

The Study of Islamic Philosophy

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The Study of Islamic Philosophy

For a long time Islamic philosophy was under a cloud of doubt and uncertainty. Some people denied its existence while others affirmed it. This uncertainty continued all through the nineteenth century. Those who denied the very existence of an Islamic philosophy feigned ignorance and maintained that the teachings of Islam opposed all free discussion and investigation, and therefore Islam has never risen to the aid of philosophy and science throughout the centuries of its existence.

The only fruits Islam has borne for its followers have been intellectual despotism and dogmatism, they said. Christianity, in comparison, has been the cradle of free thought and discussion, they maintained, patronizing art and literature, encouraging the sciences, and becoming a fertile ground for the germination of new philosophy and helping it to develop and bear fruit. [1](#)

1. Racial Prejudice

Those who attacked and denigrated Islamic philosophy did not stop at the kind of arguments that have been mentioned. They went much further and extended their fallacious notions to general racial characteristics, and extended what they said about philosophy and learning to political matters. It is surprising that although the French politically opposed racial discrimination, they were among the people who sowed the seeds of this kind of attitude, the effects of which have continued well into the present century.

For example, Renan was the first person who openly stated the view that the Semitic race is inferior to the Aryan race.² This judgement of Renan's had an effect on some of his contemporaries, and some of his disciples and students repeated his views and published them far and wide. This was because Renan was both an unequalled master of the Semitic languages and was more familiar with Islamic matters than other researchers of his day.

Advancing the notions of the 'Semitic spirit' in contrast to the 'Aryan spirit' by Leon Gauthier during the early part of the twentieth century was nothing other than the continuation of the argument made by Renan. In Gauthier's view, the Semitic mind is only capable of comprehending details and particulars which are disconnected with each other or are combined and incapable of conceiving any coherent order or relationship between details.

In other words, the 'Semitic spirit' is that of division and separation, or in Gauthier's words, *esprit separatiste*. The 'Aryan spirit' on the other hand, is the spirit of integration and synthesis, *esprit fusionniste*, as he calls it.³

It follows naturally that since the Arabs are inherently able to understand only particulars and isolated facts, they would be unable to form any theories, propositions, laws or hypotheses. It would be futile therefore to look for any philosophical or scientific investigations on their part. This is especially true now when Islam has narrowed their intellectual horizons and closed the doors to any speculative discussions, so much so that the Muslim student denigrates and ridicules science and philosophy.⁴

Those who stated such views, held that Islamic philosophy is simply an imitation of Aristotelian philosophy, and Islamic philosophical texts are nothing other than repetitions of Greek ideas in Arabic.⁵

The views of Renan, which I have just mentioned, were widespread during the nineteenth century. Fortunately the days when the habits, customs, ethical, moral, and intellectual characteristics of a nation were thought to be products of either its geographical conditions or racially inherited traits have passed. Other attempts in the same vein of formulating so-called 'national psychology' or 'group psychology' proved equally futile.

Moreover, who has claimed that Islamic philosophy is a creation of Arab thinking? It is a well established

fact that many nationalities such as the Persians, Indians, Turks, Egyptians, Syrians, Barbarians, and Andalusians contributed to the development and enrichment of Islamic philosophy.

Islamic civilisation at its zenith not only did not block the path of science, it both confirmed and encouraged it. And far from opposing philosophy, it welcomed and embraced it with open arms. It welcomed opinions and views of every shade and colour.

How can Islam, which invites mankind to observe the heavens and the earth and to contemplate and meditate upon their mysteries, oppose discussion and inquiry and restrict the freedom of thought? Even Renan, who expressed the kind of views about Islamic philosophy and science that we have already mentioned, has confessed elsewhere that Muslims treated conquered peoples with an indulgence unheard of throughout history.

For example, some among the Jews and Christians accepted Islam while others preserved their ancestral faith and attained to high and honoured official positions in the courts of the Muslim caliphs and rulers. Moreover, although Muslims differed with the Jews and the Christians in regard to beliefs and religious principles, they still married in those communities.[6](#)

Of course, this is not the first time that this French historian and philologist has contradicted himself. In one place he denies the very existence of such a thing as an Arab (Islamic) philosophy and says: "The only thing that the Arabs (Muslims) accomplished was to learn a Greek encyclopedia of the seventh and eighth centuries."[7](#)

Then he goes on to contradict his denial and asserts that there is a uniquely Islamic philosophy whose special characteristics must be given attention. He confesses that, "the Arabs (Muslims), like the Latins, through engaging in interpretation of Aristotle's works learned how to formulate a philosophy full of peculiar characteristics and elements in serious opposition to what was taught at the Lyceum."[8](#)

He then adds that "The original movement in Islamic philosophy should be sought in the various schools of the Mutakallimun (theologians)."[9](#)

These contradictory statements of Renan's and the negligence evident in his works did not remain hidden from Dugat, one of his contemporaries. Dugat believed that the quality of thought such as witnessed in Ibn Sina could not result in anything other than original and sophisticated interpretations and views: and the schools of thought such as that of the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites are nothing other than original creations of Islamic thought.[10](#)

In the twentieth century what was expressed in the form of guess and speculation by men like Dugat was found to be irrefutable and proven fact. Researchers became gradually more familiar with Islamic topics than before, and their understanding of the original and unique characteristics of Islamic thought gradually increased. As they came to know more about Islam, their judgement of it became fairer and more even-handed.

The truth of the matter is that the malicious intent of the nineteenth century European scholars was quite evident in their handling of various Islamic topics; because, while on the one hand they admitted that “the works of the Islamic philosophers have not been adequately studied and our knowledge of their substance and content of their writings is incomplete,”¹¹ in the next breath they made the most general and blanket statements and judgements on it and said that Islamic philosophy is nothing other than an imitation of Aristotle.

It is well to keep in mind that these scholars had no direct access to Islamic philosophy because they did not have the original texts at their disposal, while the Latin translations could not give a full and accurate portrayal of the scope and depth of this philosophy. Today, however, we can speak with complete certainty of the accomplishments which the Islamic civilization had made in this regard and still claim that there are a large number of topics in Islamic thought which have not yet been fully investigated and discussed.

As to the question of whether we should call this philosophy “Islamic” or “Arab”, such questions are nothing but futile arguments over words and names. This philosophy developed and grew in an Islamic environment and was written in the Arabic language. The fact however that these thoughts were written in Arabic does not mean that Islamic philosophy is a creation of the Arab element.

We who have already condemned racism have never claimed any such things. Islam gathered in its fold numerous nationalities and all of them contributed to the growth and development of its thought. And as for this philosophy being called “Islamic”, it can not be claimed that it is the product of the intellectual efforts of the Muslims alone, since such a claim would not sit well with the historical evidence available. Historical records show that the earliest teachers of the Muslims were Nestorian, Jacobites, Jews, and Sabaeans, and that Muslim scholars cooperated with their Nestorian and Jewish contemporaries in their philosophical and scientific investigations.

In any case, I am inclined to call this philosophy “Islamic” because of two reasons. Firstly, Islam is not just a religion it is also a civilization; and the topics of Islamic philosophy, despite the variety of its sources and backgrounds of writers, are rooted in the Islamic civilization. Secondly, the problems, the foundations, and aims of this philosophy are all Islamic, and it was Islam that formed this cohesive philosophy by gathering teachings and views belonging to many different cultures and schools of thought.

2. Islamic Philosophy

Islamic philosophy is unique in the sort of topics and issues with which it deals, the sort of problems it attempts to solve and the methods it uses in order to solve them

Islamic philosophy concerned itself with such matters as the problem of unity and multiplicity, the relationship between God and the world, both of which had been subjects of heated controversies and

discussions among the theologians for a long time. [12](#)

Another aim of this philosophy was to reconcile revelation with reason, knowledge with faith, and religion with philosophy, and to show that reason and revelation do not contradict each other, and that religion would be accepted by the pagan when it is illuminated by the light of philosophic wisdom. It aimed to prove also that when religion embraces philosophy it takes on philosophical qualities just as philosophy too assumes the colour of religion. In all, Islamic philosophy is a creature of the environment in which it grew and flourished, and as is quite obvious, it is a religious and spiritual philosophy.

(a) Topics

Although Islamic philosophy is religiously oriented, it has not ignored any major philosophical issues. For example, it has extensively discussed the problem of being, and defended its position on issues like time, space, matter, and life. Its treatment of epistemology is both unique and comprehensive.

It drew distinction between the self (nafs) and reason, inborn and acquired qualities, accuracy and error, surmise and certain knowledge. It has investigated the question of what is virtue and happiness and divided virtues into a number of categories and reached the conclusion that the highest virtue is uninterrupted contemplation and serene realization of the Truth.

Muslim thinkers divided philosophy into the two generally accepted categories of 'speculative' and 'practical' and their discussions extended over varied topics such as natural philosophy, mathematics, metaphysics, ethics and politics. [13](#)

Evidently, the Islamic thinkers believed philosophy to have a much greater scope than is generally given it today, and in this regard their work was similar to that of the Greek philosophers, specially Aristotle, whom they imitated and followed. Thus, Islamic philosophy was intermingled with medicine, biology, chemistry, botany, astronomy and music. Generally speaking, all the fields of science were considered to be nothing other than branches of philosophy.

Considering all that has been said, it would not be an overstatement to claim that Islamic philosophy encompasses all the various aspects of Islamic culture. It should, of course, be kept in mind that during the ages when Islamic philosophy was developing and maturing, learning and investigation were carried out in an encyclopedic and all-round manner.

Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that the full range of Islamic philosophical thought cannot be fully accessible through the study of philosophical texts alone. In order that a full understanding be attained, it is necessary to expand the range of investigation and research to include discussion of theology (*kalam*) and mysticism (*tasawwuf*).

It might even be necessary to relate any discussion of Islamic philosophy to the history of Islamic Law and the principles of jurisprudence. It is not rare to discover philosophical ideas, concepts, and views in

what are ostensibly Islamic scientific texts dealing with such topics as medicine, geometry, chemistry, and astronomy.

Furthermore, some Muslim scientists showed more courage and freedom in expressing philosophical views than that shown by those specializing in the field of philosophy. Also, amongst Islamic mystical and theological discussions, views and positions are encountered which in their profundity and precision equal any found amongst the Aristotelians.

These Muslim thinkers challenged Aristotle's philosophy and struggled against it for many years. This struggle led to the emergence of a distinctive Islamic philosophy and thought. Later on a certain methodology and forms of rational analysis were introduced into discussions about the foundations of Islamic law and the principles of jurisprudence which have a distinctly perceptible philosophical tinge. It is even possible to uncover in their involved procedures, rules and methods similar to those in use today.

(b) Islamic Philosophy and Christian Scholasticism

What we have already said may give an idea of the wide scope of philosophical thought in Islam. And it would be a mistake to limit ourselves—as the nineteenth century European scholars did—to the study of a few scattered Latin and Hebrew translations. In fact, if the depth and the scope of Muslim philosophers' thinking is ever to be clearly and fully understood, it must be done through an examination of the original sources themselves.

However, even though not all the original texts have as yet been published and subjected to research, enough is known to convince us that the material gathered by the Muslim thinkers of the Middle Ages was greater than that gathered by the Christian scholars of that era, that the Muslim thinkers explored wider horizons, enjoyed more complete freedom, and made greater inventions and discoveries than their Christian counterparts.

If, therefore, one is to speak of a Christian philosophy, or as it is better known, of Christian Scholasticism, it would be more apt to speak first of an Islamic philosophy and an Islamic Scholasticism, especially since Christian Scholastic thought owes much to Islamic Scholasticism for developing and clarifying many of its problems and issues. [14](#)

Islamic philosophy is to the East what Latin philosophy is to the West. The combination of these two philosophical traditions plus the scientific investigations carried out by Jewish scholars complete the history of speculative thought of the Middle Ages.

In order that the true place of Islamic philosophy can clearly be understood, and a full understanding of the various stages in the development of human thought be attained, it is essential that we investigate the relationship of the Islamic philosophy with ancient, medieval, and modern philosophies.

(c) The Islamic and the Greek Philosophies

We do not deny the fact that philosophical thought in Islam has been influenced by Greek philosophy and that Islamic philosophers have mostly adopted Aristotle's views. Nor do we deny that Islamic thinkers looked upon Plotinus with wonder and followed him in many instances.

If a word is not repeated it dies, and who has not been an apprentice at the school of his predecessors? We, the children of the twentieth century, are still relying on the scientific work done by the Greeks and Romans in a number of fields.

If, however, we should go so far as to label the use and join the chorus sung by the likes of Renan who claims that Islamic philosophy is nothing other than a replica of Aristotelian philosophy, or of some others who say that it is an exact copy of Neo-Platonic philosophy, we would be completely mistaken.¹⁵ The truth of the matter is that Islamic philosophy has been influenced by a number of factors, the result of which was birth of new ideas and views. Just as it has been influenced by Greek thought, it has also been influenced by the Indian and Persian cultural traditions.

The exchange and adoption of ideas do not always imply blind obedience. Several individuals may examine a particular topic and the result of their investigations may appear in a number of forms. A philosopher may utilize some of the ideas of another philosopher but this does not prevent him from giving birth to new ideas or to wholly new philosophical systems.

Spinoza, for example, even though clearly followed Descartes, was the originator of an independent philosophical system of his own, and Ibn Sina, even though a loyal disciple of Aristotle, put forth views never professed by his master. Each of the Islamic philosophers lived in a particular environment distinct from the environment of the other, and it would be a mistake if we ignore the influence that these particular circumstances have had on their philosophical ideas and views.

Thus the Muslim world could have a philosophy appropriate to its social conditions and religious principles. As to what the nature of this philosophy is, only an extensive discussion and analysis of its main ideas and principles could provide us with the answer.

(d) Islamic Philosophy and Modern Philosophy

It is not possible for us to adequately discuss the relationship of Islamic philosophy with modern philosophy in this article and speak of the chain of ideas that relate these two together. This is specially true since repeated attempts have been made during the middle of the present century to discover the principles of modern philosophy and their roots in Christian Scholasticism.

Today, when we are aware, of the relationship between modern and medieval philosophy, on the one hand, and the influence of Islamic philosophy on European medieval thought on the other, how is it possible to ignore the influence that Islamic thought has had on modern philosophy? In this study we

shall discuss some examples of this influence and relation. As we shall prove, the similarity between Islamic philosophy and modern philosophy is so strong that one may speak of the existence of a kind of kinship between them.

Without going into details we can say that the history of modern philosophy originates with the consideration of two important issues: firstly, the significance of the experimental aspect, which deals with matters related to external reality; secondly speculation, which is concerned with the rational sciences.

In other words, the experience of Bacon on the one hand and the doubt of Descartes on the other, have been the subjects of discussion and controversy in the modern age. Moreover, it has been pointed out before that Christian Scholastic thinkers and the Renaissance philosophers engaged in experimentation and paid attention to the world of nature a long time before Bacon.

Roger Bacon, whom Renan calls “the real prince of thought during the middle ages” did not limit himself to carrying out chemical experiments but widened the scope of his experiments to include the world of nature.

Now if it can be shown that he had contact with the works of Islamic scientists, we can conclude that his experimental approach, or rather the origin of experimentation during the Renaissance, were both products of Islamic thought and Muslim thinkers, because they were the ones who used observatories and laboratories in order to discover scientific truths.

As for the Cartesian doubt, there is evidence that it had some precedence during the Christian Middle Ages and we believe that any study of the origin of Cartesian doubt will remain defective without any attempt to discover it in Islamic philosophy.

Who can say that the doubt of Descartes is not wholly or partially influenced by the doubt of Al-Ghazzali? Even if we set aside the question of influence, the two philosophers are still found to think in parallel and similar terms. Elsewhere in our discussions we have shown that Descartes' “cogito” is not entirely inspired by St. Augustine and that there is much similarity between it and Ibn Sina's idea of “man suspended in space.” [16](#)

In short, since Christian and Jewish Scholasticism—which is closely related to the Islamic world—is the link connecting Islamic philosophy to modern philosophical speculation, the probability of transfer and exchange of ideas cannot be denied.

Indeed it would amount to hasty generalization if, without having first properly investigated and studied the issue, we were to say that there have been no connections between the East and the West in regard to the world of thought and philosophic and rational speculation.

It has been proven today that an exchange dating back to the ancient times did exist and it was renewed

during the middle ages. What is there then to stop such a connection from existing today? Ideas and opinions cannot be imprisoned in limited geographical boundaries, their movement cannot be restricted. What was once referred to as the secret of the atom, is common scientific knowledge today in all parts of the world.

Viewpoints of Islamic Philosophy

We cannot find any example of a full and complete study of Islamic philosophy either in the East or in the West before the middle of the nineteenth century. This is so because whenever the Western scholar turned his attention to the study of matters relating to the East, it was mostly with the economic or political aspects that he was concerned, not with the cultural aspect.

If we encounter any instances of such cultural studies in the eighteenth century or the early part of the nineteenth century, it is mostly based on Latin sources. As for the Easterners, they were so lost in economic and political difficulties during this period that they had no interest in keeping alive their ancient culture or revitalizing their Islamic heritage.

(a) The Movement of Orientalism

In the second half of the nineteenth century the European Orientalists became interested in Islamic subjects and became vanguards of a movement that rapidly developed and reached its zenith during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Some of these European scholars even travelled to the East and studied in its schools in order to better understand the spiritual and intellectual life of the Orient.

Europe and America competed with each other in the publication of Islamic culture. Schools where Oriental languages were taught, and colleges where Islamic subjects were studied were established in Paris, Rome, London, and Berlin. Scholarly and historical societies were formed for the sole purpose of investigating and examining the various aspects of Islamic civilization.

Periodically, seminars were held by Orientalists, where valuable presentations and discussions occurred. At the same time, learned and scholarly journals and publications were devoted to the study of Oriental subjects. These debates, discussions and exchanges of views, caused the cloud of ignorance and confusion to be scattered and the facts of the matter to be more clearly perceived.

This Orientalist movement had welcome results. Texts unknown up to the time were discovered. Precious manuscripts of texts were published. The new techniques of publication of books accompanied with notes and indices came into widespread usage, and a number of the most important works in the libraries of the Muslim world were translated into living European languages such as Italian, French, English and German.

The publishing of such translated works in turn stimulated interest and discussion in various aspects of Islamic civilization such as politics, economics, history, literature, Quranic interpretation and exegesis,

science and philosophy all of which received brief treatment in articles published in scholarly journals and were dealt with extensively in books.

Research and study increased in proportion to the level of knowledge and information that became available. Scholars and investigators fell into the habit of spending years in scholarly research in order to clarify hidden or poorly understood points. Such intensive researches led various groups of scholars to specialize in different aspects of the Islamic civilization.

Some became experts in the Arabic language and Islamic literature while others became specialists in Islamic theology and jurisprudence. Still a third group concentrated on Muslim mysticism, while a fourth group delved deep into the field of Islamic science and philosophy. The fruit of this expansion and specialization in the field of Islamic studies was the Encyclopedia of Islam which was published in French, German and English languages.

This book is itself the clear proof of the extensive knowledge of Islam gathered by the Orientalists and their intense interest in Islamic culture and civilization. The Encyclopedia of Islam is indeed a rich and important source of information indispensable for every researcher of Islamic subjects.

The East was also influenced by the work of the Western Orientalists. The scholars of the East adopted many of their views, translated many of their texts, and following the path paved by them, became their partners in reviving the glory and brilliance of Eastern culture.

They also finished what had been left incomplete by the Western Orientalists or filled in gaps left in their treatment of various subjects. These contributions, although small in each instance, were spread over a wide range, so that none of the aspects of Islamic culture were ignored. Still what has been done is only the beginning of an effort that must grow and expand.

(b) The Orientalists And Philosophy

Philosophy was not left out of the general trend described above. Texts written by Muslim philosophers, which had remained in their original manuscript form, were published and the original Arabic versions were compared with the Hebrew and Latin translations of them which were extant. The study of their notes and commentaries helped a great deal in solving any problems which may have existed in regard to their meaning.

Without the efforts of the Orientalists, these books would have remained in some corner of a library, unread, gathering dust. And if it were not for the fact that they understood a number of ancient and modern languages and possessed a correct methodology, the works published by them would not have been characterized by such care and authenticity.

The work of the European Orientalists was not limited to the printing and publication of books; they tried to discover and explore the whole horizon of intellectual life in Islam and to write about it. For instance,

they wrote about the history of Islamic philosophy and philosophers, theology and the theologians, Sufism and the Sufies and described the various sects and schools of thought found in Islam.

Sometimes they investigated the life, opinions and views of one individual. At other times they wrote books about scientific terms and definitions, so that their names were inseparably linked with the subject of their specialization.

Who, for example, on hearing the name of Nicholson is not reminded of *tasawwuf*? It would be outside of the scope of this work to mention all the Orientalists alongside the subjects of their specialization which made them famous. It would suffice to say that Orientalism possessed a unique vigour and vitality during the first quarter of the present century which also included the study and investigation of speculative subjects.

In spite of all this, the history of Islamic philosophy and the views of its most eminent thinkers are as yet insufficiently understood and it is the missing link in the chain of human intellectual history. We still do not know exactly how this philosophy came into existence, what was the manner of its development, what factors caused its flourishing and flowering, and what were the causes of its decay.

Nor has the work of the Islamic philosophers ever been scrutinized one by one so as to show how much each one of them borrowed or inherited from his predecessors and how much of his philosophy was the result of his own original thought. The sad truth of the matter is that the shining stars of Islamic philosophy are strangers in their own lands and to their own people.

What better proof of this than the fact that many of us Easterners know more about Rousseau and Spencer than about Al-Kindi and Al-Farabi? And if God had not so decreed that a group of Orientalists should make a study of them, today we would have known nothing useful about these great figures.

The work of the Orientalists, however, is too limited in scope to adequately deal with a subject such as Islamic philosophy. Moreover, in some cases they contain either literal or technical errors, or are deficient in some other manner. Sometimes these studies are so brief that it is not possible to fathom the intent of their writers.

Perhaps the cause of all these difficulties is that some of the scholars who have investigated Islamic philosophy do not understand the Arabic language sufficiently and have not mastered the history of Islamic culture. Others, not lacking in any of the aforementioned aspects are completely ignorant of the history of Islamic philosophy.

There are, of course, brilliant exceptions to this general weakness. Two examples of such beautiful and informative works are Van den Bergh's translation of the *Metaphysics* of Ibn Rushd, and De Boer's *History of Islamic Philosophy*. One cannot read Van den Bergh's book and not feel that he is reading a philosopher commenting on philosophy. And one cannot read De Boer's book without wishing that he had made it a much larger work. [17](#)

Of course, much time has passed since the publication of the books mentioned above and the other works by the Orientalists. They are thus in need of revision, and the conclusions reached in them must be reexamined in the light of the far greater knowledge of Islamic thought now available. This is especially true since the more access we have attained to the original manuscripts, the greater was the rapidity by which our problems have been solved and our mistakes corrected.

Although the history of the efforts to gather the inheritance of Islamic tradition and attempts to revitalize the Islamic civilization date back only to the beginning of the twentieth century, a great deal of progress has been made and much material has been made available to the researcher. Nevertheless, the need for new analysis and discussion based on the study of these newly available facts and source material is absolutely undeniable.

(c) The Road Ahead

We must continue on the path that we have been following until now and fully discover this hidden link in the chain of human intellectual history, and put it in its proper place. Up to now, the Orientalists have made important contributions and have made great efforts to accomplish this task.

It is our duty to try to overtake them; and if we are unable to do this, at least we should keep pace with them. It is not enough for us to make a thinker or an inventor famous by mentioning his ideas or his inventions, we must make an effort to revive his works. All the nations of the world are in a race with one another in trying to publish the works of their scientists and thinkers.

The field of our study is vast and there are innumerable opportunities for research. Our first duty is to gather and publish the writings of the philosophers of Islam; works which have remained as manuscripts until this day, or have been published in an unsatisfactory form. I say this because as long as we have not studied the works of our philosophers and scientists in the language in which they were originally written, we cannot understand the essence and the core of their teachings.

When we found out that treatises written by Al-Kindi are to be found in the libraries of the city of Istanbul, or that manuscripts of the works of Al-Farabi are scattered among libraries of London, Paris, and Escorial,^{[18](#)} or that from the famous work of Ibn Sina, *Shifa'*, the publisher has printed only the first volume, *Logic*,^{[19](#)} then we realized the importance and necessity of gathering the texts of our philosophers and publishing them.

It is unnecessary to mention the fact that Ibn Rushd is better known in the Latin world than he is in the Muslim world, and that some American Orientalists have been publishing his writings for some time now.

The publishing of these texts would take a long time. Therefore it is necessary that a number of individuals and academies cooperate with one another in accomplishing this important task. The Cairo University had at one time adopted an interesting and effective technique in that it gathered films of some of the manuscripts and printed some samples from them.

Unfortunately it has recently stopped doing this. Maybe it has been because of the war, and the university will resume this practice. I also hope that the College of Alexandria will also join this effort, and finally that all the universities of the East shall compete with one another in accomplishing this task.

A comment about the libraries of Istanbul must be made here. In these libraries, the heritage of more than six centuries of Islamic culture is stored. Naturally, texts can be found there the copies of which do not exist anywhere else in the world.

For example, a German Orientalist has recently found some precious volumes in these libraries among which Ash'ari's *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* can be mentioned. This book is an important source in the field of the history of Islamic doctrines. Since the publication of Ash'ari's book and the *Nihayat al-Aqdam* of Shahrastani, some of the views we had held regarding Islamic theology (*kalam*) and theologians (*mutakallimun*) have changed.

I have no doubt that our Turkish brothers are aware of the value of this priceless heritage, and if they themselves are unable to publish these masterpieces they shall not hesitate to make them available to those who wish to do so.

Besides the publishing of these texts, we should also engage in investigation and discussion of the works of Islamic philosophers and get to know them just as well as we do the non-Islamic philosophers. We should prepare biographies of our thinkers, describe their views in detail, explain the factors which were instrumental in formation of their views, clearly evaluate their intellectual debt to the ancients and to their immediate predecessors, and examine the similarities existing between their ideas and those of their contemporaries.

I hope that the day will come when they will write about Al-Farabi just as they are writing today about Musa ibn Maymun, that they become as familiar with the works of Ibn Sina as they are with the writings of Thomas Aquinas, and shall discuss AlGhazzali just as they discuss Descartes. That would be the day when it can be justifiably said that Islamic philosophy has been given the recognition and stature it so rightly deserves.

[1.](#) See V. Cousin, Cours de l'histoire de la philosophie, pp.4849, Paris 1841.

[2.](#) E. Renan, Histoire Generale de systeme comparees langues semitiques;

[3.](#) L. Gauthier, L'esprit semitique et l'esprit aryen, pp. 66-67, Paris 1923, see also I. Madkour, La Place d'al-Farabi, p. 14, Paris, 1934.

[4.](#) Renan, "Le 'islamisme et la Science", dans Discours et Conferences, p. 337 Paris, 1887; Madkour, La Place d'al-Farabi, p. 54.

[5.](#) Renan, Averroes's et l'Averroesme, pp. 79, II, Paris, eighth edition

[6.](#) Ibid, vol. I, p. 171. See also Goldziher, Le dogme et la loi de l' Islam, pp. 29-34.

[7.](#) Renan, Averroes's, Avertissement, p.11.

[8.](#) Ibid, p.89.

[9.](#) Ibid.

[10.](#) G. Dugat, Histoire des philosophes et des theologians musulmans, p. XV,

[11.](#) G. Tennemann, Manuel de l'histoire de la philosophic (French translation by V. Cousin), T. I, pp.358359, Paris 1839.

- [12.](#) Madkour, La place d'al-Farabi, p.46 et suite.
- [13.](#) Madkour, L'Organon d'Aristote, p. 49 et suite, Paris, 1934.
- [14.](#) L. Gauthier, "Scolastique musulmane et sehoiastique chretienne", dans Revue d'Histoire de la philosophie, Paris, 1928.
- [15.](#) Renan, Averroes's, p. 88; Duhem, Le systeme du monde T. IV p 321 et suite, Paris, 1917.
- [16.](#) S. Van den Bergh, Die Epitome der Metaphysik des Averroes, Leiden, 1924.
- [17.](#) T.J. De Boer, Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam, Stuttgart, 1901, tr. ang., par E.R. Jones, The History of Philosophy in Islam, London, 1903
- [18.](#) Madkour, La place, pp.223-225.
- [19.](#) Madkour, L' Organon, pp. 1920.

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- [6] <https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/22993>
- [7] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/racism>
- [8] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/orientalism>
- [9] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/christianity>
- [10] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/islam>