhani* and *al-Sirat al-Falsafiyah*. The latter work is a justification of his conduct of life, from the philosophical point of view, because he was blamed by some people for not living on the model of his master, Socrates. It is a curious and very interesting *apologia pro vita sua*.

He thinks that there should be moderation in a philosopher's life – neither much asceticism, nor too much indulgence in pleasures. There are two limits higher and lower. The higher limit beyond which a philosopher should not go is to abstain from pleasures that cannot be obtained except by committing injustice and doing things contrary to reason. The lower is to eat what does not harm him or cause illness, and to wear what is sufficient to protect his skin, and so on. Between the two limits, one can live without becoming unworthy of being called a philosopher.

Al-Razi claims that he in his practical life did not go beyond these two limits. He did not live in the service of a monarch as a minister or a man of arms, but as a doctor and counsellor. He was not greedy, nor in conflict with other people but, on the contrary, he was very tolerant as regards his own rights. He never exceeded in drinking, eating, or enjoying life. As for his love of science and study, it is all well known to everybody. From the theoretical point of view too, his works entitle him to be called a philosopher.

In *al-Tibb al-Ruhani* he treats, in twenty chapters, the main points of ethics. He wants to expound what the vices are and how we are to get rid of them.

He begins with the exaltation of reason, in the manner we have seen above. Then he goes in *medius res* by treating the question of passions. He says that man should control his passions; he brings out the

distinction drawn by Plato between three aspects of the soul: reasonable, pugnacious, and appetitive; and shows how justice should reign among them.

It is necessary that a man should know his own defects. For this, he can appeal to a reasonable friend who will tell him about his defects. He should get information about what other people, neighbours, and friends, think of him. Here al-Razi depends on two treatises of Galen: "On Knowing One's Own Defects," and "How Good People Benefit from Their Enemies."

These are the contents of preliminary chapters. In the fifth, he expounds his theory of pleasure, a theory which he treats again in a special epistle. For him, pleasure is nothing but the return of what was removed by something harmful to the previous state, for example, one who leaves a shadowy place for a sunny and hot place gets pleasure on coming back to the shadowy place. For this reason, says al-Razi, natural philosophers have defined pleasure as a return to nature.

Al-Razi condemns love as an excess and submission to passions. He condemns vanity; because it prevents one from learning more and working better. Envy is an amalgamation of misery and cupidity. An envious man is the man who feels sad when another obtains some good things, even when no harm comes to him at all. If he has been harmed, then the emotion is not envy but enmity. If a person contents himself with what is necessary for him, then there would be no place for envy in his soul.

Anger is aroused in animals to make it possible for them to take revenge on harmful things. If it is in excess, it does much harm to them.

Lying is a bad habit. It is of two sorts: for good, or for evil. If it is for good, then it merits praise; otherwise, it is blameworthy. So its value depends on the intention.

Misery cannot be wholly condemned. Its value depends on the reason for it. If it is due to the fear of poverty and fear of the future, then it is not bad. If it is for mere pleasure of acquisition, it is bad. There must be a justification for one's misery; if it is a reasonable one, it is not a vice; otherwise it is a thing to be combated.

Worry, when it is too much, is not a good thing, for its excess, without good reason, leads to hallucination, melancholy, and early withering.

Cupidity is a very bad state which brings pain and harm. Drunkenness leads to calamities and ills of body and mind.

Copulation, when in excess, is bad for the body; it causes early senility, weakness, and many other ills. One should indulge in it as little as one can, because excess in it leads to more excess.

Frivolity is also pernicious in some cases.

Acquisition and economy are good for living, but only in moderation. No more wealth should be acquired

than is needed and spent, except a little saving for sudden calamities and bad future circumstances.

Ambition may lead to adventures and perils. It is well and good if we can get a better rank without adventure or peril; otherwise it is better to renounce it.

The last chapter treats a favourite theme in the Hellenistic and early medieval period, that of the fear of death. Here al-Razi contents himself by dealing with it from the point of view of those who think that when the body is destroyed, the soul is also destroyed. After death, nothing comes to man, because he cannot feel anything. During his life, man is submerged in pains, whereas after death there would be no pain whatever. The best thing for a reasonable man to do is to get rid of the fear of death, because if he believes in another life, he must be joyful because, by death, he goes to a better world. If he believes there is nothing after death, there is no cause for worry. In any case, one should reject every kind of worry about death, because it is not reasonable to worry.

Conclusion

Al-Razi had no organized system of philosophy, but compared to his time he must be reckoned as the most vigorous and liberal thinker in Islam and perhaps in the whole history of human thought.

He was a pure rationalist, extremely confident in the power of reason, free from every kind of prejudice, and very daring in the expression of his ideas without reserve.

He believed in man, in progress, and in God the Wise, but in no religion whatever.

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¹ Epitres de Beruni, contenant le repertoire des ouvryes de Muhammad ibn Zakariya ar-Razi, publiee par Paul Kraus, Paris, 1936, p. 4.

2. See on him: Fihrist, p. 296; al-Baihaqi, p. 22; Usaibi'ah, Vol. I, p. 309; Meyerhof, ZDMG, 85, 38 et sqq.; Wustenfeld, p. 55; Leclerc, Vol. I, p. 292; Brockelmann, GAL, Vol. I, p. 265, Suppl., Vol. I, pp. 414–15; Brockelmann (Suppl., Vol. I, p. 415) refutes the contention that al-Razi was Ibn Rabban's pupil, on the ground that the latter was in Rayy in 224/838. But this proof is not sufficient, because Ibn Rabban's life is not well known as to enable one to assert that he did not, go to Rayy much later, say between 265/878 and 270/883, especially when we know nothing about his later life till his death

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7. Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah, Vol. I, p. 310.

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9. P. 299, Flugel; pp. 314–416, Cairo ed.

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23. Ibid., p. 416; p. 300, Flugel (Ed.); Usaibi'ah, p. 319.

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Chapter 23: Al–Farabi

By Ibrahim Madkour

Abu Nasr al–Farabi was born in about 258/870 and he died in 339/950. Eminent founder of a philosophical system as he was, he devoted himself entirely to contemplation and speculation and kept himself aloof from political and social perturbations and turmoils. He left a considerable amount of literature. Besides his immediate pupils, there were many who studied his works after his death and became his followers. His philosophy set the standard for scholarly speculation both in the East and the West long after his death.

Since the last decades of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, several attempts have been made to write his biography, to collect his still unpublished works, and to elucidate some obscurities in his philosophy. In 1370/1950, on the occasion of the millennium of his death, some Turkish scholars discovered some of his works still in manuscript and removed certain difficulties concerning his thought. We cannot say if they have all been resolved. We do not even know if it is easy to resolve them unless we add further to

our knowledge of his life and works. Public and private libraries still keep a considerable number of Islamic manuscripts behind closed doors; and we think it is time for these manuscripts to be brought to the light of the day.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to deal briefly with al-Farabi's life, his works, and his philosophy, with special reference to some of the lost links and misconceptions about or objections raised against his doctrine.¹

Life

Contrary to the usage among some of the Muslim scholars, al-Farabi did not write his autobiography, and no one among his disciples managed to give an account of his life as al-Juzjani did for his master Ibn Sina. Material for that in the works of the biographers is quite unsatisfactory and inadequate. The rather lengthy biography in Ibn Khallikan's *Wafayat al-A'yan*,² is open to criticism as regards its authenticity. Thus, in the life of al-Farabi, several obscure points and some unsolved problems are still to be investigated and settled.

His life falls into two distinct periods, the first being the time from his birth till about the age of fifty. The only information we have about this period is that he was born at Wasij, a village in the vicinity of Farab in Transoxiana, in about 258/870. In spite of the scanty information we have about his family, his childhood, and his youth, it has been believed that he was Turkish by birth, that his father was a general, and that he himself worked as a judge for some time.³ What is better known is the cultural and intellectual movement which flourished and spread with the introduction of Islam in Farab at the beginning of the third/ninth century, and that the reputed philologist al-Jauhari, the compiler of *al-Sihah*, was one of his eminent contemporaries.

Al-Farabi was able to draw largely on this movement. The basis of his early education was religious and linguistic: he studied jurisprudence, Hadith, and the exegesis of the Qur'an. He learnt Arabic as well as Turkish and Persian. It is doubtful whether he knew any other language, and what has been stated by Ibn Khallikan about al-Farabi's mastery of "seventy tongues" is more akin to the fabulous than to exact history.⁴ From his interpretation of the word *safsafah* (sophistry), it is obvious that al-Farabi had no knowledge of the Greek languages.⁵

He did not neglect to benefit himself from the rational studies which were current in his time, such as mathematics and philosophy, although it appears that he did not turn to them until much later. Contrary to what has been held, it does not appear that he paid much attention to medicine.⁶ And when he became extremely interested in these rational studies, he did not remain content with what he had acquired in this respect in his native town. Spurred by intellectual curiosity, he had to leave his home and wander abroad in pursuit of more knowledge.

That marks the second period of his life, the period of old age and full maturity. Baghdad, as an

outstanding centre of learning throughout the fourth/tenth century, was naturally his first destination where he encountered various scholars among whom were philosophers and translators. It was the study of logic which attracted him to that circle of distinguished logicians of Baghdad of whom the most renowned was Abu Bishr Matta ibn Yunus considered to be the foremost logician of his age. Al-Farabi studied logic under Ibn Yunus for some time. He surpassed his teacher and, on account of the eminent position he had gained in this field, he came to be called "The Second Teacher." Another famous logician, Yahya ibn 'Adi, was his disciple.

Al-Farabi remained twenty years in Baghdad and then his attention was engaged by another cultural centre in Aleppo. There, in the brilliant and scholarly Court of Saif al-Daulah, gathered the most distinguished poets, philologists, philosophers, and other scholars. In spite of the strong Arab sympathies of that Court, no racial bias or prejudice could mar the scholarly and cultural atmosphere in which Persians, Turks, and Arabs argued and disputed and agreed or differed in the name of disinterested pursuit of knowledge.

In that Court al-Farabi lived, first and foremost, as a scholar and seeker after truth. The glamour and the glory of Court life never allured him, and, in the garb of a Sufi, he addressed himself to the hard task of a scholar and a teacher; and he wrote his books and his treatises among murmuring rivulets and the thick foliage of shady trees.

Except for several short journeys abroad, al-Farabi remained in Syria till his death in 339/950. Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah maintains that al-Farabi visited Egypt towards the end of his life.⁷ This is most probable, as Egypt and Syria have been closely linked for a long time in history, and cultural life in Egypt at the time of the Tulunids and the Ikhshidids had its attractions. However, the alleged report of the murder of al-Farabi by some highwaymen while he was travelling between Damascus and 'Asqalan quoted by al-Baihaqi is incredible.⁸ Al-Farabi had reached such an exalted position in the Court of Saif al-Daulah that the Amir in person, together with his immediate *entourage*, attended the funeral service in honour of the dead scholar.

Works

He left a considerable amount of literature; yet, if we accept the reports of some of the biographers, such as al-Qifti and Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah, the number of his writings is seventy, small compared with that of his contemporaries, namely, al-Kindi and al-Razi the physician. However, we must bear in mind that in the lists of the works of these scholars, the biographers have often mentioned the same book under two, maybe more, different titles, and that most of the works they have listed were mere articles or short treatises.

Al-Farabi's works may be divided into two equal parts, one dealing with logic and the other with other studies. The logical works are concerned with the different parts of Aristotle's *Organon*, either in the form of commentary or paraphrase. Most of these writings, however, are still in manuscript; and a great many

of these manuscripts are not yet available.⁹

The second category of his works deals with the other branches of philosophy, physics, mathematics, metaphysics, ethics, and politics. A good part of it is available, and it gives a clear idea of the various aspects of al-Farabi's philosophy. But some of it is doubtful and his authorship of it is a subject of controversy, as in the case of *Fusus al-Hikam* (Gems of Sageness) or *al-Mufariqat* (Separateness).¹⁰ In this category, no really scientific study was attempted; al-Farabi did not even mention medicine, and his discussion of chemistry was rather in the nature of a defence than in the form of elaboration and analysis.

Ibn Khallikan is probably right when he maintains that al-Farabi wrote most of his books in Baghdad and Damascus.¹¹ There is no evidence of his having written any of his books before the age of fifty, and even if he did write any, it is not certain whether it was theological or philosophical. The biographers have not reported anything contradictory.

Some scholars have attempted to make a chronological list of his works.¹² But one wonders what the value of such a list would be since all his works were written in the last thirty years of his life, when he began to write as a fully mature philosopher; and there was certainly no noticeable change or development in his thoughts or doctrine during this period.

The style of al-Farabi is characteristically concise and precise. He deliberately selects his words and expressions as he profoundly thinks of his ideas and thoughts. His aphorisms are pregnant with profound significance. That is why Max Horten has given a large commentary to explain the small treatise entitled *Fusus al-Hikam*.¹³ Al-Farabi has a particular style; anyone accustomed to it can well recognize it. He avoids repetition and redundancy and prefers brevity and conciseness.

It seems that al-Farabi was in favour of esoteric teaching and believed that philosophy should not be made available to the uninitiated among the masses,¹⁴ and that philosophers should expound their ideas garbed in obscurity, mystification, and ambiguity.¹⁵ Even today, it is not an easy task to comprehend the meaning implied in some Farabian aphorisms.

His method is almost identical with his style. He collects and generalizes; he arranges and harmonizes; he analyses in order to compose; he divides and sub-divides in order to concentrate and classify. In some of his treatises, division and classification seem to be his only objective. His treatise entitled "What Should Be Learnt Before Attempting Philosophy" is in the form of an index of the Greek schools of philosophy, the meanings of their titles and the names of their originators. He has been chiefly concerned with the study of the aims and the style of the works of Aristotle.¹⁶ His "Classification of Sciences" is the first attempt of its kind in the history of Islamic thought.¹⁷

Al-Farabi is fond of opposites; in fact, he gives the opposite of almost every term he uses: thus negation implies affirmation; and Being, Non-Being. He wrote a treatise in answer to the questions he had been

asked. In this treatise he gives the proposition with which he is confronted and contrasts it with its opposite, in order to get an adequate solution. This reminds us of Plato's Parmenides.

His main concern has been to elucidate the basis of a theory and the foundation of a doctrine, to clear up obscurities, and to discuss controversial questions in order to arrive at the right conclusions. However, he pays scant attention to ordinary topics; and what he supposes to be self-evident is passed by without the slightest attempt at an explanation. A good example of this is his treatise, "The Aims of the Stagirite in Every Chapter of His Book Named the Alphabet."¹⁸ This study is almost akin to our introduction to or criticism of a new book. It can be favourably compared to a similar work by a contemporary philosopher.¹⁹ No wonder, Ibn Sina found in this treatise the key to Aristotle's "Metaphysics"²⁰.

The works of al-Farabi became widespread in the East in the fourth and fifth/tenth and eleventh centuries, and they eventually reached the West where some Andalusian scholars became the disciples of al-Farabi.²¹ Some of his writings were also translated into Hebrew and Latin, and had their influence on Jewish and Christian scholasticism.²² These works were published in the last decades of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, and some of them were translated into various modern European languages. Yet there is still great need for their republication with meticulous editing, especially now that the libraries of Istanbul are much more available to us than before, and we can fill some gaps through them.

Philosophy

The philosophy of al-Farabi has its distinct features and clear-cut aims. He has adopted some of the doctrines of previous philosophers, reconstructed them in a form adaptable to his own cultural environment, and made them so closely knit that his philosophy has become most systematic and harmonious. Al-Farabi is logical both in his thinking and expression, in his argument and discussion, and in his exposition and reasoning.

His philosophy might have depended on some false presuppositions, and might have expounded some hypotheses which modern science has refuted, yet it played a very significant role and influenced several schools of thought in subsequent times. Beginning with his logical studies, we will briefly explain the characteristics and the chief elements of his philosophy

1. Logic

It has been already mentioned that a considerable part of the works of al-Farabi is devoted to the study of logic; but it is almost limited to the delineation of the *Organon* in the version known to the Arabic scholars of that time. He holds that "the art of logic gives, in general, the rules which, if followed, can correct the mind and direct man to the right way to truth away from the pitfalls of error."²³ For him, logic stands in the same relation to intelligibles as grammar to words, and prosody to verse.²⁴ He emphasizes

the practical and applied aspects of logic, indicating that intelligibles are to be tested by its rules, as dimensions, volumes, and masses are by measurement.[25](#)

Logic also helps us in distinguishing truth from error and attaining the right way of thinking or in guiding other people along this way; it also indicates where to start our thoughts and how to conduct them necessarily to their final conclusions.[26](#) Practice in rhetoric and dialectical discourses, or in geometry and arithmetic, can never be a substitute for logic, in the same way as learning a considerable number of poems and speeches is of no avail to a man ignorant of grammar.[27](#) The art of logic – as is generally thought – is not an unnecessary ornament, because it can never be replaced by natural aptitude.[28](#)

However, al-Farabi has always had in mind the difference between grammar and logic; for the former is concerned with words only, while the latter deals with meanings and is related to words in so far as they are the embodiments of meanings. Moreover, grammar is concerned with the laws of language, and languages are as diverse as peoples and races; but logic deals with the human mind which is always the same anywhere and everywhere.[29](#)

The subject-matter of logic is its topics in which the laws of intelligibles are studied. They are classified under eight heads: (1) Categories, (2) Interpretations, (3) First Analytics, (4) Second Analytics, (5) Topics, (6) Sophistics, (7) Rhetorics, and (8) Poetics, all of which constitute the real aim of logic. The fourth part is the most significant and noble of all the others; what is anterior may be considered to be an introduction and what follows an application and comparison leading to the avoidance of error and confusion.[30](#)

It is obvious that al-Farabi follows in the footsteps of Aristotle, although he considers rhetorics and poetics as branches of logic. The same error was committed by the Peripatetics, especially by those of the school of Alexandria.[31](#) Some of them even claimed that Porphyry's *Isagoge* was a part of the *Organon* of Aristotle; but this claim is not supported by al-Farabi known as “The Second Teacher,” Aristotle having been taken to be the First.

Undoubtedly, “Demonstration” was regarded by Aristotle as important, but he was rather proud of his discovery of syllogism.

The contribution of al-Farabi to logic is two-fold. First, he has succeeded in properly and lucidly expounding the logic of Aristotle to the Arabic-speaking world. In the introduction of one of his recently published treatises, he indicates that he will explain the principle of syllogism after Aristotle in terms familiar to the Arabs; consequently, he substitutes examples from the daily life of his own contemporaries for the otherwise vague and unfamiliar examples originally cited by Aristotle. His process is in no way detrimental to the study of the logic of Aristotle, nor does it alter or vitiate the significance of his philosophy.[32](#)

On the other hand, al-Farabi lays the basis for the quinary division of reasoning, indicating that it is demonstrative if it leads to certainty; dialectical if it leads to a semblance of certitude through good

intention; sophisticated if it leads to a semblance of certitude through bad intentions and falsity; rhetorical if it leads to a probable opinion; and poetical if it leads to imagery giving pleasure or pain to the soul.³³ These different kinds are used according to the situation and the standard of the audience.

Philosophers and scholars make use of demonstrative reasoning, theologians resort only to dialectic syllogisms, and politicians take refuge in rhetorical syllogisms. It is obvious that the way of addressing any group of people should be adapted to the standard of their understanding; and, thus, to use demonstrative syllogisms when addressing the populace and the masses is absurd.³⁴

2. The Unity of Philosophy

Al-Farabi maintains that philosophy is essentially one unit. Thus, it is imperative for great philosophers to be in accord, the pursuit of truth being their one and only aim. Plato and Aristotle, “being the originators of philosophy and the creators of its elements and principles and the final authority as regards its conclusions and branches,”³⁵ are closely in accord in spite of some of their apparent and formal differences.

Thus, al-Farabi believes in the existence of only one school of philosophy, the school of truth. Therefore, the terms Peripatetics, Platonists, Stoics, and Epicureans denote only names of groups of philosophers; all constitute one single school of philosophy. Parties and cliques are a nuisance in philosophy as well as in politics.

Al-Farabi, as a philosopher and historian; has been fully aware of the danger of partisanship in philosophy. This partisanship was caused more or less by the fanatics among the disciples of the great philosophers. Instead of attempting to harmonize the doctrines of various philosophers, these disciples managed to widen the gap between two masters by stressing shades of difference and sometimes even by altering and misrepresenting their doctrines.³⁶ This attitude of al-Farabi is identical with the attitude of the twelfth/eighteenth-century philosophers towards the disputes and dissension of the Renaissance philosophers.

There is no novelty in this doctrine of al-Farabi; it has been previously held by the philosophers of the later Greek schools, especially those of the school of Alexandria. When Porphyry speaks about his master, he points out that he has found the ideas of the Peripatetics and the Stoics fused in Plotinus' works.³⁷ In fact, Porphyry has devoted several treatises to the attempt of reconciling the philosophy of Plato with that of Aristotle;³⁸ and a number of scholars of the school of Alexandria followed in his footsteps;³⁹ but none of these scholars ever thought of combining all the philosophers in a single school. This has been an omission, and al-Farabi has been profuse in his writings in an attempt to point this out.

Religious truth and philosophical truth are objectively one, although formally different. This idea rendered possible the accord between philosophy and the tenets of Islam. Al-Farabi undoubtedly has been the first scholar to raise a new edifice of philosophy on the basis of this accord; later philosophers have

followed the lines chalked out by him; Ibn Sina has been to a certain extent occupied in the exposition and delineation of its Platonic aspects, while Ibn Rushd has been busy indicating the accord between Aristotelian philosophy and religion.

This doctrine of reconciliation has been based on two main points: first, revising the Peripatetic philosophy and garbing it in a Platonic form, in order to make it more consonant with Islamic tenets; and, secondly, giving a rational interpretation of religious truths. In fact, al-Farabi expounds philosophy in a religious way and philosophizes religion, thus pushing them in two converging directions so that they may come to an understanding and co-exist.

This revision of the Peripatetic philosophy has been concerned with two theories, one cosmological and the other psychological, viz., Theory of the Ten Intelligences and that of the Intellect. His rational explanation depends on two other theories; the first is concerned with prophecy and the second with the interpretation of the Qur'an. The whole philosophy of al-Farabi is summed up in these four theories which are inter-related and all of which aim at one end.

3. Theory of the Ten Intelligences

This theory constitutes a significant part in Islamic philosophy; it offers an explanation of the two worlds: heaven and earth; it interprets the phenomena of movement and change. It is the foundation of physics and astronomy. Its chief concern is the solving of the problem of the One and the many and the comparing of the mutable and the immutable.

Al-Farabi holds that the One, i. e., God, is the Necessary by Himself; hence, He is not in need of another for His existence or His subsistence. He is an intelligence capable of knowing Himself; He is both intelligent and intelligible. He is quite unique by His essence. Nothing is like Him. He has no opposite or equivalent.[40](#)

If the above premises are admitted, what would be God's influence on the universe and the relationship between Him and the many? Only through a kind of emanation has al-Farabi laboured to elucidate these problems. He holds that from the Necessary One flows or emanates only one other by virtue of its self-knowledge and goodness. This emanent is the first intelligence. Thus, knowledge equals creation, for it is enough for a thing to be conceived in order to exist. The first intelligence is possible by itself, necessary by another; and it thinks the One as well as itself. It is one-in-itself, and many by virtue of these considerations.

From this point al-Farabi starts the first step towards multiplicity. From thinking by first intelligence of the One flows another intelligence. By virtue of its thinking of itself as possible in itself flow the matter and form of the "first heaven," because every sphere has its specific form which is its soul. In this way, the chain of emanations goes on so as to complete the ten intelligences, and nine spheres and their nine souls. The tenth and last intelligence, or agent intelligence, is that which governs the sublunary world.

From this intelligence flow the human souls and the four elements. [41](#)

These intelligences and souls are hierarchical. The first intelligence in this hierarchy is the most transcendent, and then follow the souls of the spheres and then the spheres themselves. The last in order is the earth and the world of matter, which falls in the fourth rank. [42](#)

The ancient Greeks held that anything celestial is sacred and anything terrestrial is impure. The tenets of Islam categorically assert that heaven is the *qiblah* of prayer, the source of revelation, the destination of the “ascension.” Everything in heaven is pure and purifying. Al-Farabi here conforms to both the religious tenets and the philosophical teachings; but his main difficulty lies in maintaining that the impure earthly world has evolved from the sacred celestial one.

The number of intelligences is ten consisting of the first intelligence and the nine intelligences of the planets and spheres, because al-Farabi adopts the same theories as held by the Greek astronomers, especially by Ptolemy according to whom the cosmos is constituted of nine encircling spheres all of which move eternally and circularly around the earth. Intelligences and souls are the originators of this movement. Every sphere has its own intelligence and soul.

The tenth intelligence manages the affairs of the terrestrial world. The soul is the immediate mover of sphere: However it acquires its power from the intelligence. It moves through its desire for the intelligence; and pursuit of perfection moves its sphere. Thus, its desire is the source of its movement. Intelligence in its turn is in a state of perpetual desire. The lower desires the higher and all desire the One which is considered the Prime Mover although It is immovable. [43](#)

The movement of the spheres is effected by a kind of spiritual attraction: the inferior sphere is always attracted towards the superior. This process is a spiritual dynamism similar to that of Leibniz in spite of its dependence on unequal spiritual powers. It seems that al-Farabi, the musician, is attempting to introduce into the world of spheres the system of musical harmony.

However, al-Farabi's conclusions about physics are closely connected with his theories of astronomy. From the tenth intelligence flows the prime matter, or *hylē*, which is the origin of the four elements, and from the same intelligence flow the different forms which unite with the *hylē* to produce bodies. The terrestrial world is only a series of different kinds of forms united with matter or separated from it. Generation is the result of the unity of form and matter, and corruption is the result of their separation. The movement of the sun produces hotness and coldness necessary for change. All the separate intelligences provide the movements appropriate to the terrestrial world. In this way physics is fused with cosmology and the terrestrial world is subjected to the heavenly world. [44](#)

Nevertheless, al-Farabi repudiates astrology which was prevalent at his time, and which had been cherished by the Stoics and the Alexandrian scholars before him.

Al-Farabi does not deny the law of causality and the connection between causes and effects. For

causes may be either direct or indirect; and if it is an easy matter to discover the former, the latter are more difficult to detect. Hence happens chance or coincidence; and there is no way of controlling coincidence. For how could an astrologer associate the death of an Amir with an eclipse? Or how could the discovery of a new planet have any connection with a war? However, belief in fortuitous happenings is essential in politics and in religion, because it imbues men with fear and hope, and stimulates obedience and endeavour. [45](#)

It is, thus, through the doctrine of the ten intelligences that al-Farabi solves the problem of movement and change. He has made use of the same theory in his attempt at solving the problem of the One and the many, and in his reconciliation of the traditional Aristotelian theory of matter and the Islamic doctrine of creation. Matter is as old as the ten intelligences, but it is created because it has emanated from the agent intelligence. To vindicate the unicity of God, al-Farabi has resorted to the mediacy of these ten intelligences between God and the terrestrial world.

Some of the elements of the Theory of the Ten Intelligences can be traced to the different sources they have been derived from. Its astronomical aspect is closely identical with Aristotle's interpretation of the movement of the spheres. The Theory of Emanation has been borrowed from Plotinus and the school of Alexandria. But, in its entirety, it is a Farabian theory, dictated and formulated by his desire for showing the unity of truth and his method of grouping and synthesis. He reconciles Plato and Aristotle and religion and philosophy.

This theory met with some success among the philosophers of the East and those of the West in the Middle Ages. Yet reconciliation necessitates, from one side or the other, some concessions; and if it pleases some, others are sure to resent it. Hence, this theory has been fervently embraced by Ibn Sina who has given it a concise and elaborate exposition, while al-Ghazali is loud in denouncing it. Among the Jewish scholars, Ibn Gabriol does not give it even the slightest notice, while Maimonides enthusiastically subscribes to it. And in spite of the objections of Christian scholars to this theory, it has always elicited their respect and esteem.

4. Theory of the Intellect

The psychology of Aristotle has long been reputed for its conciseness and precision; and as an objective study it has not been less noteworthy. Aristotle's classification of the faculties of the soul is the first of its kind. He has emphasized its unity in spite of the plurality of its faculties and explained its relationship with the body. He has but inadequately dealt with the Theory of the Intellect, and in consequence stirred a problem which has puzzled the moderns as well as the ancients. However, his treatise "On the Soul" is the best of its kind among ancient works on psychology, and it even surpasses some of the modern works. In the Middle Ages it was as much in vogue as the *Organon*.

This book was introduced to the Arabs through translations from Syriac and Greek, together with ancient commentaries, especially those of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, and Simplicius. [46](#) It was the

subject of extensive study with Muslim philosophers, who in their turn commented on it and paraphrased it. Influenced by Aristotle and drawing on his work, these philosophers wrote various theses and treatises on psychology. They were chiefly concerned with the question of the intellect which stood out among all the problems studied by the scholastic philosophers.

Al-Farabi has been fully aware of the significance of this problem, and has recognized in it an epitome of the whole Theory of Knowledge. He has closely identified it with his own philosophy; for it is related to the Theory of the Ten Intelligences, and it is also the foundation of the Theory of Prophecy. He has dealt with the problem of the intellect in several places in his works; and he has devoted to its elaboration a whole treatise, "On the Different Meanings of the Intellect." This treatise had a wide circulation among the scholars of the East and the West in the Middle Ages, and it was translated into Latin at an early date.

He classifies the intellect into practical intellect which deduces what should be done, and theoretical intellect which helps the soul to attain its perfection. The latter is again classified into material, habitual, and acquired.⁴⁷

The material intellect, or the potential intellect as al-Farabi sometimes calls it, is the soul; or is a part of the soul, or a faculty having the power of abstracting and apprehending the quiddity of beings. It can be almost compared to a material on which the forms of beings are imprinted, just like wax which becomes one with the inscriptions carved on it. These inscriptions are nothing but perceptions and intelligibles.

Thus, the intelligible exists in potentiality in sensible things; and when it is abstracted from the senses, it exists in the mind in actuality.⁴⁸ That explains perception and abstraction, the important operations of the mind which bring the intelligibles from potentiality to actuality; and when these intelligibles are conveyed to the mind, the intellect in its turn is transformed from an intellect in potency to an intellect in action.

Therefore, the intellect in act, or the habitual intellect as it is sometimes called, is one of the levels of the ascension of the mind in the acquisition of a number of intelligibles. Since the mind is incapable of comprehending all the intelligibles, it is intellect in action with regard to what it perceives, and intellect in potency with regard to what it has not yet perceived. The intelligibles themselves exist in potency in the sensibles. Once they are stripped of them, they become intelligibles in action. And once man has attained to this level of the intellect in action, he can comprehend himself. This kind of comprehension has no relation with the external world; it is a mental, abstract comprehension. ⁴⁹

Once the intellect becomes capable of comprehending abstractions, it is raised again to a higher level, that of the acquired intellect, or the level where human intellect becomes disposed to conceive abstract forms which have no connection with matter.

The difference between this rational conception and sense-perception is that the former is a kind of intuition and inspiration; or, in other words, it is a kind of immediate apprehension. This is the noblest

level of human apprehension, and it is reached only by the few and the select who attain to the level of the acquired intellect, where the hidden is unveiled, and come in direct communion with the world of the separate intelligences.[50](#)

Thus, the intellect is capable of rising gradually from intellect in potency to intellect in action, and finally to acquired intellect. The two consecutive levels are different from each other, though the lower always serves as a prelude to the higher. While the intellect in potency is just a receiver of sensible forms, intellect in action retains the intelligibles and comprehends the concepts. The acquired intellect rises to the level of communion, ecstasy, and inspiration. Conceptions are of different levels: originally, they are intelligibles in potency existing in matter; once abstracted from matter they become intelligibles in action. Still higher are the abstract forms which can never exist in matter.[51](#)

However, this gradual elevation is not spontaneous; for its initial stage is the intelligibles and the intellect in potency, and its transition from potentiality to actuality can never be effected except through the influence of a prior actuality whose action is appropriate to it. This actuality is the agent intelligence, the last of the ten intelligences.

Human knowledge depends on a radiation from the separate intelligences; and agent intelligence stands in the same relation to human intellect as the sun to our eyes: our eyes depend on daylight for sight, and in the same way our intellect is capable of comprehension only, when it is unveiled by the agent intelligence which illuminates its way.[52](#) Thus, mysticism is fused with philosophy, and rational knowledge coincides with ecstasy and inspiration.

The above-mentioned theory of al-Farabi concerning the intellect is obviously based on Aristotle. Al-Farabi himself declares that his theory depends upon the third part of *De Anima* of Aristotle,[53](#) but he has his own contribution to add. His conception of the acquired intellect is alien to Aristotle; for it is almost identified with the separate intelligences, and serves as the link between human knowledge and revelation. Thus, it is different from the acquired intellect, as found in the theory held by Alexander of Aphrodisias and al-Kindi; and it is the outcome of al-Farabi's mystic tendency and his leaning towards Plotinus' system.

This fact becomes clearer if we consider the influence of the agent intelligence in the acquisition of knowledge, since it is the outcome of vision and inspiration; it offers also to the mind the abstract forms and enlightens the way for it. This theory helps in fusing psychology with cosmology, but it underestimates the activity of the human mind, since it is made: capable of comprehension only when it is illuminated by heaven; but would the Sufis care about this deficiency of the human mind?

The general acceptance of this theory in the Middle Ages is clear from the fact that Ibn Sina has not only embraced it, but has also added to it vigour and clarity; and in spite of Ibn Rushd's strict adherence to the teachings of Aristotle, he has also come under its influence. Among the Jews, Maimonides has copied it almost to the letter. With the Christians, this theory has stood at the top of the problems of

philosophy, because it is concerned with the theory of knowledge and is closely connected with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

This theory has also given rise to different schools, some favouring and the others opposing it. To sum up, al-Farabi's Theory of the Intellect has been the most significant of all theories developed by Muslim thinkers, and it has exercised a great influence on Christian philosophy.

5. Theory of Prophecy

The basis of every revealed religion is revelation and inspiration. A prophet is a man endowed with the gift of communion with God and the ability of expressing His will. Islam, as well as all the great Semitic religions, has Heaven as its authority. The Qur'an says: ***"It is naught but revelation that is revealed - the Lord of mighty power has taught him."*** (liii, 4-5).

It is most imperative for a Muslim philosopher to give due reverence to prophethood, to conciliate rationality with traditionalism, and to identify the language of the earth with the words of Heaven. This has been the endeavour of al-Farabi. His theory of prophethood may be considered to be one of the most significant attempts at the reconciliation of philosophy and religion. It may also be considered to be the noblest part of his system; it has its foundation both in psychology and metaphysics; and it is also closely related with politics and ethics.

Influenced by his political and social environment, al-Farabi has stressed the theoretical study of society and its needs. He has written several treatises on politics, the most renowned of which is his "Model City." He visualizes his city as a whole of united parts, similar to bodily organism; if any part of it is ill, all the others react and take care of it. To each individual is allotted the vocation and the task most appropriate for his special ability and talents. Social activities differ according to their aims; the noblest of these activities are those allotted to the chief, for he stands in the same relation to the city as the heart to the body and is the source of all activities and the origin of harmony and order. Hence, certain qualifications are the prerequisite of his station. The chief must be stout, intelligent, lover of knowledge, and supporter of justice, and he must also rise to the level of the agent intelligence through which he gets revelation and inspiration.⁵⁴

These attributes remind us of the attributes of the philosopher-king in Plato's Republic, but al-Farabi adds to them the ability of communion with the celestial world, as if the city is inhabited by saints and governed by a prophet. Communion with the agent intelligence is possible through two ways contemplation and inspiration. As already mentioned, the soul rises through study and quest to the level of the acquired intellect when it becomes recipient of the divine light. This level can be attained only by the sacred spirits of the philosophers and sages, those who can penetrate through the unseen and perceive the "world of light."

The sacred soul, preoccupied with what is above, gives no heed to what is below; and its external

sensation never overwhelms its internal sensation; and its influence may go beyond its own body affecting other bodies and everything in this world. It receives knowledge direct from the High Spirit and angels without any human instruction.⁵⁵ Thus, through continuous speculative studies, the sage gets into communion with the agent intelligence.

This communion is also possible through imagination, as happens to the prophets, for all their inspiration or revelation is caused by imagination. Imagination occupies an important place in al-Farabi's psychology. It is closely connected with inclinations and sentiments, and is involved in rational operations and volitional movements. It creates the mental images which are not imitations of sensibles and are the source of dreams and visions.

If we could have a scientific interpretation of dreams, it would help to give us an interpretation of revelation and inspiration, for prophetic inspirations take the form either of true dreams in sleep or of revelation in waking— The difference between these two forms is relative; they are distinct only as regards their degree. In fact, a true dream is but one aspect of prophecy.

When imagination gets rid of conscious activities as in sleep, it is wholly occupied with some of the psychological phenomena. Influenced by some bodily sensations and feelings, or by some emotions and conceptions, it creates new images or composes, from retained mental images, their new forms. Thus, we dream of water or swimming when our temperament is humid, and dreams often so represent the fulfilment of a desire or the avoidance of fear that the sleeper may move in his bed responding to a certain emotion, or leave his bed and beat a person unknown to him, or run after him.⁵⁶ It is needless to point out that these views in spite of their simplicity are similar to the ideas of modern psychologists, such as Freud, Horney, and Murray.

It is within the power of imagination to create mental images after the pattern of the spiritual world. The sleeper may, thus, behold the Heaven and its inhabitants, and may feel its enjoyments and pleasures. Imagination may also rise to the celestial world and commune with the agent intelligence from which it can receive the heavenly judgments relating to particular cases and individual happenings. Through this communion which may occur by day or at night, prophecy can be explained, since it is the source of true dreams and revelation.

According to al-Farabi: “If the faculty of imagination is so powerful and perfected in a certain person, and is not completely overwhelmed by external sensations ... it gets into communion with the agent intelligence from which images of the utmost beauty and perfection are reflected. He who sees those images would testify to the sublime and wonderful majesty of God.... Once the imaginative faculty in man is completely perfected, he may receive, when awake, from the agent intelligence the pre-vision of the present and future events ... and thus he would, through what he has received, prophesy divine matters. This is the highest level to which imagination may be raised, and which man can attain through this faculty.”⁵⁷

Thus, the chief characteristic of a prophet is to have a vivid imagination through which he can commune with the agent intelligence during waking time and in sleep, and can attain to vision and inspiration. And revelation is but an emanation from God through the agent intelligence.

Some persons, although in a lower degree than the prophets, have a powerful imagination through which an inferior kind of vision and inspiration can be achieved. In this way al-Farabi places the saints in a degree lower than the prophets. The imagination of the populace and the masses is so weak that it does not admit of rising to union with the agent intelligence, neither at night nor by day.⁵⁸

Al-Farabi's attempt at reconciliation was not the only motive behind this theory. In the third and fourth/ninth and tenth centuries a wave of scepticism refuting prophecy and prophets was prevalent. Its spokesmen copied some of the arguments held by the unbelievers in prophecy. At the head of these sceptics was Ibn al-Rawandi who was once one of the Mu'tazilites but later rejected their doctrine, and Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi the physician, a tough and powerful adversary. The latter, in particular, refuted any attempt to reconcile philosophy and religion, assumed that philosophy is the only way to reform both the individual and society and that religions are the source of conflict and strife.⁵⁹

This attack aroused all the various Islamic centres to defend their dogmas. Al-Farabi had to contribute to that defence. He explained prophecy on rational grounds and gave it a scientific interpretation.

He borrowed his explanation from Aristotle's theory of dreams, which had already been introduced to the Arab world. Al-Kindi,⁶⁰ the forerunner of al-Farabi, adhered to that theory. It assumes that dreams are images produced by the imagination the capacity of which increases during sleep after getting rid of the activities of wakefulness.⁶¹

Aristotle, however, denies that dreams are revealed by God, and never admits of prophetic predictions through sleep, otherwise the populace and the masses – who have so many dreams – would claim foretelling the future.⁶² Here, al-Farabi diverges from his master, and asserts that man through imagination can commune with the agent intelligence, but this is available only to the privileged and the chosen.

The agent intelligence is the source of divine laws and inspirations. It is, in al-Farabi's view, almost similar to the Angel charged with revelation, as in the tenets of Islam. It is within the capacity of the prophet or the philosopher to commune with the agent intelligence – the former through imagination and the latter by way of speculation and contemplation. This is understandable for the two draw together upon the same source and get their knowledge from high above. In fact, religious truth and philosophic truth are both the radiation of divine illumination through imagination or contemplation.

The Farabian theory of prophecy had an obvious impact not only on the East and the West, but on medieval and modern history. Ibn Sina adhered faithfully to it. His elaboration of that theory is closely similar to that of al-Farabi. Ibn Rushd, admitting its validity, was much astonished at al-Ghazali's criticism of it; for it corroborates the religious tenets and affirms that the spiritual perfection can be

attained only through man's communion with God.[63](#)

When the theory was introduced into the Jewish philosophic thought, Maimonides subscribed to it and showed much interest in it.[64](#) It is noticeable that Spinoza in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus* expounds a similar theory which he most probably borrowed from Maimonides.[65](#) It continued to be echoed by some of the modern philosophers in Islam, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the Imam Muhammad `Abduh.

6. Interpretation of the Qur'an

Some of the religious tenets are traditional (*sam`iyyat*); they are matters indemonstrable by way of reason, such as miracles; and the Day of Judgment comprising the Doomsday and Resurrection, the Path and the Balance, the Judgment and the Punishment. Acceptance of these *sam`iyyat* is one of the pillars of religion. The believers have but to accept them and remain content with the veracity of their source.

But some thinkers in their attempt at giving a rational explanation interpret them in a certain way or reduce them to certain natural laws. The Mu`tazilites made a noticeable endeavour in this field, for they went so far in the way of interpretation that they refuted the Transfigurists who qualified God with certain attributes contradictory to His transcendence and uniqueness.

Al-Farabi attempts a different interpretation. He admits the validity of miracles since they are the means of proving prophecy. He holds that miracles although supernatural do not contradict natural laws. For the source of these laws is to be found in the world of spheres and its intelligences which manage the terrestrial world; and once we get in communion with that world, matters other than those of the habitual course happen to us.

A prophet, as mentioned above, has a spiritual power by means of which he is associated with the agent intelligence. It is through this communion that he causes rain to fall, the moon to split asunder, the stick to be transformed into a snake, or the blind and leprous to be healed.[66](#) In this way al-Farabi tries – as the Stoics had done before – to reduce to causality matters beyond the habitual course of nature and even contradictory to it.

The Qur'an points to various *sam`iyyat*, such as the Tablet and the Pen. Al-Farabi holds that these should not be understood literally, for the Pen is not an instrument to write with, nor the Tablet a page on which sayings are registered,[67](#) but they are mere symbols for precision and preservation. The Qur'an is also full of extensive stories about the hereafter, Day of Judgment, and reward and punishment. No believer could deny these matters without undermining the principle of divine sanction and individual responsibility.

Although al-Farabi fully admits the eternal bliss or the painful suffering of the hereafter, yet he reduces them to spiritual matters having no relationship with the body and material properties, because the spirit,

not the body, is that which enjoys or suffers, is happy or unhappy.[68](#)

This interpretation conforms to the Farabian tendency towards spiritualism. Ibn Sina borrowed it and widely applied it. In Ibn Sina's view the Throne and the Chair are symbols of the world of spheres. Prayers are not mere bodily movements, but aim at imitating the celestial world.[69](#) It is as if these two philosophers wanted to lay the foundation of a philosophical religion and a religious philosophy.

However, al-Ghazali was dissatisfied with this attempt and he attacked it, taking the text of the Scripture literally. Ibn Rushd, although advocating accord between religion and philosophy, was also dissatisfied, because he claimed that for the sake of their security religion and philosophy should be kept separate. If combined, they would not be understood by the ordinary man and might lead astray even some of those capable of deep thinking.[70](#)

Conclusion

We can now conclude that al-Farabi's doctrine is so fully harmonious and consistent that its parts are completely inter-related. From the One, the First Cause, al-Farabi gets on to ten intelligences from which the two worlds of heaven and earth have flowed. His spheres are moved by the managing intelligences, and nature with its generation and corruption is subjected to these intelligences. The soul is governed by one of these intelligences which is the agent intelligence. Politics and ethics are no exceptions, for happiness pursued by men is but the communion with the celestial world. His "Model City" only aims at this end.

This doctrine is at the same time spiritualistic and idealistic, for al-Farabi reduces almost everything to spirit. His God is the Spirit of the spirits, his astronomical spheres are governed by celestial spirits, and the prince of his city is a man whose spirit transcends his body. This spiritualism is rooted in ideas and concepts, and is given wholly to speculation and contemplation. The One is the Idea *par excellence* and is the Intellect that intellects Itself. The other beings are generated by this Intellect. Through speculation and contemplation man can commune with the celestial world and attain the utmost happiness. No spiritualism is so closely related to idealism as that of al-Farabi.

Although al-Farabi's doctrine is a reflection of the Middle Ages, it comprises some modern and even contemporary notions. He favours science, advocates experimentation, and denies augury and astrology. He so fully believes in causality and determinism that he refers to causes even for those effects which have no apparent causes. He elevates the intellect to a plane so sacred that he is driven to its conciliation with tradition so that philosophy and religion may accord.

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Chapter 24: Miskawaih

By Abdurrahman Badawi

Life

Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ya`qub, surnamed Miskawaih, is also called Abu 'Ali al-Khazin. It is yet undecided whether he was himself Miskawaih or the son of (*ibn*) Miskawaih. Some like Margoliouth and Bergstrasser accept the first alternative; others, like Brockelmann,[1](#) the second.

Yaqut says that he was first a Magi (*majusi*) and was later converted to Islam. But this might be true of his father, for Miskawaih himself, as his name shows, was the son of a Muslim father, Muhammad by name.

He studied history, particularly al-Tabari's "Annals," with Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Kamil al-Qadi (350/960). Ibn al-Khammar, the famous commentator of Aristotle's, was his master in philosophical disciplines. Miskawaih engaged himself too much in the study of alchemy, together with Abu al-Tayyib al-Razi, the alchemist. From certain statements of Ibn Sina[2](#) and al-Tauhidi,[3](#) it seems that they had a poor opinion of his aptitude for speculative philosophy. Iqbal, on the other hand, regarded him as one of the most eminent theistic thinkers, moralists, and historians of Persia.[4](#)

Miskawaih lived for seven years in the company of Abu al-Fadl ibn al-'Amid as his librarian. After the death of Abu al-Fadl (360/970) he served under his son Abu al-Fath `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-'Amid, surnamed Dhu al-Kifayatain. It seems that he also served 'Adud al-Daulah, one of the Buwaihids, and later some other princes of that famous family.

Miskawaih died on the 9th of Safar 421/16th of February 1030. The date of his birth is uncertain.

Margoliouth gives it to be 330/941, but we think it should be 320/932 if not earlier, because he used to be

in the company of al-Muhallabi, the vizier, who rose to the office in 339/950 and died in 352/963, by which time he must have been at least nineteen.

Works

Yaqut⁵ gives a list of thirteen books attributed to Miskawaih. These are: 1. *Al-Fauz al-Akbar*.

2. *Al-Fauz al-Asghar*.

3. *Tajarib al-Umam* (a history from the Deluge down to 369/979).

4. *Uns al-Farid* (a collection of anecdotes, verses, maxims, and proverbs).

5. *Tartib al-Sa`adah* (on ethics and politics).

6. *Al-Mustaufa* (selected verses).

7. *Jawidan Khirad* (a collection of maxims of wisdom).

8. *Al-Jami`*.

9. *Al-Siyar* (on the conduct of life).

Of the above works al-Qifti ⁶ mentions only 1, 2, 3 and 4 and adds the following:

10. "On the Simple Drugs" (on medicine).

11. "On the Composition of the Bajats" (on culinary art).

12. *Kitab al-Ashribah* (on drinks).

13. *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (on ethics).

Numbers 2, 3, 13 are now extant and have been published. We also have five others which are not mentioned by Yaqut and al-Qifti. These are:

14. *Risalah fi al-Ladhdhat w-al-Alam fi Jauhar al-Nafs* (MS. in Istanbul, Raghیب Majmu`ah No. 1463, f. 57a-59a).

15. *Ajwibah wa As'ilah fi al-Nafs w-al-'Aql* (in the above-mentioned Majmu`ah in Raghیب, Istanbul).

16. *Al-Jawab fi al-Masa'il al-Thalath* (MS. in Teheran - Fihrist Maktabat al-Majlis, II, No, 634[31]).

17. *Risalah fi Jawab fi Su'al 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Abu Hayyan al-Sufi fi Haqiqat al.'Aql*, (Meshed Library in Iran, I, No. 43[137]).

18. *Taharat al-Nafs*, (MS. in Koprulu, Istanbul, No. 767).

Muhammad Baqir ibn Zain al-'Abidin al-Khawansari attributes to him also some treatises written in Persian (*Raudat al-Jannah*, Teheran, 1287/1870, p. 70).

As to the chronological order of his works, we know only from Miskawaih himself that *al-Fauz al-Akbar* was written after *al-Fauz al-Asghar*, and that *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* was written after *Tartib al-Sa`adah*.⁷

Miskawaih's Personality

Miskawaih was essentially a historian and moralist. He was also a poet. Tauhidi blames him for his miserliness and hypocrisy. He indulged in alchemy not for the sake of science, but in search of gold and wealth, and was most servile to his masters. But Yaqut mentions that in later years he subjected himself to a fifteen-point code of moral conduct.⁸ Temperance in appetites, courage in subduing the ferocious self, and wisdom in regulating the irrational impulses were the highlights of this code. He himself speaks of his moral transformation in his *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*,⁹ which shows that he practised a good deal of what he wrote on ethics.

Philosophy

First Philosophy

The most important part of Miskawaih's philosophical activity is dedicated to ethics. He is a moralist in the full sense of the word. Three important books of his on ethics have come down to us: (1) *Tartib al-Sa`adah*, (2) *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, and (3) *Jawidan Khirad*.

Miskawaih's *al-Fauz al-Asghar* is a general treatise similar in conception to the earlier part of al-Farabi's *Ara' Ahl al-Madinat al-Fadilah*. It is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the proofs of the existence of God, the second with soul and its modes, and the third with prophethood.

For his treatment of philosophy, he owes much to al-Farabi, particularly in his effort to conciliate Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. His historical turn of mind has been of benefit to him, for he generally refers precisely to his sources. For instance, at the end of Chapter V of the first part of *al-Fauz al-Asghar*¹⁰ he expressly acknowledges his indebtedness to Porphyry. He also quotes the commentators of Plato¹¹ and Aristotle.¹² His is the best expose (pp. 53–55) of Plato's proof concerning the immortality of the soul. He benefits especially from the book of Proclus entitled *Kitab Sharh Qaul Flatun fi al Nafs Ghair Maitah*.¹³

The first part of *Fauz al-Asghar* dealing with the demonstration of the existence of God is clear, terse, and solid. His argument here is that of the First Mover, which was most popular at the time. In that he is thoroughly Aristotelian. The fundamental attributes of God are: unity, eternity, and immateriality.

Miskawaih devotes the whole of Chapter VIII to the problem of defining God affirmatively or negatively, and concludes that the negative way is the only possible way. He also shows Neo-Platonic tendencies noticeably in Chapter IX.

He says that the first existent which emanates from God is the first intelligence which (so says Miskawaih rather strangely) is the same as the active intellect. It is eternal, perfect in existence, and immutable in state, because "emanation is connected with it in a continuous way eternally, the source of emanation being eternal and wholly generous." It is, perfect in comparison with beings inferior to it, imperfect in comparison with God.

Then comes the celestial soul inferior to intelligence; it needs motion as expression of desire for perfection in imitation of intelligence. But it is perfect in relation to natural bodies. The sphere comes into being through the celestial soul. In comparison with the soul, it is imperfect and so needs the motion of which the body is capable, i. e., the motion in space. The sphere has the circular motion which assures it of the eternal existence assigned to it by God. Through the sphere and its parts our bodies come into being. Our being is very weak because of the long chain of intermediaries between God and us. For the same reason it is changeable and not eternal. All classes of beings come to be through God, and it is His emanating being and permeating might which conserve order in the cosmos. If God abstains from this emanation, nothing will come into existence.

As a true religious thinker, Miskawaih tries to prove that creation comes *ex nihilo*. He mentions that Galen said something against this view, but was refuted by Alexander of Aphrodisias in a special treatise.¹⁴ The argument given by Miskawaih is as follows: Forms succeed each other, the substratum remaining constant. In this change from one form to another, where do the preceding forms go?

The two forms cannot remain together because they are contrary. Secondly, the first form cannot go elsewhere, because motion in place applies only to bodies, and accidents cannot go from one place to another. There remains only one possibility – the possibility that the first form goes into nothing. If it is proved that the first form goes to Non-Being, then the second form comes and so the third, the fourth, and so on also from nothing. Therefore, all things generated are generated from nothing.

Aristotle conceived of the universe as a process of becoming. The “nature” of each thing is a potentiality which moves through a process of development to an actuality which is its final nature. The movement is towards an end immanent from the first in the subject of movement. An altogether different theory appears in the fiftieth “Epistle” of the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwan al-Safa*), where the process of evolution has been shown to advance from the mineral to the human stage under the guidance of the spiritual urge for return to God.¹⁵

The Brethren of Purity used this theory to determine the status of prophethood. Miskawaih goes further and finds in it a stable basis for his moral theory as well.¹⁶ Like Aristotle he does regard happiness (*sa`adah*) as the chief human good, but unlike him he identifies it in the end with the realization of the vicegerency of God, the place which man occupies in the cosmic evolution by virtue of his specific attribute of rationality.

Miskawaih's theory of evolution is basically the same as that of the Brethren of Purity. It consists of four evolutionary stages: the mineral, the vegetable, the animal, and the human. Coral (*marjan*), date-palm, and ape (*qird*) mark the transition from the mineral to the vegetable, from the vegetable to the animal, and from the animal to the human kingdom, respectively. The prophet, in the end, completes the circle of Being by imbibing the celestial soul within him.

Psychology

Miskawaih's psychology is based on the traditional spiritualistic doctrine laid down by Plato and Aristotle, with a predominant Platonic tendency. He treats the subject in *al-Fauz al-Asghar* and *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*. In the first of these works he discusses the problems more thoroughly. But he repeats himself on many points in both the books; in both we have the same arguments, the same examples, and nearly the same words.

Against the materialists he proves the existence of the soul on the ground that there is something in man which admits different and even opposed forms at the same time. This something cannot be material, for matter accepts only one form in a determinate moment.

The soul perceives simple and complex things, present and absent, sensible and intelligible. But does it perceive them through one and the same faculty, or through many faculties? Soul has no parts; divisibility applies only to matter. Does the soul, in spite of being one and indivisible, perceive different things with different faculties and in different ways? In answering this question, Miskawaih gives two different solutions: that of Plato, who says that similar perceives similar, and that of Aristotle who says that soul has one faculty that perceives complex material things and simple non-material things, but in different ways. In this connection Miskawaih mentions Themistius and his book "On Soul."

On the question of the immortality of the soul, Miskawaih gives at first¹⁷ Aristotle's doctrine. Then he gives (Chapter VI) three arguments of Plato; referring first to Plato himself, then to Proclus' "Commentary on Plato's Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul,"¹⁸ and finally to something that Galen said on this question.

Miskawaih says that Plato's doctrine is too long and needs a commentary; therefore, he attempts to summarize it as clearly as possible, with the help of Proclus' "Commentary." In this and the following chapters (VII, VIII) he is a thorough Platonist and makes a special mention of Plato's *Laws* and *Timaeus*.

Plato says that the essence of the soul is motion, and motion is the life of the soul. Miskawaih explains and says: This motion is of two kinds: one towards intelligence, the other towards matter; by the first it is illuminated, by the second it illuminates. But this motion is eternal and non-spatial, and so it is immutable. By the first kind of motion, the soul comes near to intelligence which is the first creation of God; by the second it descends and comes out of itself. Therefore, the soul comes nearer to God by the first motion, and goes farther by the second. The first leads to its salvation, the second to its perdition.

Quoting Plato¹⁹ he says that philosophy is an exercise of voluntary death. There are two kinds of life: life according to intelligence, which is "natural life," and life according to matter, which is voluntary life. The same applies to death; therefore, Plato says. If you die by will, you live by nature. Here "will" is taken in the sense of "passion."

But Miskawaih at once corrects himself by saying that this voluntary death does not mean renunciation

of the world; that would be the attitude of those who know nothing about the objects of this world and ignore that man is civil by nature and cannot live without the help and service of others. Those who preach renunciation are iniquitous, because they want the services of others without rendering any service to them and this is complete injustice. Some pretend that they need very little, but even this very little needs the services of a great number of people. Therefore, it is the duty of every human being to serve others fairly: if he serves them much he can demand much; and if he serves them little, he can ask for little.

This is an important aspect of Miskawaih's philosophical view, and explains his great interest in ethics.

Moral Philosophy

Moral philosophy is so connected with psychology that Miskawaih begins his big treatise on ethics *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, by stating his doctrine of the soul. Here his expose is less philosophical but richer in detail.

The point of transition from psychology to ethics is given on pages 18 to 21 where, following Plato, he draws a parallel between the faculties of the soul and the corresponding virtues.²⁰ The soul has three faculties: rational, courageous, and appetitive, and correspondingly three virtues: wisdom, courage, and temperance. By the harmony of these three virtues, we have a fourth one, namely, justice. The Greek temperament being theoretical and speculative,²¹ Plato could go no farther than this.

Equipped with a personal code of moral conduct, Miskawaih determined seven species of wisdom, viz., acuteness of intelligence, quickness of intellect, clearness of understanding, facility of acquirement, precision of discrimination, retention, and recollection; eleven species of courage, viz., magnanimity, collectedness, loftiness of purpose, firmness, coolness, stateliness, boldness, endurance, condescension, zeal, and mercy; twelve species of temperance, viz., shame, affability, righteousness, conciliatoriness, continence, patience, contentment, sedateness, piety, regularity, integrity, and liberality (which is further divided into six sub-species) ; and nineteen species of justice, viz., friendship, union, faithfulness, compassion, brotherhood, recompense, good partnership, fair-dealing, cordiality, submission, resignation, devotion to God, forgetting of enmity, abstention from speaking ill of others, discussing the character of the just, ignoring the account of the unjust, and abstention from trusting the ignoble, the mischief-monger, and the flatterer.²²

We, however, cannot determine exactly whether these sub-divisions and distinctions are all Miskawaih's own. Surely he benefited himself much from his predecessors, and especially from the school of Abu Sulaiman al-Sijistani al-Mantiqi, the echo of whose works we find in Tauhidi's *Muqabasat*.

So far Miskawaih has been Platonic, but from page 29 onward he begins to be Aristotelian, and takes virtue as a mean between two vices. He applies this doctrine of the mean to the four cardinal virtues, and with this he ends the first chapter.

In the second chapter, Miskawaih goes on to discuss the question of human nature and its original state: whether it is born good or bad. He states the opinion of the early Greeks who say that nature can never be changed, but rejects it. Then he takes up the view of the Stoics who think that men are created good but become bad by their inclination to bad appetites and by keeping bad company. There is also a third opinion that men are created bad and they become good only by education. Galen rejects the last two views and says that men are of three kinds: some are good by nature, others are bad by nature, and a third class is intermediate between the two.

Finally, Miskawaih states the opinion of Aristotle as given in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and gives his own view that “the existence of the human substance depends on God's will, but the amelioration of it is left to man and depends on man's will” (p. 46).

Perfection attainable by man is of two kinds: the first is theoretical and the second practical. By the first he attains perfect science, by the second perfect character. Human faculties are three; the highest is reason, the lowest is appetite, and between the two lies courage. Man is man by the first. Therefore, perfection belongs especially to the rational soul. In each faculty there are many degrees, which Miskawaih enumerates in detail. Here (pp. 67–78) we find a long chapter on the education of children and youth.

The essential part of Miskawaih's ethics begins from the third chapter (pp. 90 *et seq.*). In the first place he follows Aristotle as commented upon by Porphyry. It seems that he depends entirely on the commentary of Porphyry on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which was translated into Arabic by Ishaq ibn Hunain, in twelve books.²³ Unfortunately, this commentary is lost both in Greek and its Arabic translation. But we can gather something of its form from Miskawaih's *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*.

Following Aristotle, Miskawaih says (p. 90) that the good is that at which all things aim. This definition, which is supposed to be perhaps that of Eudoxus (c. 25 B. C.), is given in the very beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.²⁴ Miskawaih goes on then to say that what is useful to this end may also be called good, i. e., the means as well as the end can be called good. But happiness or well-being is a relative good – good for an individual person. It is only a kind of good and has no distinctive and autonomous essence.

Miskawaih, like Aristotle,²⁵ gives a classification of happiness but adds more details, perhaps taken from Porphyry's commentary. This classification comprises (1) health, (2) wealth, (3) fame and honour, (4) success, and (5) good thinking.

After giving Aristotle's doctrine of happiness, Miskawaih states the views of Hippocrates, Pythagoras, Plato, the Stoics, and some physicians who believed that body is a part and not an instrument of man, and so held that happiness of the soul is incomplete if it is not accompanied by happiness of the body.

Miskawaih discusses these different doctrines and concludes by saying that we should reject the doctrine according to which happiness can come only after death and affirm that it is possible also in this

world. No happiness is possible except by searching for the good in this world and the world to come. Here he affirms anew his two-fold *Anschauung*. But as a true religious man he gives preference to the next world.

In support of this, he refers to the translation by Abu `Uthman al-Dimashqi of a treatise called "Virtues of the Soul" attributed to Aristotle. We find this treatise attributed to Aristotle nowhere else. There are two kinds of happiness, one according to this world, the other according to the next, but no one can have the second without passing through the first (p. 111), because, as Aristotle said, divine happiness, notwithstanding being higher and nobler, is yet in need of worldly happiness; otherwise, it would remain hidden.

The fourth chapter deals mainly with justice and explains in detail what is meant by it. Here again he follows the corresponding parts in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[26](#)

In the fifth chapter he goes on to speak about friendship and love. A striking passage in this part is about two kinds of love: (a) love of man for God, and (b) love of disciple for master. The first is too high to be attained by mortal beings, and is reserved only for a few. As to the second kind of love, Miskawaih draws a parallel between the son's love for his parents and the disciple's love for his master, and says that the latter is nobler and more generous, because masters educate our souls and by their guidance we obtain real happiness. The master is a "spiritual father and a human lord; his goodness for the disciple is divine goodness, because he brings him up on virtues, feeds him with high wisdom, and conducts him to everlasting life in eternal blessing" (p. 175).

Friendship, in general, is most sacred and useful to all human beings. He who betrays it is more wicked than a counterfeiter of coins. A good man is a friend to himself and other people are also friends to him; he has no enemy except the bad. The happy man is he who gains friends and tries his best to be of use to them.

Miskawaih quotes Aristotle saying that man is in need of friends in good as well as in bad circumstances. Even a king is in need of friends because he cannot know his people's needs except through sincere friends, especially because they supply him information and help in execution of his orders. Man should do his best to please his friends and to be always on good terms with them without hypocrisy and flattery.

Miskawaih's treatment of justice (*'adl*) is largely Aristotelian, although for him this virtue is a shadow of divine unity,[27](#) the true equipoise. The knowledge of the mean or the limit that moderation would set in each particular case is a prerequisite of justice, but, unlike Aristotle, he assigns this function to the divine code rather than to reason or prudence.[28](#) The king as the deputy of God can exercise royal discretion in minor details according to the exigencies of time and place, without violating the spirit of the divine code.

Aristotle recognized benevolence vaguely in the imperfect form of liberality which for him meant giving to "proper persons, in right proportion, at right times." With Ibn Miskawaih, it is such an excess over the just

award as would eliminate all possibility of under-estimation in justice, provided that its prejudicial effects are confined to the rights of the benevolent person himself only and the recipient himself is a worthy choice for it. Charity, thus, is a form of justice which is safe from disturbance.[29](#)

Similarly, love, according to him, is not an extension of self-love, as held by Aristotle, but a limitation of it and love for another. He regards affection (*mahabbah*) as an inborn capacity for associating with mankind in general, but confines friendship (*sadaqah*) to a few individuals, basing it on the considerations of profit, pleasure, or good as conceived by Aristotle. Love (*ishq*) being the excessive desire for pleasure or good – the consideration of profit is alien to love – cannot extend beyond two individuals.[30](#)

The object of animal love is pleasure and that of the spiritual love is virtue or goodness. The former is condemnable, the latter praiseworthy. He makes a specific mention of the love of man for God, of disciple for teacher, and of son for his parents in a graded series, as pointed out earlier. Justice, he concludes, is brought about through fear and force, but affection is a natural source of unity, so that justice is not required where affection reigns supreme. Affection, thus, is the sovereign; justice is the vicegerent.

As in *al-Fauz al-Asghar*, so in *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (pp. 195–96) Miskawaih is against all forms of ascetic life, because ascetics “sever themselves from all the moral virtues mentioned above. How can he who retires from men and lives in isolation be temperate, just, generous, or courageous? Is he anything other than something inorganic and dead?” [31](#) Divine happiness is the ultimate goal and the good of man. It belongs to man's divine part. It is pure good, while reason is the first good.

Spiritual Medicine

The last two chapters of *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* are devoted to what may be called spiritual medicine, a phrase which we find for the first time as the title of Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi's famous book: *al-Tibb al-Ruhani*. Miskawaih uses the phrase *Tibb al-Nufus* (p. 205), but the resemblance in the general treatment of the subject is, obvious. This implies that Miskawaih is undoubtedly acquainted with al-Razi's treatise, although he does not mention him by name.

The two begin by saying that the mastering of one's passion is the essential foundation of spiritual hygiene. Both refer to Galen's book “On Knowing One's Own Defects.” (This work was translated into Arabic by Thuma and revised by Hunain.[32](#)) But, whereas al-Razi contents himself with what Galen says in this respect, Miskawaih contends it by saying that there does not exist a friend who can find for you your defects, and that an enemy is more useful in this respect than a friend (p. 200) because he is more aware of your vices and would have no hesitation in revealing them to you.

In this connection Miskawaih recommends the study of another of Galen's treatise: “That Good People Benefit from Their Enemies,” which deals with this topic and is also mentioned by al-Razi.[33](#) Miskawaih

then refers to al-Kindi, who, in effect, said that the man who is in search of virtue should realize that the images of his acquaintances are mirrors in which are reflected the evils arising out of pains and passions.

In the end, Miskawaih speaks of remedies for the diseases of the soul. He enumerates the most important diseases – anger, vanity, contentiousness, treason, cowardice, vainglory, fear, and sadness – and deals with their treatment. Some of his chapters correspond with some chapters in al-Razi's *Tibb*, namely, those on vanity, sadness, and fear of death. He also reproduces some passages from al-Kindi's treatise “On the Rejection of Sadness” (p. 256).

Why does not Miskawaih mention Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi? It is because al-Razi's conclusions and method of treatment were quite contrary to his own. Al-Kindi, on the other hand, was a kindred spirit. Al-Razi was bold, rationalistic, and abstruse, whereas al-Kindi was moderate, pious, and more accessible.

We have all along been showing what Miskawaih owes to his Greek predecessors, but we should not forget that Islamic culture also has an important influence on him. In supporting some ideas which he expounds, he very often quotes the Qur'an, traditions (*ahadith*) of the Prophet, sayings of Ibn Abi Talib and al-Hasan al-Basri, besides Arabic poetry.

Philosophy of History

Miskawaih is essentially a historian and moralist. His ethics is genetic³⁴ (being based on the place and position of man in the cosmic evolution), religious, and practical in character. He even felt it necessary to reform himself morally before writing his *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*.³⁵ In history, his point of view is philosophical, scientific, and critical. Anticipating the modern outlook, he determines both the function of history and the duties of the historian as follows.

History is not an amusing tale about the royal personages, but a mirror of the politico-economic structure of society in a particular age. It is a record of the rise and fall of civilizations, nations, and States.³⁶

In order to realize this end, the historian should scrupulously guard himself against the common tendency of mixing up facts with fiction or pseudo-events. He should not only be factual but also critical in collecting his data.³⁷

Above all, he should not be content with the mere descriptions of facts, but, with a philosophic insight, should interpret them in terms of the underlying “human interests,” their immediate causal determinants.³⁸ In history as in nature, there is no room for chance or accident.

History, thus, is no longer a collection of static and isolated facts, but a dynamic process of creative human hopes and aspirations. It is a living and growing organism, whose structure is determined by the basic ideals and the ideals of nations and States. It not only binds together the facts of the past into an

organic whole, but also determines the shape of things to come. The very title of his monumental work, *Tajarib al-Umam* (The Experiences of the Nations) is itself suggestive of its aims and method, which, in the words of Leon Caetani, are “much akin to the principles followed by Western and more modern historians.”³⁹

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Chapter 25: Ibn Sina

By Fazlur Rahman

In the history of philosophical thought in the Medieval Ages, the figure of Ibn Sina (370/980–428/1037) ¹ is, in many respects, unique, while among the Muslim philosophers, it is not only unique but has been paramount right up to modern times. He is the only one among the great philosophers of Islam to build an elaborate and complete system of philosophy – a system which has been dominant in the philosophical tradition of Islam for centuries, in spite of the attacks of al-Ghazali, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, and others.

This ascendancy has been possible, however, not merely because he had a system but because that system had features of remarkable originality displaying a type of genius-like spirit in discovering methods and arguments whereby he sought to reformulate the purely rational and intellectual tradition of Hellenism, to which he was an eminent heir, for and, to an extent, within the religious system of Islam.

The exact terms of this reformulation and their relation to Islam we shall discuss presently in this chapter; it is only to be noted at the outset that it was this kind of originality which rendered him unique not only in Islam but also in the medieval West where the reformulations of the Roman Catholic theology at the hands of Albert the Great, and, especially, of Thomas Aquinas, were fundamentally influenced by him.

Since in this chapter we are mainly concerned with Ibn Sina's interpretation of Greek philosophical doctrines, we need not give an account of his sources in the Greek and Muslim philosophers. To be sure, the elements of his doctrines are Greek, and certain reformulations of Greek doctrines in his writings are also to be found in al-Farabi (to whom Ibn Sina's debt is immense) in varying degrees of development; but our task here is to state, analyse, and appreciate Ibn Sina's teaching. And, indeed, Ibn Sina's system, taken as a whole, is such that it is his, bearing the unmistakable impress of his personality. This is proved by the fact that he states his cardinal doctrines over and over again in his different works and often gives cross references, which are unmistakable signs of systematic thinking and not of random borrowing from heterogeneous sources.

The most fundamental characteristic of Ibn Sina's thought is that of arriving at definitions by a severely rigorous method of division and distinction of concepts. This lends an extraordinary subtlety to his arguments. It can often give his philosophical reasoning a strongly scholastic complexity and intricacy of structure which can annoy the modern temperament, but it is doubtlessly true that it is also this method which has resulted in almost all the original doctrines of our philosopher.

It has enabled him to formulate his most general and basic principle, viz., to every clear and distinct concept there must correspond *a distinctio in re*, a principle on which later Descartes also based his thesis of the mind-body dualism. The fecundity and importance of this principle of analysis in Ibn Sina's system are indeed striking: he announces it recurrently and at all levels, in his proof of the mind-body dualism, his doctrine of universals, his theory of essence and existence, etc. Examples of this principle are: "that which is affirmed and admitted is different from that which is not affirmed and admitted," [2](#) and "a single conceptual (lit. specific) entity cannot be both known and unknown at the same time except with regard to different aspects."[3](#)

This chapter will deal mostly with those concepts and doctrines of Ibn Sina which are not only capital and bring out the nature of his system, but have also both been influential and originally elaborated by him to a greater or lesser extent.

[The Doctrine Of Being](#)

Ibn Sina's doctrine of Being, like those of earlier Muslim philosophers, e. g., al-Farabi, is emanationistic. From God, the Necessary Existent, flows the first intelligence alone, since from a single, absolutely simple entity, only one thing can emanate. But the nature of the first intelligence is no longer absolutely simple since, not being necessary-by-itself, it is only possible, and its possibility has been actualized by

God. Thanks to this dual nature which henceforth pervades the entire creaturely world, the first intelligence gives rise to two entities: (i) the second intelligence by virtue of the higher aspect of its being, actuality, and (ii) the first and highest sphere by virtue of the lower aspect of its being, its natural possibility.

This dual emanatory process continues until we reach the lower and tenth intelligence which governs the sublunary world and is called by the majority of the Muslim philosophers the Angel Gabriel. This name is applied to it because it bestows forms upon or “informs” the matter of this world, i.e., both physical matter and the human intellect. Hence it is also called the “Giver of Forms” (the *dator formarum* of the subsequent medieval Western scholastics). We shall return later to these intelligences and these spheres to examine more closely their nature and operations; meanwhile we must turn to the nature of Being.

The procession of the immaterial intelligence from the Supreme Being by way of emanation was intended to supplement, under the inspiration of the Neo-Platonic Theory of Emanation, the meagre and untenable view of God formulated by Aristotle according to whom there was no passage from God, the One, to the world, the many. According to Muslim philosophers, although God remained in Himself and high above the created world, there were, nevertheless, intermediary links between the absolute eternity and necessity of God and the world of downright contingency. And this theory, besides, came very close to satisfying the Muslim belief in angels.

This is the first occasion to remark how Muslim philosophers, by a re-elaboration of the Greek tradition of philosophy, not only sought to build a rational system, but a rational system which sought to integrate the tradition of Islam. But what about the Theory of Emanation itself? Would it not destroy the necessary and all-important gulf between the Creator and the creation and lead to a downright pantheistic world-view – *tat tvam Asi* – against which Islam, like all higher religions, had warned so sternly?

No doubt, this type of pantheism, being dynamic, is different from the absolutist and static forms of pantheism; yet it could lead to anthropomorphism, or, by a reverse process of ascent, to the re-absorption of the creature's being into the being of God. Now, the guarantee against any such danger shall be Ibn Sina's doctrine of essence and existence. This celebrated theory again is designed to fulfil equally both religious and rational needs and, once again, to supplement Aristotle.

Early in this section we said that God and God alone is absolutely simple in His being; all other things have a dual nature. Being simple, *what* God is and the fact that He *exists* are not two elements in a single being but a single atomic element in a single being. What God is, i.e., His essence, is identical with His existence. This is not the case with any other being, for in no other case is the existence identical with the essence, otherwise whenever, for example, an Eskimo who has never seen an elephant, conceives of one, he would *ipso facto* know that elephants exist.

It follows that God's existence is necessary, the existence of other things is only possible and derived

from God's, and that the supposition of God's non-existence involves a contradiction, whereas it is not so with any other existent.⁴ It will be seen that the germs of the ontological argument exist in a fairly developed form in this argument. A cosmological argument, based on Aristotle's doctrine of the First Cause, would be superfluous in establishing God's existence.

Ibn Sina, however, has not chosen to construct a full-fledged ontological argument. His argument, which, as we shall see later, became the cardinal doctrine of the Roman Catholic dogmatic theology after Aquinas, is more like the Leibnizian proof of God as the ground of the world, i. e., given God, we can understand the existence of the world. Here cause and effect behave like premises and conclusion. Instead of working back from a supposed effect to its cause, we work forward from an indubitable premise to a conclusion.

Indeed for Ibn Sina, God creates through a rational necessity. On the basis of this rational necessity, Ibn Sina also explains the divine pre-knowledge of all events, as we shall see in his account of God. The world, as a whole, is then contingent, but, given God, it becomes necessary, this necessity being derived from God. This is Ibn Sina's principle of existence stated in brief; we shall now analyse it according to the complex materials which Ibn Sina has left us. It involves more than one point of view.

From the metaphysical point of view, the theory seeks to supplement the traditional Aristotelian analysis of an existent into two constituent elements, as it were, viz., form and matter. According to Aristotle, the form of a thing is the sum total of its essential and universalizable qualities constituting its definition; the matter in each thing is that which has the potentiality of receiving these qualities – the form – and by which the form becomes an individual existent.

But there are two major difficulties in this conception from the point of view of the actual existence of a thing. The first is that the form is universal and, therefore, does not exist. Matter too, being pure potentiality, does not exist, since it is actualized only by the form. How then shall a thing come into existence by a non-existent form and an equally nonexistent matter?

The second difficulty arises from the fact that, although Aristotle generally holds that the definition or essence of a thing is its form, he nevertheless says in certain important passages (e.g., *De Anima*, Vol. I, Chap. I, 403 a, 27 ff.) that matter is also to be included in the essence of a thing, otherwise we shall have only a partial definition of it. If, then, we regard both form and matter as constitutive of definition, we can never arrive at the actual existence of a thing. This is the rock against which the whole scheme of Aristotle to explain Being threatens to break.

This is why Ibn Sina⁵ holds that from form and matter alone you would never get a concrete existent, but only the essential and accidental qualities. He has analysed at some length the relation of form and matter in *K. al-Shifa'*, ("Met." II, 4 and "Met." VI, 1), where he concludes that both form and matter depend on God (or the active intellect) and, further, that the composite existent also cannot be caused by form and matter alone but there must be "something else."

Finally, in “Met.” VIII, 5, he tells us, “Everything except the One who is by His essence One and Existent acquires existence from something else. . . . In itself it deserves absolute non–existence. Now, it is not its matter alone without its form or its form alone without its matter which deserves non–existence but the totality (of matter and form).”

This is why Ibn Sina substitutes a three–term analysis of the existent material objects instead of the traditional Greek dyadic formula. It must be noted that it is Aristotle's doctrine which is being developed here. Many scholars have held that Ibn Sina is here following a Neo–Platonic line instead of the Aristotelian one, but, from this point of view, the Neo–Platonic doctrine is the same as that of Aristotle, viz., the dyadic scheme of form and matter, except that, according to Plotinus, under the influence of Plato, the forms have a higher ontological status and exist in God's mind who then proceeds to make them existent in matter.

It should also be borne in mind that existence is not really a constituent element of things besides matter and form; it is rather a relation to God: if you view a thing in relation to the divine existentializing agency, it exists, and it exists necessarily and, further, its existence is intelligible, but when out of relation with God, its existence loses its intelligibility and meaning. It is this relational aspect which Ibn Sina designates by the term “accident” and says that existence is an accident.

Ever since the criticism of Ibn Sina's doctrine by Ibn Rushd who, among other things, accused Ibn Sina of having violated the definition of substance as that which exists by itself, and of Aquinas who, although he adopts the distinction between essence and existence under the direct influence of Ibn Sina, nevertheless follows Ibn Rushd in his criticism, the unanimous voice of the Western historians of medieval philosophy has been to the effect that existence, according to Ibn Sina, is just an accident among other accidents, e. g., round, black, etc.

We have said that when Ibn Sina talks of existence as an accident *with relation to objects (as distinguished from essence)* he just means by it a relation to God; it is, therefore, not an ordinary accident. Further, if existence were an accident, one could think it away and still go on talking of the object just as one can do in the case of other accidents and, indeed, in that case Ibn Sina would have been forced to hold something like the Meinongian view held by many Muslim Mutakallims that non–existents must also “exist” in some peculiar sense of that word. But this is the very doctrine which Ibn Sina ridicules. The whole discussion on this point can be found in the article referred to in note No. 5 of this chapter.

Here we give only one passage where our philosopher criticizes the view of those who hold that a non–existent “thing” must, nevertheless, “exist” in some sense so that we can talk about it. He says (*K. al–Shifa'*, “Met.” I, 5), “Those people who entertain this opinion hold that among those things which we can know (i. e., be acquainted with) and talk about, are things to which, in the realm of non–being, non–existence belongs as an attribute. He who wants to know more about this should further consult the nonsense which they have talked and which does not merit consideration.”

Indeed, according to Ibn Sina, the ideas of existence and unity are the primary ideas with which we must start. These underived concepts are the bases of our application of other categories and attributes to things and, therefore, they defy definition since definition must involve other terms and concepts which are themselves derived (*ibid.*, I, 5).

It will be seen that this problem now is not a metaphysical one but has to do with logic. Ibn Sina has attempted to give his own answer to the question: How is it possible that we can talk of non-existents and what do these latter mean? His answer is that we can do so because we give to these objects “some sort of existence in the mind.” But, surely, our individual images cannot constitute the meanings of these entities for the obvious reason that when we talk, e. g., of a space-ship, it must have an objective meaning.

It is, nevertheless, true that Ibn Sina has seen the basic difficulty of the logic of existence. And our modern logic itself, despite its superior techniques and some valuable distinctions, seems nowhere nearer the solution. It has tried hard to contend that whenever I talk of a space-ship, although none exists, I am not talking of a “thing,” of an individual object, but only of a generic object or a conglomeration of properties. But is this really so? Is it absurd to say that the “individual space-ship I am talking of now has this and this property”? Besides, the crux is the phrase “conglomeration or set of properties” – what is it to which they belong and of which I profess to be talking?

Besides this meaning of “accident” as a peculiar and unique relation of an existent to God, the term “accident” in Ibn Sina has another unorthodox philosophic meaning. This concerns the relationship of a concrete existent to its essence or specific form, which Ibn Sina also calls accidental. This use of the term “accident” is quite pervasive in Ibn Sina's philosophy and, without knowing its correct significance, one would be necessarily led to misinterpret some of his basic doctrines.

Now, *whenever two concepts are clearly distinguishable from each other, they must refer to two different ontological entities*, as we said above, and, further, *whenever two such concepts come together in a thing, Ibn Sina describes their mutual relationship as being accidental*, i. e., they happen to come together, although each must be found to exist separately. This is the case, for example, between essence and existence, between universality and essence.

According to Ibn Sina, essences exist in God's mind (and in the mind of the active intelligences) prior to the individual existents exemplifying them in the external world and they also exist in our minds posterior to these individual existents. But these two levels of the existence of an essence are very different. And they differ not only in the sense that the one is creative, and the other imitative.

In its true being, the essence is neither universal nor particular, but it is just an essence. Hence he holds (*K. al-Shifa'*, “Isagoge to Logic,” Cairo, 1952, pp. 65–69; also *ibid.* “Met.” V, 1) that both particularity and universality are “accidents” which happen or occur to the essence. Universality occurs to it in our minds only, and Ibn Sina takes a strictly functional view of the universals: our mind abstracts universals or

general concepts whereby it is enabled to treat the world of infinite diversity in a summary and scientific manner by relating an identical mental construction to a number of objects.

In the external world the essence does not exist except in a kind of metaphorical sense, i. e., in the sense in which a number of objects allow themselves to be treated as being identical. Existents in the external world are the individual concrete objects, no two of which are exactly the same.

He says, "It is impossible that a single essence should exist identically in many" ("Met." V, 2), and again, "It (i. e. absolute manness) is not the manness of 'Amr; it is different from it, thanks to the particular circumstances. These particular circumstances have a role in the individual person of Zaid ... *and also a role in the 'man' or 'manness' inasmuch as it is related to him*" ("Met." V, 1). It is clear especially from this last statement that the "essence" virtually undergoes a change in each individual. That is why we must say that *if we regard essence as a universal*, that concrete determinate existence is something over and above the essence; it is something added to the essence, or it is an "accident" of the essence.

Two things must be specially noted here. First, that existence is something added not to the existent objects – this would be absurd – but to the essence. This is because everything whether it exists or not – indeed whether it is existable or not – in fact every concept is "something" of which assertions can be made, whether positive or negative. Indeed, even non-existence is "something," since one can talk about it. But a positive individual existent is more than just "something." (This distinction between "something" and an existent, treated by Ibn Sina ["Met." 1, 5] which has confusedly returned in present-day logic, was originally made by the Stoics [see, e.g., *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Vo. II, p. 117].)

Hence Ibn Sina says that when existence is attributed to essences, this existence is equivalent to "is something" and, therefore, such statements are not "profitable." But statements about existents are informative and profitable, since they add to the essence something that is new.

Secondly, we must note that although Ibn Sina speaks in several places of matter as the principle of multiplicity of forms or essences, he never says that matter is the principle of individual existence. The sole principle of individual existence is God – the Giver of existence; matter is the occasional cause of existence, supplying external attributes of multiplicity.

We have given a considerable number of quotations from Ibn Sina in the treatment of this problem not only because it is of capital importance for Ibn Sina's philosophy, but also because there has been such a great deal of fundamental confusion in the traditional treatment of the subject that a clarification of the terms "existence," "accident" in this relation, and "essence" is absolutely necessary.

[The Body-Mind Relationship](#)

With Aristotle, Ibn Sina stresses the intimate connection of mind and body; but whereas Aristotle's whole trend of thought rejects a two-substance view, Ibn Sina holds a form of radical dualism. How far these

two aspects of his doctrine are mutually compatible is a different question: Ibn Sina certainly did not carry his dualism through to develop a parallelistic, occasionalistic account of mind–body relationship. His remarks, nevertheless, on either side are both interesting and profound. We shall first state his arguments for the two–substance view and then discuss their close inter–connection.

To prove that the human soul is a substance capable of existing independently of the body, our philosopher employs two different arguments. One appeals to direct self–consciousness, the other seeks to prove the immateriality of the intellect. We can postpone his teaching on the intellect till we discuss his theory of knowledge; here we shall state and discuss his first argument. Indeed, according to him, this is the more direct way of proving the incorporeal substantiality of the soul acting not as an argument but as an eye–opener (*K. al-Shifa'*, “Psychology,” V 7).

The argument is stated by Ibn Sina in the first chapter of the psychological book of the *K. al-Shifa'* and then re–stated and discussed in the last but one chapter of the same book. Let us suppose, as he says, that a person is created in an adult state, but in such a condition that he is born in a void where his body cannot touch anything and where he cannot perceive anything of the external world. Let us also suppose that he cannot see his own body and that the organs of his body are prevented from touching one another, so that he has no sense–perception whatsoever.

Such a person will not affirm anything of the external world or even the existence of his own body but will, nevertheless, affirm the existence of his self as a purely spiritual entity. Now, that which is affirmed is certainly not the same as that which is not affirmed. The mind is, therefore, a substance independent of the body. Our philosopher is here describing an imaginary case impossible of realization, but his real point, as of Descartes, is that we can think away our bodies and so doubt their existence, but we cannot think away our minds.

The affinity of Ibn Sina's argument with that of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* has been justly pointed out by historians of philosophy. Actually, this whole trend of thought is inspired by the argument of Plotinus for the separateness of the mind from the body.⁶ But there is an important difference between Ibn Sina's and Descartes' formulations. With regard to Descartes, the question can be and has been raised: Is the existence of the self a matter of inference or an immediate datum of consciousness? Whatever the answer to this question may be, there is no doubt that consciousness or “I think” is constitutively and necessarily involved in Descartes' “I am.” This is so much so that “I think” and “I am” have the same meaning in Descartes .⁷

This being the position, it is obvious that in this case the consciousness of the self and its existence cannot be logically disengaged from each other. In Ibn Sina, however, although the element of consciousness is present since one can “affirm one's own existence,” it is nevertheless present only as a way of locating the self: it is a contingent fact and not a logical necessity. In fact, Ibn Sina presents a medial position between Descartes and Plotinus, for, according to the latter, consciousness, being a relation, signifies not utter self–identity but a kind of otherness; in complete self–identity, consciousness

must cease altogether.

This argument, which seeks to establish dualism by doubting or denying the existence of the body, may be called the argument from abstraction in that it abstracts psychical functions from the total functions of the organism. Its fundamental weakness obviously is to insist that by thinking away the body, the body ceases to play a role in one's total consciousness. If the problem could be solved by a simple inspection of the self in this manner, nothing would be easier.

Ibn Sina seems to be aware that the position is liable to objections. He says ("Psychology," V, 7): (If my self were identical with any bodily members) "say, the heart or the brain or a collection of such members and if it were their separate or total being of which I were conscious as being my self, then it would be necessary that my consciousness of my self should be my very consciousness of these members, for it is not possible that the same thing should be both cognized and uncognized in the same sense."

He then goes on to say that "in fact I do not know by self-consciousness that I have a heart and a brain but I do so either by sense-perception (experience) or on authority." "I mean by what I know to be my self that which I mean when I say: 'I perceived, I intellected, I acted,' and all these attributes belong to me." But, Ibn Sina pauses to consider the possible objection: if you are not aware of your self being a bodily member, you are neither directly aware that it is your soul or mind.

Ibn Sina's answer to this objection is: "Whenever I present bodily attributes to this something which is the source of my mental functions, I find that it cannot accept these attributes," and thus this incorporeal entity must be the soul.

Here we clearly see that the argument has taken a new turn and the phenomenon of direct consciousness is being supplemented by a further consideration to the effect that the disparateness between the mental and physical qualities is such that both cannot belong to one substance. And this is the perennial argument for the two-substance theory, viz. that the mental and the physical attributes are of qualitatively disparate *genre*.

From the acceptance of the view, that the mind is a substance, the conclusion that the mind is a unity follows tautologically and Ibn Sina lays great stress on it. Indeed, once again, both doctrines, viz., the reality of faculties and the unitary nature of the soul, are stated with equal emphasis by him. The reality of mental faculties was established by Aristotle but was further pursued by his commentators, notably Alexander of Aphrodisias.

Ibn Sina has devoted a special chapter to the question ("Psychology," I, 4) where he bases the multiplicity of faculties on the qualitative differences among mental operations. Nevertheless, he repeatedly stresses the necessity of an integrative bond (*ribat*) for the diverse operations.⁸ Indeed, he declares that even the vegetative and perceptual functions in man, for example, are specifically different from those in plants and animals, thanks to the rationality present in man which pervades and changes the character of all his functions. This integrative principle is the mind itself.

The soul in its real being is then an independent substance and is our transcendental self. We shall return to its transcendence when we discuss Ibn Sina's theory of knowledge in the next section. Here we shall note only that Ibn Sina's arguments for the immortality of the soul are based on the view that it is a substance and that it is not a form of the body to which it is attached intimately by some kind of mystical relation between the two.

There is in the soul which emerges from the separate substance of the active intelligence simultaneously with the emergence of a body with a definite temperament, a definite inclination to attach itself to this body, to care for it, and direct it to the mutual benefit. Further, the soul, as being incorporeal, is a simple substance and this ensures for it indestructibility and survival, after its origination, even when its body is destroyed.

But if at the transcendental level the soul is a pure spiritual entity and body does not enter into its definition even as a relational concept, at the phenomenal level the body must be included in its definition as a building enters into the definition of a (definite) builder. That is why Ibn Sina says that the study of the phenomenal aspect of the soul is in the field of natural science, while its transcendental being belongs to the study of metaphysics.

Now, since at the phenomenal level there exists between each soul and body a mystique which renders them exclusively appropriate for each other – whether we understand this mystique or not – it follows that the transmigration of souls is impossible. (Transmigration is rejected by Aristotle who does not hold the two-substance view.) Indeed, this mystique is both the cause and the effect of the individuality of the self. Ibn Sina, therefore, totally rejects the idea of the possible identity of two souls or of the ego becoming fused with the Divine Ego, and he emphasizes that the survival must be individual.

It is a primary fact of experience that each individual is conscious of his self-identity which cannot be shaken by any kind of argument. Indeed, our philosopher is so keen to affirm the individuality of personality that he says ("Psychology," V, 3) that even the qualitative nature of the intellectual operations in different individuals may be different – a statement which would have shocked not only the Platonists and Neo-Platonists, but even perhaps Aristotle, since, according to the universal Greek doctrine, the intellect represents, at least, the qualitative identity of mankind, a doctrine which was later pushed to its logical extremes by Ibn Rushd.

The relationship, then, between soul and body is so close that it may affect even the intellect. It goes without saying that all the other psycho-physical acts and states have both aspects – mental and physical. This was emphasized by Aristotle himself. But Aristotle's doctrine, even if it is not outright materialistic, is quasi-materialistic and, whereas it either emphasizes the double aspect of each state or operation, or tends strongly to point out the influence of the body on the mental phenomena, exactly the reverse is the case with Ibn Sina. Indeed, his insistent stress on the influence of the mind on the body constitutes an outstanding and one of the most original features of his philosophy.

Whereas in Aristotle, life and mind give a new dimension to the material organism, in Ibn Sina, under the inspiration of the Neo-Platonic thought and the influence of his own metaphysically spiritual predilections, this no longer remains a mere dimension. The material side of nature is both pervaded and overshadowed by its mental and spiritual side, even though, as a medical man, he is keen to preserve the importance of the physical constitution, especially in the case of the character of the emotions and impulses. Indeed, as we shall see, his medical art helped him to gauge the extent of mental influence on apparently bodily states.

At the most common level, the influence of the mind on the body is visible in voluntary movement: whenever the mind wills to move the body, the body obeys. In his detailed account of animal motion, Ibn Sina has enumerated four stages instead of Aristotle's three. The three stages according to Aristotle are: (1) imagination or reason, (2) desire, and (3) movement of the muscles. Ibn Sina has split up the second into (1) desire and (2) impulsion (*ijma'*) for, he says, not every desire can move to action but only when it is impulsive, whether consciously or unconsciously.

The second, and more important difference between Ibn Sina and the traditional view is that according to the latter the initiation of bodily movement must always lie in a cognitive state, whether it is imagination or reason. Ibn Sina holds that, while in most cases the cognitive act precedes the affective and the conative ones, this is not true of all cases.

We read ("Psychology," IV, 4): "All (the appetitive and conative) faculties also follow imaginative faculties.... But sometimes it happens, e.g., in cases of physical pain, that our natural impulse tries to remove the cause of pain and thus initiates the process of stirring up imagination. In this case, it is these (appetitive) faculties which drive the imagination to their own purpose, just as, in most cases, it is the imaginative faculty which drives the (appetitive and conative) faculties towards the object of imagination."

Thus, according to Ibn Sina, the initiation of the animal motion can lie in the affections as well as in the cognitive states. Psychologically, this is of great significance and marks an advance over the purely and one-sidedly intellectual accounts of traditional philosophy.

Here we reach the second level of the influence of the mind on the body, viz., that of emotions and of the will. Ibn Sina tells us from his medical experience that actually physically sick men, through sheer will-power, can become well and, equally, healthy men can become really ill under the influence of sickness-obsession. Similarly, he says, if a plank of wood is put across a well-trodden path, one can walk on it quite well, but if it is put as a bridge and down below is a chasm, one can hardly creep over it without an actual fall. "This is because he pictures to himself a (possible) fall so vividly that the natural power of his limbs accords with it" ("Psychology," IV, 4).

Indeed, strong emotions like fear can actually destroy the temperament of the organism and result in death, through influencing the vegetative functions: "This happens when a judgment takes place in the soul; the judgment, being pure belief, does not influence the body, but rather when this belief is followed

by joy or grief” (“Psychology,” I, 3). Joy and grief too are mental states, Ibn Sina goes on, but they affect the vegetative functions.

Again, “We do not regard it as impossible that something should occur to the soul, in so far as it is embodied, and be then followed by affections peculiar to the body itself. Imagination, inasmuch as it is knowledge, is not in itself a physical affection, but it may happen that, as a result, certain bodily organs, sexual for example, should expand.... Indeed, when an idea becomes firmly established in the imagination, it necessitates a change in the temperament....” (*ibid.*, IV, 4). Just as, we are told, the ideas of health present in the doctor's mind produce actual health in a patient, so the soul acts on the body; only the doctor produces cure through media and instruments, but the soul does it without any instruments.

If, indeed, the soul were strong enough, it could produce cure and illness even in another body without instruments. And here Ibn Sina produces evidence from the phenomena of hypnosis and suggestion (*al-wahm al-'amil*). He uses these considerations in order to show the possibility of miracles which are a part of the discussion of the question of prophethood.

Here we will recall what we said before that, according to Ibn Sina, a soul becomes exclusively attached to one body. Our newer consideration shows that it can transcend its own body to affect others. This would become possible only when the soul becomes akin to the universal soul, as it were.

It is on these grounds that Ibn Sina accepts the reality of such phenomena as the “evil eye” and magic in general. We may note that the influence of the emotions on the body was known and discussed in later Hellenism. Especially since the Stoic conception of the principle of “Sympathy” in nature and Plotinus' elaboration of that principle, the mind–body interaction was explained on these lines. What is scientifically new in Ibn Sina is that he also explains phenomena like magic, suggestion, and hypnosis, and, in general, the influence of one mind on other bodies and minds on these lines, i. e., by referring them to the properties of the influencing mind.

In Hellenism, these phenomena were accepted, but were regarded as exceptionally occult. And in the mystery–mongering superstition of later Hellenism, “Sympathy” was given an occult twist. Magical properties were assigned to special objects: metals, animals, etc., through which the magician or the hypnotizer worked or pretended to work on the gods or spirits to intervene in the realm of nature and to produce occult effects.

But the only principle which Ibn Sina will accept – and here he strikes a very modern note – is to refer efficacy to the special constitution of the mind itself. This rests on the premise that it is of the nature of mind to influence matter and it belongs to matter to obey the mind, and Ibn Sina will have no theurgic magic:

“This is because the soul is (derived from) certain (higher) principles which clothe matter with forms contained in them, such that these forms actually constitute matter.... If these principles can bestow

upon matter forms constitutive of natural species... it is not improbable that they can also bestow qualities, without there being any need of physical contact, action, or affection.... The form existing in the soul is the cause of what occurs in matter" ("Psychology," IV, 4).

The reason for this great change is that in later Hellenism the human soul had lost its dignity and people relied more and more for the explanation of the "para-natural" phenomena on the intervention of the gods.

Theory Of Knowledge

In accordance with the universal Greek tradition, Ibn Sina describes all knowledge as some sort of abstraction on the part of the cognizant of the form of the thing known. His chief emphasis, elaborated most probably by himself, is on the degrees of this abstracting power in different cognitive faculties. Thus, sense-perception needs the very presence of matter for its cognitive act; imagination is free from the presence of actual matter but cannot cognize without material attachments and accidents which give to the image its particularity, whereas in intellect alone the pure form is cognized in its universality.

It is very probable too that Ibn Sina elaborated this theory "of the grades of abstraction" to avoid the objection to which Aristotle's doctrine of cognition (according to which all cognition is the abstraction of form "without its matter") was liable, viz., if perception is the knowledge of form alone, how do we know that this form exists in matter? Or, indeed, how do we know that matter exists at all?

Ibn Sina's position on perception is generally that of naive realism, like that of Aristotle and his commentators, holding a representational view of perception. But under criticism from scepticism and relativism which point out the relativity of perceived qualities, this representational view becomes seriously modified and Ibn Sina finally accepts a quasi-causal or, rather, relational view of perceptual qualities, i.e., objects, which have certain real qualities in themselves, appear as such-and-such under such-and-such circumstances and from such-and-such a position.

This is responsible for several subjectivist statements in Ibn Sina, who comes to distinguish between "primary" and "secondary" perceptions: the "primary" perception being subjective or of the state of the percipient's own mind, the "secondary" perception being that of the external world. He did not clearly see, as we moderns do, the basic difficulties in this position. But his conception reappears in Western medieval philosophy as the distinction between the psychological or "intentional" object and the real object, a distinction which was much later developed by Locke into that of primary and secondary perceptual qualities.

But the great key-stone of Ibn Sina's doctrine of perception is his distinction between internal and external perception. The external perception is the operation of the external five senses. Ibn Sina also divides the internal perception formally into five faculties, although he shows a great deal of hesitation on the subject (see "Psychology," IV, I). His chief aim is to separate the different functions or operations on

a qualitative basis, and, of course, we once again remember his principle that to every clear idea there must correspond a distinction in reality. Indeed, his doctrine of the internal senses has no precedent in the history of philosophy.

The first internal sense is *sensus communis* which is the seat of all the senses. It integrates sense-data into percepts. This general sense must be internal because none of the external five senses is capable of this function. The second internal sense is the imaginative faculty in so far as it conserves the perceptual images. The third faculty is again imagination in so far as it acts upon these images, by combination and separation. In man this faculty is pervaded by reason so that human imagination can deliberate and is, therefore, the seat of the practical intellect.

The fourth and the most important internal faculty is called *wahm* which passed into the West as *vis estimativa*: it perceives immaterial motions like usefulness and harmfulness, love and hate in material objects, and is, in fact, the basis of our character, whether influenced or uninfluenced by reason. The fifth internal sense conserves in memory those notions which are called by him “intentions” (*ma'ani*).

The doctrine of *wahm* is the most original element in Ibn Sina's psychological teaching and comes very close to what some modern psychologists have described as the “nervous response” of the subject to a given object. In Aristotle, this function is performed by imagination or perception itself, but Ibn Sina contends that perception and imagination tell us only about the perceptual qualities of a thing, its size, colour, shape, etc.; they tell us nothing about its character or “meaning” for us, which must be read or discerned by an internal faculty of the organism.

In the Stoics, again, we have the perceptual-moral theory of the *oikeiosis* or “appropriation,” according to which whatever is perceived by the external senses is interpreted internally by the soul as the bearer of certain values. But the Stoics, in this doctrine, were primarily concerned with the development of a moral personality in man. Ibn Sina's doctrine of *wahm*, on the other hand, despite its moral significance, is primarily a purely psychological doctrine, explaining our instinctive and emotional response to the environment.

This “nervous response” operates at different levels. At one level it is purely instinctive as when a sheep perceives a wolf for the first time and flees from it, or as the mother instinctively feels love for her baby. This occurs without previous experience and hence through some kind of “natural inspiration” ingrained in the constitution of the organism.

Secondly, it also operates at a “quasi-empirical” level (“Psychology,” IV, 3). This occurs through association of ideas or images of memory. A dog which has suffered pain in the past from being beaten by a stick or a stone, associates the image of the object and the “intention” of pain and, when it sees the object again, at once runs away. This phenomenon of direct association can also become indirect and irrational. This happens in the case of animals and also in the case of less reasonable human beings. Some people who have irrationally associated the yellow colour of honey with both the colour and the

bitter taste of gall, do not eat honey and in fact at its sight exhibit symptoms of gall-like taste.

This principle of association appeared later in Leibniz (*Monadology*, translated by R. Latta, p. 232); and the principle of irrational or automatic association has appeared more thoroughly worked out in recent experimental psychology under the name of the “conditioned reflex.” Since *wahm* makes perceptual predictions on the basis of association of ideas, for which, says Ibn Sina, there are innumerable causes (contiguity, similarity, etc.), its perceptual judgments may sometimes be false. Aristotle had noticed this failure of perception but could not explain it since he did not discern the influence of past experience on present perceptual judgments.

We come next to the doctrine of the intellect which Ibn Sina has elaborated in great detail. He has taken over in his doctrine the theory of the development of human intellect announced by Aristotle very briefly and rather obscurely and then elaborated by Alexander of Aphrodisias and later by Farabi. But he has added quite new and original interpretations of his own.

The doctrine, in brief, distinguishes between a potential intellect in man and an active intellect outside man, through the influence and guidance of which the former develops and matures. Basically, the problem is that of the origin of human cognition and it is explained on the assumption of a supra-human transcendent intellect which, when the human intellect is ready, bestows knowledge upon it.

As against Alexander, al-Farabi, and probably Aristotle, Ibn Sina holds that the potential intellect in man is an indivisible, immaterial, and indestructible substance although it is generated at a definite time and as something personal to each individual. This has important religious consequences, for, where, according to al-Farabi only men of developed intellect survive and others perish for ever at death, Ibn Sina holds the immortality of all human souls (According to Alexander of Aphrodisias, even the actualized intellect is perishable so that no soul is immortal.) The immateriality of the intellect is proved by Ibn Sina in an unprecedented, elaborate, and scholastic manner, the basic idea being that ideas or “forms,” being indivisible, cannot be said to be localized in any material organ.

But it is in his account of the intellectual operation and the manner of the acquisition of knowledge that the most original aspect of his doctrine of the intellect lies. Whereas, according to the Peripatetic doctrine, accepted by Farabi, the universal, which is the object of the intellectual act, is abstracted from the particulars of sense-experience, for Ibn Sina it issues directly from the active intellect.

The Peripatetic tradition has given the following account of the rise of the universal from perceptual experience: First, we perceive several similar individuals; these are stored up in memory and after this constant operation the light of the active intellect “shines” upon them so that the essential nature common to all the particulars emerges from them. This theory is neither nominalistic nor realistic: it does say that the universal is more than what the instances of experience have given to the mind, but it holds that the universal *lies* somehow in these instances.

For Ibn Sina, the universal cannot emerge from the images of sense because it does not lie there.

Further, as we have seen already, the essence, according to Ibn Sina, is not really a universal: it only *behaves* as such when it is in *our* minds. Besides, no amount of particular instances would actually suffice to produce the universal essence which is applicable to infinite instances. He, therefore, declares that the task of our minds is to “consider” and reflect upon the particulars of sense–experience. This activity prepares the mind for the reception of the (universal) essence from the active intellect by an act of direct intuition. The perception of the universal form, then, is a unique movement of the intellective so not reducible to our perceiving the particulars either singly or totally and finding the common essence among them, for if so, it would be only a spurious kind of universal.

There is, besides, another vital consideration which leads to this view. If the perception of the individual instances and the noting of their resemblance (which latter, indeed, itself presupposes the possession of the universal by the mind) were sufficient to cause the universal, then acquisition of knowledge would become mechanical and this mechanism would operate necessarily.

It is, however, in fact not true that cognition can be so mechanically and deterministically produced. The origin of knowledge is mysterious and involves intuition at every stage. Of all intellectual knowledge, more or less, it is not so much true to say “I know it” as to admit “It occurs to me.”

All seeking for knowledge, according to Ibn Sina (even the emergence of the conclusion from the premises), has this prayer–like quality: the effort is necessary on the part of man; the response is the act of God or the active intellect. We are, indeed, often not aware as to what it is we want to know, let alone go ahead and “know it.” A theory of knowledge which fails to notice this fundamental truth is not only wrong but blasphemous.

All ideas or forms then come from outside. The precise sense of the “outside” we shall try to work out in the next section. But in the meantime we should notice certain other important characteristics of our knowledge. The first is that it is piecemeal and discursive, not total; it is also mostly “receptive” in the sense noted just above. In our normal consciousness we are not fully aware of the whence and whither of our cognition.

True, there are people who are receptive in the ordinary sense of the word in that they do not discover either anything, or much that is new and original; they only learn for the most part; while there are others who discover new things. But even these latter are only “receptive” in the sense that, not being fully conscious of the whence and whither of their knowledge – not aware of the total context of reality – they do not know the full meaning of their discoveries. This is because, in the common run of thinkers ideas come and go in succession and, therefore, their grasp of reality is not total.

Hence Ibn Sina rejects the general and especially later Greek doctrine of the absolute identity of subject and object in intellectual operation, for, he argues, in the case of normal consciousness, there being a succession of ideas, if the mind became identical with one object, how could it then become identical with another? In this connection he rebukes Porphyry for his “mystical and poetical statements.” Why he

should single out the pupil of Plotinus, is not quite clear, for the doctrine is both Peripatetic and Neo-Platonic, although there are, it must be admitted, moderate representatives like Alexander of Aphrodisias just as there are extremist champions of the doctrine like most Neo-Platonists.

Ideas in this detailed, discrete, and discursive form of knowledge, as we have said, come into the mind and go out of it. Ibn Sina is insistent that when an idea is not actually being used in intellection, it does not remain in the mind, or, in other words, there is, properly speaking, no intellectual memory as there is a memory of sensible images. There is nothing in the mind which can conserve intelligibles just as there is a conservatory in the soul for sensibles for the existence of an intelligible in the mind means nothing else than the fact that it is actually being intellected.

Absolutely speaking, it should be remarked that the word memory, when applied to sensible objects and individual events of the past, is radically different from the memory of universals and universal propositions, for in the former case there is a reference to the past. Aristotle himself had indicated this doctrine in his *De Memoria et Reminiscentia* where he says that universals are remembered only *per accidens*.

The ordinary human thinking mind, says Ibn Sina, is like a mirror upon which there is a succession of ideas reflected from the active intellect. This does not mean that a truth once acquired, because it “goes out of the mind,” has to be *learnt* all over again when it is remembered. By our initial acquisition we acquire a skill to contact the active intellect and in remembering we simply use that skill or power. Resuming the analogy of the mirror, Ibn Sina says that, before acquisition of knowledge, the mirror was rusty; when we re-think the mirror is polished, and it only remains to direct it to the sun (i.e., the active intellect) so that it should readily reflect light.

Even so is the ordinary philosophic (or mystic) consciousness: it is mostly partial (in varying degrees) even when it is original and creative (again in varying degrees) and it is, therefore, obviously not in total contact with reality, or, as Ibn Sina puts it, “is not one with the active intellect.” But even in our ordinary cognitive processes, there are serious pointers to existence of a type of consciousness in which this partiality and discursiveness may be overcome and which may be wholly creative, with the pulse of the total reality in its grasp.

These pointers are illustrated by Ibn Sina by the example of a man who is confronted suddenly with a questioner who asks him a question which he has never asked himself before and, therefore, to which he cannot give a detailed answer on the spot. He is sure, however, that he *can* answer it because the answer has just “occurred” to him and lies within him. He then proceeds to the details and formulates the answer.

“The strange thing”, says Ibn Sina, “that when this man begins to teach the questioner the answer to his question, he is simultaneously teaching himself as well” the detail and elaborated form of knowledge even though he previously possessed knowledge in a simple manner. This simple, total insight is the

creator of the detailed, discursive knowledge which ensues. Now, this simple, total insight (the *scientia simplex* of the medieval Latin scholastics comes from Ibn Sina) is the creative reason (or the active intellect); the formulated and elaborate form is the “psychic” knowledge, not the absolutely intellectual cognition.

A person possessed of this simple creative agency, if such a one exists, may well be said to be one with the active intellect; and since he possesses a total grasp of reality, he is sure, absolutely sure, of the whence and whither of knowledge (Ibn Sina puts a great emphasis on this self-confidence, certainty, conviction, or faith); he alone is aware of the total context of truth and therefore, in him alone there is the full awareness of the meaning of each term in the process of reality; and, therefore, finally, only such a person can enter (and must enter) most significantly into temporal history, moulding it and giving it a new meaning. This is the prophet; but how to ascertain his existence?

Doctrine Of Prophecy⁹⁴⁵

The necessity of the phenomenon of prophethood and of divine revelation is something which Ibn Sina has sought to establish at four levels: the intellectual, the “imaginative,” the miraculous, and the socio-political. The totality of the four levels gives us a clear indication of the religious motivation, character, and direction of his thinking. Indeed, from our description and partial interpretation of his central philosophical theses so far, his deeply religious spirit has emerged very clearly.

His theory of “Being” has led to the dependence of every finite being, on God; and his doctrines of mind-body relationship and of the genesis and nature of knowledge have both culminated in the religious conception of miracles in the one case, and of a creative revelatory knowledge in the other. And there is not the slightest suggestion that religiosity is something artificially grafted upon his purely rational thinking; on the contrary, it has organically grown out of a rigorous process of ratiocination, and goes down to the very kernel of his thought.

It may be said that Ibn Sina is a citizen of two intellectual-spiritual worlds; the Hellenic and the Islamic. In his own mind he has so intrinsically unified the two worlds that they are identical; the question of disloyalty to either, therefore, does not arise for him at all. Under this circumstance, both traditional Islam and the heritage of Hellenism were inevitably interpreted and modified to a greater or lesser extent. This is apparent in the whole of his philosophy which enters into the technically religious field, but is most palpably so in his doctrine of prophecy.

In this doctrine, Ibn Sina drastically modifies the Muslim dogmatic theology by declaring that the Qur'anic revelation is, by and large, if not all, symbolic of truth, not the literal truth, but that it must remain the literal truth for the masses (this does not mean that the Qur'an is not the Word of God; indeed, as we shall see, it is in a sense *literally* the Word of God); further, that the Law, although it must be observed by everyone, is also partly symbolic and partly pedagogical and, therefore, an essentially lower discipline than philosophic pursuits. (This again does not mean that we can dispense with the Law at any stage of

our individual or collective development, for to be social belongs to the essence of man.)

The interpretation and modification of Hellenism in this doctrine is obvious: although most elements of the Muslim philosophic doctrine of prophethood exist in Hellenism, they nevertheless exist in a nebulous and sometimes in a crude form; further, they are scattered. Indeed, the Greeks had no conception of prophethood and prophetic revelation as the Muslims knew it. In fact, the Muslim conception of prophethood is new and unique in the history of religion. For the Muslim philosophers (especially Ibn Sina, for although al-Farabi had pioneered the way, we do not find all the elements in him, notably, the intellectual and the miraculous), to have evolved out of these nebulous, crude, and disjointed elements an elaborate, comprehensive, and refined theory of prophecy to interpret the personality of Muhammad, is nothing short of the performance of a genius. [9](#)

At the intellectual level, the necessity of the prophetic revelation is proved by an argument elaborated on the basis of a remark of Aristotle (*Anal. Post*, I, Chap. 34) that some people can hit upon the middle term without forming a syllogism in their minds. Ibn Sina constructs a whole theory of total intuitive experience on the basis of this scanty remark. Since, he tells us, people differ vastly with regard to their intuitive powers both in quality and quantity, and while some men are almost devoid of it, others possess it in a high degree, there must be a rarely and exceptionally endowed man who has a total contact with reality. This man, without much instruction from outside, can, by his very nature, become the depository of the truth, in contrast with the common run of thinkers who may have an intuitive experience with regard to a definite question or questions but whose cognitive touch with reality is always partial, never total.

This comprehensive insight then translates itself into propositions about the nature of reality and about future history; it is simultaneously intellectual and moral-spiritual, hence the prophetic experience must satisfy both the philosophic and the moral criteria. It is on the basis of this creative insight that the true prophet creates new moral values and influences future history. A psychologico-moral concomitant of this insight is also the deep and unalterable self-assurance and faith of the prophet in his own capacity for true knowledge and accurate moral judgment: he must believe in himself so that he can make others believe in him and thus succeed in his mission to the world.

This insight, creative of knowledge and values, is termed by Ibn Sina the active intellect and identified with the angel of revelation. Now, the prophet *qua* prophet is identical with the active intellect; and in so far as this identity is concerned, the active intellect is called *`aql mustafad* (the acquired intellect). But the prophet *qua* human being is not identical with the active intellect. The giver of revelation is thus in one sense internal to the prophet, in another sense, i.e., in so far as the latter is a human being, external to him.

Hence Ibn Sina says that the prophet, in so far as he is human, is “accidentally,” not essentially, the active intellect (for the meaning of the term “accidental,” see the first section of this chapter). God can and, indeed, must come to man so that the latter may develop and evolve, but the meaning of God can at no stage be entirely exhausted in man.

But although the intellectual–spiritual insight is the highest gift the prophet possesses, he cannot creatively act in history merely on the strength of that insight. His office requires inherently that he should go forth to humanity with a message, influence them, and should actually succeed in his mission. This criterion leads the Muslim philosophers, although they admit the divineness of the leading Greek thinkers and reformers, to fix their minds upon Moses, Jesus, and, above all, Muhammad who, undoubtedly, possesses the requisite qualities of a prophet to the highest degree. These requisite qualities are that the prophet must possess a very strong and vivid imagination, that his psychic power be so great that he should influence not only other minds but also matter in general, and that he be capable of launching a socio–political system.

By the quality of an exceptionally strong imagination, the prophet's mind, by an impelling Psychological necessity, transforms the purely intellectual truths and concepts into lifelike images and symbols so potent that one who hears or reads them not only comes to believe in them but is impelled to action. This symbolizing and vivifying function of the prophetic imagination is stressed both by al–Farabi and Ibn Sina, by the latter in greater detail.

It is of the nature of imagination to symbolize and give flesh and blood to our thoughts, our desires, and even our physiological inclinations. When we are hungry or thirsty, our imagination puts before us lively images of food and drink. Even when we have no actual sexual appetite but our physical condition is ready for this, imagination may come into play and by stirring up suitable vivid images may actually evoke this appetite by mere suggestion.

This symbolization and suggestiveness, when it works upon the spirit and the intellect of the prophet, results in so strong and vivid images that what the prophet's spirit thinks and conceives, he actually comes to hear and see. That is why he “sees” the Angel and “hears” his voice. That is why also he necessarily comes to talk of a paradise and a hell which represent the purely spiritual states of bliss and torment. The revelations contained in the religious Scriptures are, for the most part, of the figurative order and must, therefore, be interpreted in order to elicit the higher, underlying, spiritual truth.

It is the technical revelation, then, which impels people to action and to be good, and not the purely intellectual insight and inspiration. No religion, therefore, can be based on pure intellect. However, the technical revelation, in order to obtain the necessary quality of potency, also inevitably suffers from the fact that it does not present the naked truth but truth in the garb of symbols. But to what action does it impel? Unless the prophet can express his moral insight into definite enough moral purposes, principles, and indeed into a socio–political structure, neither his insight nor the potency of his imaginative revelation will be of much use.

The prophet, therefore, needs to be a Lawgiver and a statesman *par excellence* – indeed the real Lawgiver and statesman is only a prophet. This practical criterion throws into still bolder relief the personality of Muhammad in the philosopher's mind. The Law (*Shari'ah*) must be such that it should be effective in making people socially good, should remind them of God at every step, and should also

serve for them as a pedagogic measure in order to open their eyes beyond its own exterior, so that they may attain to a vision of the true spiritual purpose of the Lawgiver.

The Law is not abrogated at any stage for anybody, but only the philosophic vision of the truth gives to the Law its real meaning; and when that vision is attained, the Law seems like a ladder which one has climbed but which it would still be unwise to discard. For those relatively unfortunate souls which cannot see through the Law its philosophic truth, the technical revelation and the letter of the Law must remain the literal truth.

God And The World

We have learnt in the first section that God is unique in that He is the Necessary Being; everything else is contingent in itself and depends for its existence upon God. The Necessary Being must be numerically one. Even within this Being there can be no multiplicity of attributes – in fact, God has no other essence, no other attributes than the fact that He exists, and exists necessarily. This is expressed by Ibn Sina by saying that God's essence is identical with His necessary existence.

Since God has no essence, He is absolutely simple and cannot be defined. But if He is without essence and attributes, how can He be related to the world in any way? For Aristotle, who held this conception of the Deity, the world presented itself as a veritable other – it was neither the object of God's creation, nor of care, not even of knowledge. His God led a blissful life of eternal self-contemplation and the world organized itself into a cosmos out of love and admiration for Him, to become like Him.

The Muslim philosophical tradition finds the solution under the influence of the Neo-Platonic example which combines God's absolute simplicity with the idea that, in knowing Himself, God also knows in an implicit, simple manner the essences of things.

The system is worked out and systematized by Ibn Sina, who strives to derive God's attributes of knowledge, creation, power, will, etc., from His simple unchanging being, or, rather, to show that these attributes are nothing but the fact of His existence. This is done by an attempt to show that all the attributes are either relational or negative; they are, thus, identical with God's being and with one another.

The Deity is, therefore, absolutely simple. That God is knowing, is shown by the fact that being pure from matter and pure spirit, He is pure intellect in which the subject and object are identical.

But God's self-knowledge is *ipso facto* knowledge of other things as well, since, knowing Himself, He also inevitably knows the rest of the existents which proceed from Him. Here Ibn Sina strikes an original note. According to the philosophical tradition of Hellenism, God, at best, can know only the essences (or universals) and not the particular existents, since these latter can be known only through sense-perception and, therefore, in time; but God, being supra-temporal and changeless and, further,

incorporeal, cannot have perceptual knowledge.

This doctrine of the philosophers was especially repugnant to Islam, for it not only made God's knowledge imperfect, but it made God Himself useless for those whose God He is to be. Ibn Sina devises an argument to show that although God cannot have perceptual knowledge, He nevertheless knows all particulars "in a universal way," so that perceptual knowledge is superfluous for Him.

Since God is the emanative cause of all existents, He knows both these existents and the relations subsisting between them. God knows, for example, that after such a series of events a solar eclipse would occur, and knowing all the antecedents and consequences of this eclipse, He knows in a determinate manner its qualities and properties; He knows, therefore, what this particular eclipse will be, and can differentiate it completely from all other events even of the same species, viz., eclipse in general.

But when the particular eclipse actually occurs in time, God, not being subject to temporal change, cannot know it. But He also need not know it in this way, for He knows it already (see *K. al-Najat*, Cairo, 1938, pp. 247–49). Very ingenious though this theory is and, we think, successful in showing that sense-perception is not the only way to know the particulars, it is obvious that it cannot avoid the introduction of time factor, and, therefore, change in divine knowledge.

Al-Ghazali's criticism of the theory in the thirteenth discussion of his *Tahafut al-Falasifah* certainly finds the target at this point, although his view that according to Ibn Sina, God cannot know individual men but only man in general, is obviously mistaken, for if God can know a particular sun-eclipse, why can He not know, in this manner, an individual person? Indeed Ibn Sina declares in the Qur'anic language (*op. cit.*, p. 247) that "not a particle remains hidden from God in the heavens or on the earth."

As regards God's attributes of volition and creation, Ibn Sina's emanationist account renders them really pointless as al-Ghazali has shown. In a thoroughly intellectualist-emanationist account of the Deity, will has no meaning. For Ibn Sina, God's will means nothing but the necessary procession of the world from Him and His self-satisfaction through this. Indeed, he defines it in purely negative terms, viz., that God is not unwilling that the world proceed from Him; this is very different from the positive attributes of choice and the execution of that choice.

Similarly, the creative activity of God, for Ibn Sina, means the eternal emanation or procession of the world, and since this emanation is grounded finally in the intellectual nature of God, it has the character of unalterable rational necessity.

Even though al-Ghazali's criticism which assimilates the divine activity of Ibn Sina to the automatic procession of light from the sun and, thus, rejects the appellation of "act" to God's behaviour, is not quite correct (since according to Ibn Sina, God is not only conscious of the procession of the world from Him, but is also satisfied with and "willing" to it), the term "creation" is nevertheless used only in a Pickwickian sense, and the term "act" (in the sense of voluntary action) is also seriously modified, since as we have

said, there is no question of real choice.

Rationally determined activity is, of course, compatible with will and choice and can also be said to be done with choice, but this choice has to be brought in as an additional element both initially and finally. For, suppose, a man chooses to think about a certain problem. Now, the initial choice is his own to think about this rather than that problem and then at any moment he can also choose or will to terminate this process of thinking.

What goes on between the beginning and the end will be a rationally determined process of thought, and not a series of choices, though the process as a whole is also chosen and voluntary. But in the philosophical account of God there is just no room for this additional factor either at the end or at the beginning.

The world, then, exists eternally with God, for both matter and form flow eternally from Him. But although this concept was abhorrent to Islamic orthodoxy, Ibn Sina's purpose in introducing it was to try to do justice both to the demands of religion and of reason and to avoid atheistic materialism.

For the materialists, the world has existed eternally without God. For Ibn Sina, too, the world is an eternal existent, but since it is in itself contingent in its entirety it needs God and is dependent upon Him eternally. We see here the double purpose of the doctrine of essence and existence. Unlike atheism it requires God who should bestow being upon existents; and in order to avoid pantheism, it further requires that the being of God should be radically differentiated from the being of the world.

The chief crux of the eternity of the world, which has been stressed by the opponents of the doctrine throughout the history of thought, is that it involves an actual infinite series in the past. In answer, it has been said, ever since Kant, that it is not impossible at all to imagine an infinite in the past, just as it is not impossible to imagine it in the future, i.e., there is no absurdity involved in starting from any given moment backwards and traversing the past and at no point coming to the beginning of the past.

The fallacy of this answer consists in assimilating the past to the future, for the past is something actual in the sense that it has happened and is, therefore, determinate one and for all. But the same fallacy, we think, is implied in the objection itself and it seems that the application of the term "infinite" is inappropriately used for the past: the term "infinite" is used either for a series which is endless or which is both beginningless and endless.

According to the thesis, the series is beginningless *in the past*, and endless in the future, whereas the objection seeks to put an end to the series at a given moment of time and then argue for an infinity in the past. Also, whereas beginning is a temporal concept, beginninglessness is a negation and need not be a temporal concept, but the objection obviously implies "infinity in the past" as a temporal concept.

Influence On The East And The West

The influence of Ibn Sina's thought has been enormous. In the East, indeed, his system has dominated the Muslim philosophical tradition right down to the modern era when his place is being given to some modern Western thinkers by those who have been educated in modern universities. In the madrasahs run on traditional lines, Ibn Sina is still studied as the greatest philosopher of Islam. This is because no subsequent philosopher of equal originality and acuteness produced a system after him.

Ibn Rushd, the last great philosophical name in the medieval tradition of Muslim philosophy, did not formulate his thought systematically, but chose to write commentaries on Aristotle's works. These commentaries, because of their superb scholarliness and acuteness, had a tremendous impact on the medieval West (which received Aristotle first through him) but were not only not influential in the Muslim East, but most of them are even lost in the original Arabic. His comparative lack of influence, of course, is chiefly due to the destruction of his works.

For the rest, the subsequent philosophical activity was confined to the writing of commentaries on Ibn Sina or polemics against him. Rare exceptions, like Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi, who wrote works on systematic philosophy, became less philosophical and more mystical in their intellectual, if not spiritual, temper. Nevertheless, these commentaries and polemics against and for Ibn Sina and later systems have never yet been studied to any appreciable extent by modern students.

Now, let us determine more exactly the influence of Ibn Sina, within the Islamic tradition. To say that he has dominated the philosophical tradition in Islam is certainly not to say that he has dominated the Islamic tradition itself. On the contrary, the influence of Ibn Sina – which is equivalent to the influence of philosophy – within Islam suddenly and sharply dwindled after the polemics of al-Ghazali and later on of al-Razi and then declined and became moribund.

He continued to be read in the madrasahs merely as an intellectual training ground for theological students, not to philosophize anew but to refute or reject philosophy. The chief contributory factors to this situation were the formal rigidity of dogmatic theology and the fact that human reason itself became suspect due to the incompatibility of certain tenets of Ibn Sina with this theology (besides, of course, social, political, educational, and economic causes).

Not only did the philosopher's concept of the eternity of the world give affront to orthodoxy but also to those doctrines of his own which were developed with an especial regard for Islam, like the doctrine of prophethood. But perhaps the greatest theological objection was to his rejection of the bodily resurrection. On this point, although he maintains in the *K. al-Najat* (and the *Shifa'*) that the resurrection of the flesh, while not demonstrable by reason, ought to be believed on faith; in his expressly esoteric work called *Risalat al-Adwiyyah* he rejects it in totality and with vehemence.

Ibn Sina's works were translated into Latin in Spain in the middle of the sixth/twelfth century. The

influence of his thought in the West has been profound and far-reaching. We have, while discussing Ibn Sina's individual theories, alluded time and again to certain definite influences of his. But as it is impossible to do justice to this aspect fully within the space at our disposal, we shall be content with certain general remarks.

Ibn Sina's influence in the West started penetrating palpably since the time of Albert the Great, the famous saint and teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas' own metaphysics (and theology) will be unintelligible without an understanding of the debt he owes to Ibn Sina. No one can fail to observe Ibn Sina's influence even in Aquinas' later and bigger works like the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*.

But the influence of the Muslim philosopher in the earlier formative period of the Christian Saint is overwhelming; he is mentioned by the latter, e.g., on almost each page of his *De Ente et Essentia* which is, indeed, the foundation of Aquinas' metaphysics. No doubt, Ibn Sina is also frequently criticized by Aquinas and others, but even the amount of criticism itself shows in what esteem he was held in the West.

But the influence of Ibn Sina is not restricted to Aquinas,¹⁰ or, indeed, to the Dominican Order or even to the official theologians of the West. The translator of his *De Anima*, Gundisalvus, himself wrote a *De Anima* which is largely a wholesale transposition of Ibn Sina's doctrines. Similar is the case with the medieval philosophers and scientists, Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon. Duns Scotus and Count Zabarella, the finest of the late medieval commentators of Aristotle, also bear testimony to Ibn Sina's enduring influence. Dr. S. van den Bergh in his *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut*, London, 1954 (Vol. II, *passim*) has traced the influence of certain of the ideas of the *Shaikh al-Ra'is* down to modern times.

But it would be futile to go on giving a mere catalogue of individual authors. In fact, the historic influence of this rich personality is a phenomenon which is being realized only now in the West and Professor Etienne Gilson has started it off notably by his articles: (1) "Avicenne et le point de depart de Duns Scot" and (2) "Les sources greco-arabes de l'augustinisme avicennisant" (in *Arch. Hilt. Doctr. Litt.*, 1927 and 1929, respectively).

Since then partial and not very determined efforts have been made on the subject, but there is still no comprehensive treatment. Still less satisfactory is the treatment of the historic influence of Ibn Sina's scientific thought, although again beginnings have been made, notably by Professor Sarton and Dr. Crombie's work (see also *Avicenna, Scientist & Philosopher*, edited by G. M. Wickens, London, 1952, Chaps. 4, 5, 6).

But the question of his influence on the West and East apart, a very small portion of his original works has ever been edited. In 1951, the Egyptian Government and the Arab League set up a Committee in Cairo to edit the encyclopaedia, *Kitab al-Shifa'*. Some parts of it have already been published.

Bibliography

Besides the works mentioned in the body of this chapter, and the bibliography given by Father Anawati, an account of the works on Ibn Sina between 1945 and 1952 will be found in the *Philosophical Quarterly*, 1953, *Philosophical Surveys*, Vol. VIII, Part 1, "Medieval Islamic Philosophy" by R. Walzer, and in P. J. de O. P. Menasce's "Bibliographische Einführungen in das Studium der Philosophie," 6, *Arabische Philosophie*, Bern, 1948.

1. Little can be added to the biography of Ibn Sina – a quasi-autobiography – which is available in Arabic works, e.g., al-Qifti's and modern works based upon them. Here it is omitted because it is scarcely important for an appreciation of his philosophical thought.
2. K. al-Shifa' (Psychological part, henceforth cited as "Psychology").
3. "Psychology", V, 7.
4. K. al-Najat, Cairo, 1938, p. 224, II, .21ff.
5. This section has been drawn on F. Rahman's article "Essence and Existence in Avicenna," in *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, Oxford, 1958, although certain new considerations added here have changed the presentation to a certain extent.
6. A similar development took place in the West, beginning with Augustine, and, again, under Neo-Platonic influences.
7. *Meditations II*: "What of thinking? I find here that thought is an attribute that belongs to me; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am, I exist, that is certain. But how often? Just when I think; for it might possibly be the case, that if I ceased entirely to think, I should likewise cease entirely to exist ... to speak accurately I am not more than a thing which thinks."
8. An interesting question may be raised here about the unity of the mind. We have seen that the qualitative disparateness between the mental and physical phenomena has necessitated their attribution to different substances. This argument has been re-stated with great vigour in recent times by G. F. Stout who in his *Mind and Matter* lays down the "Principle of Generic Resemblance" for acts and operations if they are to fall in a single substance. C. D. Broad has rejected this dualism in his *Mind and Its Place in Nature* on the ground that no criterion can be laid down as to how great a qualitative difference there should be to warrant us to assign phenomena to different substances. However, Broad himself favours a "Compound Theory" of mind and body, thus implicitly giving force to the same principle of qualitative resemblance and difference which he seeks to refute. For, why else should there be the necessity for a "Compound" ?
Yet, if we accept the full consequences of the principle, what, we may ask, constitutes the resemblance between mental acts so as to attribute them to one substance? For, hoping, desiring, thinking are so mutually divergent phenomena. According to the modern traditional philosophy, consciousness may be a common quality satisfying the principle and, indeed, it has been regarded as the stuff of which mental phenomena are made. If we hold this, it will follow that unconscious desires, fears, and hopes are non-mental.
9. See F. Rahman's *Prophecy in Islam*, G. Allen & Unwin, London, 1958
10. Miss A. M. Goichon's *La Philosophie d'Avicenne et son Influence en Europe medievale*, Paris, 1944, may be consulted; in general, however, the author's knowledge of Arabic and philosophy should be taken cautiously.

Chapter 26: Ibn Bajjah

By Muhammad Saghir Hasan al-Ma'sumi

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Sa'igh, known as Ibn Bajjah or Avempace (d. 533/1138), hailed from

the family *al-Tujib* and is, therefore, also known as *al-Tujibi*. Ibn Bajjah was born at Saragossa towards the end of the fifth/eleventh century, and prospered there. We have no knowledge of his early life, nor have we any idea of the teachers under whom he completed his studies. However, this much is clear that he finished his academic career at Saragossa, for when he travelled to Granada he was already an accomplished scholar of Arabic language and literature and claimed to be well versed in twelve sciences.

This is evident from the incident that occurred in the mosque of Granada as recorded by al-Suyuti: "One day Ibn Bajjah entered the mosque (*jami'ah*) of Granada. He saw a grammarian giving lessons on grammar to the students sitting around him. Seeing a stranger so close to them, the young students addressed Ibn Bajjah, rather by way of mockery: 'What does the jurist carry? What science has he excelled in, and what views does he hold?' 'Look here,' replied Ibn Bajjah, 'I am carrying twelve thousand dinar under my armpit.'

He thereupon showed them twelve valuable pearls of exquisite beauty each of the value of one thousand dinar. 'I have,' added Ibn Bajjah, 'gathered experience in twelve sciences, and mostly in the science of 'Arabiyyah which you are discussing. In my opinion you belong to such and such a group.' He then mentioned their lineage. The young students in their utter surprise begged his forgiveness."¹

Historians are unanimous in regarding him as a man of vast knowledge and eminence in various sciences. Fath ibn Khaqan, who has charged Ibn Bajjah of heresy and has bitterly criticized his character in his *Qala'id al-'Iqyan*,² also admits his vast knowledge and finds no fault with his intellectual excellence. On account of his wealth of information in literature, grammar, and ancient philosophy, he has been compared by his contemporaries with *al-Shaikh al-Ra'is* Ibn Sina.³

Due to his growing fame, Abu Bakr Sahrawi, Governor of Saragossa, appointed him as his vizier. But when Saragossa fell into the hands of Alphonso I, King of Aragon, in 512/1118, Ibn Bajjah had already left the city and reached Seville via Valencia, settled there, and adopted the profession of a medical practitioner. Later on, he left for Granada, where occurred the incident referred to above. He then journeyed to north-west Africa.

On his arrival at Shatibah, Ibn Bajjah was imprisoned by Amir Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Yiisuf ibn Tashifin most probably on the charge of heresy, as Fath ibn Khaqan has it. But as Renan opines,⁴ he was set free, probably on the recommendation of his own disciple, father of the famous Spanish philosopher Ibn Rushd.

Later on, when Ibn Bajjah reached Fez, he entered the Court of the Governor, Abu Bakr Yahya ibn Yusuf ibn Tashifin, and rose to the rank of a vizier by dint of his ability and rare scholarship. He held this post for twenty years.

This was the time of great troubles and turmoils in the history of Spain and north-west Africa. The governors of towns and cities proclaimed their independence. Lawlessness and chaos prevailed all over

the country. The rival groups and personalities accused one another of heresy to gain supremacy and to win the favour of the people. The enemies of Ibn Bajjah had already declared him a heretic and tried several times to kill him. But all their efforts proved a failure. Ibn Zuhr, the famous physician of the time, however, succeeded in killing him by poison during Ramadan 533/1138 at Fez, where he was buried by the side of Ibn al'Arabi the younger.

His Predecessors

There is no doubt that philosophy entered Spain after the third/ninth century. Some of the ancient manuscript copies of *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* available in Europe are ascribed to Maslamah ibn Abmad al-Majriti.⁵ Maslamah was a great mathematician in Spain. He flourished during the reign of Hakam II and died in 598/1003. ⁶ Among his disciples, Ibn al-Safa, Zahrawi, Karmani, and Abu Muslim 'Umar ibn Abmad ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami were famous for mathematical sciences.

Karmani and Ibn Khaldun were also known as philosophers. Ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami hailed from Seville and died in 449/1054. ⁷ Karmani, whose full name is Abu al-Hakam 'Amr ibn 'Abd al-Rabman ibn Ahmad ibn 'Ali, hailed from Cordova, journeyed to the Eastern countries and studied medicine and arithmetic at Harran. On his return to Spain he settled at Saragossa. According to the statement of Qadi Sa'id⁸ and Maqqari,⁹ he was the first man who took the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* to Spain. Karmani died at Saragossa in 450/1063.

But philosophy had entered Spain long before the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* were introduced in that region. Muhammad ibn `Abdun al-Jabali¹⁰ travelled to the East in 347/952, studied logic with Abu Sulaim Muhammad ibn Tahir ibn Bahrain al-Sijistani, and returned to Spain in 360/965. Similarly, Ahmad and 'Umar, . the two sons of Yunus al-Barrani, entered Baghdad in 330/935, studied sciences with Thabit ibn Sinan ibn Thabit ibn Qurrah, and after a considerable period returned to Spain in 351/956.¹¹ ¹¹

This is evident that philosophy was imported into the West from the East and that in the fourth/ tenth century Spanish students studied mathematics, *Hadith*, *Tafsir*, and *Fiqh* as well as logic and other philosophical sciences at Baghdad, Basrah, Damascus, and Egypt. But from the end of the fourth/tenth century, when philosophy and logic were condemned in Spain and the advocates of these sciences were persecuted, the common people stopped favouring these sciences as far down as the fifth and sixth/eleventh and twelfth centuries. This was the reason why Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Tufail, and Ibn Ruahd had to face persecution, imprisonment, and condemnation. Very few people in those days dared deal with rational sciences.

Among the predecessors of Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Hazm deserves special attention. Ibn Hazm occupies a very high place in theology and other religious sciences. His *Kitab al-Fasl fi al-Milal w-al-Nihal* is unique in that he has recorded the creeds and doctrines of the Christians, Jews, and others without displaying any prejudice. But in the domain of philosophy he has never been mentioned by any Spanish scholar side by side with the philosophers. Maqqari records:¹² "Ibn Habban and others say, Ibn Hazm was a man of

Hadlth, jurisprudence, and polemics. He wrote many books on logic and philosophy in which he did not escape errors.”

His Contemporaries

For throwing light on the contemporary thinkers of Ibn Bajjah we have no earlier authority than his own disciple Ibn al-Imam, through whom we have received information about his writings. Al-Wazir Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn al-Imam, a devoted disciple of Ibn Bajjah, preserved the latter's writings in an anthology to which he added an introduction of his own. That Ibn Bajjah was very fond of this disciple, a vizier, is apparent from the preamble of his letters addressed to him which are available in the said anthology as preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. [13](#)

In his introduction to the anthology, Ibn al-Imam says: “... the philosophical books were current in Spanish cities in the time of al-Hakam II (350/961–366/976), who had imported the rare works composed in the East and had got them made clear. He (Ibn Bajjah) transcribed the books of the ancients and others and carried on his investigation into these works. The way had not been opened to any investigator before him (Ibn Bajjah). Nor had anything except errors and alterations been recorded concerning these sciences of the ancients.

A number of errors for example, were committed by Ibn Hazm, who was one of the most exalted investigators of his time, while most of them had not ventured even to record their thoughts. Ibn Bajjah was superior to Ibn Hazm in investigation, and more penetrating in making distinctions. The ways of investigation in these sciences were opened only to this scholar (Ibn Bajjah) and to Malik ibn Wuhaib of Seville, both of whom were contemporaries. But except for a short account of the principles of logic nothing was recorded by Malik.

Then he gave up investigating these sciences and speaking about them openly, because of the attempts made on his life due to his discussing philosophical sciences, and due to the fact that he aimed at victory in all his conferences on scientific subjects. He turned to the religious sciences and became one of the leaders in them; but the light of philosophical knowledge did not shine upon his mind, nor did he record in philosophy anything of a private nature which could be found after his death.

As for Abu Bakr (may Allah show him mercy) his superior nature stirred him not to give up investigating into, inferring from, and reading all that had left its real impression on his mind on various occasions in the changing conditions of his time.”

The words of Ibn al-Imam are quite clearly appreciative of the merits of the contemporary Malik, and of predecessors like Ibn Hazm. Ibn al-Imam's praise of his teacher has been shared by a number of historians. Ibn Tufail, the famous author of the well-known philosophical romance, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, and a younger contemporary of Ibn Bajjah, singles out Ibn Bajjah in the introduction to his immortal romance, and describes him as follows: “But none of them possessed a more penetrative mind, a more

accurate view or a more truthful insight than Abu Bakr ibn al-Sa'igh.”

Al-Shaqandi (d. 629/1231), in his famous letter in which he enumerates the achievements of the Spanish Muslims as against the Africans, challenges the latter by saying: “Have you anybody among yourselves like Ibn Bajjah in music and philosophy?”¹⁴ Maqqari records the following statement: “As for the works on music, the book of Ibn Bajjah of Granada is sufficient by itself. He occupies in the West the place of Abu Nasr al-Farabi in the East “¹⁵

Another contemporary of Ibn Bajjah was al-Amir al-Muqtadir ibn Hud, who reigned over Saragossa (438/1046–474/1081). He has been mentioned by al-Shaqandi, who addresses the Africans in these words: “Have you any king expert in mathematics and philosophy like al-Muqtadir ibn Hud, the ruler of Saragossa?”¹⁶ His son al-Mu'tamin (d. 474/1085) was a patron of rational sciences.”¹⁷

Works

We give below a list of Ibn Bajjah's works:

1. The Bodleian MS., Arabic Pococke, No. 206, contains 222 folios.¹⁸ It was written in Rabi' II 547/1152 at Qus. This MS. lacks the treatise on medicine, and *Risalat al-Wada'*.
2. The Berlin MS. No. 5060 (vide Ahlwardt : Catalogue), lost during World War II.
3. The Escorial MS. No. 612. It contains only those treatises which Ibn Bajjah wrote as commentaries on the treatises of al-Farabi on logic. It was written at Seville in 667/1307.
4. The Khediviah MS. *Akhlaq* No. 290. It has been published by Dr. Omar Farrukh in his *Ibn Bajjah w-al-Falsafah al-Maghribiyyah*. On comparison it has been established that this is an abridgment of *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid*—abridgment in the sense that it omits the greater part of the text but retains the very words of the original writer.
5. Brockelmann states that the Berlin Library possesses a unique ode of Ibn Bajjah entitled *Tardiyyah*.
- 6 Works edited by Asin Palacios with their Spanish translation and necessary notes. (i) *Kitab al-Nabat, al-Andalus*, Vol. V, 1940; (ii) *Risalah Ittisal al-'Aql bi al-Insan, al-Andalus*, Vol. VII, 1942; (iii) *Risalah al-Wada', al-Andalus*, Vol. VIII, 1943; (iv) *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid* entitled *El Regimen Del Solitario*, 1946.
- 7 Works edited by Dr. M. Saghir Hasan al-Ma'sumi: (i) *Kitab al-Nafs* with notes and introduction in Arabic, *Majallah al-Majma' al-'Ilm al-'Arabi*, Damascus; 1958; (ii) *Risalah al-Ghayah al-Insaniyyah* entitled *Ibn Bajjah on Human End*, with English translation, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 1957.

Philosophy

Ibn Bajjah was skilled both in the theory and practice of the mathematical sciences, particularly astronomy and music, adept in medicine, and devoted to speculative studies like logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. In de Boer's opinion, he conforms entirely to al-Farabi in his logical writings and generally agrees with him even in his physical and metaphysical doctrines.¹⁹ Let us examine how far this statement is correct in the light of the writings of Ibn Bajjah that have come down to us.

Ibn Bajjah has undoubtedly relied in philosophy and logic on the works of al-Farabi, but it is obvious that he has made considerable additions to them. Again, he has adopted an entirely different method of philosophical investigation. Unlike al-Farabi, he deals with the problems on the basis of reason alone.

He admires the philosophy of Aristotle on which he has founded his own system. But, he says, for understanding the speculative method of Aristotle it is of utmost importance to understand, first of all, his philosophy correctly. That is why Ibn Bajjah wrote his commentaries on the works of Aristotle. These commentaries bear clear evidence that he studied the texts of Aristotle very carefully. As in Aristotle's philosophy, Ibn Bajjah has based his metaphysics and psychology on physics, and that is why his writings abound in discourses on physics.

Matter And Form

De Boer writes: "Ibn Bajjah starts with the assumption that matter cannot exist without some form, while form may exist by itself, without matter." But this is erroneous. According to Ibn Bajjah, matter can exist without form. He argues that if matter is not formless then it will be divided into "matter" and "form," and this will go on *ad infinitum*.²⁰ Ibn Bajjah claims that the "First Form" is an abstract form which exists in matter that is said to have no form.

Aristotle defines matter as what receives form and is in a way universal. His matter in this sense differs from the matter of Plato who, though agreeing with the above definition, maintains that form in itself is real and needs nothing to bring it into existence. The aim of Aristotle is not only to state that matter and form are dependent upon each other but also to distinguish the particular form of a species from that of another species. The form of a plant is different, for example, from the form of an animal, and the form of an inanimate object differs from the form of a plant, and so on.

In the writings of Ibn Bajjah the word *form* has been used to convey several different meanings: soul, figure, power, meaning, concept. In his opinion the form of a body has three stages: (1) the general spirit or the intellectual form, (2) the particular spiritual form, and (3) the physical form.

He has divided the spiritual form into the following types: –

1. The forms of circular bodies have only this much connection with matter that they make the material intelligibles perfect.
2. The material intelligibles which exist in matter.
3. Those forms which exist in the faculties of the soul – common sense, imaginative faculty, memory, etc., and are the *via media* between spiritual forms and material intelligibles.

Those forms which are related to the active intellect are called by Ibn Bajjah general spiritual forms, and those which are related to the common sense are called particular spiritual forms. This distinction has been maintained because the general spiritual forms have only one relation and that with the recipient, whereas the particular spiritual forms have two relations – one particular with the sensible, and the other general with the percipient.

A man, for example, recalls the form of the Taj Mahal; this form is not different from the form of the actual Taj Mahal when it is before the eyes – this form has, besides the aforementioned particular relation, a relation with the general body of percipients, since there are many individuals who enjoy the sight of the Taj Mahal.

Psychology

Ibn Bajjah, like Aristotle, bases his psychology on physics. He begins his discussion of the soul with its definition by stating that bodies, natural or artificial, are composed of matter and form, their form being the permanent acquisition or the entelechy of the body. Entelechy is of various kinds: it belongs either to those existents that perform their function without being essentially moved, or to those that move or act while they are being acted upon.

A body of this latter type is composed of both mover and moved, whereas the artificial body has its mover outside. Now, the form that supplies the entelechy of a natural body is called the soul. The soul is, therefore, defined as the first entelechy in a natural, organized body which is either nutritive, sensitive, or imaginative.

The ancient philosophers who preceded Aristotle had confined their study to the human soul alone and regarded the study of the animal soul as a part of natural science. *Soul* is an equivocal term, because it is not homogeneous in nature. If it were so, its functions would have likewise been homogeneous. It actually functions heterogeneously: nutritively, sensitively, imaginatively, or rationally.

Since every transitory being has to perform a particular function in virtue of which it stands as a part of the universe, the nutritive faculty has two ends, namely, growth and reproduction. This faculty does not only provide substances which are needed for the upkeep of the body, but also a surplus which is employed for the growth and development of the body. But when the growth is completed, the surplus is used for reproduction in those bodies that are reproductive.

The faculty of reproduction is to be distinguished from the nutritive faculty which acts on food and makes it a part of the body. This faculty is the “Actual Intellect” which changes a potential species into the body of an actual species. Those bodies that are not reproductive depend for the preservation of their species upon spontaneous generation. The reproductive faculty is the end of the faculty of growth and perishes only in old age when the nutritive faculty is left alone.

Sense–perception is either actual or potential. What is potential can become actual only when it is changed by something else. It, therefore, requires a mover to change it. This mover is the sensible, the moved being the sense–organ.

The sensibles or the natural accidents are of two kinds: either they are particular to the natural bodies or common to the natural and the artificial bodies; and they are, again, either mover or moved. They are always moved towards the species, since a mover causes motion in them only in so far as they are particular species, and not because they possess matter.

Every sentient body is composite and is the result of a mixture of different elements. This mixture is produced by innate heat and gives rise, for example, to condensation and rarefaction, as of odours, flavours, and colours. But besides these material states, there arise certain other states such as reproduction and spontaneous generation which are caused by the intellect or some other mover.

As soon as the process of mixture begins, the form begins to be received. Motion and reception of form take place simultaneously; and when the soul attains perfection, the reception of form is completed, matter and form, thus, becoming a single whole. When form is separated from matter, it exists actually as abstracted from matter, but is not the same as it is when it is in matter – and this is possible only if it now exists as an idea in the mind.

Sensation is, therefore, transitory. But how can a separate form be transitory, since transitoriness is only due to matter? The answer is this. The term “matter” is used for “psychical faculty” and “corporeal faculty” equivocally, and it means only the receptivity of form through which a body that has the faculty of sensitivity becomes sentient. The faculty of sense–perception is, therefore, a capacity in the sense–organ that becomes a form of the thing perceived.

But a further question arises: If perception is a form in matter, how can matter actually exist when it is not so informed? The answer is given as follows: “That ‘apprehensions’ are in a substratum and are identical with it, is clear, or else ‘an apprehension’ would not be a particular. But it does not follow from this that form cannot exist apart from–matter since the matter of ‘apprehension’ is the receptivity of the forms of the apprehensibles only, and is called matter *per prius*, while the matter of the ‘apprehensible’ is called *per posterius*.”

Psychical perception is of two kinds: sensation and imagination. As said before, sensation is by nature prior to imagination, for which it supplies the matter. In short, sensation is a capacity of the body which is acted upon by the sensible. Since movements are many, sensations are also many; and because the

sensibles are either general or particular, sensations are also general or particular.

The five senses -- sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch are five faculties of a single sense, viz., the common sense. Common sense plays the role of matter through which the forms of things become perceptible. It is through common sense that a man judges and distinguishes different states of the perceptible and realizes that every particle of an apple, for example, possesses taste, smell, colour, warmth, or cold. For this faculty preserves the impressions of the sensibles which enable the senses to apprehend the sensibles. The common sense is the entelechy of the whole body and is, therefore, called the soul. This faculty also supplies matter for the faculty of imagination.

Defined as the first entelechy of the organized imaginative body, the imaginative faculty is preceded by sensation which supplies material to it.. Sensation and imagination have, therefore, been described as two kinds of the perception of the soul. But the difference between the two is obvious inasmuch as sensation is particular and imagination general. The imaginative faculty culminates .in the reasoning faculty through which one man expresses himself to another, and achieves as well as imparts knowledge.

The appetitive soul consists of three faculties: (1) The imaginative appetence through which progeny are reared, individuals are moved to their dwellings, and have affection, love, and the like. (2) The intermediate appetence through which there is desire for food, housing, arts and crafts. (3) The appetence that makes speech and, through that, teaching possible and, unlike the other two, is peculiar to man.

The appetitive soul is applied to these three faculties *per prius et per posterius*. Every animal possesses the intermediate appetence by which it inclines to nutrition. Some animals do not possess the imaginative yearning. The yearning of intermediate appetence precedes by nature the imaginative appetences. The one thing that is clear is that every man has two faculties – the appetitive and the rational – and these precede others by nature.

The appetitive soul desires a perpetual object or an object in so far as it is perpetual. This desire is called pleasure, and the absence of desire is dullness, pain, and the like. Action is caused by desire, and perpetuity is caused by the faculties. Desire is not distinctive of man. Anyone who does an action induced by desire is regarded to have done an action based on animality. It is obvious that when a man acts in this manner, he does it not because he is possessed of ideas. He attains perpetuity only to the extent to which he is possessed of them.

Though devoid of eternity, the appetitive soul has a strong desire for eternity. It loves only the intermediate imaginary form and the imaginary form. These are the only two forms which are perpetually loved by the appetitive soul. But since forms are many, the appetitive soul hesitates to make an attempt to realize them.

Again, the appetitive soul seeks the service of nature, and suffers from pain and laziness when nature

does not co-operate with it. As nature is not simple, it is not always in one and the same state. It is due to nature that an animal needs rest, and it is due to the appetitive soul that it feels dissatisfied with it when prolonged.

But these two forms (i. e., the intermediate imaginary form and the imaginary form) are transitory, not eternal. Hence the appetitive soul does not achieve eternity but that which represents it, and what represents it is not difficult to estimate, for individuals as individuals think that they achieve eternity through perfection and perfection through the attainment of power and freedom.

Hence arises the power and freedom of those despots who hold sway over large areas of the world. Their unlimited power, abundant wealth, and unbridled activities, however, bring them no benefit, for most of them die of hunger and in utter regret for losing what they possessed. They are overtaken by fatigue and distress in dealing with the appetitive soul. In their hearts there survives the memory of their past and they feel regret and remorse.

When this occurs to the class of despots, what will be the fate of those who are lower in rank? This is as it should be, because the anxiety of their appetitive soul is to collect what is not to be collected and achieve what is not to be achieved. The animals which have no reason do not suffer from this kind of remorse, for their appetitive soul has no ambition and they have no memory of their past whims. They suffer only from natural calamities such as old age, which is the lot of every natural organism.

The imaginative faculty in man is the faculty through which he receives impressions of the sensibles and presents them before himself in imagination after their disappearance. This function of the imaginative faculty takes place both in our waking life and in sleep. This faculty also composes forms of the objects of imagination never sensed before. Sometimes it imagines and composes something which is not an individual but something applicable to a whole class.

At the final stage of imagination appears the intellect, and the rational faculty starts functioning; and we find in ourselves something which distinguishes us from other animals that obtain nutrition and possess sense-organs. Man finds in himself, for example, some objects of knowledge (concepts) containing the distinction between good and evil, useful and harmful. He also finds in himself things which he considers to be definitely true, things which are merely conjectural, and things which are false. These known objects in the soul are called *logos*.

Logos is in the first instance related to the potential rational faculty, the function of which is to receive the objects of knowledge. This is so because in the earlier stages man is devoid of them and receives them only at a later stage. The term “*logos*” is applicable to the objects of knowledge after they become potentially receptive, and also when they actually exist and are expressed through words.

These objects of knowledge (concepts) which exist in potentiality and become actual in rationality, when considered in relation to the objects which they signify, constitute their knowledge since they are known through and recognized by them. When they are considered in so far as they are perceived by the

imaginative faculty and are applied to the contents derived from them, they are called intelligibles;—but when they are considered in so far as they are perceived by the rational faculty which completes them and brings them from potentiality into actuality, they are called mind or the intellect.

There are various grades of knowledge, the first of which is the knowledge of a particularly specified object. This primarily comes into being by achieving the apprehension of the particular in the imaginative faculty in a general way only, i.e., it cannot be imagined specifically. Nor can any quality of the same be described. But it is distinguished in a general way without attending to any one of its qualities. This is the weakest knowledge of an object and resembles the imagination of an animal.

Again, when the state of the particular is possible in the imaginative faculty, man advances to this particular with its detailed characteristics, which help him to recognize it to be the same at different times. He distinguishes Zaid, for example, as tall, fair, delicate, and considers all these descriptions in his imagination as though they were related numerically to one individual.

Some people, however, think that sometimes words lead to absurdity for they introduce multiplicity where there is only unity: for example, the particular which is described by the words “tall,” “fair,” and so on, is not more than one. However, this is the way in which man achieves the knowledge of individuals in so far as they are definite and particular. Since the qualities through which the particular individuals are known as described above are accidents attached to different individuals, there is no resemblance between any two individuals. Tallness in Zaid, for example, is not exactly the same as tallness in Bakr.

When the objects of imagination are obtained in the imaginative faculty, the rational faculty looks at them through its insight, and realizes the universal meanings. Through these universal meanings the rational faculty imagines and distinguishes the nature of every imagined object. And when the words indicating the universal meanings are mentioned, the rational faculty distinguishes them, presents them before the mind, and apprehends them. All this occurs in more ways than one.

1. The rational faculty presents universal meanings before the mind, and apprehends them as true of the imagined individuals signified by them. Through insight the rational faculty sees the universal meanings in the individuals. In this sense this faculty distinguishes universal meanings from one another in the manner described above.

2. According to another method, the rational faculty distinguishes these universal meanings perfectly, but when it sees them through its insight and presents them to the soul well arranged, it sees them through its insight in the imaginative faculty which also acts upon them, and makes them resemble the universal meaning and imparts to them forms which are common to more than one, but not to all individuals to which the meaning is applicable.

The sculptor represents the form of a horse in stone, or a painter draws the form of a horse on the surface of a board, but this representation is imperfect, for it represents and reproduces the form of a horse that *obtains nutrition*, and *neighs*. But all that is represented thus is not common to all horses. The

imaginative faculty represents things which are limited in respect of age, size, etc. The image of a horse is not common to the full-grown horse, the young horse, and the colt. Its image is common only to the horses of that particular size or age which the imaginative faculty represents.

As soon as the rational faculty makes distinctions of universal meanings, and presents them to the mind to look more closely into them through its insight, the latter looks into them through the image which the imaginative faculty represents. The rational faculty distinguishes whether the image is perfect or not perfect, common or not common. Without any difficulty it thinks of the intelligible meanings.

In this way the universal meanings are apprehended by artists and most scientists. When the artisan, for example, thinks how to make an article, he presents the image of the particular article to his imaginative faculty, and prepares his plan to make it. Similarly, when a scientist looks into the objects of knowledge to know their nature and give their description, he presents their images to his imaginative faculty.

These are two methods by which the imaginative faculty serves the rational faculty by presenting to the latter the phantoms of an object, either the phantoms of the individual object itself or those of its image, which represents the universal meaning, as mentioned above. The rational faculty imparts universal descriptions to the objects of imagination. Whoever exerts the rational faculty to act on the objects obtained in the imaginative faculty sees the confirmation of what has been mentioned and sees through his rational faculty the divine gift flowing over the faculty. This is just like a person who sees by the faculty of seeing the light of the sun through the light of the sun.

The immediate cause of the apprehension of intelligibles and the activity of the rational faculty in actuality is a gift which is like the light of the sun through which one realizes and sees the creation of God so clearly that one becomes a believer in Him, His angels, books, messengers, and the next world, enjoys certain belief, and remembers God while standing, sitting, and lying. Every thought is obtained through this gift which is no other than man's connection with the active intellect.

Thus, it may be concluded that Ibn Bajjah starts describing "Aristotelian Psychology" and in the end arrives at the position of Ibn Sina and also of al-Ghazali, whose name he mentions with respect and reverence.

Intellect And Knowledge

According to Ibn Bajjah, the intellect is the most important part of man. In his opinion correct knowledge is obtained through the intellect which alone enables us to attain prosperity and to build character. Something has already been said about the source of the intellect and its working. The following extracts will, however, throw some further light on the matter:

"It is necessary for man to see through his own insight the contents of the imaginative faculty, just as he sees the individual objects with his eyes and distinguishes them fully. He is sure to find that those

individual objects are repeatedly impressed upon the imaginative faculty. Many imaginable objects have one or more than one individual in the imaginative faculty. They also possess the accidents attached to these individuals, viz., measure, colour, knowledge, health, sickness, motion, time, space, and other categories.

Having realized all this, a man sees through his insight that the rational faculty looks into the objects of imagination and apprehends their common characteristic, i. e., the differentia which distinguishes them from the objects of sense, differentia by virtue of which they are considered to be individuals and distinguished as intelligible objects. One should also realize that these differentiae are discerned by the rational faculty through the divine gift which flows over them in the same way as the objects of sight become manifest to the perceiving mind through the light of the sun that falls on them, without which light they would remain completely invisible.

Through the same gift the whole is distinguished from its parts and is judged to be greater than the parts. Again, numbers considered to be numerals are declared by this gift as different and many when investigation into God's creation – the creatures of heaven and earth, night and day, messengers, revelation, dreams, and what the soothsayer's tongue utters – is repeated so much that man comprehends them through the imaginative faculty, and the rational faculty sees through its insight in a pure, simple, and peculiar way the existence of objects which are neither conceived by thought nor perceived by the senses. Its outlook becomes widened, and it desires to know the causes of those creatures which become intelligible.

The rational faculty does not know the objects of knowledge adequately unless it knows them through four causes – form, matter, agent, and purpose. It is necessary to know all these causes in respect of the objects which inevitably possess them.

Man is by nature inclined to investigate and know all these causes. His inquiry covers in the first instance the four causes of the objects of sense–perception. This is quite evident with respect to the objects of art as well as those of nature. He is all the more interested in knowing the causes of the intelligible objects, for this investigation is considered to be sublime, high, and useful. Finally, it is through investigation of causes that man reaches the belief in God, His angels, books, messengers, and the life hereafter.”

“Look,” says Ibn Bajjah, “into the wonders that lie between the intellect and the faculty of imagination through your penetrative soul. You can see with certainty that the intellect derives from the imaginative faculty the objects of knowledge called the intelligibles, and offers to the imaginative faculty a number of other objects of knowledge.

Take, for example, the moral and artistic ideals, or those objects of knowledge which are either the events that might take place and are available in the imaginative faculty before their occurrence, or the events that have not occurred but have found their way into the imaginative faculty not through the

sense-organs but rather through the intellect as in the case of true dreams.

The most astonishing thing concerning the imaginative faculty is that which relates to revelation and soothsaying. It is clear in these cases that what the intellect offers to the human imagination does not proceed from the intellect itself, nor is acted upon by the intellect, but arises in imagination through an agent who has known it beforehand, and is able to create it.

It is God who causes by His will the mover of the active spheres to act upon the passive spheres as He likes. When, for example, He intends to make manifest what will occur in the universe, He first of all sends the knowledge to angels and through them to the human intellect. This knowledge comes to man in accordance with his capacity for receiving it. This is evident in most cases of God's virtuous servants whom He has shown the right path and who are sincere to Him, particularly the apostles to whom He makes manifest through His angels in waking life or dream the wonderful events that are going to happen in the universe.

“God, the Almighty, makes manifest to His existing beings and creatures both knowledge and deed. Every being receives these from Him according to its rank in the perfection of existence: the intellects receive from Him knowledge according to their positions, and spheres receive from Him figures and physical forms according to their ranks and positions. Every celestial body possesses intellect and a soul through which it performs particular actions which are perceived by way of imagination such as the imagination of transference from an imaginary place which continues to exist.

Due to this individually perceptible particular transference there arise particular actions which are perceived by the bodies that come into being and pass away. This is most manifest in the sun and the moon from among the celestial bodies. It is through this intellect that a man knows sciences which are revealed to him from God, things that are intelligible, the particular events which are to take place in the present and the future, as well as the events that happened in the past. This is the knowledge of the unseen of which God informs His chosen servants through His angels.”

Ibn Bajjah further elucidates the nature of human knowledge and the stages thereof when he says: “Knowledge in man means his seeing the existents together with their perfect existence in his intellect through the insight of his soul which is a gift of God. This gift of God is of different grades in different men, the greatest insight being that of prophets who perfectly know Him and His creatures, and enjoy that sublime knowledge in their own souls through their excellent insights without learning and without making any effort to learn.

The highest knowledge is that of God Himself and His angels down to the knowledge of what particular events have taken place and will take place in this universe – knowledge gained through the insight of their hearts, without the use of the eyes.

In a lower rank than that of the prophets are the friends of God who possess excellent nature through which they derive from the prophets that which enables them to attain to the knowledge of God and the

knowledge of His angels, books, apostles, the Last Day, and the highest blessing, which they continue to attest by the insight they enjoy in accordance with the different degrees of the divine gift they receive. These sincere men also receive a little bit of the knowledge of the unseen in their dreams. The friends of God include the Companions of the Prophet.

After them come a number of men whom God has favoured with insight through which they realize with certainty the reality of everything till stage by stage they attain to sure knowledge of God, His angels, books, apostles, and the Last Day. They realize through their insight that they have become pure and have achieved perfection or the highest blessing, which is continuity without destruction, honour without disgrace, and richness without fear of poverty. These people who include Aristotle are very few in number.”

Ibn Bajjah believes in the plurality of intellects and refers to the first intellect and the secondary intellects. In his opinion, the human intellect is the intellect remotest from the first intellect. He further explains the grades of the intellect by saying that some intellects have been directly derived from the first intellect, and some others are derived from other intellects, the relation of what has been derived to that from which derivation has been made being the same as the relation of the light of the sun which is inside the house to that of the sun which is in the courtyard of the house.

Knowledge of the nature of existents which the intellect possesses is of two kinds: (1) that which is intelligible but cannot be invented, and (2) that which is intelligible and can be invented. The intellect itself is also of two kinds: (i) theoretical intellect through which man understands things which he cannot bring into being, and (ii) practical intellect through which he conceives artificial beings which he can invent.

Perfection of the practical intellect lies in man's understanding artificial objects and bringing them into being in accordance with his own intention. These are invented only through the organs of the human body, either by the movement of the organs without any implement from outside, or by moving the organs which in their turn move some external instruments. This happens when the artificial objects are accomplished by the human volition.

Human organs are moved *per se*, but when an artificial object is made, they are moved by the human volition at first in the mind, and then the object is produced outside the mind in accordance with the image formed in the mind before the organs bring it into being. This image is a phantom in the imaginative faculty of the soul and is general. This image disappears from the soul which obtains another image, and the process continues.

Whenever man intends to make a certain object, he forms an image in the imaginative faculty. Then he can see by his insight that another faculty of the soul abstracts this image in the imaginative faculty and transfers it from one state to another until its existence is accomplished in the soul, and then he sets the organs into motion to bring the object into being. This faculty which understands and abstracts in

imagination is called the practical intellect. When in the imaginative faculty the practical intellect primarily abstracts the image of the artificial object according to a particular form and size, the moving faculty moves the organs to invent the object.

The intellect is, therefore, the first maker of the object, and not the organs which are moved by the soul, nor indeed the faculty which moves the organs. It is clear that the power of organs is not primarily found in nature but is caused to come into being by the faculty of the intellect which causes it to appear in imagination, and only then the organs cause the objects to be made through volition.

The imaginative faculty seeks the help of sense-perception at the time of inventing the object to present it to the faculty which has moved the organs, and to enable the intellect to compare and see whether the imagined object belongs to sense-perception in the same way as it belongs to the imaginative faculty.

The intellect has two functions to perform; (1) to present to the faculty of imagination the image of the object to be created, and (2) to have the object made outside the soul by moving the organs of the individual's body.

According to Ibn Bajjah, the human intellect by degrees achieves nearness to the first intellect in two ways: (1) by achieving knowledge based on proof, in which case the highest intellect is realized as form; and (2) by achieving knowledge without learning or making an effort to acquire it. This second method is that of the Sufis, notably of al-Ghazali; it enables one to gain the knowledge of God.

From this it is clear that though Ibn Bajjah has emphasized the speculative method, he does not condemn the mystic method, as some Europeans would have us believe.[21](#)

God, The Fountain-Head Of Knowledge

With regard to the divine gift through which the rational faculty discerns the differentiae, one man excels another, and that in accordance with the capacity that God has given him. But these two gifts are innate, not acquired. The capacities and gifts which are acquired are next to the innate ones and they are acquired by doing, under the guidance of the prophets, what pleases God. Man, therefore, should respond to the Holy Prophet's call and do what he urges him to do.

He can, thus, see through the insight of his heart the nature of every creature, its origin, and its final destination. He can know in the same way that God is a necessary being *per se*, is alone, has no associates, and is the creator of everything; that everything besides Him is contingent and has emanated from His perfect essence: that His self-knowledge implies His knowledge of all objects; and that His knowledge of objects is the cause of their coming into being.

To reduce the number of stages to achieve nearness to God, Ibn Bajjah advises us to do three things : (1) charge our tongues to rememebtr God and glorify Him, (2) charge our organs to act in accordance with the insight of the heart, and (3) avoid what makes us indifferent to the remembrance of God or turns

our hearts away from Him. These have to be followed continuously for the whole of one's life.

Political Philosophy

Ibn Bajjah wrote a number of small treatises on the administration of the House-State and the administration of the City-State, but the only available book on the subject is *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid* (Regime of the Solitary). As is clear from this book, Ibn Bajjah agrees to a great extent with the political theory of al-Farabi. He has, for example, accepted al-Farabi's division of the State into perfect and imperfect. He also agrees with al-Farabi in holding that different individuals of a nation possess different dispositions—some of them like to rule, and some others like to be ruled.²²

But Ibn Bajjah adds to the system of al-Farabi when he exhorts that the solitary man (*mutawahhid* or the penetrative philosopher) should keep aloof from the people in certain circumstances. Even though avoidance of people is in itself undesirable, it is necessary in the endeavour to achieve perfection. He also advises him that he should meet the community only on a few inevitable occasions for a short time, and that he should migrate to those countries where he finds knowledge, migration being perfectly permissible under the laws of the science of politics.²³

In his *Risalat al-Wada`* Ibn Bajjah has given two alternative functions of the State: (1) to estimate the deeds of the subjects in order to guide them to reach their intended goals and not any other ends. This function can be best performed in the ideal State by a sovereign ruler. (2) The alternative function is to devise means for the achievement of particular ends just as a rider as a preliminary exercise acquires control over the bridle in order to become an expert in riding. This is the function of the administrators of those States which are not ideal. In this case the ruler is called the chief (*ra'is*). The chief enforces in the State a traditional system for the subjects' execution of all actions.

In the system of al-Farabi, as well as in that of Ibn Bajjah, the constitution is to be framed by the Head of the State, who has been equated by al-Farabi with a prophet or Imam. Ibn Bajjah does not mention this identity in so many words but he indirectly agrees with al-Farabi when he declares that “human perfection cannot be attained but through that which the apostles bring from God the Exalted (i, e., the divine Law or *Shari`ah*). Those who follow God's guidance cannot be led astray.”²⁴ It is, therefore, too sweeping a statement to say, “He (Ibn Bajjah) ignores the political relevance of the divine Law (*Shari`ah*) and its educative value for man as a citizen.”²⁵

Ethics

Ibn Bajjah divides actions into animal and human. The former are due to natural needs and are human as well as animal. Eating, for example, is animal in so far as it is done to fulfil need and desire, and human in so far as it is done to preserve strength and life in order to achieve spiritual blessings.

Ibn Bajjah draws our attention to the active human faculties, as man is too dignified to be qualified with

the passive faculties which are either material or animal. The human faculty of learning is a passive faculty, but it is so in a different sense. The active faculty intends to attain perfection only, and then it stops, as in the art through which a trade is accomplished. But the repetition of the art is exercised only through the appetitive soul and opinion.

What is done due to the appetitive soul is the action which is done by the agent for its own sake. And, what is done by opinion is the action which is done to gain some other end. The appetitive soul desires a perpetual object, the desire being called pleasure, and its absence dullness and pain. Anybody who performs an action in this way is regarded as having done an animal action.

Those who act through opinion act only in so far as they are men. Opinion either moves one to that which is essentially perpetual, or to that which is perpetual because it is abundant. If the action is perpetual due to abundance, then the end will take the place of the preliminary action. This end-seeking is either due to propensity only, in which case it is an animal action, or due to opinion which has an intended goal in the achievement of which lies its completion.

The end varies in accordance with the nature of the individuals; some people, for example, are born for shoe-making and others for other vocations. Ends serve one another mutually, and all of them lead to one and the same ultimate goal—the chief end. The chief man is naturally he who prepares himself to aim at the chief end, and those who are not prepared for it are subservient by nature. Some people are, therefore, naturally submissive and are ruled by others, and some possess authority by nature and rule others.

Opinion is sometimes right essentially. It is so when it desires the eternal. Sometimes it is right accidentally and not in its essence. The opinions of the shrewd and crafty, for example, are right in respect of the objects they have set up before them; but they are not right-in-themselves. These opinions are relatively right but not universally so.

Colocynth is useful for a man of phlegmatic disposition, but not for all. On the other hand, bread and meat are useful both naturally and universally. The opinion which is right relatively as much as generally is right absolutely. But sometimes what is relatively right is not so in general, and is, therefore, right in one respect and wrong in another.

To declare an action animal or human it is necessary to have speculation in addition to volition. Keeping in view the nature of volition as well as speculation Ibn Bajjah divides the virtues into two types, the formal virtues and the speculative virtues. A formal virtue is innate without any trace of volition and speculation, such as the honesty of a dog, since it is impossible for a dog to be dishonest. This virtue has no value in man. The speculative virtue is based on free volition and speculation.

The action which is done for the sake of righteousness and not for fulfilling any natural desire is called divine and not human, since this is rare in man. Good, according to Ibn Bajjah, is existence, and evil is absence of existence. In other words, evil for him is really no evil.

Mysticism

Renan is right in his view that Ibn Bajjah has a leaning towards mysticism, but is certainly wrong in thinking that he attacks al-Ghazali for his insistence on intuition and Sufism. As a matter of fact, Ibn Bajjah admires al-Ghazali and declares that the latter's method enables one to achieve the knowledge of God, and that it is based on the teachings of the Holy Prophet.

The mystic receives a light in his heart. This light in the heart is a speculation through which the heart sees the intelligibles in the same way as a man sees the sunlit objects through eyesight; and through this apprehension of the intelligibles it sees all that which by implication precedes them or succeeds them.

Ibn Bajjah holds the friends of God (*awliya' Allah*) in high esteem and places them next only to the prophets. According to him, some people are dominated by corporeality only – they are the lowest in rank – and some are greatly dominated by a fine spirituality – this group is very rare, and to this group belong Uwais al-Qarani and Ibrahim ibn Adham.[26](#)

In his attitude towards God and His decree Ibn Bajjah comes close to declaring himself a fatalist. In one of the treatises he declares that if we were to refer to the decree of God and His power we would verily attain peace and comfort. All existing things are in His knowledge and He alone bestows good upon them. Since He knows everything essentially, He issues orders to an intermediary to invent a form like the one which is in His knowledge and to the recipient of forms to receive that form. This is the case concerning all existents, even concerning transitory matter and the human intellect.

In support of his view that God is the Ultimate Creator of all actions Ibn Bajjah refers to al-Ghazali's view, expressed at the end of his *Mishkat al-Anwar*, that the First Principle created agents as well as the objects of action to be acted upon; and he gets further support for this view from al-Farabi's observation, in *Uyun al-Masa'il*, that all are related to the First Principle in so far as the First is their creator.

Ibn Bajjah also states that Aristotle said in his *Physics* that the First Agent is the real agent and the near agent does not act but through the First. The First makes the near act and the object to be acted upon. The near is known to the majority of people as agent only in affairs that concern matter. The just king, for example, deserves the ascription of justice, although he is distant in rank from him who is below him in the series of agents.

Whoever ascribes an action to a near agent is like the dog that bites the stone by which it is struck. But such ascription of action to the near agent is not possible in affairs which do not concern physical matters. The active intellect which surrounds the heavenly bodies is the near agent of all transitory particulars. But He who created both the active intellect and the heavenly bodies is the real eternal agent.

God causes the existence of a thing to continue without end after its physical non-existence. When an existent reaches its perfection, it ceases to remain in time (*zaman*) but exists eternally in the continuous flux of duration (*dahr*). Ibn Bajjah here reminds one of the Holy Prophet's saying: "Do not abuse *dahr* as *dahr* is Allah." So interpreted, the saying implies that the human intellect enjoys eternal continuity. In support of this interpretation of the word *dahr* Ibn Bajjah mentions his predecessors like al-Farabi and al-Ghazali.

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Chapter 27: Ibn Tufail

By Bakhtyar Husain Siddiqi

Life And Works

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tufail (Latin, Abubacer), the first great leader of philosophical thought in the Muwahbid Spain, was born in the first decade of sixth/twelfth century, at Guadix, in the province of Granada. He belonged to the prominent Arab tribe of Qais. Al-Marrakushi traces his education to Ibn Bajjah, which in view of Ibn Tufail's denial of acquaintance with him, is incorrect.[1](#)

He started his career as a practising physician in Granada and through his fame in the profession became secretary to the governor of the province. Later, in 549/1154, he became Private Secretary to the Governor of Ceuta and Tangier, a son of 'Abd al-Mu'min, the first Muwahhid ruler of Spain who captured Morocco in 542/1147.

Finally, he rose to the eminent position of the physician and Qadi of the Court and vizier[2](#) to the Muwahhid Caliph Abu Ya'qub Yusuf (r. 558/1163–580/1184), whose personal interest in philosophy and liberal patronage turned his Court into a galaxy of leaders of philosophical thought and scientific method and made Spain, what R. Briffault calls, “the cradle of the rebirth of Europe.”[3](#)

Ibn Tufail enjoyed enormous influence with Caliph Abu Ya'qub Yusuf, and it was he who introduced Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) to him. On the express desire of the Caliph, he advised Ibn Bajjah to annotate the works of Aristotle, a task that had been taken up zealously by Ibn Bajjah but had remained unfinished to the time of his death.[4](#)

Ibn Tufail resigned his position as Court physician in 578/1182 due to old age and recommended Ibn Rushd to his patron as his successor. He, however, continued to retain Abu Ya'qub's esteem and after his death (in 580/1184) gained the favour of his son Abu Yusuf al-Mansur (580/1184–595/1199). He died at Morocco in 581/1185–86. Al-Mansur himself attended his obsequies.

Ibn Tufail was an illustrious physician, philosopher, mathematician, and poet of the Muwahhid Spain, but unfortunately very little is known about his works. Ibn Khatib attributes two treatises on medicine to him. Al-Bitruji (his pupil) and Ibn Rushd credit him with “original astronomical ideas.” Al-Bitruji offers a refutation of Ptolemy's theory of epicycles and eccentric circles which in the preface to his *Kitab al-Hai'ah* he acknowledges to be a contribution of his teacher Ibn Tufail.[5](#)

Quoting Ibn Rushd, Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah attributes *Fi al-Buqa' al-Maskunah w-al-Ghair al-Maskunah* to Ibn Tufail, but in Ibn Rushd's own account no such reference is traceable.⁶ Al-Marrakushi, the historian, claims to have seen the original manuscript of one of his treatises on the science of divinity.⁷ Miguel Casiri (1122/1710–1205/1790) names two extant works: *Risalah Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* and *Asrar al-Hikmah al-Mashriqiyyah*, the latter in manuscript form.⁸ The preface to the *Asrar* discloses that the treatise is only a part of the *Risalah Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, the full title of which is *Risalah Hayy Bin Yaqzan fi Asrar al-Hikmat al-Mashriqiyyah*.⁹

Creed Of The Muwahhids

The foundation of the Muwahhid dynasty is associated with the name of Ibn Tumart (d. c. 524/1130), a politico-religious leader who claimed to be the Mahdi. He introduced in the West orthodox scholasticism of al-Ghazali and exhorted people to observe the Zahirite *Fiqh*. During his travels he met 'Abd al-Mu'min al-Qumi (d. 558/1163), a potter's son, and made him his disciple and successor in his puritanical movement. He raised the banner of revolt against the corrupt Murabit rulers of Spain, but success ultimately fell to the lot of 'Abd al-Mu'min, who took Oran, Tlemcen, Fez, Sale, Ceuta and in 542/1147 became the first Muwahhid ruler of Morocco. He was succeeded by Abu Ya'qub Yusuf (d. 580/1184) and then by Abu Yusuf al-Mansur (d. 595/1199) on whose Courts the two great luminaries Ibn Tufail and Ibn Rushd, shed imperishable luster.¹⁰

The Muwahhids professed to be Ghazalians. They were noted for their puritanical belief in the unity of God. Anthropomorphic notions were an anathema to them. Secondly, inspired by Ibn Tumart, they stood for the strict observance of the exoteric aspect of religion. The Zahirite *Fiqh* constituted the Muwahhid State religion. Thirdly, as a legacy of Ibn Bajjah, they regarded philosophy as a species of esoteric truth reserved for the enlightened few. The masses, being incapable of pure knowledge, should not be taught more than the literal sense of the colourful eschatology of the Qur'an.¹¹

Needless to say, the mental equipment of Ibn Tufail is largely provided by the official religion of the Muwahhids, and his *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* is but a defence of the attitude of the Muwahhids both towards people and philosophers.¹²

Hayy Bin Yaqzan

Summary

The treatise dramatically opens with the spontaneous birth of Hayy in an uninhabited island, followed by a popular legend about his being thrown to this desolate place by the sister of a certain king, in order to keep her marriage with Yaqzan a secret. Unalloyed by social conventions, he is nourished there by a roe and taught by natural reason or common sense, which, though really very uncommon, equips him with inductive intellect to probe into the secret of things.

Unlike the lower animals, he becomes conscious of his being naked and unarmed with physical weapons of defence. He reflects over the situation and covers the lower parts of his body with leaves. arms himself with a stick, and thus comes to realize the superiority of his hands over the feet of animals. The death of the mother-roe leads him to the discovery of the animal soul which uses the body as an instrument, like the stick in his hands, shares light and warmth with fire, and thus bears resemblance to the heavenly bodies.

He then turns to the analysis of the phenomena of nature, compares the objects around him, and discriminates between them, and classifies them into minerals, plants, and animals. Observation shows him that body is a common factor in all the objects, but they belong to different classes because of the functions peculiar to them. This leads him to assume a specific form or soul for each class of objects.

But the soul being imperceptible, his dialectical ingenuity at last brings him to the idea of an ultimate, eternal, incorporeal, and necessary Being which is the efficient cause of the peculiar behaviour of bodies. This makes him conscious of his own immaterial essence; and acting upon a three-point code of ascetic discipline which will be explained later, he is finally absorbed in the unrestrained contemplation of the Ultimate Being.

At this stage, Asal, a contemplative and meditative soul, from the neighbouring inhabited island appears on the scene in quest of attaining perfection in solitude. He informs Hayy, the child of nature, about the Qur'anic conceptions of God, His angels, prophets, the Day of Judgment, etc., which he by his self-developed intellect immediately recognizes as truths. He, however, in the first instance, fails to see the wisdom implicit in the figurative languages of the Qur'an about God and the hereafter, and in the permission that it gives one to lead a worldly life – –a permission which is likely to turn one away from the truth.

Full of ambition and hope, he sets out in the company of Asal to the said inhabited island ruled by Salaman and begins to reform its convention-ridden people. He endeavours hard to enlighten the masses through pure concepts, but, in the end, finds these concepts far above their heads. He then realizes the wisdom of the Prophet in giving them sensuous forms instead of full light, returns to his lonely island, and is absorbed in contemplation.

Sources

Hayy Bin Yaqzan is a unique creation of Ibn Tufail's mystico-philosophical thought. Nevertheless, the idea of this romance is not entirely new. Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), among his predecessors, had written a mystic allegory of the same title. But the comparison ends here. Ibn Sina's dramatized tale narrates how one day he, with a few companions, went out for a ramble in the vicinity of a town and chanced to meet an old man, Hayy bin Yaqzan, and requested him to be permitted to accompany him in his unending journeys. But the old man replied that that was not possible for Ibn Sina, because of his companions whom he could not leave.

In this allegory Ibn Sina himself represents the rational soul, the companions the various senses, and the old man, Hayy bin Yaqzan, the active intellect. [13](#) “With Ibn Sina,” thus, “the character of Hai [Hayy] represents the Superhuman Spirit, but the hero of Ibn Tufail's romance seems to be the personification of the natural spirit of Mankind illuminated from above; and that Spirit must be in accordance with the Soul of Muhammed when rightly understood, whose utterances are to be interpreted allegorically.” [14](#)

Similarly, the names of Salaman and Asal, the other two characters of Ibn Tufail's romance, are not new in the philosophical literature. These, too, have been borrowed from Ibn Sina's tale of *Salaman wa Absal*, of which we know only through Tusi's paraphrase in his commentary on *Isharat*.

The story relates how Absal, the younger brother of Salaman, was obliged to proceed to war in order to avoid the immoral designs of the latter's wife, but was deserted by the army through her machinations and his wounded body was carried away by a gazelle to a place of safety. On returning home, he raised a strong army and regained the lost kingdom for Salaman, whose wife becoming desperate poisoned him to death.

The sorrow-stricken Salaman lost heart and became a hermit. A mystic trance, at last, revealed to him that his own wife was the cause of the catastrophe, and he killed her and all her accomplices. [15](#) Salaman, in this tale, represents the rational soul, Absal the theoretical reason, and Salaman's wife, the passion-worshipping body.

Notwithstanding the similarity of names and the episode of the gazelle, the basic theme of both the treatises is intrinsically different. With Ibn Sina the main object is to show how personal afflictions (he himself was a prisoner in the dungeon of a fortress while writing the allegory) invoke divine grace and cause the purification of the soul but the object of Ibn Tufail is nothing less than to dramatize the development of theoretical reason from the gross sense-perception to the beatific vision of God. [16](#)

By far the most marked, deep, and saturating influence, which seems to have coloured the basic structure of Ibn Tufail's romance, is that of Ibn Bajjah, his arch-rationalist predecessor. His lonely, metaphysically minded Hayy is only an extreme form of the “solitary man” of Ibn Bajjah's *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid*. Nevertheless, in spite of his recognition of the necessity of solitude for the improvement of theoretical reason, Ibn Tufail feels rather unhappy over Ibn Bajjah's one-sided emphasis on the role of reason in arriving at the ultimate truth. Somewhat sympathetically he complains of the “incompleteness” of Ibn Bajjah's *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid*. [17](#)

It is to the desire of removing this incompleteness that Ibn Tufail's *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* owes its origin. And it is the influence of Ghazali (d. 505/1111) and perhaps also of Suhrawardi Maqtul, his Persian contemporary that made him supplement reason with ecstasy in its flight to the celestial world.

Of Hayy's birth in an uninhabited island, Ibn Tufail relates two versions. The scientific version of his spontaneous birth, he owes entirely to Ibn Sina. [18](#) The legendary version is traced by Gracia Gomez (“Comparative Study of Ibn Tufail and Baltazar Gracian,” Madrid, 1926) to *Dhu al-Qarnain wa Qissat al-*

Sanam w-al-Malak we Bintuhu, a Greek tale translated into Arabic by Hunain ibn Ishaq.

The tale narrates how, under royal displeasure, the daughter of a king threw away her natural daughter from the son of her father's vizier, in the sea, the surging waves of which landed her in an uninhabited island where she was nourished by a roe. She grew up into a beautiful damsel; later, Alexander the Great chanced to meet her in the island of Oreon.¹⁹ That the life of Hayy resembles that of the damsel in its initial stages, there can be no doubt, but the resemblance ends there. Besides, the aforesaid Greek tale does not seem to be the only source of this legend. Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar has lately traced the threads of the fable to the Persian tale of *Musa-o Dara-o Nimrud*.²⁰

The romantic frame of *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* is by no means original. It is of Alexandrian origin; it may have even a Persian strain. Nevertheless, it is Ibn Tufail who changes a simple tale into a romance of a unique philosophical significance. It is the philosophical acumen rather than the poetic imagination that marks the treatise with novelty and makes it to be "one of the most original books of the Middle Ages."²¹

Object of the Treatise

As al-Marrakushi, the historian, has said, *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* is a treatise which aims at giving a scientific explanation of the beginning of human life on earth.²² As a prelude to the story of *Hayy Bin Yaqzan*, it is related that the moderate climate of the uninhabited island, coupled with a fair proportion of the elements, led to the spontaneous birth of the first man, who found the stick a successful weapon in the struggle for existence, and thereby got the conviction of his own superiority over other animals. But actually this beginning is meant merely to provide a background for showing the development of inductive intellect, independently of any social influence whatsoever.

Contradicting al-Marrakushi's position, but in complete agreement with de Boer, Dr. Muhammad Ghallab²³ rightly contends that the treatise essentially aims at showing that the individual man left to himself is able, with the resources of nature alone and without any help from society, to advance to and reach the ultimate truth, provided he has the necessary aptitude for doing so.

The truth of the Qur'an and the Hadith is open to pure intellectual apprehension, but it has to be guarded against the illiterate masses whose business it is not to think but to believe and obey. In fact, this view is an echo of Ibn Bajjah's position, which later came to be regarded as the proper official attitude under the Muwahhids.

Muhammad Yunus Farangi Mahalli²⁴ points to a still higher aim implicit in the treatise. Religion is as much essential for a progressive society as are philosophy and mysticism – a thesis which is brilliantly exemplified by the co-operation of the three dramatic characters: Hayy, the philosopher; Asal, the mystic; and Salaman, the theologian. The underlying aim is not only to show that philosophy is at one with religion properly understood, but that both the exoteric and the esoteric aspects of religion and philosophy are expressions of the same eternal truth revealed to individuals according to their intellectual

capabilities.

Philosophically speaking, the treatise is a brilliant exposition of Ibn Tufail's theory of knowledge, which seeks to harmonize Aristotle with the Neo-Platonists on the one hand, and al-Ghazali with Ibn Bajjah on the other. Al-Ghazali was dogmatically critical of Aristotelian rationalism, but Ibn Bajjah was Aristotelian through and through. Ibn Tufail, following the middle course, bridged the gulf between the two.

As a rationalist he sides with Ibn Bajjah against al-Ghazali and qualifies mysticism with rationalism; as a mystic he sides with al-Ghazali against Ibn Bajjah and qualifies rationalism with mysticism. Ecstasy is the highest form of knowledge, but the path leading to such knowledge is paved with the improvement of reason, followed by the purification of the soul through ascetic practices.

The methods of al-Ghazali and Ibn Tufail are both partially the same, but, unlike the former, the latter's ecstasy is marked by a Neo-Platonic strain. Al-Ghazali, true to his theologico-mystical position, takes ecstasy as the means to see God, but to Ibn Tufail, the philosopher, the beatific vision reveals the active intellect and the Neo-Platonic chain of causes reaching down to the elements and back to itself.

Doctrines

World

Is the world eternal, or created by God at will out of sheer nothingness? This is one of the most challenging problems of Muslim philosophy. Ibn Tufail, quite in keeping with his dialectical ingenuity, faces it squarely in the manner of Kant. Unlike his predecessors, he does not subscribe to any of the rival doctrines, nor does he make any attempt to reconcile them. On the other hand, he subjects both the Aristotelian and the theological positions to scathing criticism.

The eternity of the world involves the concept of infinite existence which is no less impossible than the notion of infinite extension. Such an existence cannot be free from created accidents and as such cannot precede them in point of time; and that which cannot exist before the created accidents must itself be created in time. Similarly, the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* does not survive his scrutiny. Like al-Ghazali, he points out that the notion of existence after non-existence is unintelligible without supposing the priority of time over the world; but time itself is an inseparable accident of the world, and so its being prior to the world is ruled out. Again, the created must needs have a Creator. Why then did the Creator create the world now and not before? Was it due to something that happened to Him? Obviously not, for nothing existed before Him to make anything happen to Him. Should it be attributed to a change in His nature? But what was there to bring about this change? [25](#)

Consequently, Ibn Tufail accepts neither the eternity nor temporal creation of the world.

This antinomy clearly anticipates the Kantian position that reason has its own limits and that its arguments lead to a maze of contradictions.

God

Both eternity of the world and its *creatio ex nihilo* equally and inevitably lead to the existence of an eternal, incorporeal Necessary Being.²⁶ The creation of the world in time presupposes a Creator, for the world cannot exist by itself. Again, the Creator must, of necessity, be immaterial, for matter being an accident of the world is itself subject to creation by a Creator. On the other hand, regarding God as material would lead to an infinite regress which is absurd.

The world, therefore, must necessarily have a Creator that has no bodily substance. And since He is immaterial, it follows that we cannot apprehend Him by any of our senses or even by imagination; for imagination represents nothing except the sensuous forms of things in their physical absence.

The eternity of the world implies the eternity of its motion as well; and motion, as held by Aristotle, requires a mover or an efficient cause. If this efficient cause is a body, its power must be finite and consequently incapable of producing an infinite effect. The efficient cause of eternal motion must, therefore, be immaterial. It must neither be associated with matter nor separated from it, nor within it nor without it; for union and separation, inclusion and exclusion are the properties of matter, and the efficient cause, by its very nature, is absolutely free from it.

However, a question is posed here. God and the world both being eternal, how could the former be the cause of the latter? Following Ibn Sina, Ibn Tufail makes a distinction between eternity in essence and that in time, and holds that God does precede the world in point of essence, and not in respect of time. Take an example. If you have a body in your fist and move your hand, the body, no doubt, will move with the movement of the hand, yet its motion will be subject to the motion of the hand. The motion of the latter proceeds from its essence, that of the former is borrowed from the latter,²⁷ though in point of time neither precedes the other.

As to the world becoming co-eternal with God, he maintains in a mystic strain that the world is not something other than God. Interpreting the divine essence in terms of light, the essential nature of which is perpetual illumination and manifestation, as held by al-Ghazali, he conceives of the world as the manifestation of God's own essence and the shadow of His own light that has no temporal beginning or end. It is not subject to annihilation as the belief in the Day of Judgment tends to suggest. Its corruption consists in its transformation into another form rather than in its complete annihilation. The world must continue in one form or another, for its annihilation is inconsistent with the supreme mystic truth that the nature of divine essence is perpetual illumination and manifestation.²⁸

Light Cosmology

In full agreement with Ibn Sina and other predecessors, Ibn Tufail accepts the principle that from one nothing can proceed except one. The manifestation of the existing plurality from unity is explained in the monotonous Neo-Platonic fashion, as successive stages of emanation proceeding from the divine light.

The process, in principle, resembles the successive reflection of solar light in looking-glasses. The light of the sun falling on a looking-glass and from there passing into another, and so on, gives an appearance of plurality.

All these are the reflections of the light of the sun, and yet they are neither the sun, nor the looking-glasses, nor anything different from both. The plurality of reflected light is lost into the unity of the sun when we look to their source, but reappears when we look to the looking-glasses in which the light is reflected. The same is true of the primal light and its manifestation in the cosmos.²⁹

Epistemology

The soul, in its first state, is not a *tabula rasa*, or a blank slate. The image of God is implicit in it from the very beginning, but, in order to make it explicit, we need to start with a clean mind, with neither bias, nor prejudice. Freedom from social prejudices and prepossessions as a primary condition of all knowledge is precisely the idea behind Hayy's spontaneous birth in an uninhabited island.

This being achieved, experience, intellection, and ecstasy play their respective roles freely in giving a clear vision of the truth inherent in the soul. Not mere discipline of spirit, but the education of the senses and the intellect, too, is essential for such a vision. The harmony of experience with reason (Kant), on the one hand, and that of reason with intuition (Bergson and Iqbal), on the other, constitutes the very essence of Ibn Tufail's epistemology.

Experience is a process of knowing the environment through the senses. The sense-organs owe their respective functions to the animal soul with its seat in the heart; from there the confused manifold of sense-data reaches the brain which spreads it all over the body through the nerve-paths. It is transmitted through the same paths to the brain, where it is organized into a perceptive whole.

Observation gives us knowledge about bodies which the inductive intellect, with its instruments of comparison and discrimination, classifies into minerals, plants, and animals. Each of these classes of bodies exhibits certain specific functions, which lead us to postulate specific forms or souls (like Aristotle) as the cause of the functions peculiar to the bodies of different classes. Such a hypothesis, however, is untenable on inductive grounds, for the supposed form or soul is not open to direct observation. Actions, no doubt, appear to be issuing from a certain body; in reality, they are caused neither by the body, nor by the soul in a body, but by some cause external to it and that cause is God as indicated before.³⁰

Ibn Tufail also knows the limitations of his newly discovered method. Following al-Ghazali³¹ and anticipating Hume, he sees no power in the cause which may necessarily produce the effect as it does. Hume's empiricism ends in scepticism, but the mystic in Ibn Tufail makes him see that the bond of causality is an act of synthesis which he ascribes to God, but which Kant attributes to the *a priori* form of understanding.

Ibn Tufail is at once a forerunner of Bacon, Hume, and Kant. He anticipated the inductive method of

modern science; perceived the inability of theoretical reason to solve the puzzle of the eternity and temporal creation of the world, and that of the inductive intellect to establish a necessary connection between cause and effect; and finally cleared the clouds of scepticism by declaring with Ghazali that the bond of causality is a synthetic act of God.

After educating the senses and the intellect and noticing the limitations of both, Ibn Tufail finally turns to the discipline of the spirit, leading to ecstasy, the highest source of knowledge. In this state, truth is no longer obtained through a process of deduction or induction, but is perceived directly and intuitively by the light within. The soul becomes conscious of itself and experiences “what the eye hath never seen, nor ear ever heard, nor the heart (mind) of any man ever conceived.”³²

The state of ecstasy is ineffable and indescribable, for the scope of words is restricted to what can be seen, heard, or conceived. Divine essence, being pure light, is perceived only by the light within, which comes into its own through the proper education of the senses, intellect, and spirit. The knowledge of essence, therefore, is itself essence. Essence and its vision are identical.³³

Ethics

Not earthly felicity, nor even divine vicegerency, but complete union with God is the *summum bonum* of ethics. Its realization, after the improvement of inductive and deductive intellect, finally depends upon a three-point code of spiritual discipline, which, according to de Boer, has a “Pythagorean appearance.”³⁴ Man is a curious mixture of body, animal soul, and immaterial essence, and, thus, at once resembles animals, celestial bodies, and God. His spiritual ascent, therefore, consists in satisfying all the three aspects of his nature, by imitating the actions of animals, heavenly bodies, and God.

As to the first imitation, it is binding upon him to provide his body with bare means of sustenance and protect it against inclement weather and wild animals, with the sole intention of preserving the animal soul. The second imitation demands of him cleanliness in dress and body, kindness to animate and inanimate objects, contemplation of the divine essence and revolving round one's own essence in ecstasy. (Ibn Tufail seems to believe that the celestial bodies possess animal soul and are absorbed in the unrestrained contemplation of God.)

Lastly, he must equip himself with the positive and negative attributes of God, viz., knowledge, power, wisdom, freedom from corporeality, etc. Discharging one's obligation to oneself, others, and God, is, in brief, one of the essentials of spiritual discipline.³⁵ The last obligation is an end-in-itself, the first two lead to its realization in the beatific vision, where vision at once becomes identical with the divine essence.

Philosophy and Religion

Philosophy is purely intellectual apprehension of truth in concepts and images which, by their very nature, are beyond the grasp of conventional modes of expression. Language is a product of the

material needs of social environment and as such can lay its hand only on the phenomenal world. The celestial world, being abstract and immaterial, altogether eludes its grasp. Described in material symbols, it loses its essential nature, and occasions men to think of it other than what it really is. [36](#)

Why then does the Qur'an describe the divine world in parables and similitudes and thereby waive aside a clearer notion of it, and occasion men to fall into the grave error of attributing a corporeity to the essence of God, from which He is absolutely free? And why does not the Holy Book go further than the precepts and rites of worship, and give men leave to gather riches and allow them liberty in the matter of food, by which means they employ themselves in vain pursuits and turn away from the truth? Is it not the imperative need of the soul to free itself from earthly passions and chains before starting its journey towards heaven? Would not men lay aside worldly pursuits and follow the truth, if they were elevated to pure knowledge in order to understand things aright? [37](#)

Hayy's miserable failure to enlighten the masses by means of pure concepts clears the way to the answers to these questions. The Prophet acted wisely in giving the masses sensuous forms instead of full light, for they had no other way of salvation. Elevated to pure knowledge, they would waver and fall headlong and make a bad end.

Nevertheless, though Ibn Tufail voices the Muwahhid State policy of withholding the teaching of philosophy from the multitude, he clearly recognizes a class of gifted people who deserve philosophic instruction and to whom allegory is the best means of imparting knowledge and wisdom.

Religion is for the masses: but philosophy is a privilege of the gifted few. Their provinces should be scrupulously kept apart. Philosophy, no doubt, is at one with religion properly understood; both of them reach the same truth, but through different ways. They differ not only in their method and scope but also in the degree of the blessedness they confer on their devotees. [38](#)

Religion describes the divine world in terms of exoteric symbols. It abounds in similitudes, metaphors, and anthropomorphic notions, so that they might better accord with the people's understanding, fill their souls with desire, and attract them to virtue and morality. Philosophy, on the other hand, is a species of esoteric truth. It seeks to interpret the material symbols of religion in terms of pure concepts and images culminating in a state where the divine essence and its knowledge become one.

Sense-perception, reason, and intuition are the bases of philosophical knowledge. Prophets too have intuitions; their main source of knowledge is revelation from God. The knowledge of the prophet is direct and personal, but that of the followers is constituted of testimony.

Philosophy is an exclusive affair of the individual; it presupposes a certain temperament and aptitude for enlightenment. Religion, on the contrary, is a social discipline. Its point of view is institutional, not individual. It aims, more or less, at a uniform betterment of the masses in general, ignoring the individual differences in ability and inner light.

Philosophy brings us face to face with reality. It demands unrestrained contemplation of truth, uninterrupted vision of the primal light, the source of all existence, by renouncing all worldly connections. Religion is not so exacting in its dictates. It decries asceticism in any and every sense of the word; for the generality of mankind, for whom it is primarily meant, are incapable of living up to this ideal. It, therefore, fixes the absolute minimum and then gives men leave to lead a worldly life, without, however, transgressing the limits thereto.

Thus, the philosopher, left to his inner light, is capable of attaining to supreme bliss. As to the masses, they should rest content with a second-rate salvation, beyond which, owing to their own limitations, they cannot rise. Later on this theory, under the influence of Ibn Rushd, armed the medieval European scholars in their struggle against the Church, with the doctrine of “two-fold truth,” John of Brescia and Siger of Brabant being two of its chief representatives.³⁹

The story does not seem to end here; for the redeeming individualistic attitude of modern philosophy, an attitude that distinguishes it from both the medieval and the ancient outlook, also appears to be a characteristic deposit of the same theory.

Influence

Of Ibn Tufail's works only *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* is extant today. It is a short philosophical romance, but so great has been its influence on the succeeding generations in the West that it has come to be recognized as “one of the most remarkable books of the Middle Ages.”⁴⁰ In spirit, says Leon Gauthier, it resembles Arabian Nights; in method it is both philosophical and mystical.⁴¹

It combines pleasure with truth by calling imagination and intuition to the help of reason, and it is this peculiar appeal that has made it an embodiment of imperishable lustre and eternal freshness, and has caused its numerous editions and translations into Hebrew, Latin, English, Dutch, French, Spanish, German, and Russian.⁴² Even today, the world's interest in it has not ceased. Ahmad Amin's recent critical Arabic edition (1371/1952), followed by its translations into Persian and Urdu within the same decade, go far enough to prove that it has no less a hold over the modern world than it had over the medieval world.⁴³

The treatise caught the attention of the Quakers,⁴⁴ and George Kieth, finding in it a support for “enthusiastic notions”⁴⁵ of the Society of Friends, translated it into English in 1085/1674. So tremendous and alarming was its influence or what Simon Ockley calls “bad use,” that he was obliged to devote a thirty-six-page appendix to his English version of the booklet (1120/1708), in order to refute Ibn Tufail's thesis that the individual man, left to his a priori inner light, can arrive at the ultimate truth.⁴⁶

A Spanish writer, Gracian Baltasar's indebtedness to Ibn Tufail occupied the world's attention during the first four decades of the present century. According to L. Gauthier, the early life of Andrenio, the hero of Gracian Baltasar's *El Criticon* (Saragossa, 1062/1651), is a “manifest” and “undeniable imitation” of

Hayy's legendary version of birth.⁴⁷ But G. Gomez, the Spanish critic, claims that the *El Criticon* is nearer to the Greek tale of *Dhu al-Qarnain wa Qissat al-Sanam w-al-Malak wa Bintuhu*, referred to earlier, than to the *Hayy Bin Yaqzan*.⁴⁸

D. K. Petrof, the Russian Orientalist, too holds that Gracian Baltasar is an exception to Ibn Tufail's influence.⁴⁹ But L. Gauthier, in his latest version of the treatise (Beirut, 1355/1936), contradicts the position of Gomez and Petrof, and concludes that Gracian Baltasar is indebted to the Greek *Qissat al-Sanam* indirectly through the *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* of Ibn Tufail.⁵⁰

The influence of the romantic frame of the treatise is also visible in *Menedez Pelyo, Pou*,⁵¹ *Saif Bin dhi Yazan*, and *Tarzan*.⁵² Even the Robinson Crusoe (1132/1719) of Daniel Defoe is no exception to its pervading influence, as proved by A. R. Pastor in his *Idea of Robinson Crusoe*.⁵³

Of Ibn Tufail's pupils Abu Ishaq al-Bitruji and Abu al-Walid ibn Rushd stand far above the rest. He maintained his leadership in the sphere of astronomy through al-Bitruji⁵⁴ whose theory of "spiral motion" (*harkat laulabi*) marks the "culmination of the Muslim anti-Ptolemaic movement."⁵⁵ In philosophy and medicine he dominated the scene in the person of Ibn Rushd,⁵⁶ whose rationalism "ran like wild fire in the schools of Europe" and ruled their minds for no less than three centuries.

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2. Leon Gauthier doubts that he really held this office, for only one text gives him this position and al-Bitruji, his pupil, calls him simply Qadi. Cf. Encyclopaedia of Islam Vol. II, p. 424.
3. The Making of Humanity, p. 188
4. Na'im al-Rahman, *Khilafat-i Muwahhidin* (Urdu translation of al-Marrakushi's al-Mu'jab), p. 240.
5. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. II, p. 424.
6. A. S. Nadawi, *Hukama'-i Islam*, Vol. II, p. 42.
7. *Khilafat-i Muwahhidin*, p. 237.
8. MS. No. 669, Escorial; published Bulaq, 1882. Cf. Leon Gauthier. *Ibn Thofail*, pp. 32, 34.
9. Gauthier, op. cit., p. 33, footnote.
10. O'Leary, *Arabic Thought and Its Place in History*, pp. 246–50.
11. D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, pp. 251–54.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
13. S. M. Afnan, *Avicenna*, p. 198.
14. De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, p. 185
15. A. S. Nadawi, op. cit., p. 50.
16. Later on 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 898/1492) also adopted the names of Salaman and Absal as characters in one of his best known mystic poems (first edition by F. Falconer, London, 1267/1850; translated into English verse by Fitzgerald, 1267/1850, 1297/1879; literal translation along with Fitzgerald's versions by A. J. Arberry, Cambridge, 1376/1956). Salaman in this poem symbolically represents the rational soul, and Absal, his nurse and lover, the passion-worshipping body. Their close union is frowned on by Salaman's royal father and the two enter fire to put an end to their lives. But only Absal is consumed while Salaman remains unharmed, whose sorrow for Absal, in the end, gives way to celestial love for Venus. The poem, as it is, is nearer in its aim and method to Ibn Sina's tale of Salaman wa Absal, rather than to Ibn Tufail's Hayy Bin Yaqzan.
17. We know of this book only through Moses of Narbonne's version in his Hebrew commentary on Hayy Bin. Yaqzan, 750/1349, the summary of which appears in M. Lutfi Jum`ah's *Tarikh Falsafat al-Islam*. Cf. also A. S. Nadawi. op. cit., Vol. 11, p. 30.
18. Ibn Sina has advocated the same view in his *Shifa'*. Cf. also Jaihl al-Din Dawwani, *Akhlaq-i Jalali*, Lueknow, 1916, p. 41.
19. Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p. 13, footnote.
20. *Zindah-i Bedar*, p. 13.
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22. *Khilafat-i Muwahhidin*, p. 237.
23. Article "Ibn Tufail," *Majallah Azhar*, 1361/1942.
24. Article "Ibn Tufail", *Ma`arif*, Azamgarh, January 1922, pp. 18–28

- [25.](#) Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p.95.
- [26.](#) Ibid., pp. 96–97.
- [27.](#) Ibid., p.98.
- [28.](#) Ibid., p. 120.
- [29.](#) Ibid., p. 117.
- [30.](#) Ibid., p.92.
- [31.](#) Al–Ghazali “... goes to the extreme of intellectual scepticism, and, seven hundred years before Hume, he cuts the bond of causality with the edge of his dialectic and proclaims that we can know nothing of cause or effect, but simply that one thing follows another (D. B. Macdonald op. cit., p. 229).
- [32.](#) Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p.114.
- [33.](#) Ibid., p. 115.
- [34.](#) De Boer, op.cit., p. 186.
- [35.](#) Hayy Bin Yaqzan, pp.107–113.
- [36.](#) Ibid., p. 119.
- [37.](#) Ibid., p. 127.
- [38.](#) Z.A.Siddiqi, Falsafa–i Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p. 103.
- [39.](#) F. Thilly, A History of Philosophy, p. 239.
- [40.](#) Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. II, p. 425.
- [41.](#) Kamil Gilani, Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p. 106.
- [42.](#) The little masterpiece has a history of translations into European languages, spread over six centuries: Hebrew translation with a commentary and comparison with the Tadbir al–Mutawahhid of Ibn Bajjah by the Jew Moses Ibn Joshua of Narbonne, 750/1349; Latin, E. Pococke Jr., Oxford, 1082/1671; reprinted, Oxford, 1112/1700; oriental editions, at least four from Cairo and two from Constantinople, 1299/1881; English, G. Kieth, London, 1085/1674; G. Ashwell, London, 1098/1686; S. Ockley, London, 1120/1708, reprinted 1123/1711, 1144/1731, revised by E. A. Dyek, Cairo, 1323/1905; P. Bronnle, London, 1322/1904; revised with an Introduction by A. S. Fulton, London, 1325/1907, reprinted, London, 1328/1910, 1348/1929; Dutch, Bouwmeester, Amsterdam, 1083/1672, reprinted 1113/1701; German, .J. G. Pritius, Francfort, 1139/1726; J. G. Eichhorn, Berlin 1197/1782; Spanish, F. P. Biogues, Saragossa, 1318/1900, reprinted 1353/1934; Russian, J. Kuzmin, Leningrad, 1339/1920; French, L. Gauthier, Alger, 1318/1900, Paris, 1327/1909, and Beirut, 1355/1936, the only authentic and exhaustive critical estimate. (Brockelmann, Vol. I, p. 460, Supp. I, p. 831; George Sarton, op. cit., Vol. II, Part I, p. 355; Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. II, p. 425).
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- [45.](#) S. Ockley, The Improvement of Human Reason, p. 194.
- [46.](#) Ibid., p. 168.
- [47.](#) Gauthier, op. cit., p. 52.
- [48.](#) Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p. 13.
- [49.](#) G. Sarton, op.cit., p.355.
- [50.](#) Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p. 14, footnote.
- [51.](#) Ibid., pp.12, 14.
- [52.](#) Kamil Gilani, op.cit., p. 105.
- [53.](#) A. R. Pastor, Idea of Robinson Crusoe, Part I, Wartford, 1930.
- [54.](#) He refuted Ptolemy's theory of epicycles and eccentric circles and in the preface to his Kitab al–Hai'ah confesses that he is following the ideas of Ibn Tufail (L. Gauthier, op. cit., p. 26).
- [55.](#) G. Sarton, op. cit., p. 399.

⁵⁶. He was advised by Ibn Tufail with regard to his commentaries on Aristotle's works as well as his medical work *Kulliyat*. Cf. G. Sarton, op. cit., p. 355

Chapter 28: Ibn Rushd

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By Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany

Introduction

Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd was born in Cordova in 520/1126. His family was renowned for its deep knowledge in *Fiqh*, and his father and grandfather held the office of the Chief Justice of Andalus. This religious descent gave him the opportunity to reach a high standard in Islamic studies. The Qur'an and its exegesis, the Tradition of the Prophet, the science of *Fiqh*, Arabic language and literature were all learnt by him by oral transmission from an authorized doctor (*alim*).

He revised the Malikite book *al-Muwatta'*, which he had studied with his father Abu al-Qasim, and learnt it by heart.² He also pursued such scientific studies as mathematics, physics, astronomy, logic, philosophy, and medicine. His teachers in these sciences were not renowned, but on the whole Cordova was famous for being a centre of philosophical studies, while Seville was renowned for its artistic activities.

In a dialogue between him and Ibn Zuhr the physician, while they were in the Court of al-Mansur ibn `Abd al-Mu'min, Ibn Rushd, proud of the scientific atmosphere in his native city, said: "If a learned man died in Seville his books are sent to Cordova to be sold there; and if a singer died in Cordova his musical instruments are sent to Seville."³ In fact, Cordova at that time rivalled Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, and the other great cities in eastern Islam.

He was the pupil of neither Ibn Bajjah nor Ibn Tufail, the two great Maghribian philosophers. In his story, *Hayy Bin Yaqzan*, Ibn Tufail observed that most of the learned men in Maghrib were interested in mathematics, and that philosophy when introduced through the books of Aristotle, al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina was found unsatisfactory. The first philosopher who could have produced something valuable on this subject was Ibn Bajjah, but he was occupied in worldly affairs and died before completing his works. Al-Ghazali criticized the doctrines of the Muslim philosophers in his book *Tahafut*: and his way to attain to truth was a mystic one. Ibn Sina expounded the doctrine of Aristotle in *al-Shifa'*, but he mixed his own opinions with those of Aristotle— This short account given by Ibn Tufail concerning the state of philosophical studies in eastern Islam explains why he asked Ibn Rushd to comment on Aristotle.

Ibn Rushd lived in the midst of disturbed political conditions. He was born in the reign of the Almoravides who were overthrown in Marrakush in 542/1147 by the Almohades, who conquered Cordova in 543/1148. The Almohade movement was started by Ibn Tumart who called himself al-Mahdi. He tried to imitate the Fatimids, who had appeared a century before and founded an empire in Egypt, in their encouragement of philosophy, their secret interpretations, and their excellence in astronomy and astrology.⁴ His three Almohade successors 'Abd al-Mu'min, Abu Ya`qub, and Abu Yusuf, whom Ibn Rushd served, were known for their encouragement of science and philosophy.

When Abu Ya`qub became Amir, he ordered Ibn Rushd to write commentaries on Aristotle. This is the account given by al-Marrakushi. Ibn Rushd said: "When I entered into the presence of the Prince of the Believers Abu Ya`qub, I found him with Abu Bakr Ibn Tufail alone. Abu Ya`qub began praising me, mentioning my family and ancestors. The first thing the Prince of the Believers said to me ... was, 'What is their opinion about the heavens?' referring to the philosophers. 'Are they eternal or created?' Confusion and fear took hold of me.... But the Prince of the Believers understood my fear and confusion, and turned to Ibn Tufail and began talking about the question he had asked me, mentioning what Aristotle, Plato, and all the philosophers had said..."⁵

In another account given by the same biographer, Ibn Rushd relates that Ibn Tufail summoned him one day and told him that the Prince of the Believers complained of the difficulty of the expression of Aristotle and his translators, and mentioned the obscurity of his aims saying: "If someone would tackle these books, summarize them, and expound their aims after understanding them thoroughly, it would be easier for people to grasp them." And Ibn Tufail got himself excused on the plea of old age and his occupation in government service and asked Ibn Rushd to take up this work.

Thus, Ibn Rushd started his commentaries on the books of Aristotle. He deserved for this undertaking the title of the "Commentator"⁶ for which he was renowned in medieval Europe. Dante in his *Divine Comedy* mentions him together with Euclid, Ptolemy, Hippocrates, Avicenna, and Galen, designating him as the great Commentator.

"Euclide geometra e Tolemeo,
Ipocrate, Avicenna e Galieno,
Averois, che'l gran comento feo."
(Dante, "Inferno," IV, 142-44)

It is related that he wrote three kinds of commentaries: the great, the middle, and the lesser. The great commentaries are called *tafsir*, following the model of the exegesis of the Qur'an. He quotes a paragraph from Aristotle and then gives its interpretation and commentary. We have now in Arabic his great commentary of the *Metaphysica*, edited by Bouyges (1357-1371/ 1938-1951).

The lesser ones are called the *talkhis*. In the Arabic language *talkhis* means summary, resume or precis. One may say that these commentaries although Aristotelian in the main, reveal also the true Rushdian

philosophy. A compendium called the *Majmu`ah* or *Jawami`* comprising six books (*Physics, De Caelo et Mundo, De Generations el Corruption, Meteorologica, De Anima* and *Metaphysica*) has now been published in Arabic. In these commentaries, Ibn Rushd did not follow the original text of Aristotle and, the order of his thought.

An example of the middle commentaries is to be found in the "Categories," edited by Bouyges in 1357/1932. At the beginning of the paragraph, Ibn Rushd says: "*qala*" ("*dixit*") referring to Aristotle, and sometimes (not always) gives an excerpt of the original text.⁷ This method was current in eastern Islam, and Ibn Sina followed it in his *al-Shifa'*, reproducing in many places the very phrases of the Arabic translation of Aristotle. In fact, Ibn Sina, declared that in his *al-Shifa'* he was following the "First Master."

It is true that most of the commentaries are found in their Latin or Hebrew translations, or conserved in Hebrew transliteration, but the original Arabic texts are more sure and accurate. On the whole, the value of Ibn Rushd's commentaries is historical, except for the lesser ones which reveal to a certain extent his own thought. His own philosophical opinions are to be found in three important books, the *Fasl*, the *Kashf*, and the *Tahafut*, and in a short treatise called *al-Ittisal*. His *Colliget (Kulliyat)* in medicine is as important as the *Canon* of Ibn Sina, and was also translated into Latin, but it was less famous than that of Ibn Sina's. In jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) his book *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* is used as an Arabic reference book.

He was better known and appreciated in medieval Europe than in the East for many reasons. First, his numerous writings were translated into Latin and were circulated and conserved, while his original Arabic texts were either burnt or proscribed due to the antagonistic spirit against philosophy and philosophers. Secondly, Europe during the Renaissance was willing to accept the scientific method as viewed by Ibn Rushd, while science and philosophy began in the East to be sacrificed for the sake of mystical and religious movements. In fact, he himself was affected by this conflict between science (and philosophy) and religion. Religion won the battle in the East, and science triumphed in the West.

His disgrace, persecution, and exile in 593/1198 were the result of that conflict. The dispute for political power between the representatives of religion and philosophers never ceased from the third/ninth century onward. Al-Kindi described this dispute and defended the philosophers in his books.⁸ The men of religious learning (*fuqaha'* and *`ulama'*) were nearer to the masses who were influenced by them. The Muslim rulers, in need of their support, left the philosophers to the rage of the masses.

Several accounts have been given concerning the exile of Ibn Rushd to Lucena, near Cordova. The charge was that he had written in some of his books of having seen the giraffe in the garden of the king of the Berbers. Ibn Rushd said in his defence that he had written "the king of the *two lands*." (*Berber* written in free hand without diacritical marks can be read as *Barrain*.) A second story holds that he had written down that Venus is divine. A third story is that he denied the historical truth of the People of `Ad mentioned in the Qur'an.

The intrigues of the religious party succeeded to the point that not only was Ibn Rushd exiled but his

writings too were publicly burned. A manifesto⁹ against philosophy and philosophers was issued and distributed everywhere in Andalus and Marrakush, prohibiting the so-called dangerous studies and ordering to burn all the books dealing with such sciences. However, his disgrace did not last long and al-Mansur after his return from Marrakush pardoned and recalled him. Ibn Rushd went to Marrakush where he died in 595/1198.

Philosophy And Religion

The accord between philosophy and religion is rightly regarded as the most important feature of Islamic philosophy. Ibn Rushd's solution to this problem was really an ingenious one. As a philosopher, he found that it was his duty to defend the philosophers against the fierce attacks of the *faqih*s and theologians, especially after their condemnation by al-Ghazali in his "Incoherence of the Philosophers." Ibn Rushd's treatise called *Fasl al-Maqal fi ma bain al-Hikmah w-al-Shari`ah min al-Ittisal* is a defence of philosophy in so far as it is shown to be in harmony with religion.

It may be doubted nowadays whether this question should receive so much attention, but in the sixth/twelfth century it was really vital. Philosophers were accused of heresy (*kufr*) or irreligion. In fact al-Ghazali condemned the philosophers as irreligious in his *Tahafut*. If this accusation were true, the philosophers according to Islamic Law would be put to death, unless they gave up philosophizing or proclaimed publicly that they did not believe in their philosophical doctrines. Consequently, it was necessary for philosophers to defend themselves and their opinions.

Ibn Rushd begins his treatise by asking whether philosophy is permitted, prohibited, recommended, or ordained by the *Shari`ah* (Islamic Law). His answer is, from the very outset, that philosophy is ordained or at least recommended by religion (religion is used in this context as synonymous with *Shari`ah* and specifically Islam). Because the function of philosophy is nothing more than speculating on the beings and considering them in so far as they lead to the knowledge of the Creator.¹⁰

The Qur'an exhorts man to this kind of rational consideration (*i'tibar*) in many a verse such as: **"Consider, you who have vision."** *Al-i'tibar* is a Qur'anic term which means something more than pure speculation or reflection (*nazar*).

To translate this Qur'anic consideration in logical terms is nothing more than getting the unknown from the known by way of inference. This type of reasoning is called deduction of which demonstration (*burhan*) is the best form. And since God exhorts man to know Him through demonstration, one must begin to learn how to distinguish between the demonstrative and the dialectical, rhetorical, and sophistical deductions. Demonstration is the instrument by which one can attain to the knowledge of God. It is the logical method of thinking, which leads to certainty.

It follows that the Qur'an exhorts man to study philosophy since he must speculate on the universe and consider the different kinds of beings. We have now passed from the legal plane of *Fiqh* to the

philosophical one, in spite of their distinction. The objective of religion is defined in philosophical terms: it is to obtain the true theory and the true practice (*al-ʿilm al-haqq w-al-ʿamal al-haqq*).¹¹

This reminds us of the definition of philosophy given by al-Kindi and his followers, which remained current all through Islamic philosophy. True knowledge is the knowledge of God, of all the other beings as such, and of the happiness and unhappiness in the hereafter.¹² The way of acquiring knowledge is of two kinds, apprehension and assent. Assent is either demonstrative, dialectical, or rhetorical.

These three kinds of assent are all used in the Qur'an. Men are of three classes, the philosophers, the theologians, and the common people (*al-jumhur*). The philosophers are the people of demonstration. The theologians – the Ash'arites whose doctrine was the official one at the time of Ibn Rushd – are of a lower degree, since they start from dialectical reasoning and not from scientific truth. The masses are the “people of rhetoric” who understand only through examples and poetic thinking.

So far, religion is compatible with philosophy. The act and aim of philosophy are the same as those of religion. Now about the compatibility of their methods and subject-matter. If the traditional (*al-manqul*) is found to be contrary to the rational (*al-ma`qul*), it is to be interpreted in such a way as to be in harmony with the rational.¹³ Allegorical interpretation (*ta'wil*) is based on the fact that there are certain Qur'anic verses which have an apparent (*zahir*) meaning and an inner (*batin*) meaning.

Early Muslim scholars in the face of such verses avoided interpreting them, because they were afraid to confuse the minds of the common people. The Ash'arites interpreted some such verses as that of “sitting on the Throne” (*al-istiwa'*), while the Hanbalites believed in its apparent meaning. The position of Ibn Rushd, as a philosopher, is different from that of the early Muslims, the Ash'arites and the Hanbalites. *Ta'wil* is to be practised only by the philosophers who are the people of demonstration. Even then, this *ta'wil* should be kept back as esoteric knowledge, far from being declared to the masses.

Ibn Rushd returns to the plane of *Fiqh* and compares the logical method of philosophy with the traditional one of *Fiqh*. This latter, called the principles of *Fiqh*, depends on four sources: the Qur'an, Tradition, *ijma`* (consensus) and *qiyas* (legal syllogism). We have seen that the Qur'an has to be rationally interpreted.

Ijma` comes from the unanimous accord of the opinions of all the qualified scholars at a certain time. But there was no consensus at any time about doctrinal matters, simply because some scholars believed, as mentioned in the Qur'an, that there were certain matters which should be concealed. Only “those who are well grounded in learning”¹⁴ (*al-rasikhun fi al-ʿilm*) had the right to know. And, since there is no consensus in doctrinal matters, al-Ghazali had no right to condemn the philosophers as irreligious on the basis of *ijma`*. They deserved, in al-Ghazali's opinion, the charge of heresy (*takfir*) for three things: their doctrine concerning the eternity of the world, their denial of God's knowledge of particulars, and their denial of bodily resurrection.

According to Ibn Rushd, religion is based on three principles in which every Muslim of the above-

mentioned three classes should believe. These are the existence of God, the prophecy, and resurrection. [15](#) These three principles constitute the subject-matter of religion.

As prophecy depends on revelation, philosophy remains distinct from religion, unless it is shown that reason and revelation are in accord with each other. This problem is discussed in other books of his in detail. But he who denies any one of the above principles is irreligious (*kafir*). He can believe what he likes through any of the demonstrative, dialectical, or rhetorical ways.

Philosophers should not declare their esoteric interpretations to the masses lest they should be led to heresy. The theologians who did so were responsible for the origin of the various Islamic sects which accused one another of heresy.

All in all, philosophy is the twin sister of religion; they are the two friends who, by their very nature, love each other.

The Way To God

Having established that religion has apparent and inner meanings, symbolic for the common people and hidden for the learned, Ibn Rushd endeavours in his book: *al-Kashf `an Manahij al-Adillah* to find out the way to God, i.e., the methods given in the Qur'an to attain to the belief in the existence of God and to the knowledge of His attributes, according to the apparent meaning, for the first knowledge that every reasonable man is entitled to obtain is of the way which leads to the belief in the existence of the Creator.

Since this book was written in a theological form, Ibn Rushd began to review the methods of the various Islamic sects, which he classified into five principal kinds: the Ash'arites, the Mu'tazilites, the Batinites, Hashawites, and the Sufis. [16](#) It was but natural that he should have reserved for his contemporaries, the Ash'arites, the greatest part of his discussion, but strangely enough he never referred to the Batinites mentioned in the above classification. The Mu'tazilites were briefly discussed along with the Ash'arites, but not separately through their original writings which had not, as he later stated, reached the Maghrib.

The Hashawites maintain that the way to God is listening through oral transmission (*al-sama`*) [17](#) and not through reason. They mean that faith in God is received from the Prophet and that reason has nothing to do with it. But this contradicts what is mentioned in the Sacred Book which calls men in general to believe through rational proofs.

The Ash'arites hold that the way to God is through reason, but their method is different from the religious way which the Qur'an has called man to follow. They lay down certain dialectical premises from which they start, such as: the world is temporal; bodies are composed of atoms; atoms are created; the agent of the world is neither temporal nor eternal. Their arguments, however, are far from being understood by the common people, and are inconsistent and unconvincing. [18](#)

Another Ash`arite way is that of Abu al-Ma`ali.¹⁹ It is based on two premises, that the world is probable (*ja'iz*), and that what is probable is temporal. But this way abolishes the wisdom of creating the creatures as such. The way of Ibn Sina²⁰ is in some respects similar to that of Abu al-Ma`ali; only he substitutes the probable by the possible.

The Sufis²¹ follow the mystic way. They say that the knowledge of God is thrown into the soul from high above, after we have got rid of our earthly desires. But, this way is not accessible to all mankind, and it abolishes speculation for which people are exhorted all through the Qur'an.

What, then, is the true way to God which is suitable for all mankind? Two ways are mentioned in the Qur'an, called by Ibn Rushd the proof of providence and the proof of creation. The first is teleological and the second cosmological, both starting from man and other beings, not from the universe as a whole.

The proof of providence depends on two principles: the first is that all beings are suitable for the existence of man; and the second is that this suitability is by necessity due to an agent intending to do so by will, since this suitability cannot be achieved by chance. All beings are created for the service of man: stars shine at night for his guidance, his bodily organs are fit for his life and existence. A whole theory of value can be developed from this view.

The proof called creation takes into consideration the animals, plants, and heavens. It is also based on two principles: that all beings are created, and that everything created is in need of a Creator. The examples given refer to animated beings. When we see that bodies devoid of life are endowed with life, we know by necessity that there is a Creator of life, i.e., God. Heavens, also, are commanded to move and take care of the sublunary world. God says in the Holy Book: ***“Verily, those on whom ye call beside God could never create a fly if they all united to do so.”***²² He who wants to know God should know the essence and uses of things to attain to the knowledge of true creation.

These two ways are common both to the learned elite and the masses. The difference between their knowledge lies in the degree of details.²³ Common people are content with the sensuous knowledge, which is the first step to science. The elite are convinced only by demonstration.

The significance of God's unicity is expressed in the Qur'anic principle ***“No God but He.”***²⁴ Negation of other deities is considered here to be an additional meaning to the affirmation of God's unicity.²⁵ What would happen if there were more than one God? The world would be subject to corruption: one god would be superior to the others, or the rest of the gods would find some device to dethrone the one in power.²⁶

God is qualified by seven main attributes:²⁷ knowledge, life, power, will, audition, sight, and speech. They are human qualifications considered in their absolute perfection. Three positions can be taken as regards the relation between God's essence and His attributes. The first is the negation of the attributes. This is the position of the Mu'tazilites. The second is to affirm them in a state of complete perfection. The third is to conceive them as transcendent and beyond human knowledge. They are in the sphere of the

unknowable.

As a matter of fact, the Qur'an asserts the attributes and yet states that ***"Nothing is similar to Him,"***²⁸ which means that He is unknowable. The common people may believe according to the apparent meaning of the text that He sees, hears, speaks, etc. The people of demonstration should not expound their interpretation before the masses.

The doctrines of both the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites are unsound. Ibn Rushd criticizes their solutions in his book *al-Manahij* and at length in the *Tahafut*. He holds that in the case of the attributes, without affirming or negating them, one must follow the apparent meaning mentioned in the Qur'an. As to philosophical interpretation, this must be kept esoteric.

The acts of God are reduced to five principal ones: creation, sending the prophets, predestination, justice, and resurrection.²⁹ They constitute the relationship between God and the world and man.

Creation is an act of God. He created the world providentially, not by chance. The world is well ordered and is in a state of the most perfect regularity, which proves the existence of a wise Creator. Causality is presupposed. All the Rushdian proofs depend on the belief that nothing comes to be without a cause, and that there is a definite series of causes emanating from a Prime Cause.

He says: "He who, in the artificial things, denies or cannot understand the caused resulting from causes would have no knowledge of the art or the artisan; similarly, he who denies the existence in this world of the dependence of effects on causes would deny the wise Maker."³⁰

The proof for sending prophets is based on two principles mentioned in the Qur'an. The first is that men of this type are those who prescribe the laws through God's revelation, not through human learning. The act of a prophet is to prescribe laws which if followed by men would bring them everlasting happiness. The second principle is that he who is found to be qualified to perform this act of lawgiving is a prophet.

Just as the act of the physician is to cure the body, and he who effects this cure is a physician, so the act of the prophet is to prescribe laws and he who is found to do this act is a prophet. Theologians assume that our belief in the truth of the prophets lies in the belief in their miraculous acts, which are supernatural. But the Qur'an refuses to follow this way which was common to previous religions.

When the Arabs told Muhammad that they would not believe in him unless he made a spring flow from dry earth, he answered through God's revelation: "I am only a human being, a messenger."³¹ The only miracle of Islam is its Holy Book, the Qur'an, which comprises the laws necessary for the well-being of man. Thus, there is nothing supernatural,³² since everything goes on according to natural laws resulting from the close association of causes and effects.

Predestination is a very difficult problem about which the opinions of the Muslim thinkers oscillate from absolute fatalism to absolute free-will. Fatalism abolishes man's freedom, and, consequently, his

responsibility. The Mu'tazilites are in favour of free-will which is the ground of man's responsibility for his good and bad doings. If this view is assumed, God has nothing to do with man's acts, man being creator of his own acts. And, consequently, there would be other creators besides the Creator.

The Ash`arites maintain a midway position saying that man is predestined and yet he acquires the power to act. This is their famous doctrine concerning the acquisition (*al-kasb*). But this solution is, in Ibn Rushd's view, self-contradictory. Their doctrine leads to fatalism.

Man is predisposed neither to fatalism nor to free-will. He is determined. Determinism is the production of acts according to their appropriate causes. Causes are external or internal. Our acts are accomplished both through our will and the compatibility of external happenings. Human will is determined by outer stimuli which are subject to definite regularity and harmonic order according to the universal will of God.

Not only are our acts determined by causes from without, they are also related to causes from within ourselves. The determined regularity in external and internal causes is what we call predestination.³³ God's knowledge of these causes and of what results from them is the reason for their being.

God is just and never does injustice to man, as declared in the Qur'an. The nature of man is not absolutely good, although good is dominant. The majority of mankind are good. God has created good essentially, and bad accidentally for the good. Good and bad are similar to fire which has many uses for the well-being of things, yet in some cases it may be harmful. This Rushdian theory supports the optimism that prevails in the world.

All religions are in accord as to the reality of resurrection. They differ only as to whether it is spiritual or bodily. Spiritual resurrection is the survival of the soul after its separation from the body. Belief in bodily resurrection is more suitable for the minds of the masses who are short of understanding the spiritual immortality of the soul.

The Way To Knowledge

We pass now from Ibn Rushd, the Muslim philosopher garbed in a cloak of *Fiqh*, to the commentator of Aristotle, who was more faithful to the "First Master" than Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius. Medieval philosophy in Europe was influenced by Aristotle through the commentaries of Ibn Rushd. As Gilson rightly puts it: "Strangely enough, very few men have been more influential than Averroes in shaping the popular notion of medieval philosophy which is now currently received as historical truth."³⁴ It is true that his main system is Aristotelian, but under the influences of ideas received from different sources, he gave the system a new form.

The way to knowledge is one of the major problems, discussed all through Muslim philosophy because of its relationship to higher existents, namely, the "agent intellect" with which man gets in communion.

The soul and intellect are carefully distinguished by Ibn Rushd in his consideration of the process of knowledge.

A full account about the hierarchical order of beings is necessary to understand the place of these two entities. This is why Ibn Rushd began his treatise *Talkhis Kitab al-Nafs* by giving a short review concerning the composition of beings and their source of behaviour and knowledge. From the very start he says: “The aim of this treatise is to set forth in psychology the commentators' opinions which are more related to natural science and more appropriate to Aristotle's purpose. It would be relevant before that to give a brief introduction about the necessary principles presupposed for understanding the substance of the soul.”

These are: (i) All perishable beings are composed of matter and form, each of which is not by itself a body, although through their combination the body exists. (ii) Prime matter has no existence in actuality, but is only the potency to receive forms. (iii) The first simple bodies in which prime matter is actualized are the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth.

(iv) The elements enter in the composition of all other bodies through mixture. The remote cause of this mixture is the heavenly bodies. (v) Natural heat is the proximate cause of the real combination. (vi) Organic beings are generated from animate individuals of their kind through natural heat. Soul is the proximate cause of their generation and their remote cause is the intelligence that moves the spheres.

Before further discussion of psychology Ibn Rushd asks the crucial question “Can there be forms separate from matter ?”³⁵ The answer to this question constitutes the true way of knowledge.

Material forms can never be separate from matter, since physical forms³⁶ – which is another expression of material forms – subsist only in matter. Hence they are temporal and subject to change. They are not eternal since they have no subsistence except in matter. It follows that separate forms are something other than the material forms. Consequently, the separateness of the rational soul, namely, the intellect, can only be demonstrated if it is shown that it is pure form.

The soul is not separate because it is “the form of an organic natural body”.³⁷ The soul is divided according to its acts into five kinds: the nutritive, the sensitive, the imaginative, the cognitive, and the appetitive, and this last seems to be subsequent to the imaginative and sensitive.³⁸

The hierarchical order of the faculties is dependent on the order of the material forms, mentioned above. The way of animal knowledge is by sensation and imagination, and that of man, besides these two, by intellect. Thus, the way to knowledge is either through the senses or through the intellect, leading either to the knowledge of the particular or of the universal. True knowledge is that of the universal, otherwise animals can be said to have knowledge.

The term “knowledge” is applied equivocally to animals, man, and God. Animal knowledge is limited by the sensuous and imaginative, whereas human knowledge is universal. Sensation and imagination exist

in animals for their conservation. To assure their security, protect themselves, and obtain food, animals have to move towards or away from the sensibles.

In case the sensibles are present, they are perceived by the senses; and in their absence, representations take their place. Sensations are, then, the condition of representation, and “every being which has representations necessarily has sensations.” [39](#) But, since man has a higher faculty, namely, intellect, he gets representations through thought and reasoning, whereas in animals representations exist by nature.[40](#)

Further, forms perceived by animals are finite, and sometimes, when perceived by man, they become universal images. Those who assume that animals have reason confuse universal images with universal concepts. Forms perceived by man are infinite, in the sense that the particulars they denote are infinite. Representations, in so far as they are the motor cause for movement, effect their action in man through their collaboration with concepts.

Human knowledge must not be confused with divine knowledge, since “man perceives the individual through the senses and universal existents through his intellect. The cause of man's perception changes through the change in the things perceived, and the plurality of perceptions implies the plurality of objects.”[41](#)

It is impossible that God's knowledge should be analogous to ours, because “our knowledge is the effect of the existents, whereas God's knowledge is their cause.”[42](#) The two kinds of knowledge, far from being similar to one another, stand in opposition. God's knowledge is eternal, while man's knowledge is temporal. “It is God's knowledge which produced the existents, and it is not the existents which produce His knowledge.”[43](#)

So far, we have seen that there is individual as well as universal knowledge. The first is the outcome of sensation and imagination, and the second is the result of the intellect. The act of the intellect is to perceive the notion, the universal concept, and the essence.

The intellect has three basic operations abstraction, combination, and judgment. When we perceive a universal notion, we abstract it from matter. This is more evident in a thing denuded of and far from matter, such as the point and line.[44](#) Not only does intellect abstract simple apprehensions from matter, it combines them together and judges that some of them when predicated of some others are true or false. The first of these operations is called apprehension (*intelligere* in the Latin terminology) and the second is called assent (*credulitas*).

We have, then, three successive operations. First, we get in the intellect single notions (intentions) totally abstracted from matter, and this operation is what has been called abstraction. Secondly, by way of combining two or more notions together we have the concept, such as the concept of man which is composed of animality and rationality, the genus and differentia. And this constitutes the *esse* of a thing. Hence, a complete essence constitutes also its definition. Thirdly, since concepts are neither true nor

false, when affirmed or negated in a proposition, we have a judgment.[45](#)

The intellect is theoretical and practical. Practical intellect is common to all people. This faculty is the origin of arts of man necessary and useful for his existence. Practical intellectibles are produced through experience which is based on sensation and imagination: Consequently, practical intellect is corruptible since its intellectibles depend for their existence on sensation and imagination. Hence they are generated when perceptions and representations are generated, and corrupted when these are corrupted.

Through practical intellect man loves and hates, lives in society, and has friends. Virtues are the product of practical intellect. The existence of virtues is nothing more than the existence of representations from which we move towards virtuous acts in the most right manner; such as to be brave in the proper place and time and according to the right measure.[46](#)

Two main questions must be settled concerning the theoretical intellect, the first its eternity and the second, its communion with the agent intellect. The first question can be put in other terms: Are the theoretical intellectibles always in actuality, or do they first exist in potency and then in actuality, thus being in some way material?[47](#) This brings Ibn Rushd once more to the consideration of the material forms, grading from the elementary forms (i.e. forms of the four elements) to the representations produced by the imaginative soul.

They all have four things in common. (1) Their existence is subsequent to change. (2) They are diverse and multiple according to the diversity and plurality of their objects. (It follows from these two qualities that they are temporal.) (3) They are composed of something material and something formal. (4) The perceived is different from the existent, since the form perceived is one in so far as it is intelligible and multiple as regards its individuality.[48](#)

Intelligible forms in man are different from all the other material forms. (1) Their intellectual existence is one and the same as their objective existence which can be pointed out. (2) Their perception is infinite since the forms when abstracted have no individual plurality. (3) The intellect is the intellectible and perception is the perceived. (4) Intellect grows with old age, whereas all other faculties weaken, because the intellect operates without an organ.[49](#)

The operation of intellection runs like this: there is the intellect or the person who perceives, and there are the intellectibles which are the object of intellection and perceived by the intellect. Intellectibles must be existent, otherwise the intellect would have nothing to apprehend, because it can only be attached to what exists, not to what does not exist.[50](#) And, our knowledge is the effect of the existents.

Now, these intellectibles, namely, the universals, either exist in the soul as held by Plato, or exist in the reality outside the soul. Ibn Rushd, following Aristotle, rejects the doctrine of idealism. Consequently, universals exist in reality and their existence is attached to the particulars composed of matter and form. Through the operation of abstraction, the intellect denudes the forms of matter.

It follows that intellectibles are partly material and partly immaterial.⁵¹ They are material in so far as they depend on representations which in their turn depend on the particulars. The material intellect must not be understood as corporeal, but as mere possibility, the disposition to receive the intellectibles. What brings but the possible intellect from potency to actuality is the agent intellect. It is higher and nobler than the possible. It is itself existing, always in actuality, whether perceived by us or not. This agent intellect is from all points of view one and the same with the intellectibles.

Man can attain to the agent intellect in his life-time as he grows up. Since it has been shown that the intellect is nothing other than the intellectibles, the act of the intellect in acquiring the intellectibles is called the “union” (*al-ittihad*) or the “communion” (*al-ittisal*).

Union is not something analogous to the way of the Sufis, since the agent intellect is not divine and does not illuminate our souls as some Neo-Platonists hold. Union is a rational operation explained on epistemological grounds, and is based on the acquirement of the universal forms by the possible intellect. These universal forms have no existence in actuality apart from the sensible individuals.

When Ibn Rushd was translated into Latin, some of his doctrines were accepted and some refuted. The movement which was influenced by him is called Latin Averroism. It means Aristotelian philosophy as interpreted by Ibn Rushd, his distinction between philosophy and theology, his empirical rationalism, and more especially his theory concerning the intellect. On the whole, Latin Averroism considered Ibn Rushd a faithful exponent of Aristotle and of truth.

Meanwhile, there arose many theologians who opposed his doctrines. An example of this opposition is to be found in the treatise of Albert the Great, “On the Oneness of the Intellect against Averroes.” Siger of Brabant followed Ibn Rushd in his psychology in particular; a summary of Siger's treatise: “On the Intellect,”⁵² proves that he borrowed his ideas from a translation of the *Kitab al-Nafs*. The Averroist movement lasted till the ninth/fifteenth century and had many reactions, which proves the great influence of the philosopher of Cordova.

The Way To Science

Science, religion, and philosophy constitute three different realms. Man is by necessity forced to find some way of harmonizing these different aspects of culture which co-exist in the society in which he lives; otherwise his personality would disintegrate.

Science is necessary for the welfare of all the people living in a civilized community. Their material existence is dependent on and correlated with the degree of scientific knowledge. Religion is even more fundamental in human societies. As Bergson puts it, “We find in the past, we could find today, human societies with neither science nor art nor philosophy. But there has never been a society without religion.”⁵³ Philosophy is the search for truth. It has rightly been said that man is a metaphysical animal.

The greatness of famous philosophers – Plato, Aristotle, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Descartes, Kant, etc. – lies in placing each of these three disciplines in its proper place, both in the sphere of knowledge and of action. The first philosophers in Islam gave to science its due consideration, without devaluing religion. Al-Kindi, al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina were all scientists and philosophers. And with that, they were all sincere Muslims, except that they interpreted religion in the light of their scientific and philosophical knowledge.

Al-Ghazali was dissatisfied with the doctrines of the philosophers. He attacked them in his book “The Incoherence of the Philosophers” and accused them of *kufur* on twenty points. The eloquence of al-Ghazali, his deep knowledge of the art of controversy and argumentation, and his vast erudition in every study gave him a wide popularity to the point that he was considered an eminent authority on Islam (*hujjat al-Islam*).

Ibn Rushd answered the accusations point by point. The discussion between the two great figures is really an interesting debate, which mirrors a genuine conflict in Muslim society, between religion, on the one hand, and science and philosophy, on the other, Ibn Rushd, in his capacity as a philosopher aiming at truth, integrated the three apparently diverse realms. Through rational interpretation of the Qur'an, he effected the harmony of religion with philosophy. He unveiled the true way to religion as stated in the Qur'an.

He, now, turns to pave the way to science. In his enthusiastic defence of religion, al-Ghazali unintentionally shut the door to it. The mystic way of the Sufis prescribed by him is incompatible with the rational methods of science. The Muslims, unfortunately, followed al-Ghazali, the “Authority of Islam,” and neglected little by little the study of the sciences. Their once great civilization faded.

On the other hand, Ibn Rushd defended science, and medieval Europe followed the way prescribed by him to attain to it. This is the true spirit of Latin Averroism which led to the rise of European science. Science is the body of systematized and formulated knowledge based on observation and classification of facts. But the way to science is more basic than the scientific truths so obtained, since through the scientific method we can attain to the scientific realities and progress more and more in our study.

The two *Tahafuts*, of al-Ghazali and that of Ibn Rushd, picture the ideas which were in play on the stage of Islamic civilization during the fifth and sixth/eleventh and twelfth centuries. Some of those ideas, though now considered to be of mere historical value, were of major importance at the time.

The length at which the problem of the eternity of the world is discussed and its prime place at the head of the twenty discussions indicate the importance that al-Ghazali gave to it. Ibn Rushd considers that the main questions for which al-Ghazali charged the philosophers of being irreligious amount to three: eternity of the world, denial of God's knowledge of particulars, and bodily resurrection.

In our view, the problem which still remains of vital importance is that of causality. Scientific thought can only be established on the basis of the causal principle. While Hume criticized causality, Kant tried to

find out some rational grounds on which causality can stand. Through transcendental *a priori* forms of pure reason, Kant believed that science is safeguarded.

The induction of Stuart Mill presupposes universal causation. Russell says “Whether from pure prejudice, or from the influence of tradition, or for some other reason, it is easier to believe that there is a law of nature to the effect that causes are *always* followed by their effects than to the effect that this *usually* happens.”⁵⁴ Only contemporary science has replaced the conception of “cause” by “causal laws,” causal lines, statistics, etc.

Ibn Rushd found himself entitled to safeguard science and show the way to attain to scientific realities, since al-Ghazali undermined the necessary relation of cause and effect. As Quadri puts it: “La science perdait ainsi toute raison d'être. La substance n'avait plus de fondement... La science scientifique devait être revendiquée et sauvée.”⁵⁵

Al-Ghazali begins the dialogue about the natural sciences by enumerating the different sciences “to make it known that the Holy Law does not ask one to contest and refute them.” In this enumeration he mentions such sciences as the art of incantation, alchemy, astrology, etc. Ibn Rushd rejects such pseudo-sciences. The talismanic art is vain. Whether alchemy really exists is very dubious. Astrology does not belong to the physical sciences.⁵⁶

The real reason why al-Ghazali denied the necessary causal relation is that “on its negation depends the possibility of affirming the existence of miracles which interrupt the usual course of nature, like changing of the rod into a serpent”⁵⁷ According to Ibn Rushd, miracles must not be questioned or examined by the philosophers. “He who doubts them merits punishment.”

However, the miracle of Islam lies not in such miracles as changing the rod into a serpent, but in the Qur'an, “the existence of which is not an interruption of the course of nature assumed by tradition ... but its miraculous nature is established by way of perception and consideration for every man.... And this miracle is far superior to all others.”⁵⁸

In fact, Ibn Rushd repeats here what he has stated before in his twin books the *Fasl* and the *Kashf*. . Recent Muslim theologians, Muhammad `Abduh, Ameer Ali, and others, have adopted this Rushdian view which is now current in all Muslim societies. A return to Ibn Rushd is one of the incentives to recent renaissance in the East. Muhammad 'Abduh says : “It is impossible for the people of Islam to deny the relation existing in this world between causes and effects.”⁵⁹

We pass from this prelude to the heart of the discussion. Al-Ghazali posits the theme like this: “According to us the connection between what is usually believed to be a cause and what is believed to be an effect is not a necessary connection, each of the two things has its own individuality and is not the other... the satisfaction of thirst does not imply drinking, nor burning contact with fire.... For the connection in these things is based on a prior power in God to create them in a successive order, though not because this connection is necessary in itself.”

Ibn Rushd starts his answer from common sense, which in his view is the basis of certitude. “To deny the existence of efficient causes which are observed in sensible things is sophistry, and he who denies them either denies with his tongue what is present in his mind or is carried away by a sophistical doubt ...” [60](#)

But philosophy cannot be based on common sense. Empiricism is useful for practical ends, not for exact sciences. Both practical empiricism based on common sense and scientific knowledge believe in causality, except that the first is less sure and the latter more precise. To be scientific is to be able to predict what will happen in the future when a cause is given. Belief in science and its power results from our ability to predict on the basis of causal necessity.

Modern science still believes in causality, not in its older form of cause–effect relationship, but in causal lines and structures. To sum up, belief in causality is a matter of faith, originating from the animal faith in expectation. Ibn Rushd had complete faith in nature, and maintained that everything in the world happens according to a perfect regularity which can be understood in terms of cause and effect.

This brings us to the picture of the physical world as conceived by Ibn Rushd, and the way it can be scientifically known. The world is a continuum of things and persons interrelated through necessary causality. Two principles are presupposed, though not enunciated: the one is the permanence of things and the other is the law of causation. These two postulates are the result of metaphysical assumptions derived from Aristotelianism, namely, the idea of substance and the idea of the four causes.

Al–Ghazali denies the two principles. As to the permanence of things, he reproduces the counter–argument of some philosophers in a comical manner that “if a man who had left a book at home might find it on his return changed into a youth ... a stone changed into gold, and gold changed into stone; and if he were asked about any of these things he would answer, ‘I do not know what there is at present, in my house.’” [61](#)

Al–Ghazali accepts the challenge saying “There is no objection to admitting that anything may be possible for God.” An example of this possibility is the miracle of Ibrahim when he was thrown into fire and was not burnt. Fire by the will of God lost its quality of burning. Fire in itself is not an efficient cause. The true cause is God who through His will and power gives the things their qualities. There is no reason, then, why they might not be contrary to what they are.

To meet this argument, Ibn Rushd looks at the problem from the philosophical point of view already mentioned. The permanence of things permits us to attain to the essence of a thing, its definition, and giving it a name. “For it is self–evident that things have essences and attributes which determine the special functions of each one of them and through which the definitions and names are differentiated. If a thing had not its specific nature, it would not have a special name nor a definition, and all things would be one.” [62](#)

As to the second postulate concerning causality, “all events have four causes, agent, form, matter, and

end.” Human mind perceives the things and conceives their causes. And, “intelligence is nothing but the perception of things with their causes, and in this it distinguishes itself from all the other faculties of apprehension; and he who denies causes denies the intellect. Logic implies the existence of causes and effects, and knowledge of the effects can only be rendered perfect through knowledge of their causes. Denial of causes implies the denial of knowledge.”⁶³

If they call the relation of cause–effect a habit, habit is an ambiguous term. Do they mean by habit (1) the habit of the agent, or (2) the habit of the existing things, or (3) our habit to form a habit about such things? Ibn Rushd rejects the first two meanings and accepts the last which is in harmony with his conceptualism. Because it is impossible that God should have a habit. The habit of existing things is really their nature, since habit can only exist in the animated.

On the whole, the way to science starts with faith which is the basis of certitude. Sceptics and agnostics have no place in science. Armed with this faith in the existence of the world as such, the intellect discovers the causes of things. Scientific knowledge is the knowledge of things with their causes which produce them.

The Way To Being

Two distinct types of metaphysics came down to the Arabs, a metaphysics of Being and a metaphysics of the One. The first is that of Aristotle, and the second that of Plotinus. Since the *Enneads* of Plotinus was mistakenly ascribed to Aristotle, al–Kindi was confused between the two systems and could not bring them into accord.

Al–Farabi was more inclined to the philosophy of the One. He fused the two systems in the Necessary Being, God, the One of the Qur'an and the One of Plotinus. The way to the One is rather a mystic way, and that to Being is purely logical. The philosophy of al–Farabi was mixed with the wine of mysticism. Ibn Sina, following the way opened by al–Farabi, looked at the problem from a new standpoint, i. e., from the distinction between the necessary and the contingent, yet in his old age he dwelt upon the fusion of the One and the Being with a kind of divergence towards a gnostic mysticism.

Ibn Rushd returned to the original doctrine of Aristotle and freed himself from the burden of Neo–Platonism. Being, and the way to attain to it, is the object of his short *Talkhis* on Metaphysics. At the beginning of this treatise he says: “Our aim is to pick up from the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle his theoretical doctrines.”⁶⁴

As a faithful follower of Aristotle he defines metaphysics as the knowledge of Being as such. Metaphysics is part of the theoretical sciences. It studies Being absolutely (*bi–itlaq*); the immaterial principles of physical sensibles such as unity, plurality, potency, actuality, etc., the causes of the existents on the side of God and divine entities. Physical science is concerned with the causes of individual beings. It remains for metaphysics to study the highest causes of the particulars.

The subject-matter of metaphysics is three-fold: the study of (1) sensible things and their genera, namely, the ten categories; (2) the principles of substance, the separate entities and how they are related to the First Principle, which is the Supreme Perfection and the Prime Cause; and (3) the particular sciences in view of correcting their sophistries. It is evident that the second part of this division is the most fundamental, and the two others are related to it. Hence, Ibn Rushd gives a more elaborate definition of metaphysics. "It is the science which studies the relationship of the different existents as regards their hierarchical order of causes up to the Supreme Cause."⁶⁵

Hence, knowledge of Being consists in an exploration into its causes and principles. True knowledge is conformity with the existent. Ibn Rushd confronts the mental with the external existence to the point that if what exists in our minds is in conformity with what is outside, it is true of Being. Two distinct meanings are thus applied to Being, the one epistemological and the other ontological. Which of the two is the origin of the other, essence or existence?

There is no ambiguity in the system of Ibn Rushd about this question. The external existents are the basis of our knowledge. If an entity exists in our minds without having any real existence outside, it would not be a being, but simply an entity such as chimera, for example.⁶⁶ Being and existence are, then, one and the same. To exist is to be real.

The criterion of Being is its real existence, whether in potency or in act. Prime matter has being, although it never exists without form. When the intellect is attached to external existents, the being which was outside becomes inside the mind in the form of a concept or an essence. Existence, then, is presupposed in Being.

External existents are called substances. Substance is the first of the ten categories; the rest are the secondary substances. Prime substance has more substantiality than the secondary. When we say, "Socrates is a man," this denotes that Socrates is more substantial than human, humanity, or manness. Meanwhile, manness is as real as Socrates. Both the universal and the particular are substances. The particular has a sensuous existence, and the universal an intellectual one. But the individual substances are the starting point in the entire metaphysics of Ibn Rushd.

Physical bodies are commonly said to be composed of two principles, matter and form. This is not quite true, because a body is not only matter or only form; it is a whole composed of the two. It is a composite. This whole is additional to the two principles of Being.⁶⁷ Hence the principles of the sensible substances amount to three. The body is one unity which has many parts. By substance, we mean the whole composed of matter and form.

Some philosophers, for example Ibn Sina, assumed that every physical body has two forms, a specific form and a corporeal form. The latter, *forma corporeitatis*, consists in the three dimensions which give the body extension in space. According to Ibn Sina, the form of corporeity is substance and is the cause of plurality in physical beings. Ibn Rushd rejects this view and says that Ibn Sina was totally wrong.⁶⁸

Individual substances are composed of matter and only one form. They have two kinds of existence, the one sensuous and the other intellectual, Matter is the cause of their corporeity and form the cause of their intelligibility.

A thing is known by its definition which gives its essence; and definition is composed of parts, the genus and the differentia. Genera, species, and differentiae are universals. Now, are the essences or the universals the same as the individual things, or are they different? Universals are identical with individuals, since they define their essences.

Those who assume that the universals have a separate existence and subsist by themselves fall in contradictions very difficult to resolve. In their view human knowledge can be possible only if the universals have separate real existence. But, “it is evident that for the intellection of essences we have no need to assume the separateness of the universals. ⁶⁹ They exist only in our minds as concepts denuded of matter. Hence, this doctrine is conceptualism, as opposed to realism and nominalism. Human mind occupies a dignified place in nature and plays an active role in acquiring knowledge.

Moreover, universals are not eternal and immutable as Platonic idealism assumes. It is true that, as regards essence, universals are eternal since essence as such is not corruptible. But as regards the individual which is essentially corruptible, the universal is corruptible and changeable in so far as it is a part of the composite of form and matter. The first substance is the “this” which is pointed at.

How can the universals be eternal and at the same time corruptible? Or, as Ibn Rushd puts it: “How can eternal entities be the principles of corruptible things?”⁷⁰ This difficulty is solved by reference to potency and actuality. The scale of beings is graded from pure potency to pure actuality. Prime matter is pure potency; it can only exist in a being combined with form. The lowest existents are the four elements of which sensible bodies are composed.

Potency (dynamic in Greek) can be understood as possibility or disposition. Potency is so called as opposed to actuality. Now, the first substance can exist in actuality or in potency. Matter inherent in the substance is its potentiality. This potentiality is of different degrees according to proximity and remoteness. Man, for example, exists potentially in the sperm and in the four elements; the first potency is the near one, the latter is the remote one.

Four conditions are necessary for a thing to exist: (1) the proximate subject, (2) its disposition, (3) the motor causes, (4) the absence of preventing causes. Take, as an example, a sick man. Not all sick men have the possibility to be cured, and he who has the possibility should also have the disposition. In addition to these two conditions, he must have the efficient cause which brings him from sickness to health, provided there are no external preventions.⁷¹ The case of the natural objects is similar to that of the artificial ones.

Consequently, there is always a motor cause which brings a thing to exist in actuality. Sometimes, there are more than one motor causes. For example, bread has the potency to change into flesh and blood,

and has as motor causes the mouth, the stomach, the liver. etc. The remote cause is the potency in the elements to change into flesh. Along with these causes, bread is in need of a very remote cause, namely, the heavenly bodies.

Since physical things are composed of matter and form, potency is always subsequent to matter, and actuality subsequent to form. Form, which is the act, is prior to matter at every point, because form is also the efficient and final cause. The final cause is the cause of all other causes, since these are there for the sake of it. Furthermore, potency is not prior in time to act, because potency can never be denuded of act.

Matter and form exist simultaneously in a being. The motor cause of a physical thing is apparently prior to the existence of the thing. A distinction must be made between a motor cause and an efficient cause. Motor cause applies only to change in place, namely, the movement of translation. All other changes, especially generation and corruption, are caused by efficient causes.

Celestial bodies are moved by a motor, not an efficient, cause, because their movement is translation in space and they do not change. They are intermediate existents between the pure act and the existents which exist sometimes in potency and sometimes in act. Their similarity to existents in act lies in their eternity and incorruptibility. Their similarity to the things which exist in potency and come to actuality is in their change of place, their circular movement in space.

Ibn Rushd terminates the discussion of this point by saying: "Consider how divine providence has managed to combine the two kinds of existence. In between pure act and pure potency, it has posited this kind of potency, namely, the potency in space through which the eternal and corruptible existences are connected."⁷²

Furthermore, act is prior to potency in point of dignity and perfection, because evil is privation or one of the two opposites, such as sickness which, although existent, is bad as regards privation of health; and since potency is the possibility to become either of the two opposites, it is not an absolute good. Pure act is an absolute good.⁷³ Hence, the nearer the things are to the First Principle which is pure act, the better they are.

Celestial bodies have obtained their principles from the First Principle, God. And, likewise, everything on this earth which is good is the product of His will and design. As to evil, it exists because of matter. This world, as it is, is the best possible one. Either the world would not have existed at all, or it would have existed having some evil for the sake of a greater good.

We have seen that sensible substances are composed of matter and form. Now, are these two principles sufficient for the existence of sensible substances? Or, is there a separate substance which is the cause of their perpetual existence?⁷⁴ It is evident that the sensible is in need of a motor cause, and this cause needs another, up to the First Mover whose movement is eternal. This brings us to the consideration of time.

Time is an eternal continuum subordinate to an eternal movement, which is continuous and one, because the true one is continuous. It is clear that Ibn Rushd asserts the eternity of the world, on the assumption that both movement and time are eternal. Eternity of the world is the first and longest discussion in the *Tahafut* of al-Ghazali. The whole discussion is, as mentioned above, only of historical value, and, therefore, we need not dwell on it.

The First Mover moves the *primum mobile* by desire, not by representation. The world is animated, i. e., it has a soul. It also has intelligence. Celestial bodies are moved not through sensations and representations, as is the case with animals, but through the conception of intelligence. (Intelligence is so called with regard to celestial bodies; with regard to man it is called intellect.)

Heavenly bodies have no senses, because these are found in animals for their conservation. Representations exist in animals for the same end. Celestial bodies are in no need of conservation since they are eternal. Their movements are the product of desire (*shauq*) through intellection. The first mover of the firmament is moved by a most dignified desire – desire for the Supreme Good. The movers of the celestial bodies are, then, intelligences which are themselves immobile. There are thirty-eight movers and nine spheres.

The tenth intelligence, or the *Intelligentsia Agens*, is the last of these movers. It moves the sphere of the moon. It is the cause of the movement of the sublunary beings. It is this intelligence which gives forms to the elements and other existents.

Man is the nearest being to the celestial bodies, and this is because of his intellect. He is intermediate between the eternal and the corruptible.⁷⁵ Through the agent intelligence, he acquires the forms which are its products. Thus, communion with the agent intelligence can be realized. And in this communion lies man's felicity and happiness.

¹. On the life and work of Ibn Rushd see: Renan, *Averroes et l'averroïsme*, Paris, first ed., 1852, ninth ed., 1932; Munk, *Mélanges de Philosophie Juive et Arabe*, Paris, 1859, reprint 1927; Horten, *Die Philosophie des Ibn Roschd*, Bonn, 1910; *Die Metaphysik des Averroes*, Halle, 1912; *Die Hauptlehren van Averroes nach seiner Schrift, Die Widerlegung des Gazali*, Bonn, 1913; Carra de Vaux, *Les Penseurs de l'Islam*, Vol. IV, Paris, 1923; Gauthier, *Ibn Rochd*, Paris, 1948; *La théorie d'Ibn Rochd sur les rapports de la religion et de la philosophie*, Paris, 1909; Quadri, *La philosophie Arabe dans l'Europe Médiévale des Origines a Averroes*, Paris, 1947 (translated from the Italian); Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1954; El-Ehwany, *Islamic Philosophy*, Cairo, 1957; Hourani, *The Life and Thought of Ibn Rushd* (a series of four lectures), American University, Cairo, 1947; 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, *Ibn Rushd* (in Arabic), Cairo, 1953. For the editions of his writings, and his manuscripts see: Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Vol. I, Weimar, 1898; Bouyges, *Notes sur les philosophes arabes comme des Latins au Moyen-Age; Inventaire des textes arabes d'Averroes*, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint Joseph*, Beyrouth, 1922.

Latin Translations: *Opera Omnia*, apud Juntas, 10 Vols, Venice, 1574. New editions of the Averroes Latinus have been recently published: (i) *Parva Naturalia*, Cambridge, Mass., 1949; (ii) *Commentarium magnunt in Aristotelis De Anima*, Cambridge, Mass., 1953.

Arabic Editions and Translations: Editions by Bouyges: *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, Beyrouth, 1930; *Talkhis Kitab al Maqulat*, Beyrouth, 1932; *Tafsir ma ba'd al-Tabi'ah*, 5 Vols., 1938–1951; *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, Cairo, 1319/1901 (this edition comprises the *Tahafut* of al-Ghazali, the *Tahafut* of Ibn Rushd and the *Tahafut* of Khwajah Zadah), complete English translation by

Simon van den Bergh, London, 1954, in 2 Vols., the first for the text and the second for the notes. (i) *Fasl al-Maqal*; (ii) *Al-Kashf 'an Manahij al-Adillah*; (iii) "Discussion of the Opinions of Ibn Rushd by Ibn Taimiyyah." The first two treatises are edited in Arabic by Muller, Munich, 1859, and translated by him into German, 1875; reprinted in Arabic, Cairo, 1894–1895. French translation by Gauthier, *Accord de la religion et de la Philosophie*, Algier, 1905.

English translation by Jamilur Rahman, *The Philosophy and Theology of Averroes*, Baroda, 1921; a new English trans. is in preparation by George Hourani.

Rasa'il Ibn Rushd, Hyderabad, 1947. A compendium of six treatises *Talkhis*; (i) *Physics*; (ii) *De Caelo et Mundo*; (iii) *De Generatione et Corruptione*; (iv) *Meteorologica*; (v) *De Anima*; (vi) *Metaphysica*. *De Anima*, *Talkhis Kitab al-Nafs*, Arabic edition by A. F. El-Ehwany, Cairo, 1950.

Metaphysics, *Talkhis ma ba'd al-Tabi'ah*; (i) Arabic edition by Mustafa Kabbani, Cairo, n.d.; (ii) *Compendio de metafisica*, Arabic text with Spanish trans., introduction and glossary by Carlos Quiros Rodriguez, Madrid, 1919; (iii) *Die Epitome der Metaphysik des Averroes*, German translation by Simon van den Bergh, Leiden, 1924; (iv) new Arabic edition by Amin Osman, Cairo, 1958 (paraphrasis in *Libros Platonic de Republica*); new English translation by Rosenthal, Cambridge, 1956.

[2.](#) The biography of Ibn Rushd by al-Dhahabi, reproduced in Arabic by Renan, p. 456. (See also *Tabaqat al-Atibba'* by Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah; *Kitab al-Mughrib* by Ibn Said, etc.)

[3.](#) *Al-Maqqari*, *Nafh al-Tib*, Vol.II.

[4.](#) Ibn Khallikan, biography number,660. On the connection between Almohades and the Ismailites, see al-'Aqqad, *Ibn Rushd*, Cairo 1953, pp. 9–15.

[5.](#) 'Abd al-Wahid al-Marrakushi, ed. *Pozy*, pp. 174–75.

[6.](#) This is also the opinion of Bouyges. In his preface to *Talkhis Kitab al-Maqulat* (Beyrouth, 1932, p. v.), he says: "C'est an qualite de 'Commentateur' d'Aristote que le philosophe arabe andalous Averroes (1126–1198) est devenu celebre."

[7.](#) The only Arabic middle commentary we have is the "Categories." The text of Ibn Rushd compared with the ancient Arabic translation shows that there is nothing additional. It is neither a summary nor a commentary. It is simply a new edition of the translation put in a new phraseology. Are all the so-called middle commentaries of this type? We leave the question open.

[8.](#) E1–Ehwany, *Islamic Philosophy*, Cairo, 1957, pp. 40–42, in which excerpts from al-Kindi's treatise on "First Philosophy" are translated. Compare what al-Kindi says in favour of philosophy with what Ibn Rushd sets forth.

[9.](#) Mentioned by al-Ansari in Renan's *Averroes et l'averroisme*, pp. 439–43.

[10.](#) *Fasl*, Cairo ed., p.2.

[11.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[12.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[13.](#) *Ibid.*, p.8.

[14.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[15.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[16.](#) *Al-Kashf 'an Manahij al-Adillah*, Cairo ed., p. 31. Ibn Rushd mentions in the beginning only four sects; the Sufis have been excluded, although he discusses their method later.

[17.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 31. *Al-sam'* is also called the traditional.

[18.](#) *Ibid.*, p.32, and ad passim.

[19.](#) *Ibid.*, p.40.

[20.](#) *Ibid.*, p.41.

[21.](#) *Ibid.*, p.44.

[22.](#) *Ibid.*, p.46.

[23.](#) *Ibid.*, p.48.

[24.](#) *Ibid.*, p.49, (*La ilaha illa hu*).

[25.](#) *Wahdaniyyah*; sometimes translated as "unity" which gives a different meaning, unity being *wahdah*.

[26.](#) Ibn Rushd refers to three verses; (i) xxi, 22: "If there were therein Gods besides Allah, then verily both (the heavens and the earth) had been disordered." (ii) xxiii, 91: "Nor is there any God along with Him; else would each God have assuredly championed that which he created, and some of them would assuredly have overcome others...." (iii) xvii, 42: "If there were

other gods along with Him, as they say, then had they sought a way against the Lord of the Throne” (Pickthall's trans.).

[27.](#) Al-Kashshaf, p.53.

[28.](#) Ibid., p.60; Surah xlii, 11: "Naught is as His likeness; and He is the Hearer, the Seer" (Pickthall's trans.).

[29.](#) Ibid., p.80.

[30.](#) Ibid., p.86.

[31.](#) Ibid., p.97. Surah xvii, 93: "Am I aught save a mortal messenger?"

[32.](#) Supernatural in the sense of interrupting the course of nature (khariq).

[33.](#) Al-Kashshaf, p.107.

[34.](#) Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, New York, 1954, p.219.

[35.](#) Ibn Rushd, Kitab al-Nafs, p. 8.

[36.](#) "Material forms" is called in Arabic hayulaniyyah or tabi'iah. The first term comes from the Greek term hyle, the second means physical or natural.

[37.](#) Kitab al-Nafs, p. 12.

[38.](#) Ibid., p. 13.

[39.](#) Ibn Rushd, Tafahut, tr. van den Bergh, p. 301.

[40.](#) Kitab al-Nafs, p.69.

[41.](#) Tahafut, p.279.

[42.](#) Ibid., p.285.

[43.](#) Ibid.

[44.](#) Kitab al-Nafs, p.67.

[45.](#) Ibid., p.68.

[46.](#) Ibid., p.71.

[47.](#) Ibid., p.72.

[48.](#) Ibid., p.74.

[49.](#) Ibid., p.76.

[50.](#) Tahafut, p.281.

[51.](#) Kitab al-Nafs, p.88.

[52.](#) For this summary, see Gilson, op.cit. p.396.

[53.](#) Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, New York, 1954, p.102.

[54.](#) Bertrand Russell, Human Knowledge, London, 1948, p. 472.

[55.](#) Quadri, La Philosophie Arabe, Paris, 1947, p. 204.

[56.](#) Tahafut al-Tahafut, tr. van den Bergh, Vol. I, p. 312.

[57.](#) Ibid., p.313.

[58.](#) Ibid., p.315.

[59.](#) Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatuhu, by Antun Farah, Alexandria, 1903, p. 91. The author began an Arabian Averroism analogous to the Latin Averroism, and wrote articles on Ibn Rushd in his journal al-Jami'ah. When he published this book, he added the discussions of Muhammad 'Abduh and Qasim Amin, the two leaders of recent renaissance in Egypt.

[60.](#) Tahafut al-Tahafut, p.318.

[61.](#) Ibid., p.324.

[62.](#) Ibid., p.318.

[63.](#) Ibid., p.319.

[64.](#) Talkhis ma ba'd al-tabi'ah, Cairo edition by Osman Amin, 1958.

[65.](#) Ibid., p.34.

[66.](#) Ibid., p. 17.

[67.](#) Ibid., pp. 37, 65. On p. 65 Ibn Rushd says: "It is evident that the sensible substances are three: matter, form, and the whole composed of them." Now one would ask, "If sensible substances are composed of matter and form, what do their names denote, the matter, the form, or the composite?" It is clear that the name most probably denotes the whole.

[68.](#) Ibid., pp 40-41 He says: "Some assumed that corporeity means divisibility in dimensions, they thought that dimensions

are more liable to have the name of substance...”. For the doctrine of Ibn Sina, see Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany's book, *Ibn Sina*, Cairo, 1958, pp. 49–50.

[69.](#) Ibid., p.45.

[70.](#) Ibid., p.94.

[71.](#) Ibid., p.86

[72.](#) Ibid., p.94.

[73.](#) Ibid., p.95.

[74.](#) Ibid., p. 124.

[75.](#) Ibid., p. 159.

Chapter 29: Nasir Al-Din Tusi

By Bakhtyar Husain Siddiqi

Life

Khvajah Nasir al-Din Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Hasan, an accomplished scholar, mathematician, astronomer, and Shiite politician of the period of the Mongol invasion on the Assassins and the Caliphate, was born at Tus in 597/1201. After receiving early education from his father and Muhammad b. Hasan, he studied *Fiqh*, *Usul*, *Hikmah* and *Kalam* especially the *Isharat* of Ibn Sina, from Mahdar Farid al-Din Damad, and mathematics from Muhammad Hasib, at Nishapur. He then went to Baghdad, where he studied medicine and philosophy from Qutb al-Din, mathematics from Kamal al-Din b. Yunus, and *Fiqh* and *Usul* from Salim b. Badran. [1](#)

Tusi began his career as an astrologer to Nasir al-Din 'Abd al-Rahim, the Governor of the Isma'ilite mountain fortress of Quhistan during the reign of 'Ala al-Din Muhammad (618–652/1221–1255), the seventh Grand Master (*Khudawand*) of Alamut. His “correspondence” [2](#) with the *wazir* of the last 'Abbasid Caliph, al-Musta`sim (640–656/1242–1258) of Baghdad, was, however, intercepted by his employers, and he was removed to Alamut under close supervision, although he enjoyed there every facility to continue his studies. In 654/1256, he “played” [3](#) the last Assassin ruler Rukn al-Din Khurshah into the hands of Hulagu and then accompanied the latter as his trusted adviser to the conquest of Baghdad in 657/1258. [4](#)

The Maraghah Observatory

Tusi's chief claim to fame rests on his persuading Hulagu to found the celebrated observatory (*rasad khanah*) at Maraghah, Adharbaijan, in 657/1259, which was equipped with the best instruments, “some of them constructed for the first time.” [5](#) Here he compiled the astronomical tables, called *Zij al-Ilkhani*, which “became popular throughout Asia, even in China.” [6](#)

Besides being dedicated to the advancement of astronomy and mathematics in the late seventh/thirteenth century, this observatory was important in three other ways. It was the first observatory the recurring and non-recurring expenditure of which was met out of endowments, thus opening the door for the financing of future observatories.⁷

Secondly, just as Ibn Tufail (d. 581/1185) turned the Court of Caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min into an enviable intellectual galaxy that promoted the cause of knowledge and wisdom in the West, Tusi made the Maraghah observatory a “splendid assembly”⁸ of the men of knowledge and learning by making “special arrangements”⁹ for the teaching of philosophical sciences, besides mathematics and astronomy, and by dedicating the income of endowments to stipends. Thirdly, annexed to the observatory, there was a huge library in which were stored the incorruptible treasures of knowledge looted by the Mongols and Tartars during their invasions on Iraq, Baghdad, Syria, and other territories. According to Ibn Shakir, the library contained more than four hundred thousand volumes.¹⁰

Tusi retained his influential position under Abaqa, Hulagu's successor, uninterrupted until his death in 672/1274.

Works

In an age of widespread political devastation followed by intellectual decline, Hulagu's patronage to Tusi is of singular importance in the history of Muslim thought. The revival and promotion of philosophical sciences in the late seventh/thirteenth century centred round Tusi's personality. To the Persians, he was known as “the teacher of man”¹¹ (*ustad al-bashar*). Bar-Hebraeus regarded him as “a man of vast learning in all the branches of philosophy.”¹² To Ivanow, he appears an “encyclopedist,”¹³ and Afnan thinks him to be “the most competent ... commentator of Avicenna in Persia.”¹⁴

One also cannot help being impressed by the “remarkable industry” displayed by him in “editing and improving”¹⁵ the translations made by Thabit bin Qurrah, Qusta bin Luqa, and Ishaq bin Hunain of Greek mathematicians and astronomers. Brockelmann has enumerated fifty-nine of his extant works,¹⁶ but Ivanow attributes “something like one hundred and fifty works”¹⁷ to him. The list given by Mudarris Ridwi runs to one hundred and thirteen titles, excluding twenty-one the attribution of which to Tusi is doubtful.¹⁸

Himself an accomplished scholar rather than a creative mind, Tusi's position is mainly that of a revivalist and his works are largely eclectic in character. But even as a revivalist and eclectic, he is not lacking in originality, at least in the presentation of his material. His versatility is indeed astonishing. His manifold and varied interests extend to philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, physics, medicine, mineralogy, music, history, literature, and dogmatics. His important philosophical works are listed below.

1. *Asas al-Iqtibas* (logic), 1947.

2. *Mantiq al-Tajrid*, (logic).

3. *Ta'dil al-Mi'yar* (logic).
4. *Tajrid al-'Aqa'id* (dogmatics), Teheran, 1926.
5. *Qawa'id al-'Aqa'id* (dogmatics), Teheran, 1926.
6. *Risaleh-i I'tiqadat* (dogmatics).
7. *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* (ethics).
8. *Ausaf al-Ashraf* (Sufi ethics)
9. *Risaleh dar Ithbat-i Wajib* (metaphysics).
10. *Ithbat-i Jauhar al-Mufariq* (metaphysics).
11. *Risaleh dar Wujud-i Jauhar-i Mujarrad* (metaphysics).
12. *Risaleh dar Ithbat-i 'Aql-i Fa'al* (metaphysics).
13. *Risaleh Darurat-i Marg* (metaphysics).
14. *Risaleh Sudur Kathrat az Wahdat* (metaphysics).
15. *Risaleh 'Ilal wa Ma'lulat* (metaphysics).
16. *Fusul* (metaphysics), Teheran, 1956.
17. *Tasawwurat* (metaphysics), Bombay, 1950.
18. *Talkhis al-Muhassal*, Cairo, 1323/1905.
19. *Hall-i Mushkilat al-Isharat*, Lucknow, 1293/1876.

Akhlaq-i Nasiri

Nothing can be farther from truth than the assertion that *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* of Tusi is a mere “translation”¹⁹ of *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* of Ibn Miskawaih. The author was undoubtedly commissioned by Nasir al-Din 'Abd al-Rahim, the Isma'ilite Governor of Quhistan, to translate the *Kitab al-Taharat (Tahdhib al-Akhlaq)* from Arabic into Persian, but he did not accept the suggestion for fear of “distorting and disfiguring the original.”²⁰

Besides, Ibn Miskawaih's effort is confined to the description of moral discipline; the domestic and political disciplines are altogether missing in his work. These, according to Tusi, are equally important aspects of “practical philosophy” and, therefore, are not to be ignored. With this in mind, Tusi compiled *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* on the following pattern.

With regard to content, the part on moral philosophy is a “summary”²¹ and not a translation of *Kitab al-Taharat*, but the form, the arrangement of topics, and the classification of subjects is Tusi's own, which apparently give an air of originality to it.

For the parts on domestic and political philosophy, Tusi is greatly indebted to Ibn Sina²² and Farabi,²³ and yet the mere addition of these two parts which completed practical philosophy (*hikmat-i 'amali*) in all

its details, if not anything else, justifies Tusi's claim that *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* was written "not on the style of imitation nor in the spirit of translation, but as an original venture."²⁴

Ethics

Following Ibn Miskawaih, Tusi regards ultimate happiness (*sa`adat-i quswa*) as the chief moral end, which is determined by the place and position of man in the cosmic evolution, and realized through his amenability to discipline and obedience. The concept of ultimate happiness is intrinsically different from the Aristotelian idea of happiness which is devoid of the "celestial element"²⁵ and also has no reference to the cosmic position of man.

The Platonic virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice (derived from the trinity of the soul – reason, ire, and desire) and their differentiation into seven, eleven, twelve, and nineteen species respectively, given by Ibn Miskawaih, figure prominently in Tusi's ethics, the only difference being that he reduced the last nineteen to twelve.

But following Aristotle's distinction in the soul of theoretical reason, practical reason, ire, and desire, and, unlike Ibn Miskawaih, he deduces justice from the culture of practical reason²⁶ without disclaiming the Platonic view of the proper and harmonious functioning of the triple powers of the soul. Unlike Aristotle and like Ibn Miskawaih, he ranks benevolence²⁷ (*tafaddul*) higher than justice, and love (*mahabbah*) as a natural source of unity, higher than benevolence.

Aristotle conceived of vice as an extreme of virtue either on the side of excess or defect. To Galen, vice was a malady of the soul. The Qur'an, after enunciating the general ethical principles of moderation,²⁸ defines vice as a disease of the heart.²⁹

Ibn Miskawaih, after enumerating the eight generic vices of astuteness and stupidity (*safah* and *balahat*), rashness and cowardice (*tahawwur* and *jubun*), indulgence and abstention (*sharrah* and *khumud*), tyranny and sufferance (*jaur* and *mahanat*), on the Aristotelian pattern, describes at length the causes and cures of fear and sorrow. Ibn Miskawaih does not make it clear whether fear and sorrow constitute the excess or deficiency of ire and desire.

This problem is taken up by Tusi, and he finds out a solution for it, befitting his ingenuity. Disease is the deviation of the soul from equipoise (*i`tidal*). Aristotle and following him Ibn Miskawaih had thought of this deviation in terms of quantity (*kammiyyat*) and, therefore, the excess (*ifrat*) and defect (*tafrit*) of a state were for them the only two causes of moral diseases.

Tusi for the first time propounded the view that the deviation is not only quantitative but also qualitative, and to this new type of deviation he gave the name of perversion³⁰ (*rada'at*). Consequently, a moral disease may have one of the three causes: (1) excess, (2) defect, or (3) perversion of reason, ire, or desire. This explains adequately that fear constitutes the perversion of ire, and sorrow, the perversion of

desire.

Equipped with the theory of triple causation of the maladies of the soul, Tusi classifies the fatal diseases of the theoretical reason into perplexity (*hairat*), simple ignorance (*jahl-i basit*), and compound ignorance (*jahl-i murakkab*), constituting its excess,–deficiency, and perversion – a classification which cannot be traced to Ibn Miskawaih.

Perplexity is caused by the inability of the soul to distinguish truth from falsehood due to the conflicting evidence and confusing arguments for and against a controversial issue. As a cure of perplexity, Tusi suggests that a perplexed man should, in the first instance, be made to realize that composition and division, affirmation and denial, i. e., the contraries, being mutually exclusive, cannot exist in one and the same thing at the same time, so that he may be convinced that if a proposition is true, it cannot be false, and if it is false, it cannot be true. After his assimilating this self-evident principle, he may be taught the rules of syllogism to facilitate the detection of fallacies in the arguments.

Simple ignorance consists in a man's lack of knowledge on a subject without his presuming that he knows it. Such ignorance is a precedent condition for acquiring knowledge, but it is fatal to be contented with it. The disease may be cured by bringing home to the patient the fact that intellection and not physical appearance entitles a man to the designation of man, and that an ignorant man is no better than a brute; rather he is worse than that, for the latter can be excused for its absence of reason, he cannot.

Compound ignorance is a man's lack of knowledge on a subject coupled with his presumption that he knows it. In spite of ignorance he does not know that he is ignorant. According to Tusi, it is almost an incurable disease, but devotion to mathematics may perhaps reduce it to simple ignorance.

Tusi regards anger (*ghadab*), cowardice (*jubun*), and fear (*khauf*) as the three prominent diseases of ire (*quwwat-i difa'*) on the side of excess, deficiency, and perversion, respectively. In his analysis of fear, especially the fear of death, and in his elaboration of the seven concomitants and ten causes of anger, he follows Ibn Miskawaih.

Similarly, excess of appetite (*ifrat-i shahwat*) is caused by the excess of desire while levity (*batalat*) results from its deficiency, and sorrow (*huzn*) and jealousy (*hasad*) constitute the perversion of this power. He defines jealousy as one wishing a reverse in the fortune of another, without longing to possess a similar fortune for oneself. Following Ghazali, he also distinguishes between envy³¹ (*ghibtat*) and jealousy, by defining the former as a longing to have the fortune similar to the one possessed by another without wishing any reverse to him. Jealousy consumes virtue as fire consumes fuel, but envy is commendable, if directed to the acquisition of virtues, and condemnable if directed to lust for worldly pleasures.

Tusi regards society as the normal background of moral life, for man is by nature a social being, and his perfection consists in evincing this characteristic of sociability towards his fellow-beings. Love and

friendship, therefore, constitute the vital principles of his moral theory – a theory in which apparently there is no place for the retired and secluded life of an ascetic.

In a later work, *Ausaf al-Ashraf*, however, he approvingly writes of asceticism as a stage in mystical life. He claims no mystic experience and makes it clear in the preface that his effort is a purely intellectual appreciation and rational formulation of the mystic tradition.³² Though not a mystic, he is an advocate of a rational treatment of mysticism. He classifies it into six progressive stages, each stage, excepting the last, having six moral states of its own.

The first stage is that of the preparation for the mystic journey (*suluk*), the necessary requirements of which are faith in God (*iman*), constancy in the faith (*thabat*), firmness of intention (*niyyat*), truthfulness (*sidq*), contemplation of God (*anabat*), and sincerity (*khulus*).

The second stage consists of the renunciation of the worldly connections which obstruct the mystic path. There are six essentials of this stage and these are repentance over sins (*taubah*), asceticism of the will (*zuhd*), indifference to wealth (*faqr*), rigorous practices to subdue irrational desires (*riyadat*), calculation of virtues and vices (*muharabat*), harmony between actions and intentions (*muraqabat*), and piety (*taqwa*).

The third stage of the mystic journey is marked by aloofness (*khalwat*), contemplation (*tafakkur*), fear and sorrow (*khauf* and *huzn*), hope (*rija'*), endurance (*sabr*), and gratitude to God (*shukr*).

The fourth stage covers the experiences of the traveller (*salik*) before reaching the final goal. They are devotion to God (*iradat*), eagerness in devotion (*shauq*), love of God (*mahabbah*), knowledge of God (*ma'ri fat*), unshakeable faith in God (*yaqin*), and tranquillity of the soul (*sukun*).

The fifth stage consists of resignation to God (*tawakkul*), obedience (*rida'*), submission to the divine will (*taslim*), certitude about the oneness of God (*tauhid*), effort for union with God (*wahdat*), and absorption in God (*ittihad*).

In the sixth stage the process of the absorption in God reaches its culmination and the traveller is ultimately lost (*fana'*) into the oneness of God.

Domestic Science

Acknowledging his debt to Ibn Sina,³³ Tusi defines home (*manzil*) as a particular relationship existing between husband and wife, parents and children, master and servant, and wealth and its possessor. The aim of domestic science (*tadbir-i manzil*) is to evolve an efficient system of discipline, conducive to the physical, social, and mental welfare of this primary group, with father as its controlling head. The father's function is to maintain and restore the equipoise of the family, having in view the particular dispositions of the constituents and the dictates of expediency in general.

Wealth is necessary for achieving the basic ends of self-preservation and race-preservation. For its acquisition, Tusi recommends the adoption of noble professions and the achievement of perfection in them, without ever giving way to inequity, infamy, and meanness. Hair-dressing and filth-clearing are, no doubt, mean and repulsive professions, but they are warranted on the ground of social expediency.

Tusi regards the saving of wealth as an act of prudence, provided it is not prompted by greed or miserliness, and does not cause hardship to the constituents of the home or involve the risk of one's integrity and prestige in society. In matters of expenditure, he stands for moderation in general. Nothing should be spent which may smack of extravagance, display, miscalculation or stinginess.

Not gratification of lust, but procreation and protection of property are the basic aims of marriage. Intelligence, integrity, chastity, modesty, shrewdness, tenderness of the heart, and, above all, obedience to husband are the qualities which ought to be sought in a wife. It is good if she is further graced with the qualities of noble birth, wealth, and beauty, but these are absolutely undesirable if not accompanied with intelligence, modesty and chastity.

Administrative expediency requires that the husband should be awe-inspiring. He may be benevolent and magnanimous to his wife, but in the wider interests of the home, he should avoid excessive affection, keep her in seclusion, and should not confide secrets or discuss important matters with her. Polygamy is undesirable because it invariably upsets the whole domestic organization. Women are feeble-minded by nature and psychologically jealous of another partner in the husband's love and fortune.

The concession of polygamy is reluctantly given by Tusi to kings because they are in a position to command unconditional obedience, but even for them it is desirable to avoid it as an act of prudence. Man is to the home as heart is to the body, and as one heart cannot give sustenance to two bodies, so one man cannot manage two homes. So great is the sanctity of home in Tusi's eyes that he even advises people to remain unmarried if they are unfit to enforce family equilibrium.

On the discipline of children, Tusi, following Ibn Miskawaih,³⁴ begins with the inculcation of good morals through praise, reward, and benevolent censure. He is not in favour of frequent reproof and open censure; the former increases the temptation, and the latter leads to audacity. After bringing home to them the rules regarding dining, dressing, conversation, behaviour, and the manner of moving in society, the children should be trained for a particular profession of their own liking. The daughters should be specifically trained to become good wives and mothers in the domestic set-up.

Tusi closes the discussion with the greatest emphasis on the observance of parental rights, as enjoined by Islam. Psychologically speaking, children realize the rights of the father only after attaining the age of discrimination, but those of the mother are evident from the very start of life. From this Tusi concludes that paternal rights are largely mental, while maternal ones are largely physical in character. Thus, to the father one owes unselfish devotion, veneration, obedience, praise, etc., and to the mother, the provision

of food, clothes, and other physical comforts.

Lastly, servants are to home as hands and legs are to man. Tusi recommends that they should be treated benevolently, so that they may be inspired to identify their interests with those of their master. The underlying idea is that they should serve out of love, regard, and hope, and not out of necessity compulsion, and fear, which affect adversely the interests of the home.

To sum up: Home for Tusi is the centre of domestic life. Income, saving, expenditure, and the discipline of wife, children, and servants, all revolve round the general welfare of the family group as a whole.

Politics

Farabi's *Siyasat al-Madinah* and *Ara' Ahl al-Madinat al-Fadilah* form the first attempt towards the philosophical formulation of a political theory in the Muslim world. He used *'ilm al-madani* both in the sense of the civic science and the science of government. Following him, Tusi has also used *siyasat-i mudun* in both of these senses. In fact, his treatment of the need for civic society (*tamaddun*) and the types of social groups and cities is largely derived from Farabi's views on the subject.³⁵

Man is by nature a social being. To substantiate his position, Tusi refers to *insan*, the Arabic word for man, which literally means to be gregarious or associating. Since this natural sociability³⁶ (*uns-i taba'i*) is characteristically human, it follows that the perfection of man consists in evincing this characteristic fully towards his fellow-beings. Civilization is another name for this perfection. It is for this reason that Islam has emphasized the superiority of congregational prayers over those offered in isolation.

The word *tamaddun* is derived from *madinah* (city) which means living together of men belonging to different professions for the purpose of helping one another in their needs. Since no man is self-sufficient, everyone is in need of help and co-operation from others. Wants differ from man to man and the same is true of the motives which induce one to co-operation. Some seek co-operation for the sake of pleasure; others are prompted by the consideration of profit; and still others aim at goodness or virtue. This diversity in the causes of co-operation leads to conflict of interests resulting in aggression and injustice. Thus arises the need for government to keep everyone content with his rightful lot without infringing the legitimate rights of others.

Administration of justice, therefore, is the chief function of a government, which should be headed by a just king, who is the second arbitrator, the first being the divine Law. He can exercise royal discretion in minor details according to the exigencies of time and occasion, but this too should conform to the general principles of the divine Law. Such a king, Tusi concludes, is the vicegerent of God upon earth, and the physician of the world temper.

As to the qualities of this monarch, he should be graced with the nobility of birth, loftiness of purpose, sobriety of judgment, firmness of determination, endurance of hardship, large-heartedness, and

righteous friends. His first and foremost duty is to consolidate the State by creating affection among its friends and disaffection among its enemies, and by promoting unity among the savants, warriors, agriculturists, and business men – the four constituents of the State.

Tusi then proceeds to lay down the principles of war ethics for the guidance of rulers. The enemy should never be taken lightly, however lowly he might be, but at the same time war should be avoided at all costs, even through diplomatic tricks, without resorting to perfidy.³⁷ But if the conflict becomes inevitable, offensive should be taken only in the name of God and that too with the unanimous approval of the army. The army should be led by a man of dashing spirit, sound judgment, and experience in warfare.

Tusi particularly emphasizes the maintenance of an efficient secret service to have vigilance over the movements of the enemy. Again, diplomacy demands that the enemy should, as far as possible, be taken prisoner rather than killed, and there should be no killing after the final victory, for clemency is more befitting a king than vengeance. In the case of a defensive stand, the enemy should be overtaken by ambush or surprise attack, provided the position is strong enough; otherwise no time should be lost in digging trenches building fortresses, and even in negotiating for peace by offering wealth and using diplomatic devices.

Tusi, being the wazir of Hulagu, was well aware of the degeneration of monarchy into absolute despotism, and, therefore, advised the attendants upon kings to avoid seeking close contact with them, for being in their company is in no way better than associating with fire. No office is more perilous than that of a minister to a king, and the minister has no greater safeguard against the jealousies of the Court and the vagaries of the royal mood than his trustworthiness.

The minister should guard jealously the secrets confided to him, and should not be inquisitive about what is withheld from him. Tusi was held in great esteem by the Mongol chief, yet he agrees with Ibn Muqna` , that the closer one may be to the king, the greater should he show his respect to him, so much so that if the king calls him “brother,” he should address him as “lord.”

Source Of Practical Philosophy

According to Tusi, the Qur'anic injunctions relate to man as an individual, as a member of a family, and as an inhabitant of a city or State.³⁸ This threefold division is evidently suggestive of the classification of practical philosophy into ethics, domestics, and politics by Muslim thinkers. The same is true of the content of these sciences; but it is no less true that later on these disciplines were considerably broadened under the influence of Plato and Aristotle. Shushtery's remark that “ethics was the only subject in which the East did not imitate the West,” and that “the only influence which the West could bring to bear upon the East in connection with this subject, was the method of scientific treatment,”³⁹ is more true of domestics and politics, where Greek influence is least traceable, than of ethics proper.

Psychology

Instead of proving the existence of the soul, Tusi starts with the assumption that it is a self-evident reality and as such it needs no proof. Nor is it capable of being proved. In a case like this, reasoning out of one's own existence is a logical impossibility and absurdity, for an argument presupposes an argumentator and a subject for argument, but in this case both are the same, viz., the soul.

Nature of the Soul

The soul is a simple, immaterial substance which perceives by itself. It controls the body through the muscles and sense-organs, but is itself beyond the perception of the bodily instruments. After reproducing Ibn Miskawaih's arguments for the incorporeality of the soul from its indivisibility, its power of assuming fresh forms without losing the previous ones, its conceiving opposite forms at one and the same time, and its correcting sense illusions,⁴⁰ Tusi adds two of his own arguments.

Judgments of logic, physics, mathematics, theology, etc., all exist in one soul without intermingling, and can be recalled with characteristic clarity, which is not possible in a material substance; therefore, soul is an immaterial substance. Again, physical accommodation is limited and finite, so that a hundred persons cannot be accommodated at a place meant for fifty people, but this is not true of the soul. It has, so to say, sufficient capacity to accommodate all the ideas and concepts of the objects it knows, with plenty of room for fresh acquisition.⁴¹ This too proves that the soul is a simple, immaterial substance.

In the common expression "My head, my ear, my eye," the word "my"⁴² indicates the individuality (*huwiyyah*) of the soul, which possesses these organs, and not its incorporeality. The soul does require a body as a means to its perfection, but it is not what it is because of its having a body.

Faalties of the Soul

To the vegetative, animal, and human soul of his predecessors, Tusi adds an imaginative soul which occupies an intermediate position between the animal and the human soul. The human soul is characterized with intellect (*nutq*) which receives knowledge from the first intellect. The intellect is of two kinds, theoretical and practical, as conceived by Aristotle.

Following Kindi, Tusi considers the theoretical intellect to be a potentiality, the realization of which involves four stages, viz., the material intellect (*'aql-i hayulani*), the angelic intellect (*'aql-i malaki*), the active intellect (*'aql-i bi al-fi'l*), and the acquired intellect (*'aql-i mustafad*). It is at the stage of the acquired intellect that every conceptual form potentially contained in the soul becomes apparent to it, like the face of a man reflected in a mirror held before him. The practical intellect, on the other hand, is concerned with voluntary and purposive action. Its potentialities are, therefore, realized through moral, domestic, and political action.

The imaginative soul is concerned with sensuous perceptions, on the one hand, and with rational abstractions, on the other, so that if it is united with the animal soul, it becomes dependent upon it, and decays with it. But if it is associated with the human soul, it becomes independent of the bodily organs, and shares the happiness or misery of the soul with its immortality. After the separation of the soul from the body, a trace of imagination remains in its form, and the punishment and reward of the human soul depend upon this trace (*hai'at*) of what the imaginative soul knew or did in this world.⁴³

The sensitive and calculative imagination of Aristotle apparently constitutes the structure of Tusi's imaginative soul, but his bringing the imaginative soul into relation with an elaborate theory of punishment and reward in the hereafter is his own.

As a matter of tradition handed down from Ibn Sina and Ghazali,⁴⁴ Tusi believes in the localization of functions in the brain. He has located common sense (*hiss-i mushtarak*) in the first ventricle of the brain, perception (*musawwirah*) in the beginning of the first part of the second ventricle, imagination, in the fore part of the third ventricle, and memory in the rear part of the brain.

Metaphysics

According to Tusi, metaphysics proper consists of two parts, the science of divinity (*'ilm-i Ilahi*) and the first philosophy (*falsefah-i ula*). The knowledge of God, intellects, and souls constitutes the science of divinity, and the knowledge of the universe and the universals constitutes the first philosophy. The knowledge of the categories of unity and plurality, necessity and contingency, essence and existence, eternity and transitoriness also forms part of the latter.

Among the accessories (*furu`*) of metaphysics fall the knowledge of prophethood (*nubuwwat*), spiritual leadership (*imamat*), and the Day of Judgment (*qiyamat*). The range of the subject itself suggests that metaphysics is “of the essence of Islamic philosophy and the realm of its chief contribution to the history of ideas.”⁴⁵

God

After denying the logical possibility of atheism and of an ultimate duality, Tusi, unlike Farabi, Ibn Miskawaih, and Ibn Sina, argues that logic and metaphysics miserably fall short of proving the existence of God on rational grounds. God being the ultimate cause of all proofs, and, therefore, the foundation of all logic and metaphysics, is Himself independent of logical proof. Like the fundamental laws of formal logic, He neither requires nor lends Himself to proof. He is an *a priori*, fundamental, necessary, and self-evident principle of cosmic logic, and His existence is to be assumed and postulated rather than proved. From the study of moral life as well, he arrives at a similar conclusion and, like Kant in modern times, regards the existence of God as a fundamental postulate of ethics.

Tusi further argues that proof implies perfect comprehension of the thing to be proved, and since it is

impossible for the finite man to comprehend God in His entirety, it is impossible for him to prove His existence.⁴⁶

Creatio ex nihilo

Whether the world is eternal (*qadim*) or was created by God *ex nihilo* (*hadith*), is one of the most vexing problems of Muslim philosophy. Aristotle advocated the eternity of the world, attributing its motion to the creation of God, the Prime Mover. Ibn Miskawaih agreed with Aristotle in regarding God as the creator of motion but, unlike him, reasoned out that the world, both in its form and matter, was created by God *ex nihilo*.

Tusi in his *Tasawwurat* (written during the period of Isma`ilite patronage) effects a half-hearted reconciliation between Aristotle and Ibn Miskawaih. He begins by criticizing the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. The view that there was a time when the world did not exist and then God created it out of nothing, obviously implies that God was not a creator before the creation of the world or His creative power was still a potentiality which was actualized later, and this is a downright denial of His eternal creativity. Logically, therefore, God was always a creator which implied the existence of creation or world with Him. The world, in other words, is co-eternal with God. Here Tusi closes the discussion abruptly with the remark that the world is eternal by the power of God who perfects it, but in its own right and power, it is created (*muhdath*).

In a later work, *Fusul* (his famous and much commented metaphysical treatise), Tusi abandons the above position altogether and supports the orthodox doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, without any reservation. Classifying Being into the necessary and the possible, he argues that the possible depends for its existence on the necessary; and since it exists by other than itself, it cannot be assumed in a state of existence, for the creation of the existent is impossible and absurd. And that which is not in existence is non-existent, and so the Necessary Being creates the possible out of nothing. Such a process is called creation and the existent, the created (*muhdath*).

Similarly, in *Tasawwurat*, Tusi agrees with Ibn Sina that from one nothing can proceed except one, and following this principle explains the emanation (*sudur*) of the world from the Necessary Being after the Neo-Platonic fashion. In *Risaleh-i `Aql*, *Risaleh-i `Ilal wa Ma`lulat*, and *Sharh-i Isharat* too, he supports, both logically and mathematically, pluralization in the creative process taken as a whole. But in later works, *Qawa'id at-`Aqa'id*, *Tajrid al-`Aqa'id*, and *Fusul*, he evidently attacks and blows up the very foundation of this principle, once held so dearly by him.

The reflection of the first intellect is said to have created the intellect, soul, and body of the first sphere. This position, he now points out, obviously implies plurality in what is created by the first intellect, which goes against the principle that from one nothing can proceed except one. As to the source of plurality, he further argues that it exists either by the authority of God or without His authority. If it exists by the authority of God, then there is no doubt that it has come from God. If, on the other hand, it exists without

the authority of God, that would mean the setting up of another god besides God.[47](#)

Again, in *Tasawwurat*, Tusi holds the view that God's reflection is equivalent to creation and is the outcome of His self-conscious necessity. But in *Fusul*, he abandons this position as well. He now regards God as a free creator and blows up the theory of creation out of necessity. If God creates out of necessity, he argues, His actions should spring out of His essence. Thus, if a part of the world becomes non-existent, the essence of God should also pass into nothingness; for the cause of its non-existence is conditioned by the non-existence of a part of its cause, the non-existence of which is further determined by the non-existence of the other parts of its cause and so on. And since all existents depend for their existence on the necessity of God, their nonexistence ultimately leads to the non-existence of God Himself.[48](#)

Prophethood

After establishing freedom of the will and resurrection of the body, Tusi proceeds to establish the necessity of prophethood and spiritual leadership. Conflict of interests coupled with individual liberty results in the disintegration of social life, and this necessitates a divine Code from God for the regulation of human affairs. But God Himself is beyond all sensory apprehension; therefore, He sends prophets for the guidance of peoples. This, in turn, makes necessary the institution of spiritual leadership after the prophets to enforce the divine Code.

Good And Evil

Good and evil are found mixed up in this world. The obtrusiveness of evil is inconsistent with the benevolence of God. To avoid this difficulty, Zoroastrians attributed light and good to Yazdan and darkness and evil to Ahriman. But the existence of two equal and independent principles itself involves a metaphysical inconsistency. Rejecting the view on this ground, Tusi explains away the reality and objectivity of evil with the enthusiasm of Ibn Sina, his spiritual progenitor.

According to Tusi, the good proceeds from God and the evil springs up as an accident (*'ard*) in its way. The good, for instance, is a grain of wheat thrown into the soil and watered, so that it grows into a plant and yields a rich crop. The evil is like the foam which appears on the surface of the water. The foam evidently comes from the water-courses and not from the water itself. Thus, there is no evil principle in the world, but as an accident it is a necessary concomitant or by-product of matter.

In the human world, evil is occasioned by an error of judgment or through a misuse of the divine gift of free-will. God by Himself aims at universal good, but the veils of the senses, imagination, fancy and thought hang before our sight and cloud the mental vision. Thus, prudence fails to foresee the consequences of actions, resulting in wrong choice, which in turn begets evil.

Again, our judgment of evil is always relative and metaphorical, that is, it is always with reference to

something. When, for instance, fire burns a poor man's cottage or flood sweeps away a village, a verdict of evil is invariably passed on fire and water. But in reality there is nothing evil in fire or water; rather their absence would constitute an absolute evil in comparison to the partial evil occasionally caused by their presence.

Lastly, evil is the outcome of ignorance, or the result of some physical disability, or the lack of something which provides for the good. The absence of day is night, the lack of wealth is poverty, and the absence of good is evil. In essence, therefore, evil is the absence of something – a negative, not a positive something.[49](#)

To the question why a finite sin is dealt with infinite punishment by God, Tusi replies that it is a mistake to attribute either reward or punishment to God. Just as the virtuous, by nature and necessity, deserve eternal bliss and happiness, so the vicious by nature and necessity deserve eternal punishment and despair.

Logic

On logic, his works include *Asas al-Iqtibas*, *Sharh-i Mantiq al-Isharat*, *Ta'dil al-Mi`yar*, and *Tajrid fi al-Mantiq*. The first of these gives a comprehensive and lucid account of the subject in Persian on the lines of Ibn Sina's logic in *al-Shifa'*.

Tusi regards logic both as a science and as an instrument of science. As a science, it aims at the cognition of meanings and that of the quality of the meanings cognized; as an instrument, it is the key to the understanding of different sciences. When knowledge of meanings as well as of the quality of meanings becomes so ingrained in the mind that it no longer requires the exercise of thought and reflection, the science of logic becomes a useful art (*san`at*), freeing the mind from misunderstanding, on the one hand, and perplexity, on the other.[50](#)

Having defined logic, Tusi, like Ibn Sina, begins with a brief discussion of the theory of knowledge. All knowledge is either a concept (*tasawwur*) or a judgment (*tasdiq*); the former is acquired through definition and the latter through syllogism. Thus, definition and syllogism are the two instruments with which knowledge is acquired.

Unlike Aristotle, Ibn Sina had divided all syllogisms into the copulative (*iqtirani*) and the exceptive (*istithna'*). Tusi has followed this division and elaborated it in his own way. His logical works are Aristotelian in general outline, but he mentions four[51](#) instead of three syllogistic figures; and the source of this fourth figure is found neither in the *Organon* of Aristotle nor in any of the logical works of Ibn Sina.[52](#)

Review

Tusi, as we have already seen, owes his ethics to Ibn Miskawaih and politics to Farabi; but neither of them reaches the depth and the extent of Ibn Sina's influence over him. Tusi's logic, metaphysics, psychology, domestics, and dogmatics – all are substantially borrowed from him. Besides, his long though casual connection with the Nizari Isma'ilites also influenced his ethical, psychological, and metaphysical speculations.

Historically speaking, his position is mainly that of a revivalist. But from the standpoint of the history of culture, even the revival of the philosophical and scientific tradition, especially in an era of political and intellectual decline, though marked by tiresome erudition and repetition, is no less important than origination, inasmuch as it prepares the ground for the intellectual rebirth of a nation.

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1. Zand's article on Tusi in Hilal, November 1956, Karachi.
2. Ivanow, Tasawwurat, p. xxv.
3. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. IV, p. 980.
4. After passing into the service of Hulagu, Tusi, in the preface to Zij al-Ilkhani, referred to his connection with the Isma'illites as "casual" (Ivanow, op cit., p xxv) and also "rescinded" the dedication of Akhlaq-i Nasiri to Nasir al-Din 'Abd al-Rahim, his Isma'ili patron at Quhistan (Browne, Literary History of Persia, Vol. II, p. 456)
5. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. IV, 981.
6. P. K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, p. 378.
7. Aidin Sayili's article in Yadnameh-i Tusi, Teheran University, Teheran, 1957, p. 61.
8. Hukuma'-i Islam, Vol.II, p.256.
9. Yadnameh-i Tusi, p.66.
10. Browne, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 485.
11. Asas al-Iqtibas, p.YB.
12. Browne, op. cit, Vol. III, p. 18.
13. Ivanow, op.cit., p. lxxv.
14. Afnan, Avicenna, p.244.
15. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. IV, p. 981.
16. Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur, Suppl., Vol. 1, pp. 670-76.
17. Ivanow, op. cit., p. xxvi.
18. Asas, pp. YJ-YH
19. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. I, p. 933.
20. Akhlaq-i Nasiri, p. 5.
21. Ibid., p.6.
22. Ibid., p. 145.
23. Ibid., p. 175.
24. Ibid., p.6.
25. Ibid., p.44.
26. Ibid., p.61.
27. Aristotle regards "prodigality" as the extreme of liberality on the side of excess, and hence a positive vice, although it is for him "no sign of meanness, but only of folly" (Nichomachean Ethics, p. 105).
28. Qur'an, ii, 190; v,2.
29. Ibid., ii, 10.
30. Akhlaq-i Nasiri, p. 114.
31. Ghazali, Ihya', Vol.III, Chap.III
32. Ausaf al-Ashraf, p.1
33. Akhlaq-i Nasiri, p. 145. The treatise referred to by Tusi is Kitab al-Siyasat, ed. Ma'luf, Beirut, 1911.
34. Tahdhib al-Akhlaq, pp.46-54.
35. Ara' Ahl al-Madinat al-Fadilah, pp. 53-85; Siyasat at-Madaniyyah, pp. 1-76.
36. Compare this theory of natural sociability with Hobbes' view of man as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Roger, Students' History of Philosophy, p. 245).
37. Compare it with Machiavellian ethics of "force and fraud." "A ruler will perish if he is always good. He must be as cunning as a fox and as fierce as a lion" (Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy, p. 528).
38. Akhlaq-i Nasiri, p. 10.
39. Outlines of Islamic Culture, Vol. II, p. 441
40. Tahdhib al-Akhlaq, pp.3-7.
41. Tasawwurat, p.25.
42. Every body belongs to a soul, according to this argument. In modern times, William James too has used the same argument to prove that every thought belongs to a mind. "It seems as if the elementary psychic facts were not thought, this

thought or that thought, but my thought, every thought being owned.” W. James, Psychology (Briefer Course), p. 153

[43.](#) Tasawwurat, p.23.

[44.](#) Ghazali has located retention (hafizah) in the first ventricle (tajwif) of the fore part of the brain, imagination (wahmiyyah) in the middle ventricle of the brain, thought (tafakkur) in the middle of the brain, and recollection (tadhakkur) in the rear verticle of the brain. (Mizan al-`Amal, p. 25.).

[45.](#) Afnan, op.cit., p. 106.

[46.](#) Tasawwurat, p.8.

[47.](#) Fusul, p. 18.

[48.](#) Ibid., pp. 16–18.

[49.](#) Tasawwurat, p.44.

[50.](#) Asas al-Iqtibas, p.5.

[51.](#) Ibid., p.379.

[52.](#) Afnan, op.cit., p. 101.

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