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speak of the saintly virtues; but what can the laws of conventional morality or anything else in the world matter to men who cultivate ecstasy by autohypnotic methods and feel themselves inspired to such an extent that their individuality is lost in God? Instead of judging them by ordinary standards, which is futile, let us rather reflect that sincere devotion to the Ideal—or as they would say, the Real—covers a multitude of sins, and acknowledge that in the course of their quest they reached, if not the goal, at any rate a purer religion and a higher morality than Islam could offer them.

R. A. Nicholson.

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

Among the Muslim peoples it is commonly held that in the golden age of the caliphate there flourished world-wide systems of philosophy which were Arabian and Islamic, and that the Muslim academies were the forerunners and patterns of the European universities. This view, involving as it does the claim that Islam is the parent that begat and nourished European civilization, is not confined to mere propagandist literature, but is to be found, with or without qualification, in most of the serious contributions which modern Muslim scholars have made to the study of the development and history of Islamic institutions in the Middle Ages. In western literature, too, from time to time one reads of ‘Arabian philosophy’. Some occidental writers profess to regard ‘Arabian’ philosophy as a hotchpotch of the opinions of the ancients into which heterogeneous matter of all kinds has been thrown and left to seethe. They maintain that there is no such thing as ‘Arabian’ philosophy; that the Arabic-speaking peoples merely took over the Greek philosophy which was current among the Syrian Christians and the cultured pagan community of Harran and added thereto a few ingredients borrowed from Persia and India.

Now it is true that the whole framework, scope, and material of Arabic philosophy is to be traced to the civilization of the empires which the Arabs conquered, and that Greek philosophy predominates in their system. Whatever has been said in more recent times there was no misapprehension of the truth among earlier Muslim scholars. Al-Jahiz (d. A.D. 869) of Basra, an able and versatile writer whose influence in Muslim Spain was destined to be of great importance, makes a generous recognition of the debt which his co-religionists owe to the intellectual achievements of the Greeks: ‘Did we not possess the books of the ancients in which their wonderful wisdom is immortalized
and in which the manifold lessons of history are so dealt with that the past lives before our eyes, did we not have access to the riches of their experience which would otherwise have been barred to us, our share in Wisdom would be immeasurably smaller and our means of attaining a true perspective most meagre. Furthermore, the philosophers and scholastic theologians themselves for the most part made no attempt to conceal the origin of their theories. No literary pretence would have deceived the obscurantists who clung to the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet, for a large number of condemnations on all intellectual pursuits which were unknown to the Arabs of Muhammad's time are directed against those who introduce innovations of foreign origin. Philosophy was called 'wisdom mixed with unbelief'. Book-titles such as An exposure of Greek infamies and a sip of religious Counsels and Ocular demonstration of the Refutation of Philosophy in the Quran, tell their own story. A tale was circulated that a well-known philosopher on his death-bed recanted his doctrines, his last recorded utterance being 'Almighty God has spoken the truth and Avicenna is a liar'.

Again, it is true to say that the positive contribution which the Arabs made to the sum of human knowledge by way of addition to the achievements of earlier thinkers is not of great importance: but even so, though one may convincingly prove that the Islamic civilization bequeathed little or no more than it had itself inherited, it seems somewhat unfair to deny to that civilization a right to the peculiar synthesis of philosophic thought which its doctors adopted as their own, and it would be a positive injustice to belittle the zeal and enthusiasm for learning for the sake of learning which animated large numbers of men throughout the vast Muhammadan empire. 'Arabic philosophy' does convey to orientalists a definite meaning. They know that only one pure-blooded Arab—al-Kindi—distinguished himself by a

1 And to others also: cf. Keicher's monograph Raymondus Lullus und seine Stellung zur arabischen Philosophie.

mastery of philosophical problems; but they also know that that strange and often irreconcilable combination of Aristotelian and neo-Platonic thought which even the greatest Muslim philosophers accepted as a reasonable explanation of the universe can best be called Arabian. Muhammadan it was not. Its foremost exponents were often nominal Muslims only, or self-confessed heretics who paid for their opinions with their lives or the loss of their liberty.

Had the Arabs been barbarians like the Mongols, who stamped out the fire of learning in the East so effectually that it never recovered, and possibly never will recover, from the loss of its libraries and its literary tradition, the Renascence in Europe might well have been delayed more than one century. Before the days of printing the life of a scholar must always have abounded in irritation and disappointment. Until, and even after, the foundation of the Muslim universities in East and West, many a student set out as a matter of course on a journey of a thousand miles or more in quest of a teacher. Vast journeys from Spain to Mecca or from Morocco to Baghdad were undertaken by young men who left their homes practically penniless to sit at the feet of a chosen master.

Here a word on the origin of the Muslim universities may not be out of place. The first was the famous Niẓāmi University of Baghdad which was founded by Niẓāmi-Mu'min, the friend of Omar Khayyām and the Vizier of the Turk, Alp Arslān, in the year A. H. 457, the year before the Norman Conquest of England. Within a short time other universities sprang up at Nisābūr, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo, Alexandria, and other places: often, it will be noticed, in a city which had borne a reputation for learning centuries before the rise of Islam. In Europe Salerno1 was already famous as a studium of medicine in the tenth century. If this school actually was a survival of the

1 See Rashdall's The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, I, ch. 3, and Cambridge Medieval History, vi, p. 360.
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old Greek school of medicine it would be due to the fact that southern Italy was a part of the Byzantine Empire until the eleventh century. Even after the Norman conquest it was the home of a large population which spoke Greek. Still, on the other hand, the Norman conquerors of Sicily patronized Arabian learning and adopted Islamic customs with such thoroughness that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Arabian medicine must have had a powerful influence on the school, sustaining it not creative. In any case the Saracen population must have been treated by Muslim physicians, and the earliest authors show that they were not ignorant of the writings of Arabian doctors.

Salerno was a medical school pure and simple; it was not a university. The oldest Christian universities of Bologna, Paris, Montpellier, and Oxford came into being in the twelfth century. The first 'Arabian' university in Europe owed its origin to Muslim learning, but not to Muslim initiative, and it came very late in the day. Alfonso the Wise (1252–84) secured the services of a certain Abu Bakr al-Riqûî, one of the most learned men of his generation, and built for him a school, where al-Riqûî gave instruction in all the sciences to Christians, Jews, and Muslims.

But the proudest of the Muslim universities was the Mustanṣîriyâh which was founded in A.D. 1234 in Baghdad. We are told that in outward appearance, in statelyness of ornament and sumptuousness of furniture, in spaciousness and in the wealth of its pious foundations, the Mustanṣîriyâh surpassed everything that had previously been seen in Islam. It contained four separate law-schools, one for each of the orthodox sects of the

1 Guillaume le Bon (II) exhorted his subjects, the majority of whom were Saracens, to address their prayers to Allah; and his successors imitated Saracen money, court ceremonial, palace inscriptions, method of administration, and even, it is said, the harem. Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne par Edrisi, ed. Duyv and de Goeje, Int. p. 1.

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Sunnîs, with a professor at the head of each, who had seventy-five students (faqîb) in his charge, to whom he gave instruction gratis. The four professors each received a monthly salary, and to each of the three hundred students one gold dinar a month was assigned. The great kitchen of the college further provided daily rations of bread and meat to all the inmates. According to Ibn-al-Furât there was a library ... in the Mustanṣîriyâh with rare books treating of the various sciences, so arranged that the students could easily consult them, and those who wished could copy these manuscripts, pens and paper being supplied by the establishment. Lamps for the students and a due provision of olive oil for lighting up the college are also mentioned, likewise storage places for cooling the drinking water; and in the great entrance hall ... stood a clock ... doubtless some form of clepsydra, announcing the appointed times of prayer, and marking the lapse of the hours by day and by night. Inside the college a bath house ... was erected for the special use of the students, and a hospital ... to which a physician was appointed, whose duty it was to visit the place every morning, prescribing for those who were sick; and there were great store-chambers in the Madrasah provided with all requisites of food, drink, and medicines. And all this in the early thirteenth century!

The origin of intellectual movements in the eleventh century is extremely obscure, and in the present state of our knowledge it would be safer to point to the vast importance of the role of Muslim savants in Spain in educating individuals rather than to the direct influence of their system of education on the Christian universities of Europe. The latter are of course junior to the Oriental universities, and the testimony of scholars in the Middle Ages abundantly justifies the thesis that Islamic learning provided them with much material for their studies. Many of

1 Bagdad during the Abbaïd Caliphate, G. le Strange, Oxford, 1909, p. 267 f.
these scholars are mentioned in *The Legacy of Israel* and in other chapters of this book. John of Salisbury\(^1\) reminds his readers of the services of the Spaniards and those in touch with Africa and the Muhammadan East. Roger Bacon (c. 1215–92) can write ‘philosophia ab... arabico deducta est. Et ideo nullus latinus sapientiam sacrae scripturae et philosophiae poterit ut oportet intelligere, nisi intelligat linguas quibus sunt translatae’; and he tells us what Arabian authors especially justify this statement. But unfortunately the Christian travellers of earlier centuries do not tell us what they brought back with them from their journeys to countries under Muslim rule or Muslim influence. A comparison of the subjects studied among the Muslims in the tenth and eleventh centuries with the similar preoccupations of Christian students in the eleventh and twelfth centuries might be an indication that there is a closer connexion between Eastern and Western universities than has hitherto been supposed, but no decisive evidence is available. The very nature of systematic study, the relation of professor and pupil, the question of fees and endowments, the maintenance of discipline and the conferring of degrees or licences to teach, and the manifold activities of university life, must inevitably be more or less the same whether the centre of learning be in Baghdād or Oxford. Consequently, until some more definite proof of filiation is forthcoming, it would seem precarious to assert that the Christian university as an institution was moulded after the Islamic pattern. There are a good many points of resemblance, such as the grant by the Muslim professor of an *ijāza* or licence to teach or repeat the contents of a given document in the name and with the authority of the professor. Such a custom is evidently akin to the medieval *licentia docendi*, the earliest form of degree\(^2\); on the other hand the principle

1 *Metalogicus*, iv. 6. I am indebted to Professor Clement C. J. Webb for this reference.

2 However, the authorities who conferred the licence were not the same.

that nobody should set up as a teacher without having himself been taught for an adequate period by a duly authorized professor is too obvious to need a precedent so distant. Other superficial points of contact are the presence of large bodies of foreigners who were organized as *nationes*; also the early European practice of imparting instruction freely without exacting payment from pupils. This generous recognition of an obligation to hand on the torch of learning without requiring payment still lives on in the great university mosque of al-Azhar in Cairo, where students from all parts of the Muslim world are grouped in separate communal quarters, and are partially supported by pious benefactions and grants from the governing body.\(^3\)

The way in which individual Latin scholars drew Arabian learning from Spain in the century before the official translators began their work has been sketched with great skill and probability in *The Legacy of Israel*.\(^2\) In Europe Arabic ideas were propagated by wandering scholars, whose writings have not

\(^1\) Rushdī comments: ‘The License of the Rector to “read” a title or book, or rather the completion of such a course of lectures, made a man a Bachelor,’ and ‘A canonist could... lecture on a single title after four years of “hearing”’. The technical sense of ‘hearing’ and ‘reading’ correspond to similar technicalities in Arabic, but these similarities and also the employment of pupil-teachers after five or six years of instruction are not necessarily of any significance and may well have arisen spontaneously in any university. Could an Arabic origin of that mysterious word *bacalareus* (which the *Oxford English Dictionary* can hardly be said to explain satisfactorily) be conjectured we should be on firmer ground. Originally a bachelor in a university appears to have been a student who was allowed to teach in a master’s school, and though I have failed to find the exact expression in any Arabic writer *bijāq-altariyitā*—‘the right to teach on the authority of another’—would describe the baccalaureate and provide a tolerable assurance. However, the earliest use of the word is said (Hatsfeld et Darmsteter) to be in the *Chanson de Roland*. If the conjecture could be substantiated it would follow that the word of Arabic origin had been assimilated to ‘bachelor’; the Arabic not providing a word for the person holding the degree but only for the office.

\(^2\) See article by Charles and Dorothea Singer, p. 214 f.
survived; and though the channels through which the works of Avicenna, Algalzal, and Averroes reached the Latins are well known, the more subtle penetration of ideas in the preceding centuries can only be conjectured: it cannot be proved.

Through the translations made by Dominic Gundisalvus, Archdeacon of Segovia, in the early years of the twelfth century, the Christian West became acquainted with Aristotle by way of Avicenna, al-Farabi, and Algalzal. Gundisalvus' own encyclopedia of knowledge relies in the main on the information he has drawn from Arabian sources.¹

The frequent statement that the West owed the recovery of Aristotle to the Arabs needs some qualification. It may be said that down to the time of Gundisalvus it was scarcely suspected that Aristotle was a philosopher. Bacon tells us that Boethius was the first to make the West acquainted with Aristotle. His translation of the Categories and the De Interpretatione together with his own logical treatises and commentaries formed practically the sum of Aristotelian knowledge in Europe down to about 1150. The West really knew no more of Plato than they knew of Aristotle by direct contact; but Platonism enjoyed the advantage of being firmly embedded in Christian thought. The earliest (but incomplete) version of the Metaphysics to reach Paris came in c. 1200 from Byzantium; a few years later another incomplete version translated from the Arabic arrived. The complete work was not in the hands of scholars till after 1260. The Nicomachean Ethics arrived first from Greek sources, then from Arabic, and lastly in its entirety, translated direct from the Greek, about 1250. The Physics and De Anima were received first from Greek.

Thus it may be said that the West owed the recovery of Aristotelian philosophy to the Arabs inasmuch as the interest of European scholars in the works of Aristotle was first kindled by acquaintance with Arabian thought. It can hardly be doubted

¹ See further The Legacy of Israel, pp. 254-6.
velation as authoritative. But there is not always agreement as to what belongs to metaphysics and what to revealed religion. Roger Bacon, in his commendation of the study of philosophy, shows clearly his attitude to the question and indicates the oriental sources which determined the bent of his mind. ‘Metaphysics among the philosophers’, he says, ‘occupies the place of one part of theology, being named by them together with moral philosophy scientia divina¹ and theologia physica, as appears from the first and eleventh books of Aristotle’s Metaphysics, and from the ninth and tenth of the Metaphysics of Avicenna. Metaphysics surveys many matters concerning God and the angels and divine objects of this kind.’² And again, ‘the end of speculative philosophy is the knowledge of the creator through the creatures’.³ The Christian must always remember that ‘in itself philosophy leads to the blindness of hell, and therefore it must in itself be darkness and mist’.⁴

Among the Arabian scholars there was no larger measure of agreement. Avicenna stressed being que being as the proper subject of metaphysics, while Averroes, who claimed to depend more closely on Aristotle, asserted that God and the Intelligences were its proper province. Thus in the two Arabian philosophers best known to the Latins the domain of metaphysics and theology was quite different. Averroes claimed the right to submit everything save the revealed dogmas of the faith to the judgement of reason.

To return to the origin of philosophical studies among the Muslims. There is no reason for supposing that the Arabs who formed the victorious armies of the first caliphs differed markedly from the Arabs of to-day, save that the proportion of full-blooded Bedawin was probably considerably greater, a fact which is not likely to raise exaggerated hopes among modern philosophers. Among such men interest in any form of learning was negligible. Not only stimulus to study but also material for study had to come from without. The stimulus came when the first generation or two had passed away, and the conquering caste had to justify their right to exist as a separate religious community. While the newcomers ruled by force of arms, preserved all or at any rate most of the distinctive customs of the desert, and spoke a different dialect, there was no need of any intellectual justification; the more especially when, in Syria, for example, their Christian neighbours regarded them as a new sect of Arian tendencies, while the Arabs themselves looked with an indulgent eye on the worship of the Trinitarians. But before many years had passed distinctions between the Semites of the Desert and the Semites of the Sown became blurred. The caliphs’ armies had enrolled thousands of Arabs who had served the ‘Romans’ as auxiliaries. In Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt the Arabs were often welcomed because they put an end to imperial exactions and relieved the schismatic churches from the unwelcome pressure of the central government, displaying a better knowledge of local feeling and sentiment than foreigners. Islam at first was all but inarticulate. Its simple creed of One God did not involve any necessary contradiction of Christian belief. It was only when the contradictory and controversial aspects of the two religions were emphasized that Islam found its voice and sought for formulas in which to give it utterance.

In the course of time large numbers of Jews and Christians became Muslims in order to escape the poll-tax which was exacted from all non-Muslim monotheists, or people who possessed inspired scriptures.¹ These people carried with them the culture of the Byzantine and Persian empires. Such widespread secessions alarmed the authorities of the Church, and they proceeded by

¹ Avicenna’s treatise on metaphysics is called ‘īmān-ī-lābīyyūt, literally ‘knowledge of matters pertaining to the divine’.
² Opus Majus, Philag., ch. iii.
³ Ibid., ch. viii.
⁴ Ibid., ch. xii fin.
¹ I have described the influence of the Jews in The Legacy of Israel, pp. 129 ff.
argument to attack the foundations of Islam. What was the nature of Allah? What was meant by the assertion that he was Almighty, Omniscient? What was the relation of His knowledge to Himself. If He had predestined all things by an immutable decree wherein lay man’s free will and responsibility? Such were some of the problems which the Christian churches had been debating for centuries. They handled them on with ironical satisfaction to the Muhammadan community, where they caused as much bitterness and strife as in their original home. There were times and areas where these questionings could be silenced by the voice of authority, but among the more earnest and intelligent classes they called for some sort of answer. Such answers as were given were at first halting and tentative. The language and the ideas were new and strange to a people whose governing classes had not known even of the existence of philosophy. St. John of Damascus when he argues can dismiss his Muslim opponents with kindly condescension. The Muslims, however, were not long content to leave their adversaries in undisputed possession of the weapons of Greek dialectic, and they gradually familiarized themselves with the system of thought which was contained in the writings of the Greeks and Syrians. Little has come down to us from this early period save the tradition that various philosophical works were translated into Arabic, and some sayings of earlier speculative theologians which show that philosophical doubts had already begun to work in their minds.

It was under the patronage of the Abbasid Caliph al Ma’mūn (198–218, i.e. A.D. 813–33) that philosophy really came into its own. From the fact that this caliph held that the Qurān was created in time in opposition to the orthodox tenet that it was eternal before all worlds, and was confessedly an upholder of the doctrines of the Muʿtazila1 or Liberal theologians on the subject of the divine nature, it may be inferred that the Muslims had long been familiar with Greek thought and Christian theology.

1 See p. 252.
receives a desire to give birth to the forms which are present to itself, and desire begets pains until it accomplishes its desire in the world of perception. Out of this desire the soul is formed. Therefore the soul is intellect; sometimes it is in a body and sometimes it is external to it. The intellect works in this world through the soul. The soul of all animals has ‘taken a wrong path’. There is, too, a plant-soul which is endowed with life, and springs from the same source as the others. The human soul has three parts, plant, animal, and rational. The soul leaves the body at its dissolution, and the pure soul which has kept itself unspotted from the world will return at once without any delay to the intellectual substances. On the other hand, souls which have defiled themselves in this world and have become subject to the lusts of the body will only attain to their original state after grievous exertion. In answer to the question as to what the soul remembers when it has returned to the world of intelligence it is answered that it only thinks and does what is befitting in that world. The proof that it will not remember its former preoccupations, its desires, or its philosophy is that even in this world it takes no interest in temporal matters when its gaze is fixed on the heavenly world. All knowledge in the heavenly world is timeless, and therefore souls are timeless. Therefore, too, souls know timeless the things thought in this world.

The manifold operations of the soul at different times form no argument against the soul’s faculty being one simple entity. Its working is manifested at different times because corporeal substances cannot receive its workings at one and the same time. The intellect is all things and its essence comprehends all things, so that when it sees its own essence it sees all things.

God is the cause of the intelligence, which is the cause of soul, which is in turn the cause of nature, while nature is the cause of all individual things. Though one thing may cause another, God is the cause of all, for he is the creator of cause. The two worlds of sense and intelligence are related to one

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1 Ed. by Fr. Dieterici, Leipzig, 1885.
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another as a rough to a carved stone. Beauty in nature proceeds from the beauty which is in the soul.

The results of secondary causes are not to be attributed to a will residing in the stars. The body, which is merely the instrument of the soul, perishes and disintegrates when the soul has no further use for it and leaves it. Because of the soul man is what he is. The soul remains ever in one state subject neither to corruption nor dissolution.

Such are a few of the ideas which were fathered on Aristotle, and it is strange to reflect that the subsequent Arabian philosophers did not think of questioning the authenticity of a document which contained many statements that they instinctively ignored. To this corruption of the sources of authoritative Aristotelianism may be traced the general confusion and lack of unity of conception which the West inherited from the East, and from which St. Thomas delivered Christendom. However, the mysticism inherent in the Neo-Platonic doctrines met the need of many who found refuge therein from the doubts and difficulties which the system as a whole created when it was circulated as a part of Aristotelianism. On the other hand, the confusion which a piecing-together of incoherent philosophies engendered in the minds of earnest Muslim seekers after truth must have contributed not a little to the hatred and intolerance of all philosophy which so many of their writers express.

By philosophers (jalāiscia—an arabized plural of jilāisiyy) the Arabs meant those whose primary interest was philosophical rather than theological. Al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153) says that they all followed the Aristotelian path, save in a few details which they borrowed from Plato and the earlier philosophers. This statement must, of course, be read in accordance with the Islamic belief that the Neo-Platonic theories attributed to Aristotle were really his. Al-Shahrastānī begins his list of Arabian philosophers with al-Kindī and Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq, and ends it with Abū Ḥāli ibn Sinā (Avicenna) who, he says, is held by the majority
to have had the keenest insight and judgement. Doubtless to these he would have added, had he lived longer, the Spanish philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes d. 1198), Aristotle’s most learned commentator. The physics of these men were founded on Aristotle’s doctrine of the four causes: they recognized the existence of forms and natures by which beings can be differentiated, and they sought to discover the principle of being in these forms and natures.

Al-Kindī’s own theory of the universe was akin to The Theology of Aristotle. The divine intelligence is the cause of the world’s existence; its activity is mediated through the heavenly spheres to the terrestrial world. The world-soul is intermediate between God and the world of bodies. This world-soul created the heavenly spheres. The human soul is an emanation from the world-soul. There is thus a duality in man: inasmuch as the soul is tied to the body it is influenced by the heavenly spheres, but in so far as it is true to its spiritual origin it is free and independent. Both freedom and immortality are only attainable in the world of intelligence, so that if man would attain thereto he must set himself to develop his intellectual powers by acquiring a right knowledge of God and the universe.

In the opinion of an exceptionally well-informed biographer, Ibn Khallikān, the greatest of the earlier Islamic philosophers was al-Fārabi (d. A.H. 339—950) who was ultimately of Turkish origin. He was a prolific commentator on Aristotle and those works of Plato with which his co-religionists were acquainted. His treatises on The Soul and The Faculties of the Soul and on The Intelligence were well known to the Latins. Al-Kindī and al-Fārabi handed on to their successors the problem of the intellectus agens. Aristotle had brought his theory of the human mind under the sway of his theory of the antithesis of power and act, potentiality and actuality; and to him human reason (intellectus as it was called in the Middle Ages) was only a capacity for knowledge: sometimes it knows or thinks, sometimes
it does not. There must then be an actual being which can rouse the potential human intellect to actuality, and this must itself be intellectū nāwū, al-fā‘al. But what was this active or creative intellect, what its relation to the human soul, to the intelligences which moved the spheres, and to God? Al-Fārābī divided the intellect into four, namely intellect in power, in act, the acquired intellect, and the agent intellect. By the third he seems to have meant the state of the intellect in act at the moment of its understanding the intelligibles. By the agent intellect he meant a pure form which does not reside in matter. It is that which makes the potential intellect actual and the potential intelligible actually intelligible.

Before we leave this subject it may be said that Averroes (see p. 275) held that the active intellect and also the potential intellect were one in all men. Such a belief was destructive of personal immortality and of individual personality. It was combated by St. Thomas Aquinas, who taught that the possible or potential intellect and also the active intellect was a part of the soul of each individual, so that the number of active intellects and possible intellects is identical with the sum of the human race. Avicenna had followed al-Fārābī in asserting the unity of the active though not of the potential intellect in all men, but this the great Dominican rightly saw was inconsistent with the individual’s control over his own actions.

In al-Fārābī we meet those arguments for the existence of God which are derived from the Timaeus and the Metaphysics and recur with tedious iteration in all the Islamic scholastics—the necessary and the potential, the impossibility of an infinite chain of causes and the postulate of a first cause necessarily existent in and for itself. Al-Fārābī was an enthusiastic exponent of the theory that the world had no beginning, a doctrine which was an offence to Islam and Christianity. His definition of time as the movement which holds things together deserves mention.

A name far better known in the West than al-Fārābī was Avicenna (Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sīnā, 980–1037) whose family sprang from Bukhārā. His posthumous fame rested more on his medical than his philosophical writings. He had the gift of popular writing and could make a subject his own and explain it briefly and succinctly to the world, so that he was justly regarded as representative of the best Arabian philosophic thought before the rise of Averroes in the West. The Latins knew Avicenna before they became acquainted with the work of Averroes. Raymond, Archbishop of Toledo, between the years 1130 and 1150, ordered translations to be made by his Archdeacon Dominic Gundisalvus and Juan Avendeath of Seville. Avicenna’s general position is similar to that of his predecessor, but his doctrines are much more clearly articulated. Pure intelligences emanated from the necessary being, simple substances, not subject to change. These beautiful things turned always towards the necessary being whom they sought to imitate, rapt in the intellectual delight of contemplating the divine throughout eternity. Avicenna’s interpretation of his predecessors exercised a powerful influence in the West when his works had been translated into Latin.¹

One of the many words and ideas which Avicenna handed on to the West was intention,² the Arabic ma‘qila, i.e. what is understood by the intellect, intelligibles. There were two kinds of intentions, the primary conception of a thing such as a tree, and the secondary intention or logical concept of a thing in relation to abstract universal conceptions. Avicenna’s contention that the subject of logic was second intentions by which one proceeded from the known to the unknown was taken over by Albertus Magnus, and became part of the scholastic tradition.

Avicenna made for himself and posterity a problem which taxed his ingenuity to the utmost. He laid down the principle

¹ Cf. Legacy of Israel, p. 211.
² See the article on this word in New English Dictionary.
that from the one and indivisible only one being can originate.\(^1\) Therefore it is not permissible to assert that form and matter spring directly from God, for that would involve the assumption that there are two different modes in the divine essence. Matter, indeed, is not to be thought of as coming from God, because it is the very principle of multiplicity and diversity.

Again, argued Avicenna, we may not suggest that a necessary being which has no final cause is influenced by a purpose in the sense that he acts for the sake of something other than himself. For if he did he would be dominated in his actions by regard for a being inferior to himself. It would then be necessary to distinguish within the divine nature: (a) the good of the thing which made it desirable; (b) the divine knowledge of that good; and (c) the divine intention of acquiring or producing that good. Therefore something intermediary between God the necessary being and the world of multiplicity must be postulated. The problem, therefore, was how to account for the fact of a complex universe and a simple creator.

Avicenna began by combining the notions of the necessary and the possible with the notions of consciousness and knowledge. The first caused, the pure intelligence, derives its being from the first being. It is therefore necessary. But in itself it is merely contingent, since there was no necessity for the first cause to cause it. Thus arose a duality in the universe by which the first cause was unaffected, and from this duality there came triplicity. Thence came the series of emanations which ended in the sphere of the moon, where the intelligence of the moon engendered a last pure intelligence which produced human souls and the four elements. Here Avicenna got into serious difficulty. He had lost the principle which he had held through the spheres, the principle that ‘from one only one can proceed’.

\(^1\) No doubt Plotinus, who was conscious of the difficulty in showing how plurality can emanate from unity, is the source of this and many other doctrines of Avicenna.

The elements might be one materially by reason of a common substratum, but what of their forms? He attributed the existence of ‘four elements’ to a knowledge within the pure intelligences that they were four in God’s thought. To endeavour to safeguard his principle and still to leave room for multiplicity Avicenna advanced the theory that matter was ‘prepared’ or ‘disposed’ to accept a particular form. This disposition was produced by the motions of the spheres in such a way that the form had simply to occupy or appropriate the matter which had been prepared to receive its proper form.

The scale of creation, according to many Muslim philosophers, was constructed thus:

First Principle, i.e. God.

The First Intelligence, knowing its essence and its origin.

The Second Intelligence (a) the soul and (b) body of
knowing itself as
(a) necessary
(b) possible.

The Third Intelligence (a) the soul and (b) body of
knowing itself as
(a) necessary
(b) possible.
and so on till

The Sphere of the Moon the soul and body of the
the sphere of the Moon.

The Active Intelligence:

human souls and the four

elements.

Although it is anticipating the march of learning, it is convenient to insert here Roger Bacon’s account of the state of philosophical knowledge in his day (1292): ‘The greater part of Aristotle’s philosophy failed to have any effect [in the West] either because manuscripts were hidden away and extremely rare, or because the subject matter was difficult or distasteful,
or because of the wars in the East, until after the time of Mahomed when Avicenna and Averroes and the rest brought back Aristotle’s philosophy into the light of comprehensive exposition. Although some logical and other works had been translated from the Greek by Boethius, yet only from the time of Michael the Scot, who translated certain parts of Aristotle’s books on Nature and Metaphysics with his own expositions, has the philosophy of Aristotle been highly prized by the Latins. Of the thousand books which contain his great and comprehensive wisdom only a mere modicum has even been translated into Latin up to the present, and less still is in general use among students. Avicenna in particular, Aristotle’s imitator and expositor, who completed philosophy as far as he could, composed a work on philosophy in three volumes, as he says in the prologue of his book The Sufficiency. One was a popular work like the dicta of the Peripatetic philosophers who are of the school of Aristotle; the second according to the pure truth of philosophy which “fares not the thrusts of opponents’ spears” as he says himself; the third, which he completed at the end of his life, in which he explained the earlier volumes and gathered together the more obscure facts of nature and art. But two of these volumes have not been translated. The Latins possess certain parts of the first which is called the book of Assiapha (variant Assepha) that is the Book of Sufficiency. After him came Averroes, a man of solid wisdom who corrected many statements of his predecessors and contributed a good deal of new material himself, although he too must be corrected in some particulars and needs amplifying in many others. However, as Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes, “Of making many books there is no end”.

There are grounds for regarding Bacon as an embittered scold, and he certainly failed sometimes to keep abreast of the knowledge of his own day; but nevertheless there is value in his statements if we apply them to his immediate past.

Inasmuch as Muhammadan Spain was a faithful mirror of all the warring sects of Oriental Islam and was drawn into the many controversies, philosophical and dogmatic, which agitated the ancient centres of Hellenism, it is essential that some account should be given of those thinkers whose teaching exercised strong influence on early Spanish philosophy and scholasticism. Some of Bacon’s words still hold good. The time has not yet come when a history of Muslim philosophy can be written. Even were all the relevant material which is contained in manuscripts stored in the various libraries of Europe and the Muhammadan world published and placed in the hands of scholars, we should have to wait till monographs and detailed studies had prepared the ground for a general survey of its vast content. At the present time there are many gaps in our knowledge which are being filled up slowly; but almost every accession to our knowledge of medieval Arabian philosophy also throws fresh light on the development of medieval thought in the West. The Muslim East was closely bound to the West by the ties of religion which political disunion could not sever. When once Western Islam was opened to the flow of Eastern speculation a close connexion in thought and the subjects of study became apparent. There was a unity—a common interest—which bound together the scattered scholars of the vast Islamic empire in an intellectual brotherhood of understanding which Europe has lost to-day. Muslim Fachgenossen enjoyed the inestimable advantage of thinking, writing, and speaking a common language: consequently we are bound to look for the antecedents of the Muslim thinkers of Spain—who did not become active till the third century of the Hijrah—in the Orient.

In Spain the Church had lost contact with philosophy, so that instead of the Christians being the tutors of the invading Muslims
they had to become their pupils. Mozarabic literature is notoriously poor and decadent, and it would be vain to look for the seeds of medieval scholastic in its territory. Spain remained the most orthodox Muslim country for some three centuries, and there is no trace of any important theological or rational movement till the writings of al-Jahiz, a Mu’tazilite of a prodigious industry who wrote on almost every subject known to the ancient world, were brought in by Spanish Arabs who had attended his lectures in the Orient. Immediately, the Mu’tazilite doctrines met with a response from the more intelligent classes and orthodox teaching was called in question.

The relation of the divine omnipotence to human will had been hotly debated as early as the first century of the Hijrah. This problem, which our own Pelagius raised and discussed with such vigour that the views he propounded soon rose to the rank of a new heresy, was entirely after the hearts of the Greek theologians, who seized with avidity upon a fresh subject of debate. Predestination and Free Will became the burning question. From thence it passed like an infectious disease to the Muslim Church. Those who held the view that God could not predestinate men’s actions because He was a moral being who was bound to do that which was righteous came to be known as Mu’tazila, i.e. Secessionists, and the name was subsequently applied to those who departed from a strictly orthodox attitude towards the Quran and apostolic tradition. We are not concerned to follow the fortunes of the liberal theologians in the East, except in so far as their attitude influenced the subsequent course of Muslim thought which poured into western and southern Europe. The great service which the Mu’tazila rendered the civilized world was not so much their insistence upon certain doctrines such as the eternal principle of the divine righteousness; but their demand that theology should be subject to in-

1 In this they were not innovators, but upholders of the ancient Semitic conception of aTXay or righteousness which is far older than monotheism.

vestigation by the mind. They would not be silenced by such phrases as ‘God Most High has said’. Instead they demanded to be told the meaning of ‘God’ and ‘said’. The danger of such an attitude became obvious in those extremists who carried the questionings of the Mu’tazila too far and fell into agnosticism or open atheism. Fitzgerald’s famous quatrains well illustrate the pessimism into which many of these men fell. But doubt and pessimism are states of mind which man instinctively regards as unwholesome, and the strength of the Mu’tazilite movement lay with those who laboured to establish the theology of Islam on a firm philosophical foundation. They insisted that the foundation should be logical, and that nothing that was repugnant to philosophy as they knew it should be taught as de fide.

If we see in the voluminous literature of the Mu’tazilite controversy about the divine attributes merely a dispute about names, we shall as gravely underestimate the issue at stake as Gibbon did when he accused the Christian churches of convulsing the world for the sake of a diphthong.

The Quran can hardly be said to have furnished its devotees with the material for a doctrine of God. It referred to Him as The Knower, The Mighty, the Lifegiver, and the Death-bringer, and so on: it spoke of Allah sitting upon His throne and ascribed to Him the figure of a man. The Mu’tazila regarded such expressions as figurative—mere anthropomorphic concessions to man’s limitations. The exaltation of seven attributes: Power, Will, Knowledge, Hearing, Seeing, Speech, and Life, into separate qualities within the Divine nature they condemned as polytheism. Some went so far as to deny that anything whatever could be predicated of God: others rejected only some of these qualities. Duns Scotus, who owed a great deal to the Spanish Arabian School, held that the First Being was living, active, intelligent, and possessed of will.

The name Mu’tazila originally meant one who held that a mortal sinner had ‘succeeded’ from the community of the faithful.
A discussion as to what was meant by God possessing the attribute of speech became fundamental, and eventually led to the suppression of the Mu'tazila by the power of the secular arm. The Mu'tazila argued that if speech was a divine attribute it was necessarily eternal and pre-existent before all worlds, uncreate; otherwise when God spoke in time he suffered change in that He had become what He was not before, and 'becoming' may not be predicated of God. Therefore, if speech was a divine attribute, and the Quran was the record of that speech, the Quran as the word of God must, ex hypothesi, be uncreate. But that was absurd, because it was demonstrably a thing of the created world, revealed and written in time and place, as its sometimes domestic and purely local verses plainly indicated. God's attributes were identical with His being, and though his relations with His creatures engendered certain operative attributes, e.g. creation and preservation, they pertained only to time.

The Caliph al-Ma'mūn, himself a Mu'tazilite, made belief in the Quran a thing of time a test of conformity. Unfortunately the Mu'tazila showed themselves intolerant in the day of their power, and their persecution of the orthodox party who held firmly to the doctrine of the pre-existence of the Quran and a fairly literal exegesis of it, together with an acceptance of the vast number of traditions which circulated in the name of Muhammad, recoiled on their own head.

However, in the fourth century of the Hijrah it had become abundantly plain that some concession must be made to the claims of the Mu'tazila. Men's minds had become unsettled, and there was urgent need of the restatement of the dogmas of the faith in the light of current philosophy. This task was taken in hand by two men who were the founders of orthodox kalām, or scholastic philosophy, namely Abu' l-Hasan al-Ash'ārī.

1 Al-Ash'ārī's exposition of his system is now being published in Germany for the first time. Till this is in the hand of scholars it is not possible always to say how far al-Ash'ārī's own opinions warrant the doctrines of his school.
Sierra de Córdoba and there, surrounded by his disciples, gave himself up to the study and the teaching of an esoteric theology. Secrecy, which fear of the secular power inspired, gave his teaching a depth which would have been denied to a faith more widely disseminated, and secured for Ibn Masarra and his school a lasting influence on the thought of the subsequent centuries. In course of time it became known that Ibn Masarra's retreat was the centre from which doctrine dangerous to the fundamental theses of Islam was being promulgated; and, fearful of the consequences of a charge of atheism, Ibn Masarra deemed it prudent to leave the country under the pretext of undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca. Not till the accession of the tolerant and scholarly 'Abd al-Rahmân III did Ibn Masarra return from Arabia to Spain; and when he was once more established as a teacher the esoteric character of his instruction became more marked. To the outside world he was the pious and austere ascetic who followed the path of penitential exercises and devotions; to his ordinary hearers he was a mystic whose utterances were free from all suggestions of unorthodoxy; but to the inner circle of his initiates he was a master of esoteric truth, whose words bore an inner and mysterious meaning which only the chosen few could understand. Ibn Masarra was the first to introduce into the West an intentionally ambiguous and obscure use of common words, and his example has been followed by most subsequent esoteric writers. So successful was his method that when he died in 931 he was respected as a man of saintly character and pious austerities rather than remembered as a teacher of dubious theology.

No written work of Ibn Masarra is extant; but a learned Spanish Orientalist has collected the material for a reconstruction of the essential features of his system. From these it would seem that Ibn Masarra was an enthusiastic advocate of the philosophy which was fathered on Empedocles. Among the

the context of a kalām book whether the author is a Jew or a Muhammadan. As would be expected, the orthodox Ash’arite view of God, which explicitly denies the operation of natural laws and the relation of cause and effect, had no more influence on Jewry than on Christendom.

From Sa’ādīa ben Joseph al-Fayyūmī (892–942) down to Joseph Albo (1380–1444) Jewish philosophy concerned itself with the problems and the arguments it inherited from the Arabs. There is no need to catalogue the list of men who were generally abreast with, and sometimes in advance of, the philosophical position of their time. By far the most important was Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) whose searching criticism of the Arabian Mutakallimin was freely used by St. Thomas Aquinas. Maimonides followed the example of al-Fārābī and Avicenna in going back to Aristotle for the material for his proof of the existence, unity, and incorporeality of God.

Among a section of Christian scholastics Avicennan gained an astonishing reputation after his Fons Vitae was translated from Arabic into Latin by Avendeath and Dominic Gundisalvus, in the first half of the twelfth century. Almost without exception the Franciscan school came under the spell of the Fons Vitae; while the Dominicans, inspired by St. Thomas Aquinas, subjected its doctrines to a sharp and destructive criticism. Gundisalvus himself wrote three works, De Unitate, in which he explained that everything save God is composed of matter and form, De Processione Mundi and De Anima, which propagated the pantheistic theories of the Spanish-Arabian school. So devoid of all polemic was the Fons Vitae that many Christian writers thought the author was an Arab, while Guillaume d'Anvergne thought he was the only Christian thoroughly conversant with Arabian philosophy who was sound in the doctrine of the Verbum Dei. However, as Guillaume does not share Avicebron’s view that spiritual beings are composed of matter,

1 See further The Legacy of Israel, pp. 192–202 and especially 437 ff.

it is reasonable to assume that his praise of him as the noblest of all philosophers was based upon a partial acquaintance with his works.

Alexander of Hales also adopts Avicebron’s view of prime matter and speaks of angels as possessed of matter and form. To the Spanish Jew he owes the idea that every active and passive relation indicates form and matter respectively.

Avicebron gave the title Source of Life to his work because it claimed to point to an esoteric knowledge of the principle behind all phenomena, a knowledge which was hidden from the ignorant and foolish and revealed to the philosopher who meditated on the divine mysteries. The universe was thus to be explained not by a study of the nature of things, but by a knowledge of the principle which had given them being. Illuminative wisdom was known to Bacon, who speaks of philosophy as ‘coming into being through the influence of a divine illumination’.

The revival of peripatetic studies reinforced the opposition of many Christian scholastics to the Spanish-Arabian doctrines, and those who had espoused them were forced to endeavour to clothe them with the authority of the Fathers. St. Thomas therefore takes pains to show that St. Augustine did not explicitly ascribe matter to spiritual beings. With possibly one or two exceptions he expounds Avicebron’s theories simply in order to refute them. His de substantiis separatis contains a conspicuous example. He asserts that it is impossible to prove that spiritual beings are of matter, and he advances arguments for rejecting the doctrine of emanations in place of the immediate creative activity of God.

Another writer whose work had great influence in the West was Alqazīl (Abū Ḥāmid ibn Muhammad al-Ṭāṣī al-Ghazālī, 1058–1119). Surnamed Huṣūṭu-l-ʾĪṣām, ‘Islam’s convincing Proof’, his varied life was lived amid the significant intellectual and religious movements of his day. In turn he had been
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philosopher, scholastic, traditionist, sceptic, and mystic. A man of unquestionable sincerity and firm moral purpose—one of the comparatively few men of his race who consistently exerted himself to awake in his co-religionists a zeal for morality—he has retained in Islam a position somewhat comparable with that of St. Thomas Aquinas in Christianity. In reading his theological treatises one remembers only with an effort that the author is a Muhammadan, unless a reference to the Trinity or the Incarnation is called for.

In early manhood he took up the study of theology and canon law as a career. Before he was twenty he began to question the dogmas which were held to be authoritative and to inquire into theological problems for himself. He was elected assistant to the professor at Nishāpūr, and from there he passed on to the Niṣābūr Academy at Baghdad, where as a specialist in law his fortune was secure. Here, after some years of conflict between faith and reason, he succumbed to a severe nervous breakdown, and left the capital in search of quiet and peace. Regaining the power of ordered thought, he set himself to study afresh the four ‘ways’ which claimed to lead to the truth: (1) scholastic theology; (2) the Ta‘līmites, who believed that there was an infallible teacher; (3) the ‘Aristotelian’ philosophers, and (4) the Ṣūfīs or mystics who held that God could be mystically apprehended in ecstasy. He went carefully through all these systems, and finally emerged a mystic. Al-Ghazālī’s spiritual pilgrimage is a fascinating story which deserves to be better known in its details. Its importance for our purpose is that Al-Ghazālī set himself to study afresh the several systems of philosophy and theology and embodied his results in works which were translated into Latin. His books on logic, physics, and metaphysics became known through the translators of Toledo in the twelfth century, though so far as concerns metaphysics Al-Ghazālī’s influence did not equal that of Avicebron, which, being in the main stream of Spanish thought, was firmly established among the Latins until Averroes and St. Thomas drove it into a backwater.

Two Spaniards, Raymund Lull and Raymund Martin, must be mentioned. The controversy which has gathered round the origin of Raymund Lull’s philosophy well illustrates the point which was made at the beginning of this chapter. Spanish Orientalists claim to have found very many examples of Arabian inspiration in Lull’s work; while certain modern French scholastics have asserted that the genesis of his system is to be found in Augustinianism and the classical tradition of the Church. Where controversy runs high it is begging the question to speak of a ‘common-sense view’; but probably many will agree that the facts justify the general conclusion of this chapter: a classical tradition, lost or obscure in Christian Europe, returned under the aegis of Islam and caused enthusiastic study of Arabian writings, of Aristotle, and of the Fathers of the Church. There can be no necessity to write of a ‘reproche d’arabisme’ when Christian scholars sought the aid of those who had, on the whole, faithfully transmitted the lore of the ancients. Christians who lived during the Arabian Renaissance felt no false shame in learning from the Arabians; nor, to do them justice, did the Arabians display more than a legitimate pride in their intellectual pre-eminence. Ibn Ṭūmulūs of Alcira—he died in 1223 and was thus almost a contemporary of Lull—writes in no vainglorious spirit: ‘In the sciences of Geometry, Arithmetical, Astronomy, and Music the scholars of Islam have surpassed their ancient predecessors. Still, although it can be said with great probability that men nowadays have access to fuller knowledge than the ancients, it is only fair to remember that it is likely that a good many of the works of the ancients have perished.’ Modern scholarship endorses\(^1\) the claim which Ibn Ṭūmulūs puts forward with the scrupulous fairness of a scholar who would rather magnify than decry the achievements of his

\(^1\) See chapters x, xi, and xii.
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predecessors. His claim that Muslim thinkers have achieved as much in the realm of metaphysics as in the positive sciences is not on such sure ground. We have seen what had happened to Aristotelianism in its Arabian dress.

The absence of any considerable body of philosophical opinions which can be labelled Arabian unduly complicates the question of immediate source, but any one who considers that Lull was the founder of a School of Oriental Studies; that he wrote and spoke Arabic; that the great aim of his life was to commend the Christian faith to the Saracens on intellectual grounds; and that he is said to have met a martyr's death preaching to the Arabs of Tunis, will probably feel that to exclude direct Arabian influence from his life is to narrow unduly the range of his overflowing sympathies. He lived in an age (1235–1315) when the West was going back to the real source of its philosophy, and the extent to which he relied on the Muslim philosophers can only be determined by close study of none too decisive data. Certainly in the theological, or rather devotional, section of his writings he borrowed a great deal from the Arabs. His treatise on the *Hundred Names of God* speaks for itself; while in *Languema* he writes with manifest approval of the marabout or dervish system of exciting devotional and ecstatic states by the rhythmical recitation of certain words. It seems more natural to suppose that the parallels between the language and habits and the mode of existence adopted by Lull and those current in the Muhammadan world are due to his observation of, and interest in, the religious life of his Muslim contemporaries, rather than to attribute such coincidences to the influence of remote Christian eremites of the early centuries.

The first School of Oriental Studies in Europe was founded at Toledo in 1250 by the Order of Preachers. Here Arabic and Biblical and Rabbinical Hebrew were studied with a view to making men competent to undertake missionary work among Jews and Muslims. The greatest scholar this School produced

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was Raymund Martin, a contemporary of St. Thomas, whose knowledge of Arabian authors has probably not been equalled in Europe until modern times. Not only was he familiar with the Quran and the collections of apostolic tradition in Islam, but he also quotes the principal theologians and philosophers of Islam from al-Fārābī down to Averroes, with critical observations on the points of difference between them. The *Summa contra Gentiles* and the *Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos* had a common origin in that they were both composed by command of the General of the Order of Preachers.

It was Raymund Martin who perceived the value of Alghazel's *Tabāfuṭ al-falāṣifa*, or Incoherence of the Philosophers, and incorporated a great deal of it, which is a polemic against the philosophers and scholastics of Islam, into his *Pugio Fidei*. Henceforward Alghazel's arguments in favour of the *creatio ex nihilo* and his proofs that God's knowledge comprises particulars, and of the domina of the resurrection of the dead were employed by Christians in many scholastic treatises. Raymund translates the title of Alghazel's attack on the philosophers *Rūnān seu Præcipitium Philosophorum*. Alghazel's mental and religious attitude appealed to Christian scholars from the moment that his writings could be read, and they still repay careful study. Martin's *Pugio* is remarkable for the case with which it moves in the world of Oriental letters. The Hebrew of the Old Testament, the Talmud, and the Hebrew version of Maimonides Martin cites in Hebrew, after the manner of a modern scholar writing for a learned circle of readers. Alghazel, Rāfī (al-Rāfī), and Averroes he cites in Latin, always giving the title of the book from which his quotation is drawn.

Among Alghazel's works was a treatise on the place of reason as applied to revelation and the theological dogmas. This work presents many parallels in its arguments and conclusions with the *Summa of St. Thomas*, a fact which can hardly have more than one explanation. The *Summa contra Gentiles* and the
faith, and both found a happiness in the mystical apprehension of the divine which they confessed made their earlier strivings seem as nothing.

Passing over Ibn Bajja (Avempace) and Ibn Ṭūsafi we must end with a mention of Averroes che il gran comento seu. Abūl-Walid ibn Rushd (c. 520–95, i.e. 1126–98) belongs to both Eastern and European thought rather than to the East. In Italy his influence lived on into the sixteenth century, and gave rise to the famous disputes of Achillini and Pomponazzi. Averroism continued to be a living factor in European thought until the birth of modern experimental science. Latin has preserved more than one of Ibn Rushd’s works which Arabic has lost. In the West at one time Averroism could claim the attention of the first scholars of the age: in Islam Averroes never gained an authoritative position.

Ibn Rushd came of a family of Córdoban lawyers; his grandfather, his father, and he himself were all qādis of Córdoba. He devoted himself to the writing of philosophical works and commentaries during the leisure won from his legal duties. He was for a time in high favour at the Moroccan court, but the systematic opposition of the theologians brought about his downfall. He was accused of heresy and even of apostasy to Judaism and banished from Córdoba, though he was restored to favour before his death and recalled to Marrakesh, where he died in 1198. His tomb may still be seen there.

For centuries Averroes has stood as the representative of the thesis that philosophy is true and revealed religion is false. Siger of Brabant as much as any one is responsible for this, in that when he put forward a thesis which contradicted Christian dogma he claimed the authority of Aristotle and referred obscurities in the interpretation of the philosopher to the commentary of Averroes. To Siger faith and reason were mutually contradictory. In default of accurate study of what Averroes actually wrote and taught it was inevitable that the
Church should condemn with Siger the source from which he claimed to draw his doctrines. Averroes was naturally regarded as the author of Averroism. Similarly, until quite recently, Nestorius has had to bear the reproach of Nestorianism. The Angelic Doctor’s treatise de unitate intellectus contra averroistas, in which he fulminated against the thesis that belief in the unity of the intellect is necessary per rationem while it must be firmly rejected per fidem, was in itself sufficient to stamp Ibn Rushd as a false doctor. The famous letter of Stephen, Bishop of Paris, which prefaces the 219 propositions of the Averroists that were condemned, set the seal on Averroes as the father of free thought and unbelief. Of course, Averroes’ teaching that the soul was one in all men, and that its parts were only kept apart by the bodies in which they dwelt, was anathema to Christians and Muslims alike. A clear discussion of the question which Martin declares to be ‘phreneticonium deliramentis simulium’ will be found in his Pugio.2

Now, when the authentic writings of Averroes can be examined and he is allowed to speak for himself, it becomes plain that he is not altogether responsible for the intellectual position of the so-called Averroists in Christian countries. On the contrary Averroes and St. Thomas stand side by side as defenders of the same ideal, the harmony of faith and reason. And further the Angelic Doctor has made use of many of the arguments which the Muslim Doctor had previously employed. Any one who will be at the pains to consult Ibn Rushd’s Kitāb-l-Falsafī and especially his Fātu-l-magālī fi muwaqqatī-l-bikmati wal-sharrī3

1 Still a distinction must be drawn between Averroes as a philosopher and as the commentator of Aristotle. The same University of Paris which condemned the ‘Averroistic’ doctrines required its alumni a century later by a solemn oath to teach only those things which were consistent with Aristotle as expounded by Averroes (quod textum Aristotelis et sui commentatoris . . . firmiter et tuncam authenticum observabit). Rushdī, Universitāt, i. 368.

2 Paris, 1651, p. 182.

3 Translations of this work have been published in French by L. Gauthier.

Accord de la Religion et de la Philosophie. Trésor d'Ibn Rushd (Averroès), Alger, 1905; and in Spanish with Thomistic parallels and a most valuable historical and critical analysis by M. Asín, Homenaje a D. Francisco Codera Madrid, 1904, pp. 271 f.
of the text was not always the right one, especially where anthropomorphisms were used of the deity.

St. Thomas was always able to ride triumphantly over texts which seemed to conflict with his conclusions, because he was able to appeal to authoritative allegorical interpretation. The Bible was the guarantee that a statement or a doctrine was true, but the Church alone could say how the text of the Bible was to be interpreted. Obviously Averroes could not go so far as this, but he went as far as he could. He laid down a number of rules to govern cases where allegorical interpretation is necessary and the plain meaning of the text must be abandoned or left to the ignorant and uninstructed who have not sufficient intelligence to understand the philosophical difficulty inherent in the literal meaning, and whose faith would be destroyed if they were told that a Qur'anic text was not literally true. In reply to objectors he denies that the doctrine of Ijmāʾ (Islam’s nearest approach to quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus) was ever valid. If it is argued that there are certain texts which all Muslims take au pied de la lettre while they are unanimous in interpreting others allegorically, and therefore it cannot be right to apply the one method to the other text and vice versa, Averroes replies that were catholic consent definitely established it would not be lawful to do so; but when this consent is only presumed it is permissible. He maintains that, except within extremely narrow limits, it has never been possible to assert that all doctors in any one age were unanimous on any one question.

Christian Averroists had not the same freedom as their masters in peripatetic studies, and so they had to give an altogether unwarranted extension to his doctrines. Averroës had said that the science of Qur'anic interpretation was not for the ignorant multitude, and that they had better be allowed to retain their crude ideas while the philosopher interpreted the sacred text in the light of reason. Admittedly there would then be a discrepancy between the words of the Quran and the belief of the educated, but such a discrepancy could not authorize the bold theory that faith demanded belief in a proposition which reason denied to be true. Bald and uncritical Latin translations of Averroës shared the responsibility for making the Arabian the author of a theory of double truth. The translators did not always understand the technical significance of words which dealt with metaphorical and allegorical expressions. ‘Metaphor’ and ‘symbol’ or ‘similitude’ were understood to mean falsehoods and fables. Averroës was perfectly orthodox in asserting the legitimacy of allegorical interpretation, whatever his co-religionists may have thought of the texts he chose for the exercise. He was merely applying a principle which had been in existence in Christianity and Islam from the very first.

Coincidences between the theology of St. Thomas and Averroës are extremely numerous. None is more important than the dogma that God’s knowledge embraces particulars, and the arguments advanced in its support. The famous proposition of the Angelic Doctor that the Divine Knowledge is the cause of things is none other than Ibn Rushd’s al-lilmu-l-qadimu hwna illatun wa-sababun ill-manjid. The Muslim peripatetic denied that the knowledge of God comprised particulars on the ground that if it did a change in the known would involve change in the knower. Al-Gazalî replied that if God could not see and hear all that was going on in the sub-lunar world He, the author of sight and hearing, would be inferior to His creatures.

The resemblances between Averroës and St. Thomas are so numerous that they must be traceable to something firmer than mere coincidence. A common desire to reconcile philosophy and theology is not of great significance, but when the plan is worked

1 Majūn and mithāl.

2 Cf. Matt vii. 6; Sūrah iii. 5; Averroës Fażl. p. 8; Sum. Theol. i. 9 et passim.

3 See Danimatu-l-mas'ulai al-laiî dhakarabî Abu-l-Walî'd fi fażl-l-maşfî, ed. Asin, op. cit. This letter was translated by Raymond Martin and incorporated in his Papei i, ch. xxv.
out on parallel lines it is only natural to conclude that Averroes has bequeathed something more than a commentary on Aristotle to Christian scholarship. In both writers we find after the philosophical proofs of dogma quotations from the Quran or Bible; both begin by setting out doubtful or apparently contradictory testimonies. We find the same proof of God’s existence from movement, and the providential guidance of the world; the same argument for God’s unity from the unity of the world. In advancing the proposition that in order to acquire knowledge of God one must use the method of via remotionis, both temper it with the via analogiae.

These parallels could be multiplied freely, and a great many of them would be found to be common to Islamic writers in East and West. But enough has been said to demonstrate the course of the procession of philosophical and theological speculation in its journey from the Orient. From the year 1217 onwards, the commentaries of Averroes were made available to the western schools by Michael Scot in Toledo. Many of Averroes’ ideas were incorporated in Maimonides’ great work which St. Thomas sometimes quotes. In his Quaestiones Disputatae St. Thomas refers to Averroes’ statements on the controversy about the nature of God’s knowledge.

It is fitting that this chapter should end with St. Thomas Aquinas, for he puts the elusive idea ‘influence’ in its proper setting. We have traced the presence of Arabian influence in his writings, but it would not be true to say that he was dependent upon Arabian writers. He cannot be made the servant of any school or any century.¹ His habit of turning back from

¹ He did not simply piece his authorities together; he thought out for himself each point as it came up, and produced, despite the impediments to the free play of speculative thought which constant deference to various authorities demanded, a masterpiece of sober criticism and of keen insight into the general significance and affinities of the positions adopted or rejected. Clement C. J. Webb, A History of Philosophy, London, 1915, p. 120.

the ideas current in the present to the doctrines of the Fathers in the Church’s past is a valuable reminder that from the Arabians the West was recovering its lost patrimony. To say this is not to depreciate or undervalue the achievements of the Arabians. They kept alive the light of learning, and however small their contribution towards the advancement of purely philosophical thought may have been, their service to theology was of the greatest value.¹ We may be sure that those who accuse the Muslim scholars of lack of originality and of intellectual decadence have never read Averroes or looked into Algalaz, but have adopted second-hand judgements. The presence of doctrines of Islamic origin in the very citadel of Western Christianity, the Summa of Aquinas, is a sufficient refutation of the charge of lack of originality and sterility.

To do justice to the many ramifications of Muslim influence a history of medieval culture would have to be written, and far-reaching controversies would be stirred. The streams of national culture flow into the vast ocean of human thought; once they reach the sea it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the fresh from the salt. Each must rely on his own taste.

During the four centuries or more of Muslim predominance there was a spirit of religious and philosophical inquiry in all centres of learning. The colour and charm characteristic of the Oriental mind linger still in the writings of this age when every merchant was a poet and as likely as not any poet a merchant. Travel and reading, fighting and love, music and song, all these were of Allah’s bounty. Life might be short, especially if lived too near a throne or court, but it was sweet. In such an age what matter if there were religious uncertainties? The doubting could and did take refuge in a mystic pantheism which found

² The Muslim atomistic philosophers’ theory of continuous creation and atomic time is of peculiar interest at the present day. See Maimonides Guide for the Perplexed, tr. by M. Friedlander, London, 1925, pp. 120 ff., and D. B. MacDonald in Isis (ix.2) 1927, pp. 326 f.
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God within and without him. Apocalypticists and Essenes could enjoy prophetic ecstasies or practise austerities which found their way to Europe and inspired or reinforced the zeal of the Albigenese or the Cathari. The Messianist had his mabdi, and the orthodox his hope of 'solid joys and lasting pleasures' in the garden of fair women. Dour students like Ibn Ḥazm of Córdoba could sit down and compose Europe's first comprehensive Religionsgeschichte and the first systematic higher critical study of the Old and New Testaments. Phantasy could mix with fact and imagination gild the common metal of life until men like Ibnu-l-'Arabi produced their astonishing prototypes of the Divina Commedia.

The barrier of language decreed that our forefathers could only savour a fragment of this rich and varied life, and so, when the Muslim empire in Europe came to an end, all the knowledge that had not already been assimilated was banished with the defeated Moors. But even so East and West were intellectually much more closely aligned in the thirteenth century than they have ever been since. Save for the central dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation the scholastics, as we have seen, could as often as not find as many allies in the opposing camp as in the ranks of their own army. When all the rich material in Europe's libraries has been brought to light it may yet be seen that the abiding influence of the Arabs on medieval civilization is much greater than has hitherto been recognized.

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This article should be read in conjunction with that by C. and D. Singer on 'The Jewish Factor in Medieval Thought' in The Legacy of Israel, the sister volume to this.


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