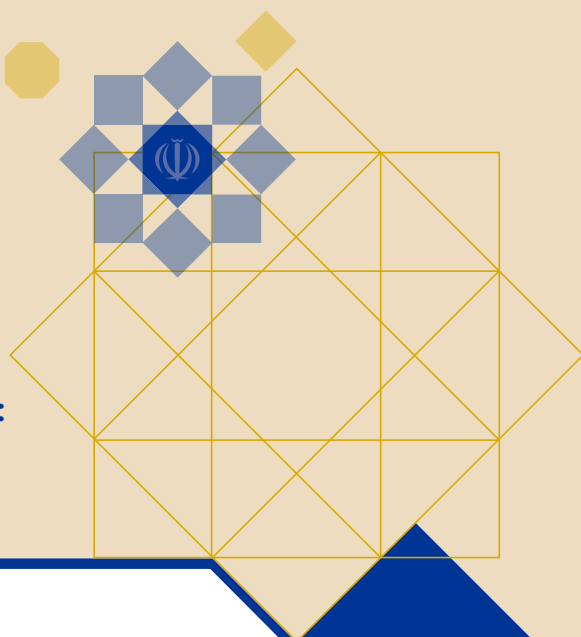




The Arabo-Oriental Syncretism: Praxis of Philosophy, Avicenna and Beyond

Prof. Dr. Mohd. Sanaullah al-Nadawi^(*)



Date of receipt: 30/3/2025



Date of acceptance: 2/6/2025

Introduction

The Arab culture with Abbasid Baghdad (750-1258) as epicenter had embarked upon rendering the scientific, philosophical and literary legacy of its neighbor civilizations (Greco-Hellenistic, Syriac, Persian and Indian, chiefly) into Arabic in individual as well as official capacities under the banner of Baghdad's *Bait al-Hikmah*. It was here that the wisdom corpus of the Schools of Nisibis and Edissa, the Academy of Jundishapur, the Library of Alexandria, the Imperial Library of Constantinople, and the academic depository of Buddhist Balkh was transformed into Arabic. The translation movement associated with itself a number of prolific translators such as Yaqub Al-Kindi (801-

(*) Professor & Chairman. Department of Arabic. Aligarh Muslim University. Aligarh-202002 U.P. INDIA. Email: sanaullahnadawi@gmail.com

973), Hunain Ibn Ishaque (809-873), Ishaque Ibn Hunain (830-910), Thabit Ibn Qarra (826-906), Bakhtoshu Ibn Jibril (d. 970), Abu Bishr Matta Ibn Yunus (d. 940), and Qusta Ibn Luqa (820-912), among many others. Major Greco-Hellenistic scientific, mathematical, medical and philosophical texts (i.e. Galen, Euclid, Ptolemy, Theophrastus, Plato, Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Simplicius, Brahmagupta, Aryabhata, Charaka, Chanakya, etc) were translated, studied and commented upon in this period under the encouraging patronage of the Abbasid Caliphs al-Mansur (r. 754-775), Al-Rashid (r. 786-809) and Mamun (r. 813-833). This trend was facilitated by the encounter with Syriac Christians who maintained a rich, long-standing intellectual tradition of their own, had established Greek learning long before the arrival of the Muslims, and were often called upon to translate these texts from Greek and Syriac into Arabic. It was a historic moment for the Arab-Muslim orient to get initiated into a methodological enquiry on a plethora of cognitive and interpretative domains not confined to ontology, epistemology, natural theology, ethics, scholasticism, etc, but extended to mathematics, physics, astronomy, medicine and other empirical disciplines.⁽¹⁾

(1) See De Lacy O'Leary D.D, How the Greek Science passed to the Arabs (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949); Dimitri Gutas, Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation: A Study of the Greco-Arabic Gnomologia (New Haven, 1975), Ahmad Farid Rifai, Asr Al-Mamun, (Cairo, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Misriyya, 1927), 2 vols.

Also see myself, Alturath al-hindi fi al-hadara al-Islamiyya, Journal of the Indian Academy of Arabic, Aligarh, Vol.13, Nos. 1-2, 1990, pp. 40-70, ISSN 2250-0413;

Among these translations were two pseudo-epigraphic works that were to exert a profound influence upon the development of all subsequent Islamic metaphysical speculations. The first was the *Athulijyya Aristutelis* (أثولوجيا أرسطاطاليس) otherwise known as the *Theology of Aristotle*, translated by the Syrian Christian, ‘Abd’ul Masih ibn Na’imah al-Himsi (early ninth century), for the philosopher al-Kindi. This work, incorrectly attributed to Aristotle, is in fact a paraphrased epitome of *Enneads IV-VI*, interspersed with a purported commentary of Porphyry (c. 234 – c. 305 AD) on a lost theological treatise of Aristotle. The spurious nature of this work was never doubted. However, most peripatetic Muslim thinkers - perhaps due to religious or political reasons of their own⁽¹⁾ - insisted on attributing it to Aristotle or the enigmatic *al-Shaykh al-Unani* (the Greek sage) - the name Flutinus, the *Arabized* Plotinus (c. 204/5 – 270), occurs a few times in the later commentaries on the *Theologia* which proves of awareness that this work belonged, in fact, to other than Aristotle.⁽²⁾ The second work in question is the *Kalam fi’l mahd al-khair* (كلام في محض الخير) or *The Theology of the Pure Good*, a work that later on played an important role in the systematic re-assembly of early Neoplatonism by the Latin Scholastics in the Catholic West as *Liber de Causis*. Like

(1) «...harmonizing...Greek philosophy...» with «...Islámic dogma...» Majid Fakhry, *History of Islámic Philosophy* (New York: 1983), p. 20.

(2) See F.W. Zimmerman, *The Origins of the So-Called Theology of Aristotle in Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*, (ed.) J. Kraye, W.F. Ryan and C.B. Schmitt; Franz Rosenthal, ‘Ash-Shaykh al-Yunani and the Arabic Plotinus Source’, *Orientalia* vol. 21 (1952), pp. 461–529 and vol. 22 (1953), pp. 370–400. Also see Abdurrahman Badawi, *Aflutin Ind Al-Arab* (Cairo: Maktaba Al-Nahda Al-Misriya), 1955.

the *Theologia*, the *Kalam fi'l mahd al-khair* is also a paraphrase: it is a paraphrase of thirty-two propositions of *The Elements of Theology* (Stoikheiosis Theologike) of Proclus (412 –485 AD), also ascribed to Aristotle.⁽¹⁾ It can hardly be debated that *Theologia* and *Kalam* are far removed from Aristotle's genuine teachings. The doctrine of *entelechy*, for example, so central to Aristotle's theory of the soul, is rejected outright. Both works expound at length a doctrine of emanation from the One (*al-Ahad*) who generates the whole order of existence in the cosmos through two lower, vertically graded hypostases and a cycle of return back to Him. In the *Theologia*, for instance, in a thoroughly Plotinian fashion, the author outlines his intention as being. The *Kalam fi'l mahd al-khair* deals with the Proclian heptads (unities participating in the One) and the tetrad relation of the One with Being, Reason and Soul. Both works are the seminal blueprints of Muslim Neo-Platonism.⁽²⁾

(1) Cristina D'Ancona Costa, 'Avicenna and the Liber de Causis: A Contribution to the Dossier', *Revista Espanola de Filosofia Medieval*, 7 (2000), pp. 95–114.

(2) See Peter S. Adamson, *Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the 'Theology of Aristotle'* (2002: London, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.) ISBN 0–7156–3163–2; D'Ancona, Cristina: *Pseudo-«Theology of Aristotle»*, Chapter I: Structure and Composition. Oriens, 2001, pp. 78–112; Paul Fenton, «The Arabic and Hebrew Versions of the Theology of Aristotle» in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The 'Theology' and Other Texts*, Jill Kraye, Charles B. Schmitt and W. F. Ryan (1986: London) ISBN 0–85481–065–X, 241–264; Shlomo Pines, «La longue récénsion de la Théologie d'Aristote dans ses rapports avec la doctrine ismaélienne» in *Revue des études Islamiques* 22 (1954) 7–20; Rowson, Everett K., Jill Kraye & W. F. Ryan & C. B. Schmitt: «The Theology of Aristotle and Some Other Pseudo-Aristotelian Texts Reconsidered» in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Jul. – Sep., 1992, pp. 478–484; Georges Anawati (de), «Le néoplatonisme dans la pensée musulmane: état actuel des recherches», in *Plotino e il neoplatonismo in Oriente e Occidente*, Rome 1974 (contains text and translation of the «Letter on Divine Science»)

Philosophical Praxis

Praxis as a philosophical topic discussed in philosophical discourses in antiquity as well as in modern times. Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, St. Augustine, Immanuel Kant, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Paulo Freire, Ludwig Von Mises, among others, have dealt with the topic in different perspectives while referring to the activity engaged by free men. For Aristotle, man has three basic activities: *theoria*, *poiesis* and *praxis* (subdivided into *eupraxia* (good praxis) and *dyspraxia* (bad praxis), making it one amongst the five virtues of thought: *technê*, *epistêmê*, *phronêsis*, *sophia*, and *nous*. The end of the disposition [*héxis* or *dunámis*] of *téchnê* is *poiésis*, the production of something; the end of the disposition of *phrónêsis*, is *praxis*, action itself. The end of the disposition of *sophía*, on the other hand, is not action, but *theoría*, universal knowledge. But in all these cases, actuality is prior to the principle of change. The three rational *héxeis* come to be only through being employed; thought and desire are what bring the dispositions to actuality. Human being (*ánthrôpos*), the originator of action, is a union of desire and intellect. The end of human being is *eudaimonía* (happiness) the exercise of the dispositions of the soul in conformity with excellence, throughout a complete lifetime. But the highest form of happiness is the exercise of the highest virtue, *sophía*. *Noûs* is the best activity for human being, and the telos of human life. Now *noûs* is directed towards the universal and the eternal, and the eternal is fully actual. The virtue

associated with *praxis*, *phrónesis*, concerns the affairs of human beings, and things that admit of deliberation [*boulé*]. It is concerned with action, and action has to do with particular and contingent things *Phrónesis* determines the right means to the right end of a particular action; it is not itself poietic. *Phrónesis* and *sophía* are contrasted throughout the *Nicomachean Ethics* on the grounds of the particular and contingent object of the one, and the universal and necessary character of the object of the other.⁽¹⁾

Arabs and the traditional *Vitae Aristotelis*: The Platonist Aristotle?

The biographical tradition on Aristotle offers us a gamut of information about the Philosopher which is interesting because it provides us with material for a history of Aristotelianism and its thought-currents. The Neo-platonic and Syriac *Vitae* of the Stagairite have had a pivotal role in the formation of Muslim philosophical perceptive of Hellenism. Several traditional *Vitae Aristotelelis* which, compiled in antiquity, have managed to survive in one form or another in regard to lost or exoteric Aristotle deserves special attention: (1) Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives*

(1) Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Aristotle's Metaphysics I*, translated by W.E. Dooley and Arthur Madigan, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; London: Duckworth, 1989, pp. 20–26, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, second edition, translated by Terence Irwin, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1999, pp.55–58; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, translated by R.D. Hicks. Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 12–18, Long, A.A. and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 45–54.

of *Eminent Philosophers*, book V, chapters 1-35 (2) The Vita Hesychii (3) The Pseudo- Hesychius (4) The Vita Marciana (5) The Vita Vulgata (6) The Vita Lascaris and (7) The Vita Latina,⁽¹⁾ besides two Syriac biographies: (1) The Vita Syriaca I, and (2) The Vita Syriaca II, and four Arabic epistles, namely The Vita Arabica I (by Ibn Al-Nadim), The Vita Arabica II (by al-Mubassir or, Mubashir), The Vita Arabica III (by al-Qifti), and The Vita Arabica IV (by Usaibia)⁽²⁾

How to understand the following passage in *Vita Marciana*?

We saw that Aristotle is Platonist (platonizein) even when he

(1) See A.-H. Chroust, *The First Thirty Years of Modern Aristotelian Scholarship (1912–1942)*, in *Classica et Mediaevalia*, vol. XXIV (1964), I. Düring, *Aristotle's Protrepticus : An Attempt at Reconstruction*, *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia*, vol. 12 (1961) ; I. Düring, *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition*, *Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis* (1957); A.-H. Chroust, *Aristotle: Protrepticus A Reconstruction* (1964) E. Berti., *La Filosofia del Primo Aristotele*, Università di Padova Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia (1962); R. Walzer, 'New light on the Arabic translations of Aristotle,' *Oriens*, vol. VI (1953), pp. 91–142; Kenny, Anthony, *Essays on the Aristotelian Tradition*, Oxford University Press, 2001; Shute, Richard, *On the History of the Process by Which the Aristotelian Writings Arrived at Their Present Form*, Arno Press, 1976 (originally 1888); Sorabji, Richard (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, Duckworth, 1990.

(2) For the Syriac and Arabic Vitae Aristotelis, see F. A. Muller, 'Die griechischen Philosophen in der arabischen Überlieferung,' *Festschrift der Frankischen Stiftungen für Professor Bernhardt* (Halle, 1873); F. A. Muller, 'Das Arabische Verzeichnis der Aristotelischen Schriften,' *Morgenländische Forschungen: Festschrift für H. L. Fischer [=Fleischer]* (Leipzig, 1875); M. Steinschneider, 'Die arabischen Übersetzungen aus dem Griechischen,' *Centralblatt für Bibl.-Wesen*, Beiheft no. II, part 5 (Leipzig, 1890–1), and Beiheft no. IV, part 12 (Leipzig, 1893); A. Baumstark, 'Lucubrationes Syrio-Graecae,' *Jahrbuch für Klassische Philologie*, Supplement, vol. 21 (Leipzig, 1894), pp. 333–524; A. Baumstark, *Syrisch-Arabische Biographien des Aristoteles* (Leipzig, 1900); J. Lippert, *al-Qiftis Tarikh al-Hukama* (Leipzig, 1903). M. Guidi and R. Walzer, 'Studi su al-Kindi I: un scritto introduttivo allo studio di Aristotele,' *Memorie della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Classe di Scienze Morali*, series VI, vol. VI, fasc. 5 (Rome, 1940), pp. 375–419.

contradicts Plato, for it is Plato who says that he cares little for Socrates but much for truth.⁽¹⁾

To understand it and overcome volleys of perceptive discomfort it must be recollected that (as well-argued by a host of scholars such as C. A. Brandis, E. Zeller, R. Susemihl, E. Heitz, W. Christ, R. Littig, W. Jaeger, D. W. Ross, L. Robin, I. Düring, and others)⁽²⁾, Hermippus of Smyrna, the disciple of Callimachus (310/305- 240 BC) and librarian at Alexandria (towards the end of the third century B. C) who possessed ample materials on Aristotle, must be considered the main source for the biographical notations found in Diogenes Laertius (fl. c. 3rd century CE). In the year 306 BC when all “alien” philosophers were banished from Athens by the decree of Demetrius Poliorcetes, Ptolemy Soter, the King of Egypt, invited Theophrastus (c.371 -287 BC), Aristotle's successor in the Lyceum, to come to Egypt and thus transfer the Peripatetic School and its library to Alexandria. Although Theophrastus turned down this invitation, his disciples, Strato of Lampsacus (c.335-c. 269 BC) and Demetrius of Phaleron (c. 350-c.280 BC) went to Egypt. Undoubtedly, these two men brought to Alexandria some of the writings of the Peripatetics, including probably some of Aristotle's compositions or, at least, notes and excerpts from his works. It has also

(1) Plato, Phaedo 91c

(2) See A.-H. Chroust, “ The Miraculous Disappearance and Recovery of the Corpus Aristotelicum “, *Classica et Mediaevalia*, vol. 23 (1963), pp. 50–67; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* I. 3AB. See here also I. Düring, *Notes on the History of the Transmission of Aristotle's Writings*, *Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis*, vol. 56 (1950), pp. 59–60; (4) I. Düring, *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition*, *Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis*, vol. 68 (1957), pp. 464–467.

been suggested that on his death Theophrastus left and bequeathed his as well as Aristotle's writings to Neleus of Scepsis. Neleus (or his heirs) subsequently sold parts of this collection of writings to Ptolemy Philadelphus, the successor to Ptolemy Soter. All this would indicate that in the course of the third century B. C, Alexandria had become one of the great centers of Aristotelian or Peripatetic scholarship, a fact which enabled Hermippus to draw much reliable information concerning the life and works of Aristotle from the accumulated materials.⁽¹⁾ Of the Neo-Platonic *Vita Aristotelis* composed by Ptolemy there exist three Neo-Platonic abridgements, all of the fifth century AD namely, the *Vita Marciana*, the *Vita Vulgata*, and the *Vita Latina*. The two Syriac *Vitae*, which likewise are abridgements of the *Vita* of Ptolemy, belong to approximately the same period. The four Arabic *Vitae* also go back to a translation of an abridgement of Ptolemy's biography. Hence, all these nine *Vitae* have a single common source: Ptolemy's *Vita* or, to be more exact, an abridgement or epitome of Ptolemy's *Vita*. This is eloquently brought out by the fact that the materials contained in the nine “derivative” *Vitae* on the whole are fairly uniform in their general tenor, although on occasion they manifest some differences of detail.

The main characteristics of Ptolemy's *Vita*, as they are reflected in its nine “derivatives”, may be seen in its boundless exaltation of Aristotle — a typical Neo- Platonic feature. According to Ptolemy, Aristotle was held in highest esteem by all people with whom he came in contact,

(1) P. Moraux, *Les Listes Anciennes des Ouvrages d'Aristote* (1951), pp. 243– 247.

be they kings, conquerors, scholars or plain common folk. Whenever he refutes stories about Aristotle that might be damaging to the latter's reputation, he displays a certain critical acumen. But his uncritical admiration for Aristotle in itself detracts much from his reliability as a reporter, although it appears that on the whole his Vita is based on an adequate knowledge of the biographical materials that were available around the year 400 A. D.⁽¹⁾

Avicenna's praxis of philosophy

As a prelude to Avicenna's concept of philosophical praxis, we must reckon with the frame in medieval Arab philosophers. Usual references to al-Farabi (257/870-339/ 950), Averroes (520/1126-595/1198), and Maimonides (530/ 1135-602/1204), to mention only the most familiar names, tend to obscure the very different place of philosophic studies in relation to other forms of Islamic thought before and after Avicenna and the fundamental shift for which he was largely responsible. The wider classical heritage of philosophic and scientific investigation was present to Avicenna in four traditions, each with differing relations to the Arabic religious sciences and their representatives. The first group, represented by such prominent contemporary writers as Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) and al-'Amiri (d. 381/991), and connected with the earlier

(1) See A.-H. Chroust, 'A brief account of the traditional Vitae Aristotelis,' *Revue des Etudes Grecques*, vol. 77, nos. 364-5 (1964), pp. 50-69, especially, pp. 60-9, and Chapter I. Also see Anton-Hermann Chroust, *Aristotle. New Light on His Life and on Some of His Lost Works. Vol. I.* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 54-55; 68-69

philosophic school of al-Kindi, was largely devoted to a courtly literary expression that focused on the ethical teachings of earlier philosophers and sages and their congruence with what were widely viewed as similar ethical teachings of Islam. After Avicenna's time, this type of writing became diluted and lost almost all awareness of any separate philosophic discipline with its own demands and critical perspectives. Avicenna's own attitude toward this tradition is evident in his radical refusal either to reduce the goal of philosophic inquiry to ethics or to identify ethics with the standpoint of Islamic law or nascent Sufi disciplines. A second alternative, very much a part of Avicenna's family background and youthful training, was the tradition of earlier Ismaili Shiite philosopher-theologians, who had deployed the resources of the Hellenistic philosophic traditions to justify and defend the political and wider soteriological claims of a series of imams claiming rightful rulership over the Muslim community. Their dialectical use or abuse of philosophic tools to support claims to a prophetic wisdom and authority lying beyond ordinary human capacities resembled the way later *kalam* theology used Avicenna's logic and metaphysics. Indeed, Avicenna's theory of intellective prophecy is largely designed to counter that dangerous misunderstanding of philosophy as simply a handmaiden to some higher revealed wisdom, while at the same time using the popular appeal of such reasoning to draw a wider audience to the study of philosophy. The third contemporary group-and the frequent rhetorical target of Avicenna's glorification of his own "Eastern Wisdom" (*Hikmah*

mashriqiyyah)-were the scholastic commentators of Aristotle, heirs to a longstanding Hellenistic tradition (partially shared by al-Farabi) in the older intellectual center of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. The political dimensions and aims of Avicenna's complex and highly problematic strategy of *Islamization* of philosophic discourse appear most clearly in contrast to the marginalization and eventual disappearance in the Muslim East of that school of Aristotelians (a number of them Christian) who persevered in the strict separation of philosophic and religious discourse. A fourth, and very real, alternative for Avicenna was exemplified in the life of his correspondent and contemporary, the scientist and polymath al-Biruni (362/973-440/1048), who happily pursued his scientific interests under the benevolent patronage of the same zealous Sunni warlord, Mahmud of Ghazna (361/971-421/1030), whose support Avicenna so carefully avoided. Judging from his surviving writings, al-Biruni seems to have been unconcerned with the wider political role of philosophic perfection in an Islamic community. Nothing can bring out more dramatically the political intentions and framework of Avicenna's writing on both philosophic and religious topics and its multiple rhetorical dimensions than this contrast with the writing and activities of al-Biruni.⁽¹⁾

Avicenna's *The Easterners* can fairly be called his manifesto of philosophical praxis, though books like *Shifa* and his letters to Abu Al-Hasan Bahmanyar Ibn Marzuban (d. 1067), Abu Ubaid Al-Juzjani (d.

(1) William E. Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1974), 77ff.

1070) and others also deal with the topic. Ontology, epistemology and social contextuality are three basic components of his concept of praxis.

For Avicenna, the starting point of all philosophical praxis is *acknowledging the fact that the knowledge to be acquired and then communicated is the knowledge possessed by the intellects of the spheres, the knowledge, that is, which reflects ontology and has a syllogistic structure. The knowledge presents a closed system: it contains all the knowledge there is, but what is known to mankind is limited⁽¹⁾ because the human intellect is associated with a body which hinders its acquisition of this knowledge. Only when the association of the rational soul with the body is severed through death will the soul receive the divine effluence containing knowledge, will have revealed to it whatever was hidden from it before the separation, and there will come about from it a similarity with the abstract intellects which are the principles of the causes of beings, since all the truths are revealed to these celestial intellects.*⁽²⁾

Avicenna holds that while still associated with the body, the human soul can acquire the knowledge, however partially, by philosophy. The goal of the praxis of philosophy is the record of progressive acquisition by humans of parts of knowledge. Thus, although the knowledge to be acquired in itself and on a transcendent plane is a closed system but hence static: on a human level and in history it is evolutionary.

(1) Avicenna's letter to Bahmanyar, Tract No 11, p. 7.

(2) Avicenna, On the Rational Soul, Tract 14, p. 10.

This idea of progress in the acquisition of knowledge is an invariable part of Aristotelian tradition that informs both about the orientation of Avicennan philosophical praxis prescription.⁽¹⁾

For Avicenna, *doing* philosophy consists of two essential operations: discerning the fundamental principles (*usul*) of the knowledge and working out the corollary principles (*tafri*) on their basis. Avicenna has exactly done it in the *Prologue to the Cure* wherein he presents the fundamental principles which he established as true followed by supplication of corollaries.⁽²⁾ He explains in details in his letter to Kiya⁽³⁾ the way he adopts while analyzing Aristotle's *De Anima*, *Physics* and *De caelo* and offers suggestions how to proceed to build their teachings. He writes to Bahmanyar:

O you who are zealous to ascertain the truth, I am bestowing upon you in these pointers and reminders Fundamental Principles and essential elements of philosophy. If sagacity takes hold of your hand to guide you, it will become easy for you to derive corollary principles from the former and work out the details of the later.⁽⁴⁾ ...gather the loose ends left (by Aristotles?), repair any breach they find it what he constructed and supply corollaries to fundamental principles he presented.⁽⁵⁾

(1) Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden, Brill, 2014), Keith, A.B. "Plotinus and Indian thought", *Indian Culture* 2 (1935–1936), p. 249.

(2) Avicenna, *Muqaddima Al-Shifa*. (Cairo: Al-Matba'at Al-Amiriyah, 1956).

(3) Avicenna, Tract 12, 1–2

(4) Avicenna, Tract 10, 2.

(5) Avicenna, Tract 8, 1

It can hardly be debated that these principles of *usul* and *tafri* (fundamental principles and corollaries) were discussed by generations of philosophers before Avicenna. They have been inseparable part of Aristotelian tradition. Abu Bakr Al-Razi (d. 925) in his *Principles of the Universe* and Hunain Ibn Ishaque, besides scholars of *usul fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), had dealt with them prior to Avicenna. The epistemological procedure is intimately with correct guessing (Hadas) which helps a philosopher discover the first principles and supply the corollaries.⁽¹⁾

But the great originality exhibited by Avicenna lies in associating the principles-corollary process with the social and historical context. For Avicenna, it is the contextuality of the philosophical praxis that guards against blind adherence to the principles-corollary rule. He wrote to Juzjani:

..as for ourselves, we hope that beyond this thee is a way countering and a course opposite theirs; we should do our best to spread what is right from our predecessors and leave unmentioned what we think they neglected. This is then what prevented us from writing commentaries on their books and exeges on their texts since we were not sure what we would not eventually get to places in which we think they were negligent, and we would therefore be compelled to either undertake to excuse them or devise arguments and pretexts for them or refute them

(1) Avicenna, Tract 10, 2.

openly.⁽¹⁾

Avicenna states in the introduction to *The Easterners* that the acquisition of knowledge in history is piecemeal Aristotle was the first to discern fundamental principles in most sciences, but his statements and those of the ancients are in need of addition, correction and revision.⁽²⁾

Avicenna's praxis of philosophy while dealing with social contextuality embarks upon another issue very much related to the exoteric-acroatic core in Aristotelian works. Should a philosopher publish all he thinks and give it to all and sundry? The question of withholding knowledge or obscurity from the unsuitable minds has been a viable point of debate through ages. Plato didn't give notes except when emphatically reminded that he might become headless in future. The tripartite etiology of Aristotle's obscurity was based on three reasons: to test student's suitability for the knowledge, to avoid lavishing philosophy on all people except only those are worthy of it and to train the mind through the exertion of research.⁽³⁾ In Arab traditions, the issue is reflected in the very concept of *dhan* المضمون به على (when knowledge is withheld in view of potential harms to society in a given time. (غير أهله)⁽⁴⁾ Knowledge can be publicized without making it public, and the best recommended way is to adhere to communicative

(1) Avicenna, Letter 38. Cf. Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden, Brill, 2014), p. 253.

(2) Avicenna, *The Easterners*, p. 1.

(3) See Al-Farabi, *Prolegomena to the Study of Aristotle's Philosophy*. P. 42.

(4) See Ibn Abd Al-Barr, *Jami' bayan al-Ilm wa Fadlihi*. (Cairo, 1968), vol. I, pp. 130 -133.

levels well-suited to the theme, not the hordes of recipients. This stands in between total withholding that might lead to head lessness, undesirable lavishes and self-aggrandizement.

Neo-platonized Peripatetic Avicenna: The Syncretistic

Methodology

The course of Arabic philosophizing initiated by the eclectic minds in the later Umayyid and Abbasid periods under the state patronage of Mutazilites was chiefly Peripatetic. Greek philosophy via Arabic translations made in *Bait al-Hikmah* under the direction of the first Arab philosopher Yaqub al-Kindi ensured a good readership, notwithstanding some inaccuracies in transliteration of names and being in vogue of some medleys of Alexandrian and Syriac originals. (*Theology of Aristotle*, the *Athulogia*, actually the collected excerpts from *Enneads* and *Isagoge* of Plotinus and Porphyry is a well-known example, as already discussed earlier in this paper). Muslim philosophizing of God is directed by the idea of being. Avicenna, the philosopher of being, approached the issue in a Plotinian fashion. To him, beings cannot be otherwise than they are, and by a series of intermediaries they flow from pure unity according to the nature of their Principle. Hence, they are necessary. Whether or not the necessary beings around us are governed by the principle of their necessity? The obviously noticeable is the fact that all have had a beginning. Before this beginning they were possible, but nothing in their concept was contrary to their realizability. But they did not exist. It

means that they were not necessary in themselves, and their realization depended on another being. Therefore, they are caused. A chain of infinite causes seems to persist, but as the notion is repugnant to the reason, it was proposed that the chain of causality must start from a being that is uncaused; a being that is free from another being's intervention.⁽¹⁾ So the first cause, the efficient cause of all existence, is uncaused. Our outside observation of concrete beings leads our minds to derive universal concepts applicable to all the individuals of a group, such as the concepts of man, horse, stone, etc., which express their nature, not their essence, hence the difference between existence and essence. The essence of man, horse or stone does not include their existence. Essence is different from existence not only in material beings, but also pure spirits. The pure spirits, though devoid of matter-form compositions, are not absolutely simple, since they are composed of their essence and existence which is given to them, but which did not follow necessarily from the very nature of their essence. Avicenna's projection is echoed in *Posterior Analytics* of Aristotle who said: *What man is, is one thing and the fact that man exists is another thing.*⁽²⁾ If a geometrician explains the significance of the term *triangle* and demonstrates its attributes, it does not mean that the triangle exists. The first being is absolutely simple, devoid of any compositions, for every composite being required a cause to unite its component parts. This absolute simplicity warrants that in

(1) Avicenna, Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt, p. 360; translated by A.M. Goichon (Beirut, Paris, 1951)

(2) Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, II, 7.

it and in it alone, essence and existence should be one and the same thing. Its essence is identical to its existence. The essence of a large number of caused beings can receive existence without postulating the same. But the simple Being is necessary by itself and is anterior to all others external. It is fundamentally different from the beings that are dependent upon it. One can infer from the situation that Avicenna conceives a genus *Necessary Being* with two species: being necessary by itself (Being cause) and being necessary by another (being caused). (Keeping in mind that Plotinus had admitted being as a first genus which has several species.⁽¹⁾ But Avicenna states clearly in *Shifa*, *Najāt* and *Ishārāt* that the Necessary Being is no way predicated of many. The First Being is belong to no genus, Substance or Being, and is not devisable into elements of certain logical distinctions such as genus, species and difference. Avicenna wrote in his *Ishārāt* that Necessary Being has nothing in common with the quiddity of anything, because every quiddity belonging to what is not itself, postulates the possibility of being...Therefore, Necessary Being does not share a generic or a specific idea with any other being; hence it does not need to be distinguished by an idea of a difference, specific or accidental. On the contrary, it is separated by essence, because necessary existence belongs to it as quiddity belongs to other beings. Necessary Being is just *unique*, sharing neither genus nor species with anything else.⁽²⁾ The

(1) Plotinus, *Enneads*, II, 7 and 8.

(2) Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, p. 364, *Kitab al-Najat*, pp. 382–83.

Muslim metaphysician in Avicenna's theory refused logical postulates for ontological reasons and metaphysical distinction on the conception of analogy. As against the pagan and monist Greeks, it represents the tradition of divine transcendent and the knowledge of the mystery of God in his unfathomable depth.

The Plotinian theory of creation leads to monism, but Muslim Peripatetic philosophers had to escape its consequences. The escape was facilitated by his choice of starting point which was essence, not existence. This enables him to differentiate between the Creator and the Creatures. The theories of perfection and deficiency are closely associated with the core issue of potentiality and actuality. Pure potentiality is not an indetermination of such a nature that can sway the balance towards realization or non-realization or being or non-being. It is, rather, deficiency. There is no good except in act (actuality). Non-realization of perfection is evil. If all the perfections of things were realized they would not be bad in any manner whatsoever.⁽¹⁾ This principle is applied on matter and essence. Matter is closest to pure potentiality and lacks in itself essence of any kind. It can realize itself by itself. Privation is evil, and since matter is complete privation, it is evil. The principle of evils expels from its fold all ideas of beauty. Therefore, the evil is ugly, and the dwelling place of non-being, since what reached the limit of deficiency ended in non-being. Any concept of essence without the attachment of possibility and links with the

(1) Avicenna, Kitāb al-Shifā, II, p. 479.

Necessary Being would turn it into non-being. As truth and being go together, the essence without possibility would have no truth either.

Avicenna's Islamized Plotinian theory of creation conceives the Creator as the Being who is absolutely one and from whom issues one being called the First Caused, *an Intelligence* by which multiplicity of beings enters the Universe. This is in contrast to the First Caused of Plotinus which is conceived to be *the Intelligence*. The One of Plotinus was superior to the Intelligence. Therefore it was not an Intelligence. This One that was Good has no knowledge of itself.⁽¹⁾ Aristotelian *Metaphysics* ⁽²⁾ identified the Necessary Being and the Prime Mover with the Good and self-subsistent thought, the sovereign thought and sovereign good which always knows itself and dwells in the joy of its known perfection. Aristotle maintained that life belonged to God, for the act of intelligence is life and God is that very act; that act self-subsisting is its own life, perfect and eternal. Hence, we call God an eternal, perfect, Living Being. This position was approximate to the Quranic view of God as *Hayy, Mumīt, Raxxāq, Wahhāb*, etc, and Muslim philosophers in a course of theodicy developed a consolidated paradigm on the unity of God. Avicenna's *Shifā, Nejāt, Risāla Fī al- 'Ishq* and his commentary on the Surah CXII of the Quran combines ontologically the perfect plenitude and super-imminence of the Ultimate Reality with actual knowledge and administrative activity in the Universe.

(1) Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI, 7, 41.

(2) Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book XII, 7.

The Truth in the Ultimate Reality as Pure Truth is pre-eminently *in re*. The truth is agreement between mind and object, and the most absolute accord is found in the Being who is Intelligence itself by essence, the Knower and the Known, as He knows himself perfectly and knows himself as perfect. (واجب الوجود هو العقل والعقل والمعقول). The Necessary Being possesses pure beauty and splendor. He is the principle of everything and the principle of the beauty of everything. It is with this perfect beauty, this perfect good that the First Being knows, with a perfect comprehension of its splendor. So, the Necessary being is *He Himself for Himself the greatest Lover and the Greatest Beloved, the One who enjoys the greatest bliss, and is the greatest object of bliss... His love for his essence is the most perfect, the most faithful, love. And since the divine attributes are not essentially distinguished in essence, love is truly essence and being, i.e. in the Pure Good.*⁽¹⁾

The tenth and twelfth centuries in Islam saw the culmination of philosophy and theology. Theologians sought help from Greek ideas taken in part from Stoics and Skeptics to refute the philosophical projections of, say, the Aristotelians. Muslim philosophers' approaches to ontology and epistemology were eclectic in their very nature. Their knowledge and understanding of the Greek Peripatetic philosophy was via the commentaries of Plotinus in which the views of Plato and Aristotle are easily identified. An apparent case of such a confluence is the theory

(1) Avicenna, , *Risāla fī al-'Ishq*, end of chap.I. See my *The Arab-Romance Parnassus* (Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 2006).

of the eternity of the world. Aristotle affirmed that the world in which live, the Universe as an orderly whole, a cosmos, is eternal. Aristotle also believed in the finitude of the causes, since it was impossible that movement should have started or can continue by itself. There must be a principle from which all movement derives. Another example is the concept of God as the First Mover of the movement of the Universe. Muslim philosophers regarded God as the Creator of the Universe from whom the world emanates eternally. It could be hardly held that the emanation was augmented in the verses of the Quran (that explicitly called it creation, *creatio ex-nihilio*, but the Muslim philosophers seemed less averse to the Plotinian theory. Their proximity to John Philoponus' Arabic translation of *De aeternitate mundi* is posited in retrospect of the theological arguments for the theory of the world as a creation. The enigmatic mystic, dogmatist and moralist Al-Ghazzali who, as given in his autobiography *al-Munqid min al-Dhalal* ⁽¹⁾ had to pass through a period of despair and skepticism until the light of God had given his peace and certitude (like the experience of St. Augustine) delivered final blows to the Aristotelian philosophy and general bankruptcy of philosophy in his *Tahafat al-Falasafa*, the *Destructio Philosophorum* of the Latins. Avicenna's influences are visible in the writings of al-Ghazzali whose refutation of the Peripatetic philosophers had emanated from the vast arsenal of some Scholastic dialectical arguments (like

(1) Tr. by R.J. McCarthy as Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazali's *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* and other Relevant Works Of al-Ghazali (Boston: Twayne, 1980).

those of the Asharites who were Muslim disciples of the Stoics).

Arabo-Orient Syncretism: The Indian Connection

One has to reckon for a barrage of cautions while addressing the Advaita-Neoplatonism-Muslim confluence in philosophy. Unlike Al-Alberuni (973-1048) and, reportedly, Al-Hallaj (858-922), Avicenna didn't set his foot on Indian soils, but a number of his discourses (chiefly those related to Cosmology, Unity and Happiness exhibit Indian tendencies, apart from the fact that the geo-historical conditions prevailing in Transoxiana, especially Bactria region, including Texla, with Greco-Indian kingdom (180 BC-10 AD) were deep rooted into Indian philosophy. The Maurya empire under Ashoka (269-232 BCE) stretched from Afghanistan to Bengal to South India and was instrumental in the spread of Buddhism in Transoxania with its Islamized Buddhist Barmakite sons as Chamberlains for the forthcoming Abbasids of Baghdad (750-1258) had pivotal role to play in wisdom edifice of Arab Mesopotamia. Greco-Buddhism is another significant phenomenon that outlines Buddhist proselytism extending to Transoxania, Asia Minor, Fertile Crescent, Egypt, Byzantium regions and Greece. Alexander the Great had interview with Brahman sage Dandamis at Texila and a Jain monk named Kalanos (Swami Sphines, c. 398 BC-323 BC) had accompanied him to Persis. Kalanos figures in the *Shahnama* of Firdausi. A letter written by Kalanos is preserved by Philo Judaeus (c.

25 BC-c.50 CE) ⁽¹⁾ For Max Muller, the Zoroastrians were a colony from Northern India who migrated to the North-west and whose religion has been preserved to us in the *Zind Avesta*, though in fragments only.⁽²⁾ According to Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeran, in point of fact that *Zind* is derived from the Sanskrit, and a passage to have descended from the Hindus of the second or warrior caste.⁽³⁾ Sir William Jones writes: "I was not a little surprised to find that out of words in Du Perron's *Zind Dictionary*, six or seven were pure Sanskrit."⁽⁴⁾

On the level of Philosophical discourses, undoubtedly Advaita and Neo-Platonist traditions have much in common and many of their differences result from the different traditions from which each arose and to which each belongs. The main trend of thought of each of these philosophies is the secondary trend in the other. The main Neoplatonic theme is that there is a hierarchy of being, at the summit of which is the One, the most perfect and highly evaluated entity. In Plotinus there is also a tendency which stresses the perfection of the One to such a degree that the rest of the universe is nothing in comparison with it. In Advaita, on the other hand, the main tendency is to absolutely and uncompromisingly deny the reality of anything apart from the absolute Brahman.⁽⁵⁾

(1) Charles Duke Yonge, 1854–5.

(2) Max Mueller, *Science of Language*, pp. 242–253

(3) Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeran, *Historical researches into the politics, intercourse, and trade of the Carthaginians, Ethiopians, and Egyptians*, Volume II p. 220.

(4) Sir William Jones' *Works* Volume I p. 82–82.

(5) A.N. Armstrong, *Plotinus and India*, *Classical Quarterly* 30 (1936) 22–28.

According to Porphyry, Plotinus once 'sought to learn directly the philosophy practiced among the Persians and that which is held in esteem among the people of India'.⁽¹⁾ The theory that some aspects of Neoplatonism were influenced by 'Indian thought', has repeatedly been discussed and has found many learned advocates and Opponents. Of the work done before Bréhier's book of 1938⁽²⁾, mention is made only of the article by Müller of 1914.⁽³⁾ Iranian influence, too, has been subject of some essays⁽⁴⁾ that argue that the idea of the fall of the soul is typically Iranian. Armstrong correctly summarized the main arguments for Bréhier's thesis that Plotinus must have undergone influence from Indian thought and particularly from the Upanishads, as follows: There are two elements in Plotinus which cannot be explained against the Greek background: (1) the infinity of the One and of the intelligible world, which contradicts the traditional Greek, rationalistic idea of the world as a closed and well defined cosmos; (2) the absence of a clear distinction and separation of the individual ego from the divine principle, connected with the identification of subject and object in the level of the nous. Both doctrines occur in the Upanishads.

Pure reasoning, in Advaita as well as in Neoplatonism, leads from the assumption of non-dual reality and from the rejection of the reality

(1) Porphyry, Vita Plotini 3, 15–17.

(2) E. Bréhier, La philosophie de Plotin, Paris 1938, chapitre VII: L'orientalisme de Plotin, 107 – 133.

(3) H.K. Müller, Orientalisches bei Plotinos? Hermes 49 (1914) 70–80.

(4) M. Techert, Iranische religiöse Elemente in dem Begriff der Psyche bei Plotin, Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny 53 (1929) 65–160; W.J.W. Koster, Le mythe de Platon, de Zarathoustra et des Chaldéens, Etude critique sur les relations intellectuelles entre Platon et l'Orient, Leiden 1951. 84.

of change to the thesis that our own self cannot transform into the Absolute, but is identical with it. The same two authors expressed a number of years later again their opinion with regard to the same subject. Bréhier is less definite, but Armstrong has retained his view. Armstrong adds that the doctrine of divine infinity is alien to Plato, but this does not affect his former arguments.

During a meeting in Paris in 1948 Jean Baruzi asked Bréhier whether he retained his opinion of 1938. The latter answered: 'I put forward the question. I could not answer it. I thought at the time that it might interest those who deal with India. I have found a number of very definite relations between the Neoplatonists and India. But I have found nobody who is interested and the problem remains to be studied'.⁽¹⁾ Przyłuski argued that there is an analogy between; (1) the three hypostases of Plotinus; (2) the three bodies of the Buddha; (3) Trinitarian Christologies in Gnosticism; (4) the Christian trinity. As there are possibilities of historical contact, several influences have to be assumed.⁽²⁾

According to H.-Ch. Puech, there is no fall of the soul in Plotinus, but

(1) 'J'ai posé la question. Je n'ai pas pu la résoudre. Je pensais à ce moment-là que cela pouvait intéresser ceux qui s'occupent de L'Inde. J'ai trouvé nombre de relations très certaines entre les neoplatoniciens et l'Inde. Mais je n'ai trouvé personne que cela intéresse, et la question reste à étudier; E. Bréhier, in *Etudes Bergsoniennes II*, Paris 1949.

(2) J. Przyłuski, *Les trois hypostases dans l'Inde et à Alexandria Mélanges Cumont II*, Bruxelles 1936, 925–933. Also see A.B. Keith, "Plotinus and Indian thought", *Indian Culture* 2 (1935–1936), 125–130; A. Szabó, *Indische Elemente in Plotinischen Neuplatonismus*, *Scholastik* 13 (1938), 57–96.

the soul sends an image (eídōlon) of itself into the material world and its 'return' is the disappearance of this image. Thus the qualitative change of the soul is replaced by an appearance and its fall by an illusion about its essence. This contradicts the traditional Greek concepts of the fall of the soul (Pythagoreans; Empedocles, Heraclitus, Plato; mysteries). The same idea occurs in the Sāmkhya system, in which there is an essential difference between matter and soul and where there is no change of the soul but a mixture (samyoga; míxis) of soul and matter.⁽¹⁾

With Filliozat⁽²⁾ we enter a new phase of research on the early relations between India and Greece, where standards of scholarship are higher, statements more definite and precise and where the need for proof is more recognized. Filliozat and several other contemporary scholars in France provide a reputation for Bréhier's surprising statement of 1948, that he could not find anybody who was interested in the relations between Neoplatonism and Indian thought.

According to Filliozat, Elements of Vedic origin seem traceable in Philostratus' Life of Appolonius of Tyana: there is a reference to the *aśvamedha*⁽³⁾ and reference to Vedic rites and to yogic powers.⁽⁴⁾ The duration of Heraclitus 'great year' according to Consorimus, 10.8 years, is a decimal fraction of the result of Indian calculations. The

(1) H.-Ch. Puech, *Le manichéisme*, Paris 1949, 134, n. 191.

(2) J. Filliozat, Book-review of: A.J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste I*, Paris 1944. *Journal Asiatique* 234 (1943–1945), 349–354.

(3) R. Goossens, *Un texte grec relatif à l'aśvamedha*, *Journal Asiatique* (1930) 280

(4) P. Meile, *Appolonius de Tyane et les rites védiques*, *Journal Asiatique* 234, (1943–1945), 451.

Hippocratical treatise 'On winds' resembles the more ancient Indian doctrine of prāna. A medical theory in Plato's Timaeus resembles Indian medical theories. It should be observed, that these last cases have to be studied much more closely before they can be called decisive. Concerning the probability of actual communications, the author rightly points to the fact that the Persian empire comprised, during the Achaemenids (a period during which many Greek as well as Indian doctrines originated), the Panjab and the Indus Valley, whereas many Greeks lived in the empire, which was governed, from the Nile to the Indus, by one class of Aramaic speaking administrators. Moreover actual meetings have been recorded between Greeks and Indians.⁽¹⁾ We may conclude from this survey that there were actual contacts between Greece and India, before and during the third century. This need not imply that Plotinus was influenced by Indian thought. We come much nearer to this problem, however, with the help of the following very important and interesting article of the same author.

Shortly before 324 A.D., i.e. at least ten years before Plotinus came to Rome, the Christian saint Hippolytus wrote his *Refutation of all heresies* in which some passages are devoted to the 'Brahmanas' amongst the Indians. Filliozat has shown that these passages presuppose a quite detailed knowledge of Upanishadic doctrines as expounded in the Maitri Upanishad. This knowledge cannot result from records

(1) R. Festugière, Trois rencontres entre la Grèce et l'Inde, Revue de l'Histoire des Religions 125 (1942–1943), 32–57; 130 (1945) 29–41.

of companions or historians of Alexander the Great, as there is an unambiguous reference to South India: the Brahmanas are said to drink the water of the river 'Tagabena' which must be identified with the river Tungavenā mentioned in the Mahābhārata and which is no other than the Tunga. Since Śringeri is the only well known holy spot on the banks of this river, it may have been a place of importance long before Śankara, who according to tradition founded his first *matha* (hermitage) there.

According to Hippolytus, the God of the Brahmanas is 'not the articulated, but the one of the knowledge (gnōsis)' and 'the Brahmanas say, that only they know it, because only they have rejected the vain opinion (kenodoxía) which is the last garment (khiton) of the soul'. Filliozat has convincingly argued that the reference to the 'God' of the Brahmanas, can only refer to Brahman, which is the metaphysical counterpart of the Christian God. That Brahman is knowledge is a widespread doctrine in the Upanishads. But we have to note that the term gnosis, characteristic for the Gnostics and probably for the Corpus Areopagiticum, is not preponderant in Plotinus. More specific in the reference to 'vain opinion' and Filliozat reminds us of Upanishadic passages, where the view that the Self is the body, is rejected; the body is only a sheath (kośa) of the Self.⁽¹⁾

These points in two directions: (1) Kenodoxía is the same as abhimāna

(1) J. Filliozat, La doctrine des brahmanes d'après saint Hippolyte, Revue de l'Histoire des Religions 130 (1945) 59–91 (announced in: Journal Asiatique 234 (1943–1945) 451).

‘delusion’. Filliozat has defended the view that the Greek term actually goes back to this Indian term. It is interesting to observe that the Greek *dóxa*, e.g. in Parmenides and since in Plato and Plotinus, has almost the same philosophical significance as the Sanskrit *avidyā* which is again the same as *abhimāna*.⁽²⁾ The several sheaths (*kośas*) which cover the Self form a well-known topic of the Upanishads, especially of the *Taittirīya*. The *Maitri* Upanishad stresses that we have to destroy our *abhimāna* and get rid of the sheaths hiding the Self. Though the latter idea does not occur in Plotinus, it is interesting to note that it is connected with the doctrine of *abhimāna*, which does exist in Plotinus as *dóxa*. The fact that it plays in Parmenides a more important role than in Plotinus shows that it is superfluous to assume Upanishadic influence on Plotinus in this respect. But there can have been a concordance of influences and it is possible that Plotinus discovered Indian confirmation of the ancient Greek legacy. He may also have come to a somewhat Indianizing interpretation of the lacunary expression of Parmenides.

There are other examples. Hippolytus describes the Brahmanas the divine as the sun. We need not argue that Plotinus might have taken this from the same source, since this comparison is familiar to all readers of Plato. Filliozat is right in stressing that a Roman of the third century interested in India, e.g., Plotinus, could have a quite detailed and not inadequate knowledge of Upanishadic doctrines. However before we can speak of a definite influence of Upanishadic doctrines upon Plotinus, we must first show that certain features cannot be traced back to Greek

sources. This leads again to a consideration of the Greek background of Plotinus' thought. Moreover the susceptibility to undergo influence has to be explained with the help of the Greek background. In this context Festugière has shown, as Filliozat mentions (in the above book-review), that the interest in the Orient since the second century has to be explained against the background of the decline of Greek rationalism, which is an internal development of the Greek tradition.⁽¹⁾

Conclusion

Aristotelian tradition within exoteric and esoteric or pseudo-epigraphic moulds traversing beyond the Hellenistic world never fell short of capitulation by Muslim peripatetic and neo-platonic schools, including the scholastic and juristic philosophers of Islam in regard to postulation of logical canons. Hardly any book or tract of Muslim philosophy is devoid of any references to the Stagairite Aristotle. The Neoplatonized Aristotle (*Theologia-Enneads* episode, along with the Indian Vedanta and Buddhist points of encounter) enamored a number of Muslim thinkers, theologians and Mystics. The section of Muslim philosophers close to *Sophia Prennis* had incorporated their accounts of the Ultimate and the Salvation amid close encounters with Hellenists, Neoplatonists and Indian Upnishadic sages with some soterological corrective or accommodative impulses from the canonicity of Islam.

(1) See O. Lacombe, 'A note on Plotinus and Indian thought', Silver Jubilee Commemoration volume of the Indian Philosophical Congress, II, Calcutta 1950, 45-54.

The Polymath Avicenna exhibits a spirit of amalgamation and syncretism while savoring Aristotle of Greece with a pinch of salt, for taste, from the Alexandrian School. His praxis of philosophy is represented in the Aristotelian Principles-Corollary chain of structured syllogism (the *usul-tafri*’ duo). The ontologically conceived philosophical praxis of Avicenna centers around enquiry of the Ultimate and Happiness, talking in terms of Celestial Intellects in a way that is much closer to Indian philosophy as it represents the trajectory of Greco-Alexandrian *Nous*, the Muslim *Nafs*, and the Indian *Atma*. The *hadas* angel, again, makes him come closer to the advanced Indian *Yogins* of *Samadhi*. The original contribution of Avicenna to the otherwise Aristotelian praxis of philosophy lies in his in-depth evaluation of the social contextuality and historical factors while contemplating any philosophical discourse, especially of the antiquity or belonging to socially alien and different peoples. As regards withholding the wisdom, elevated standard of expression or being selective vis-à-vis the recipients without accusations of self aggrandizement, Avicenna can hardly be seen as a loner among the philosophers and sages.

Bibliography

1. Abd Al-Barr, Yusuf Ibn Al-Namri, *Jami’ bayan al-Ilm wa Fadlihi*. (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 1398 AH) 2 vols.
2. Adamson, Peter S., *Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the 'Theology of Aristotle'* (2002: London, Gerald Duckworth & Co.

- Ltd.) ISBN 0-7156-3163-2
3. Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr, *Prolegomena to the Study of Aristotle's Philosophy*.
 4. Anawati, Georges (de), "Le néoplatonisme dans la pensée musulmane: état actuel des recherches", in *Plotino e il neoplatonismo in Oriente e Occidente*, Rome 1974.
 5. Aphrodisias, Alexander of, *On Aristotle's Metaphysics I*, translated by W.E. Dooley and Arthur Madigan, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; London: Duckworth, 1989
 6. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. Tr. by Hume Trendennick. 2 vols (Harvard University Press) ISBN 0-674-99317-9.
 7. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* (ReadHowYouWant.com, 2006). ISBN 1425000975.
 8. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, second edition, translated by Terence Irwin, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1999
 9. Armstrong, A.N. Plotinus and India, *Classical Quarterly* 30 (1936) 22-28.
 10. Avicenna, *Kitab al-Najat* (Dar Al-Jeel, 1992)
 11. Avicenna, *Kitab al-Shifa* (Cairo: Al-Matba'at Al-Amiriyah, 1956).
 12. Avicenna, *Kitab al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihat*. Ed. By Sulaiman Dunya (Cairo: Dar Al-Marif)
 13. Avicenna, *Kitab al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihat*, p. 360; translated by A.M. Goichon (Beirut, Paris, 1951)

14. Avicenna, *The Easterners* (Mantiq Al-Mashreqeen), Cairo, 1910.
15. Avicenna, Tracts 8, 10, 11, 12, 14. *Rasail Ibn Sina* (Leiden, 1891).
16. Badawi, Abdurrahman, *Aflutin Ind Al-Arab* (Cairo: Maktaba Al-Nahda Al-Misriya), 1955.
17. Baumstark, A. 'Lucubrationes Syrio-Graecae,' Jahrbuch für Klassische Philologie, Supplement, vol. 21 (Leipzig, 1894), pp. 333-524
18. Baumstark, A. *Syrisch-Arabische Biographien des Aristoteles* (Leipzig, 1900)
19. Berti, E. *La Filosofia del Primo Aristotele*, Università di Padova Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia (1962)
20. Bréhier, E. , *La philosophie de Plotin*, Paris 1938, chapitre VII: L'orientalisme de Plotin, Bruxelles 1936.
21. Chroust, A.-H. "The Miraculous Disappearance and Recovery of the Corpus Aristotelicum", *Classica et Mediaevalia*, vol. 23 (1963)
22. Chroust, A.-H. 'A brief account of the traditional Vitae Aristotelis,' *Revue des Etudes Grecques*, vol. 77, nos. 364-5 (1964)
23. Chroust, A.-H. *Aristotle: Protrepticus A Reconstruction* (1964)
24. Chroust, A.-H. , *The First Thirty Years of Modern Aristotelian Scholarship* (1912-1942), in *Classica et Mediaevalia*, vol. XXIV (1964)

25. Chroust, Anton-Hermann, *Aristotle. New Light on His Life and on Some of His Lost Works*. Vol. I (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973)
26. D'Ancona Costa, Cristina 'Avicenna and the Liber de Causis: A Contribution to the Dossier', *Revista Espanola de Filosofia Medieval*, 7 (2000)
27. D'Ancona, Cristina: Pseudo-"Theology of Aristotle", Chapter I: Structure and Composition. *Oriens*, 2001, pp. 78–112.
28. Düring, I. *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition*, *Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis*, vol. 68 (1957)
29. Düring, I. *Notes on the History of the Transmission of Aristotle's Writings*, *Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis*, vol. 56 (1950)
30. Düring, I. , *Aristotle's Prolrepticus: An Attempt at Reconstruction*, *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia*, vol. 12 (1961)
31. Fakhry, Majid *History of Islámic Philosophy* (New York: 1983)
32. Fenton, Paul, "The Arabic and Hebrew Versions of the Theology of Aristotle" in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The 'Theology' and Other Texts*, Jill Kraye, Charles B. Schmitt and W. F. Ryan (1986: London) ISBN 0-85481-065-X, 241-264.
33. Filliozat, J. Book-review of: A.J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste I*, Paris 1944. *Journal Asiatique* 234 (1943-1945), 349-354.
34. Filliozat, J. 'La doctrine des brahmanes d'apres saint Hippolyte', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 130 (1945) 59-91.

35. Gohlman, William E. , *The Life of Ibn Sina* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1974)
36. Goossens, R. , ‘Un texte grec relatif a l'aśvamedha’, *Journal Asiatique* (1930) 280
37. Guidi, M. and R. Walzer, 'Studi su al-Kindi I: un scritto introduttivo allo studio di Aristotele,' *Memorie della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Licei*. Classe di Scienze Morali, series VI, vol. VI, fasc. 5 (Rome, 1940), pp. 375-419.
38. See Gutas, Dimitri, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden, Brill, 2014), Keith, A.B. “Plotinus and Indian thought”, *Indian Culture* 2 (1935-1936), 125-130
39. Gutas, Dimitri, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation: A Study of the Greco-Arabic Gnomologia* (New Haven, 1975)
40. Kenny, Anthony, *Essays on the Aristotelian Tradition*, Oxford University Press, 2001
41. Koster, W.J.W. Le mythe de Platon, de Zarathoustra et des Chaldéens, Etude critique sur les relations intellectuelles entre Platon et l'Orīnt, Leiden 1951.
42. Lacombe, O. , ‘A note on Plotinus and Indian thought’, *Silver Jubilee Commemoration volume of the Indian Philosophical Congress, II*, Calcutta 1950, 45-54.
43. Laertius, Diogenes, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, translated by R.D. Hicks. Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991

44. Lippert, J. *al-Qiftis Tarikh al-Hukama* (Leipzig, 1903)
45. Long, A.A. and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987
46. McCarthy, R.J., *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazali's al-Munqidh min al-Dalal and other Relevant Works Of al-Ghazali* (Boston: Twayne, 1980).
47. Meile, P. 'Appolonius de Tyane et les rites védiques', *Journal Asiatique* 234, (1943-1945),
48. Moraux, P. *Les Listes Anciennes des Ouvrages d'Aristote* (1951)
49. Muller, F. A. 'Das Arabische Verzeichnis der Aristotelischen Schriften,' *Morgenländische Forschungen: Festschrift für H. L. Fischer[=Fleischer]* (Leipzig, 1875)
50. Muller, F. A. 'Die griechischen Philosophen in der arabischen Überlieferung,' *Festschrift der Frankischen Stiftungen für Professor Bernhardt* (Halle, 1873)
51. Müller, H.K. , Orientalisches bei Plotinos? *Hermes* 49 (1914) 70-80.
52. O'Leary, De Lacy D.D, *How the Greek Science passed to the Arabs* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949)
53. Pines, Slomon, "La longue récénsion de la Théologie d'Aristote dans ses rapports avec la doctrine ismaélienne" in *Revue des études Islamiques* 22 (1954) 7-20
54. Plato, *Phaedo* (Start Classics, 2013), ISBN 1627938281
55. Plotinus, *Enneads*, II, VI. (Library of Alexandria, 1975), ISBN

1465579389

56. Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*. Oxonii e Typographae academico, 1835.
57. Przyluski, J. *Les trois hypostases dans l'Inde et à Alexandria Mélanges Cumont II*, Bruxelles 1936.
58. Puech, H.-Ch , *Le manichéisme*, Paris 1949.
59. R. Festugière, 'Trois rencontres entre la Grèce et l'Inde', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 125 (1942-1943), 32-57; 130 (1945) 29-41.
60. Rifai , Ahmad Farid, *Asr Al-Mamun*, (Cairo, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Misriyya, 1927), 2 vols.
61. Rosenthal, Franz 'Ash-Shaykh al-Yunani and the Arabic Plotinus Source', *Orientalia* vol. 21 (1952)
62. Rowson, Everett K., Jill Kraye & W. F. Ryan & C. B. Schmitt: "The Theology of Aristotle and Some Other Pseudo-Aristotelian Texts Reconsidered" in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*. Journal of the American Oriental Society, Jul. - Sep., 1992, pp. 478–484.
63. Sanaullah, Mohd., 'Alturath al-hindi fi al-hadara al-Islamiyya', *Journal of the Indian Academy of Arabic*, Aligarh Muslim University, Vol.13, Nos. 1-2, 1990, pp. 40-70, ISSN 2250-0413
64. Sanaullah, Mohd., *The Arab Legacy in Latin Europe* (Aligarh, Samia Publications, 2004)
65. Sanaullah, Mohd., *The Arab-Romance Parnassus* (Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 2006).

66. Shute, Richard, *On the History of the Process by Which the Aristotelian Writings Arrived at Their Present Form*, Arno Press, 1976 (originally 1888); Sorabji, Richard (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, Duckworth, 1990
67. Steinschneider, M. 'Die arabischen Übersetzungen aus dem Griechischen,' *Centralblatt für Bibl.-Wesen*, Beiheft no. II, part 5 (Leipzig, 1890-1), and Beiheft no. IV, part 12 (Leipzig, 1893)
68. Szabó, A. *Indische Elemente in Plotinischen Neuplatonismus*, *Scholastik* 13 (1938)
69. Techert, M., *Iranische religiöse Elemente in dem Begriff der Psuche bei Plotin*, *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny* 53 (1929)
70. Walzer, R. 'New light on the Arabic translations of Aristotle,' *Oriens*, vol. VI (1953)
71. Zimmerman, F.W. *The Origins of the So-Called Theology of Aristotle in Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*, (ed.) J. Kraye, W.F. Ryan and C.B. Schmitt.