

THE STUDY OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY TODAY

In August 1987, the Congress of the History of Medieval Philosophy, which holds its sessions every five years, met at the University of Helsinki (Finland). As a member of the Committee of the Society of the History of Medieval Philosophy, I was committed to elaborate a report on the Study of Islamic Philosophy during the period 1982-1987. I would like to give here a summary of my Report which will be published in extenso in the Bulletin of the Society.

Before entering *in medias res*, I think it would be useful to make some remarks on the validity of the appellation itself of Islamic Philosophy and its extension. This appellation has provoked many discussions among the historians of medieval philosophy and islamologists. These discussions took place when on the occasion of the first Congress of the History of Medieval Philosophy, I proposed to the organisers of the Congress to make, in their programme a place for Islamic or Arabic philosophy. The Committee agreed and asked me to prepare a project on the topic, given that up to this date this aspect of the History of Philosophy was practically ignored by the Western historians.

In order to present an exhaustive *status questionis* of the topic , I prepared a series of questions which I sent to two kinds of scholars :1) from one part, to the Western medievalist who, as philosophers were interested in the influence of Arabic Philosophy on the thinkers of the Middle Ages; these medievalists are generally philosophers who do not know Arabic and thus are obliged to use the Latin Medieval translations or modern translations of the Arabic texts. 2) from the other part, there are Arabists or also Arabs who know Arabic but do not know Latin so that they have another approach to the Arab philosophers.

I thought that the best solution was to have these two kinds of scholars work together, so that through these interdisciplinary contacts more light would be shed on our problem. I prepared ten questions or propositions, which I sent to almost fifty scholars specialized more or less in medievalism or in philosophy. Here is the list of these scholars disposed alphabetically:

Abel, Achena, Ahwani, Allard, Al Verny (D'), Arberry, Arnaldez, Asghar Hekmat, - Bausani- Cantwell Smith, Cerulli, Chenu, Corbin, Dulude, Faruqi, Fazlul Rahman, Finnegan Geiger, Gregory, Gringnasch, Gandillace (de), Guillaume, - Hourani (G.), - Khodeiri, Klibansky, Kraemer, Kritzeck, Kutsch, - Lewis (G.), - Madkour, Makdisi, Masse, McCarthy, Men (de), Moin, Poraux. Raeymaecker, Ritter, Rosenthal (E.), Rosenthal (F.) - Taha Hussein, Tarachand.- Vajda, Vanden Bergh, Van Nieuwenhuize, Van Steedberghen, Vansteenkiste, Verbeke, Von Grunebaum .- Walzer, Wickens, Wilpert

Among the ten questions addressed to them two are important for our topic:

I. What appellation do you prefer : Islamic Philosophy or Arabic Philosophy?

II. What is the delimitation of this philosophy ? Must we limit it strictly to the Hellenistic Philosophy expressed in Arabic by Kindi, Farabi, Avicenna, Averroes etc. which was known in the Arabic world as Falsafa or Hikma, , or must we extend it to the methodology of the Sharia (Islamic Law), to Theology (Kalam), Mysticism (Tasawwuf), and Philosophy of sciences?

To understand the significance of the first question i.e. Islamic Philosophy or Arabic Philosophy ,we must keep in mind how

Avicenna and Averroes penetrated in the medieval West. Thomas Aquinas for instance and the Latin scholars mention Avicenna, Averroes or Algazel as representative of the "Arabs" because their works were written in Arabic and that Arab was a synonym for Muslim. And so the tradition was established to call their philosophy Arabic philosophy or Philosophy of Arabs and this was followed by the historians of philosophy up to twentieth century (of for instance, Scholliers, Munk, Brehier, Gilson). We have to wait up to de Boer, Gauthier, Corbin Sharif to see the use of Islamic Philosophy, or Philosophy of Islam.

It is therefore not astonishing to see how different were the answers to the first question. I gave them at length in my article of MIDEO (t.5 1958). I can summarize them in this way.

The partisans of the appellation "Arabic Philosophy" were particularly the Western medievalists (Chenu, Van Steenberghen, Gilson Wilpert) but also some Arabists (Kutsch, Cerulli, Kraemer, Kritzeck) and some Arabs (Taha Hussein, Khodeiri). Others preferred "Islamic Philosophy" (Madkour, Von Grunebaum, Ahwani Ali Asghar Hekmat, Tarachand, Gregory, Arberry). Makdisi suggested the expression "Arabic Islamic Philosophy"

Concerning Corbin, he protested vehemently against the appellation of "Arabic Philosophy"; he considered it not only narrow but also dangerous and false because this expression connotes political tendency. And in his book in French titled History of Islamic Philosophy he focused his vision on the Philosophy of Ishraq and the Hikma of Persian philosophers of the Safavids Renaissance after the 16th Century.

Those who have read the answers to our inquiry have seen that, theoretically, the problem is insoluble : it is impossible to find an adequate concept which embraces at the same time the linguistic point of view and the religious one. One can present good reasons for each aspect but none is decisive. One must accept a compromise which takes in to account the specific differences, and, why not say it, the national and religious susceptibilities.

It seems, in taking in to account these difficulties that the expression found by De Boer a half century ago is the one which offers the least criticism: Philosophy in Islam. With my friend the

late Prof. Gardet, I elaborated a formula which is near to De Boer's We proposed: "Medieval philosophy in Islamic Lands" (in French: "Philosophie medievale en Terre d'Islam"). From there, divisions derive naturally: 1) either according to the language in which the Philosophy is expressed, so we will have Arabic Philosophy, Persian philosophy, Hebrew Philosophy, Turkish Philosophy and also Latin Philosophy dealing with the medieval versions of these different philosophies; 2) or taking in to account the religion and then we will have Christian Philosophy, Islamic Philosophy, Jewish Philosophy.

Concerning the second question, i.e. the extension of the domain of Islamic Philosophy, the opinions also diverged. We can divide them in to five sections:

- 1) For the first group Islamic Philosophy must be limited to the Falsafa i.e. the Philosophy of Hellenistic inspiration (Chenu, Arberry, Ritter, Wilpert).
- 2) A second group maintains the Falsafa as principal subject of Islamic philosophy but would like also to include the religious sciences of Islam (Gardet, Rosenthal, de Menasse).
- 3) A third group adopts without hesitation also the kalam (Guillaume, Hourani).
- 4) The fourth group adds the mysticism (tasawwuf) (Achena, Schacht, Vanden Bergh).
- 5) The fifth group would like to include the methodology of jurisprudence (usul al - fiqh) (Bausani, Cerulli, de Gandillac, Khodeiri, Kritzck, Tarachand). Mille d' Alverny and Dr. Madkour include sciences and Arnaldez the grammar.

Finally Gilson magnanimously suggests extending the field in order: to receive all what is intelligible.

For the report presented at Helsinki, I adopted the four main groups: FALSAFA, KALAM, TASAWWUF AND SCIENCE.

1.FALSABA.

The Critical edition of al-Shifa' of Avicenna which has been undertaken at Cairo by Egyptian scholars, has been achieved by Said Zayed, Avicenna (Ibn Sina) al-Shifa', al-Tabi iyyat I. al-Sama al-tabi i , Le Caire, Hay'at al kitb, 1983, 240 pages.

The publication of the medieval Latin texts of al-Shifa' Metaphysics and De Anima had been published by Simone Van Riet of the University of Louvain. They are a masterpiece of high scholarship. She has also edited the De Generatione et corruptione:

Avicenna Latinus. Liber de Philosophia Prima sive Scientia Divina I-X Lexiques 14+352 pages, Louvain-la Neuve - Leiden 1983
Avicenna Latinus - Liber Tertius Naturalim-De Generatione et Corruptione. Introduction doctrinale par G.Verbeke, VIII + 100 + 350 pages, Louvaine-la Neuve - Leiden 1987.

Jean Michot also of Louvain, has devoted his doctoral dissertation to Avicenna: La destinee de l'homme selon Avicenne .Le retour a Dieu (ma ad) et l'imagination. Academie Royale de Belgique ,Fonds Rene Draguet, t. V XLVIII + 240 pages, Louvain, Peeters.

I have also published the second volume of my translation into French of the Metaphysics of al-Shifa' Paris, Vrin 1985,237 pages.

Mlle Druart ,who has left the University of Georgetown for the Catholic University of America ,has published several interesting articles on Al-Farabi and Yves Marquet on Ismelism and on Ikhwan al-Safa'. Interesting documents on Averroes, Aristotles Arabus, Kindi, and the Greek sources of Islamic Philosophy have been also published.

This section contains 141 titles of books and articles.

II KALAM

Besides the important works of Mrs Bernand on al-Qadi Ibn al-Jabbar, particularly on his theory of knowledge and the studies of Prof. Frank of the Catholic University of America on the mutazilites, we have to mention two important books in this domain. The first is

that of al-Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wal-nihal*. The translation of this capital text has been undertaken by three French eminent specialists Professors Daniel Gimaret, Guy Monnot and Jean Jolivet from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes of Paris. UNESCO has sponsored this translation which supersedes translation of Haarbrucker (in 1850). This first volume contains a brilliant introductory article of M.A. Sinaceur, Director of the department of Philosophy and Human Sciences at the UNESCO, titled "Shahrastani, tolerance et alterite". The distribution of the subjects among the authors is as follows. Gimaret deals with the prolegomena and the part concerning Islam. Jolivet translates and comments on the philosophical text and Monnot the non-islamic religions. This first volume is the work of Gimaret and Monnot:

Shahrastani, *Livre des religions et des sectes*, t. I, traduction avec introduction et notes par Daniel Gimaret et Guy Monnot, Peeters/Unesco, 1986, XXVI + 728 pages.

The second important work on kalam is the *Traite de theologie musulmane* of Robert Caspar, professor of Islamic Theology and Mysticism at the Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic studies. Since the publication of the *Introduction a la theologie musulmane* of Gardet-Anawati in 1948, this is certainly the best general book on Kalam. This section contains 39 titles.

III. TASAWWUF

Two important publications deserve to be mentioned in this section, apart from the translations by Deladriere, of Junayd and Ghazali texts.

The first is the English translation of the great and classical book of Louis Massignon: *The Passion of al-Hallaj, mystic and martyr of Islam*. Translated from the French by Herbert Mason vol. I *The life of al-Hallaj*, 645 pages ; vol.2. *The survival of al-Hallaj*, 493 pages ; vol.3, *The teaching of al-Hallaj*, 360 pages ; vol.4, *Bibliography and Index*, 294 pages. Bollingen series XCVIII, Princeton University Press, 1982.

This capital work on mysticism was revised and enlarged by the author himself before his death. It has been carefully edited by his son David Massignon with the collaboration of Louis Gardet and Henri Laoust. It is composed of four volumes totaling 2000 pages of

a condensed technical text, full of scientific notes. It was a difficult challenge to undertake its translation and one has to congratulate Mr Herbert Mason to have had the courage to realize this translation. He has worked in constant collaboration with the editors of the second French revised edition. That means that his translation has been carefully checked by the best scholars of Massignon's thought.

The four volumes are admirably edited with big legible print; notes are put on the bottom of the pages; the bibliography and the indexes are carefully reproduced. The book contains 47 illustrations and a beautiful portrait of Massignon in the beginning of the first volume. M. Mason has written an excellent and fervent biography of Massignon underlining the signification of his work.

The second important book in this section is the continuation of the monumental edition, by Othman Yahya, of *al-Futuh al-Makkiyya* of Ibn Arabi. In the period envisaged in my Bulletin, there have been published vol.VIII in 1985 and vol.X in 1987. This publication has given a strong emphasis to the studies devoted to the great Muslim mystic. One can have an idea of this activity in reading the two long reports of J.W. Morris, Ibn Arabi and his interpreters: Part I: Recent French Translations in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* vol.106 July-September 1986, pp.539-551; Part II oct. Dec. 1986, pp.733-756

This section contains 16 titles.

IV-SCIENCES

This section is, after that of *Falsafa*, the richest in original works. Many scholars have given interest to the history of sciences among the Arabs thanks to the numerous manuscripts on Arab sciences discovered in the libraries.

The development of this section is due to several factors. First to the "Centre d'histoire des sciences et de la philosophie arabes" which groups, in Paris, scholars from the CNRS (Conseil National de la Recherche scientifique) and from the "Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes (Paris 5e section), animated by two great historians of Arabic philosophy and science: Professors Rushdi Rashed, and Jean Jolivet. Two collections have been founded by them A, A

Collection of texts and studies B, A collection of studies and re-editions"

A. Texts and studies

This collection is consecrated to works on science and philosophy. According to the tradition of the "Collection Guillaume Bude" the texts, scientifically established, are edited, translated, explained and accompanied with an introduction and notes. Parallel to this collection there is a collection of studies on the texts.

B. Studies and editions

This collection has a double aim. First it contains studies, individual or collective, dealing with the history of Arabic sciences and philosophy, but independent of the edited texts; and also it contains a reproduction of ancient works no longer available of renowned scholars.

Some texts have already appeared:

1. The mathematical works of Tusi, text established and translated by Rushdi Rashid.
2. The astronomical work of Thabit Ibn Qurra, published by Regis Morelon.

Texts in preparation: works of al-Kindi, Ibn al-Haytham, Ibn Sahl, al-Farabi.

In the series "Studies and re-editions" there have already appeared:

10 *Entre arithmetique et algebre, recherches sur l'histoire des mathematiques arabes* by Rushdi Rashed.

20 *Etudes sur Avicenne* under the direction of Jolivet and Rashed.

30 *Jabir Ibn Hayyan* of Paul Kfous.

In preparation:

1. The Mechanics of Heron of Alexandria translated by Carra de Vaux.
2. Trois traites arabes sur le corps parfait, translated by Fr. Woepcke
3. Les livre des appareils pneumatiques et les machines hydrauliques of Philon of Byzantium translated by Carra de Vaux.

The Center is preparing also an "Encyclopedia of Arabic Sciences" under the direction of Rushdi Rashid and with the collaboration of 25 specialists.

The second factor which has contributed to the development of publications in the domain of the History of sciences among the Arabs is the activity of the Institute of Arabic Sciences (IHAS) of the University of Aleppo. A scientific Review of a high standard was founded in 1971 in which many eminent specialists published their works. In my Report I quoted the titles of the articles published in the issues of volumes 6(198) and vol.7(1983)

And to finish I must mention the Review founded by Prof. Fuad Segin of the University of Frankfurt, his numerous reproductions of manuscripts dealing with Arabic sciences, and the publications of some classical medical books by the Hamdard Institute founded by Hakim Mohammad Said, at Karachi.