

The Dialogue of Civilisations: Medieval Social Thought, Latin-European Renaissance, and Islamic Influences

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THE DIALOGUE OF CIVILISATIONS: MIEVEAL SOCIAL THOUGHT, LATIN-EUROPEAN RENAISSANCE, AND ISLAMIC INFLUENCES

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"Civilizations no longer exist as separate entities in the way they once did. But modern societies still bear the strong stamp of history, and still identify with each other along cultural fault lines. Among these fault lines, the one that generates the most discussion today runs between Islamic and Western societies" (UN General-Secretary, Mr. Kofi Annan, June 28, 1999)²

INTRODUCTION

The above quote is taken from a 1999 speech by the United Nations General Secretary in which he called for a "Dialogue among Civilizations," as a counter to the "clash of civilizations" theme propounded by Harvard University's Samuel Huntington in 1993. His reference to the "stamp of history" and "cultural fault lines" provides some context for the present paper; about the most significant among those "stamps" and "fault lines" were, of course, the Crusades.

Yet few problems in civilisational dialogue are as delicate as that of determining the extent of influence of one culture upon another. This is especially true with respect to the links between medieval Islam and Latin-Europe. As Durant puts it, "civilisations are units in a larger whole whose name is history" (Durant, 343-44); they do not disappear. The past always rolls into the present; indeed, "transplanted ideas, no less than transplanted plants, tend to develop new characteristics in their new environment" (Hitti, 221). The medieval Islamic civilisation absorbed Greek Hellenism, Judaism, Christianity, Hindu mathematics and Chinese alchemy, but developed its own intellectual edifice. This is true also for Western civilisation whose evolution was crucially impacted by the "intermediate" Islamic civilisation.

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² Quoted from his speech, "The Dialogue of Civilizations and the Need for a World Ethic," Oxford University Centre for Islamic Studies, June 28, 1999: see UN Press Release SG/SM/7049, June 29, 1999. On November 16, 1998, the UN General Assembly had adopted a resolution, proclaiming 2001 as the "UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations." Also, for related discussion, see Civilization: The Magazine of the Library of Congress, June-July 1999, pp.73-87. Similar plea for an international dialogue was recently made in a speech by Mr. Amr Moussa, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States and former Foreign Minister of Egypt; see OCIS News, No.31, Spring 2002 (Oxford University Centre for Islamic Studies).

Note: This is a revised version of a paper presented at the International Medieval Congress 2001,

The mainstream literary-history paradigm, however, has tended to present the evolution of social thought as one straight line of events, moving almost entirely across the Western world, as if denying history to the rest of the world. Thus, one observes a "literature gap" in discussions of "medieval" history of the West. This gap encompasses just about every discipline (see Ghazanfar, 1991).

A very large part of the period includes the multi-dimensional development of Arab-Islamic thought. During this period, Islamic scholarship not only absorbed and adapted the re-discovered Greek heritage but also transmitted that heritage, along with its own contributions, to Latin-Europe. Thus was provided the stimulus for developing the human intellect further, for conveying a mold for shaping Western scholasticism, for developing empirical sciences and the scientific method, for bringing about the forces of rationalism and humanism that led to the 12th century Medieval Renaissance, the 15th Century Italian Renaissance and, indeed, for sowing the seeds of European Reformation (see Dawson, Gilson, Haskins, Makdisi, Sarton, Southern and others).

Having thus set the tone, my purpose here is two-fold. First, I briefly argue that the European Renaissance depended crucially upon the intellectual armory acquired through prolonged contacts with, and knowledge-transfer from, medieval Islamic civilization. Second, the paper will document the influence of several key Islamic scholastics, particularly Ibn Rushd, whose writings contributed to European Enlightenment.

EUROPEAN RENAISSANCE: A BRIEF PARADIGMATIC CRITIQUE

Charles Homer Haskins, on the very first page of his magnum opus, 'The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century' (1927), anticipates criticism by those for whom the 15th century Italian Renaissance is more significant. He argues that the "Middle Ages (was) less dark and less static and the (Italian) Renaissance less bright and less sudden than was supposed" (Haskins, vi). Then he insists that such a view ignores "the influx of new learning of the East, the shifting currents in the stream of medieval life and thought" (Haskins, 4). Further, it was during the 12th century when Europe experienced "the revival of learning in the broadest sense," armed with the "new knowledge of the Greeks and Arabs and its effects upon Western science and philosophy, and the new institutions of learning..." (Haskins, viii-ix). After the reconquest, "Spain's part was to serve as the chief link with the learning of the Mohammadan world..." (Haskins, 11). But, he says, "The story begins in Syria" (Haskins, 281). His reference is to the "first age of translations," from Greek to Arabic, that began in Syria and then flourished during the 9th century in Baghdad's House of Wisdom (Bait-al-Hikma). He goes on, "To their Greek inheritance, the Arabs added something of their own. The reception of this science in Western Europe marks a turning point in the history of Western intelligence" (Haskins, 282). Others have talked similarly. Thus, "medieval scholars crossing the Pyrenees found the quintessence of all preceding science distilled by the theorists and practitioners of Islam. Historically, by entering the arena of Islamic civilization they had indeed entered the whole vast vibrant world of antiquity as well" (Goldstein, 98). And, "What Islam had to offer them now was not only a spate of enlightening digests of the whole, long, rich evolution but an intelligent discussion of all its essential features, screened and refined through Islam's own intensive experience" (Goldstein, 102).

While this "intensive experience" included Islamic world's own "philosophic" battles between reason and revelation (thus originated the voluminous "scholastic" literature), similar battles were later ignited in Latin Europe through the transmission of that experience. Indeed, western scholasticism was inspired by

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medieval Islamic scholasticism and "takes shape beginning in the twelfth century, not by chance, in regions in contact with the Islamic world: Arab Andalusia and the Sicily of Frederick II" (Amin, 56; see Makdisi, 1974).

Now, while Haskins emphasizes "continuity and change" as the hallmark of Middle Ages, one typically observes "discontinuity" and an almost exclusive "universalization" of European Dark Ages in literary history pertaining to almost all branches of knowledge. Much of the literature, unlike Haskins' works, reflects painstaking efforts to minimise the significance of Islamic linkages; the Greek heritage is the primary emphasis. Such omissions in historiography has persuaded one eminent medievalist to argue that "the Arabic component of our paradigmatic view of the Middle Ages has always remained incidental; it has never been systemic" and the "myth of Westernness" is "too much shaped by cultural prejudices" that are "still quite powerful in the real world of literary historiography" (Menocal, 9, 13-14). Thus, Arab-Islamic scholarship is treated "as nothing more than a holding operation ... as a giant storehouse for previously discovered scientific results, keeping them until they could be passed on for use in the West. But this is, of course, a travesty of the truth" (Ronan, 203; also see Amin, Daniel, Dawson, Crombie, Sarton, Southern, and others). Occasional references notwithstanding, what is almost endemic concerning Islamic heritage is the tone and style that is "other-oriented," exclusionary, remote, denigrating, or outright offensive.

Further, we can readily agree on the more recent Western impact on the Islamic world, for we are our own witnesses. However, it becomes somewhat unsettling when we learn of the distant, far more significant impacts in reverse. The names of a few medieval Islamic scholars (whose names are often Latinised) are tolerated, but mainly as "transmitters" of the Greeks (see Makdisi, 1974). Such posturing is "garbled falsification" and "colossal misrepresentation" (Briffault, 189, 201), "a travesty of truth" (Ronan, 203), and "worse than a lie" (Sarton, 1952, 27).

Having stated a secondary theme of my paper, I now proceed to the main task: that is, to document some evidence as to the overall influence of some prominent early Islamic scholars' writings which contributed immeasurably to European Awakening.

ISLAMIC SCHOLASTICS AND THEIR INFLUENCE: IBN RUSHD AND COMPANY

Our current task is to explore briefly the intellectual sources of medieval Islamic-European connections that gave rise to what Haskins has called the "vision of a profoundly secular renaissance" (quote from Benson-Constable, xxiii). That vision was inspired through the scholarship of medieval Islamic "giants" (as Sarton referred to them), such as Al-Kindi (d. 256A.H.; 801-873 C. E.), Al-Razi (865-925), Al-Farabi (870-950), Ibn Sina (980-1037), Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), and, in particular, Ibn Rushd (1126-1198). The Europe of the late Dark Ages was receptive, but such a vision "had no roots in the earlier medieval culture of the West. It is neither Christian, nor Latin, nor German. It appears abruptly in Southern France about the time of the First Crusade, without any preparation and previous development ... The origins of the new style are to be found in the rich and brilliant society of Muslim Spain" (Dawson, 1950, 153). Thus emerged the "confidence in the power of reason and that faith in rationality of the universe without which science will have been impossible" (Dawson, 1967, 230).

The primacy of reason in pursuing human affairs was indeed the singularly unique and revolutionary attribute that the Islamic legacy bestowed upon the medieval West. And reason emerged as a force to counter the authority of the Church, for the popes, "judged all and could be judged by none" (Strayer, 8;

also see Durant, 954). It was these social environmental contacts with Islamic civilization that persuaded twelfth century English heretic, Adelard of Bath, "trained (as he says) by Arab scientists," to assert, "For I was taught by my Arab masters to be led only by reason, whereas you were taught to follow the halter of the captured image of authority" (Stiefel, 71 and 80).

While Ibn Rushd's role in this "rational" evolution is acknowledged to be the most pronounced, there were others who not only influenced Ibn Rushd but also directly impacted on subsequent Latin-European discourses. The task of introducing the Greek philosophy into Islam and of underscoring its essential conformity with the Islamic worldview fell, first, to Abu Yusuf Al-Kindi. But there were also others.

(1) AL-KINDI (801-873)

He was the founder of the Islamic Peripatetic school of philosophy and the author of some 270 treatises ranging from logic and mathematics to physics and music, Abu Yusuf al-Kindi, in recognition of his tireless efforts to make philosophy acceptable to theologians, is known as the "philosopher of the Arabs." He is also the only great Muslim philosopher of antiquity. A thorough Mu'tazilite, he wrote that truth is universal and supreme, and that philosophy is but another form of the message which the prophets have carried.

Despite his profound philhellenic sympathies, Al-Kindi remained thoroughly committed to the Islamic system of beliefs, as interpreted chiefly by the rationalist theologians of the eighth and ninth centuries, the Mu'tazilah. He was virtually alone in attempting to give philosophical support to the basic Islamic scriptural concepts. Al-Kindi's two treatises on geometrical and physiological optics were utilised by Roger Bacon (1214-1292). His influence was so widely felt that the Italian physician and mathematician, Geromino Cardano (1501-1576) considered him, "one of the twelve giant minds of history" (Myers, 11).

(2) AL-RAZI (865-925)

Famed as the greatest physician of Islam, Muhammad Abu Bakr Zakariya Al-Razi earned the title of the "Arabic Galen" and "most brilliant genius of the Middle Ages" for his achievements in medicine, but also was known as the founder of philosophy of nature in Islam. He was a free thinker and an important philosophical figure who was even more radical than Al-Kindi in his attachment to Greek rationalism.

Constantine the African translated into Latin two of Al-Razi's philosophical works and Gerard of Cremona translated his medical work, 'Tib al-Mansouri', under the title of 'Liber Almansorius'. Al-Razi's greatest work, 'Kitab al-Hawi (Liber de Continens)' was translated into Latin being published several times.

(3) AL-FARABI (870-950)

Muhammad abu-Nasr Al-Farabi wrote extensively in different fields. He wrote the 'Introduction to Logic' and 'Abridgement of Logic'; his interest in natural science led to his commentaries on Aristotle's 'Physics' and on the movement of the celestial bodies. He also wrote 'The Power of the Soul', 'The Unity and the One', 'The Intelligence and the Intelligible', and a commentary on Alexander of Aphrodisias' 'De Animis'. His 'The Model City' continues to be of sociological interest even today. However, Al-Farabi is best known for 'The Encyclopedia', a definitive account of all branches of sciences and art, and 'The Political Regime', also known as 'The Book of Principles'.

The influence of Al-Farabi upon two of the thirteenth century's most prominent Latin scholastics, Albertus Magnus and his student, St. Thomas Aquinas, is profound. Hammond documents the similarities by placing Al-Farabi's arguments "side by side with those of St. Thomas in order to aid the reader in comparing them" (Hammond, 65). Thus, "we see without doubt the influence of the former [Al-Farabi] on the latter [St. Thomas] but not vice versa" (Hammond, p.29). Further, "Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas and others borrowed from him a great amount of material hitherto regarded by many as a product of their speculation, while in reality it is not" (Hammond, ix; also see Sarton).

(4) IBN SINA (980-1037)

Abu Ali Al-Husain Ibn Sina was another precocious genius of Islam's classical period whose work spanned vast areas of knowledge. Soon he had mastered the metaphysics of Aristotle. His magnum opus, 'The Canon of Medicine (al-Qunan fil-Tibb)', remained the standard text until the birth of modern medicine. He has been credited with at least 99 books on various topics. His 'Kitab al-Shifa (The Book of Healing)' covered practical knowledge on civic affairs as well as theoretical knowledge on physics, mathematics, and metaphysics.

Ibn Sina's writings not only formed a bridge between the Greeks and Renaissance Europe, but also constituted a distinctive school known as Latin Avicennism in medieval Europe, led by William of Auvergne. Less well known than the Latin Averroism, it was an attempt to reconcile the ideas of St. Augustine with Aristotlenism.

Ibn Sina's influence reached out to make its mark on two other great minds--Ibn Rushd and the eminent Jewish heretic, Maimonides (1135-1204)--and into Christendom to the various Latin-Scholastics (Albertus Magnus, St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, John of Seville, and others). Roger Bacon called him "the chief authority in philosophy after Aristotle," and Aquinas spoke with as much respect of him as of Plato (Myers, p.34). "Avicenna and Averroes were lights from the East for the Schoolmen, who cited them next to the Greeks in authority" (Durant, 342).

(5) ABU HAMID AL-GHAZALI (1058-1111)

The most prominent of the medieval Islamic theologian-scholastics is Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, "acclaimed as the greatest ... certainly one of the greatest" (Watt, 1963, vii). He exerted great influence upon Jewish and Christian scholasticism and succeeded in reconciling his pragmatic tendencies with strict Moslem orthodoxy" (Myers, 35). The most significant of his writings is the four volume 'Ihya Ulum al Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)', which "parallels" St. Thomas Aquinas' 'Summa Theologica' (Sarton, I, 914, Durant, 950). Incidentally, Al-Ghazali's works, including the 'Ihya', were translated into Latin before 1150 (Myers, 39).

Al-Ghazali's scholarship assumes its greatest significance in relation to the larger philosophical-theological controversies of the time. He challenged those other Islamic scholastics, whose Aristotelian rationalism threatened Islam itself. His attempt at reconciliation appeared in his Tahafat al-Falasifah (The Incoherence of Philosophers), which was later countered by Ibn Rushd, as we shall see.

As the works of Islamic rationalists, chiefly Ibn Rushd, reached medieval Europe, they even threatened the "liquidation of Christian theology" (Durant, 954). Thus, relying heavily on Al-Ghazali's synthesis, "St. Thomas was led to write his 'Summas' to overcome that threat" (Durant, 954). And, "since Ghazali placed

science, philosophy and reason in a position inferior to religion and theology, the Scholastics accepted his views, which became characteristic of most medieval philosophy" (Myers, 39-40). Thus, "Europe as well as the Muslim East felt the impact of Al-Ghazali's teaching. Echoes of his voice are heard in the reflections of Blaise Pascal, and his work was paralleled by Thomas Aquinas in the discourse on Christian doctrine and in other portions of *Summa Theologica*" (Jurji, Collier's Encyclopedia, 1979, 13:312-13). His "teaching is quoted by St. Thomas and other scholastic writers" (O'Leary, 208); and it is generally known St. Thomas' Christian synthesis which "was deeply influenced by Muslim philosophers, chiefly al-Ghazali" (Sarton, 914; see also Copleston, 181; Myers, 42; Rescher, 156).

Further, the Spanish Dominican monk, Raymond Martin directly benefited from Al-Ghazali's texts in his books entitled, 'Pigio Fidei' and 'Explanation Symboli'; and "the arguments have been taken exactly as they were in the originals" (Sharif, 1361). And, St. Thomas used some texts of Al-Ghazali's in 'Contra Gentiles', either directly or through the mediation of Raymund Martin. St. Thomas, who had received his education from the Dominican order in the University of Naples, had known al-Ghazali's philosophy well, using his arguments in attacks on Ibn Rushd and his Aristotelian commentaries. This university was established in 1224 by Frederick II (1194-1250), chiefly to assimilate Islamic philosophy and science.

(6) IBN RUSHD (1126-1198)

Having provided a glimpse of a few prominent Islamic scholastics, we now turn to the most famous intellectual of Cordoba, Ibn Rushd. The "heresies" of iconoclasts, such as Ibn Rushd, generated unprecedented intellectual turmoil which for ever transformed social thought in both medieval Islam and Latin-Christendom.

Abul Walid Mohammad Ibn Rushd (known as Averroes in Latin-West) was the ultimate rationalist, the Aristotelian heretic of the medieval Islam and Christianity. His singular influence in stimulating the Western Renaissance is acknowledged "as the landmark in the history of Western civilization" (Gilson, 1938, 30). Along with Ibn Sina, he is "the greatest name in Arabian [Islamic] philosophy whose influence spread, in many directions, through the duration of the middle ages, then in the epoch of the Renaissance up to the very threshold of modern times" (Gilson, 1955, 217). Indeed, "he was the greatest Muslim philosophers of the West, and one of the greatest of medieval times" (Sarton, II-1, 356). Roger Bacon ranked Ibn Rushd next to Aristotle and Ibn Sina (Durant, 338).

Ibn Rushd came from a family of Cordoban scholars; his father was a local qadi, as was his grandfather (also the imam of the Cordoba mosque). Trained as a lawyer and a physician, his role as Caliph's advisor initiated him into philosophy. He wrote extensive commentaries on Aristotle, and others. He also wrote a 7-volume medical encyclopedia, 'Kitab al-Kulliyat fil-Tibb' (hence the Latin name *Colliget*, a corruption of the word "kulliyat," meaning "generalities"), used at European universities until the eighteenth century. Though his scholarship in medicine has been eclipsed by his fame as a philosopher, he was "one of the greatest physicians of the time" (Sarton, II-1, 305).

Ibn Rushd's philosophy was in the tradition of prevailing Islamic scholasticism, with attempts to synthesize Islamic faith and reason in light of the available Greek heritage. His 'Commentaries' on Aristotle were translated into Latin and Hebrew. There soon appeared super-commentaries on his commentaries--which itself is a commentary on the extent of Ibn Rushd's influence. The works of Aristotle and Ibn Rushd in their Latin translations were used not only in the curriculum at Naples (where St. Thomas studied), but

were also sent to the Universities of Paris and Bologna. Nowhere did Averroism strike deeper roots than in the Universities of Bologna and Padua, the latter became the "hot-bed" of Averroism (Sharif, 1381).

Like others before him, Ibn Rushd was criticized for suggesting that revelation must be guided by reason. In his view, the noblest form of worship was to study God through His works, using the faculty of the mind. For his rebuttal ('Tahafut al-Tahafut', or 'Incoherence of the Incoherence') of Al-Ghazali's arguments, Ibn Rushd is rather well known. His dispute with Al-Ghazali provides a fascinating view of the issues which engaged medieval minds. In Al-Ghazali's scheme, everything is the result of continuous divine intervention, the divine will; any causal link is secondary. But, for Ibn Rushd, while divine will may be the ultimate cause, "To deny the existence of efficient causes which are observed in sensible things is sophistry ... Denial of cause implies the denial of knowledge and denial of knowledge implies that nothing in the world can really be known" (quoted in Hoodbhoy, 114).

Once the rediscovery of Aristotle through Ibn Rushd's writings was complete, the philosophers and theologians alike found themselves in possession of the greatest intellectual reservoir ever developed up to that time. Ibn Rushd "the Great Commentator." Influenced by his writings, philosophers and theologians split into two major groups: the "liberal," pro-Averroists, known as the Latin Averroists, with Siger of Brabant at their head, generally identified with the Franciscan Friars; and the "conservative," anti-Averroists, with St. Thomas Aquinas of the Dominican Monks at their head. The issues were legion: metaphysical, philosophical, and practical. It may be noted, however, that even Ibn Rushd's critics, including St. Thomas, did not escape his influence, and their understanding of Aristotle was conditioned by Averroes' interpretations. In 1852, Ernest Renan expressed this paradox very well, "St. Thomas is the most serious adversary that the Averroan doctrine has encountered, and yet one can go further to say, paradoxically, that he is the greatest disciple of the Great Commentator. Albert the Great owes everything to Avicenna, St. Thomas, as philosopher, but above all to Averroes" (quoted in Fakhri, 5).

Etienne Gilson in his 'Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages' accords Ibn Rushd the distinction of having asserted the "primacy of reason", or a purely philosophical rationalism, long before the Italian Renaissance. Rationalism was "born in Spain, in the mind of an Arabian philosopher, as a conscious reaction against the theologism of the Arabian divines." (Fakhri, 6; Gilson, 1948, 37). Gilson adds that when Ibn Rushd died in 1198 "he bequeathed to his successors the ideal of a purely rational philosophy, an ideal whose influence was to be such that, by it, even the evolution of Christian philosophy was to be deeply modified" (Gilson, 1948, 38). Gilson attributes to Ibn Rushd the recognition, which became pivotal to St. Thomas' own philosophy, "that nothing should enter the texture of metaphysical knowledge save only rational and necessary demonstrations" (Fakhri, 6; Gilson, 1948, 79). However, unlike some of his adversarial Latin Averroists, St. Thomas was not willing to concede that either Aristotle or Ibn Rushd were infallible.

Despite the enthusiasm in Paris during the thirteenth century for Ibn Rushd's Aristotelian 'Commentaries', serious questions arose as to the compatibility of Ibn Rushd's Aristotelianism with the Christian doctrine. And there were condemnations en masse--medieval "McCarthyism" and even a thirteenth century Papal Inquisition against the Christian "heretics." The focus was mainly on Latin Averroists, led by Siger of Brabant, who were suspected of subscribing to the "double-truth" doctrine: some truths philosophical, others theological; and reason was superior to faith. St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) in his 'On the Unity of the Intellect' against the Averroists confirms this suspicion but denies the doctrine. Ibn Rushd himself did not subscribe to such a thesis and it is doubtful, according to Gilson and other medievalists, that even Siger himself did so. This doctrine, however, was a godsend for the scientifically-minded people in the West,

who were condemned and persecuted by the Church and the State. They found their best support in this and other "Averroisms." For this reason, de Wulf calls Ibn Rushd the "doctor of anti-Scholastics" (Sharif, 1380).

For Ibn Rushd, the primacy of reason is unquestioned but compatible with faith, and for this Gilson regards him as the herald of rationalism long before the Renaissance (Fakhri, 34). In his 'Harmony of Philosophy and Religion (Fasl al-M'aqal)', which was not available to St. Thomas, Siger of Brabant or their contemporaries in Latin, Ibn Rushd maintains a position which may be called the 'parity' or 'harmony' of truth, philosophical and theological. Thus, philosophical truth, although superior to religious truth, is not really incompatible with, or even different, from it. The only difference is the path to truth--philosophical and the theological. For any 'apparent' conflict between the religious texts and the philosophical texts, it is the duty of philosophers, whom the Qur'an calls "those who are confirmed in knowledge" (Qur'an, Sura 3:5-6), according to Ibn Rushd's reading, to resolve the conflict by recourse to the method of interpretation. Thus, in response to Al-Ghazali's charge of infidelity (kufr), Ibn Rushd argues that, if the inner meaning of the Qur'anic passages is understood, the position of the philosophers accords with that of the theologians (Fakhri, 33-34).

However, Ibn Rushd's Aristotelian commentaries and his own contributions rapidly became the ruling mode of social thought in the West. Scholars of medieval Europe were provoked and inspired by Ibn Rushd's writings. Whereas some Muslim scholastics and their Latin successors tried to "Islamise" and "Christianise" Hellenism, Ibn Rushd's commentaries and rationalism seemed to excessively "Hellenise" Islam and Christianity. Thus, his Muslim contemporaries persecuted him while Muslim posterity almost ignored him, allowing his works to be lost. But Jews preserved many of them. In Latin Christianity, the commentaries were translated into Latin from the Hebrew, fed the heresies of Siger of Brabant and the rationalism of the Italian school of Padua, and threatened the foundations of Christianity. Relying on the more compatible Al-Ghazali, St. Thomas recognized that some dogmas of religion were beyond reason and must be accepted by faith alone. "The aim of his life was to reconcile Aristotelianism and Muslim knowledge with Christian theology" (Sarton, II-2, 914); and "Thomas Aquinas was led to write his 'Summas' to halt the threatened liquidation of Christian theology by Arabic interpretations of Aristotle ... indeed, the industry of Aquinas was due not to the love of Aristotle but to the fear of Averroes" (Durant, 913, 954). Thus, driven by this fear, the Latin Scholastic constructed the medieval "synthesis;" so that the Aristotelian-Averroistic heresies were debunked with Ibn Rushd the "infidel" humbled, and St. Thomas' followers saw his academic glory in this synthesis. So perceived, this conclusion is reflected in a medieval sketch that one medieval scholar reproduced in his book; the sketch entitled "St. Thomas Aquinas overcoming Averroes," showing St. Thomas surrounded by angels and monks, displaying his "synthesis" to the vanquished Ibn Rushd lying at his feet; see Libby, 55.

It was not to be so, however. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Latin orientated-Averroism had far-reaching consequences for medieval and modern social thought, hardly foreseeable by the medieval scholastics. It established "a tradition in which it became possible to question the status of religion" (Daniel, 107); and from the end of the twelfth century to the end of the sixteenth century Averroism remained the dominant school of thought, in spite of the orthodox reaction it created first among the Muslims in Spain and then among the Talmudists, and finally, among the Christian clergy. These were the centuries that witnessed revolutions in the evolution of social thought, with medieval Islamic sources always providing the background. As the Greek heritage "had aroused the great age of Arabic science and philosophy, so now it would excite the European mind and inquiry and speculation ... would crack stone

after stone of that majestic edifice to bring this collapse of the medieval system in the fourteenth century, and the beginnings of modern philosophy in the ardor of the Renaissance" (Durant, 913). The results were monumental in Western history. It is suggested that Harold Nebelsick puts it well. He discusses the achievements of the Arab-Islamic scholars and how they "appropriated, appreciated and preserved Greek classical learning and built upon it" (p. 5), and "thus, laid the foundations for a quite unprecedented revival of learning in Europe" (p. ix). And, "The results were the Renaissance in the thirteenth century, the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, and eventually the rise of modern science in the seventeenth" (p. 9). Even in our own time the contributions of those scholars, in the world of Islam and in the Christian West, represent the source of the most beneficent form of intellectual enlightenment (Fakhri, 7).

SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Our purpose in this paper has been two-fold. Though less immediate, first we provided a brief critique of the mainstream literary paradigm that dominates the discussions of European Renaissance, with the "intermediation" role of Islamic civilization almost invariably noted as minimal and remote. Secondly and relatedly, after briefly noting the influence of a few key Islamic scholars, we discussed in some detail the influence of Ibn Rushd, whose works, once transmitted and assimilated, generated unprecedented upheaval in social thought in Latin Europe. Those linkages gave rise to the twelfth century European Medieval Renaissance, helping formulate the medieval Scholastic synthesis, facilitating the fifteenth century Italian Renaissance, and indeed, sowing the seeds for the sixteenth century European Reformation. Such were the medieval civilisational connections which had been made possible as the Islamic legacy transferred en masse to Europe over several centuries through translations, travels, trade and commerce, cultural diffusion, oral traditions, the Crusades, and so forth (see Ghazanfar, 1998).

Having pursued these tasks, though perhaps provocatively to encourage wider discussion, it is appropriate now to rely on three corroborative comments from well-known medievalists. It might be noted that the tenor of such quotations could easily be multiplied.

(1) "We are so accustomed to regard our culture as essentially that of the West that it is difficult for us to realise that there was an age when the most civilized region of Western Europe was the province of an alien culture (i.e., Islam) ... At a time when the rest of Western Europe was just emerging from the depths of barbarism, the culture of Moslem Spain had attained complete maturity and surpassed even the civilization of the East in genius and originality of thought. ... All of this brilliant development of culture is completely ignored by the ordinary student of medieval European history. It is as though it were a lost world which had no more to do with the history of our past than the vanished kingdom of Atlantis" (Dawson, 1932, 230-231).

(2) "This introduces what might be called the miracle of Arabic science, using the word miracle as a symbol of our inability to explain achievements which were almost incredible. There is nothing like it in the whole history of the world ... Some historians have tried to belittle those immense achievements by claiming that there was nothing original in them and that the Arabs were nothing but imitators. Such a judgment is all wrong. The achievements of the Arabic-speaking people between the ninth and twelfth centuries are so great as to baffle our understanding" (Sarton, 1951, 27, 29, 35).

(3) "Islam is the parent that begot and nourished European civilization ... We may be sure that those who accuse Moslem scholars of lack of originality and of intellectual decadence have never read Averroes or looked into al-Ghazali, but have accepted second-hand judgments. The presence of doctrines of Islamic origins in the very citadel of Christianity, the 'Summa' of Aquinas, is a sufficient refutation of the charge of lack of originality and sterility" (Guillaume, quoted in Bertram Thomas, 190).

Yet, the contemporary literary discussions of the evolution of social thought continue to reflect the persistent and stubborn "blind spot." Thus, for the sake of ensuring "continuity and change," as Haskins and others appear to desire, and for the sake of doctrinal objectivity that is incumbent upon all scholars, there is this plea. Can "Western Europeans" somehow overcome "the great difficulty in considering the possibility that they are in some way seriously indebted to the Arab world, or that the Arabs were central to the making of the medieval Europe?" (Menocal, xii-xiii). Resistance is deep-rooted, however, though Aristotelian rationality of Ibn Rushd demands openness and flexibility.

And the "Dialogue among Civilizations," as suggested by the UN Secretary General recently, more than ever, "is necessary for the enhancement of civility, whether at national or international level."

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