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Ibn Khaldūn undertook a scientific investigation of them. It was, however, the enhanced interest in the study of history and society in modern times which led to the devolution of increased attention to Ibn Khaldūn’s thought, to the recognition of his rank as a major Muslim thinker, and to the judgment that he was equal, if not superior, to the other well-known Muslim philosophers. This was in part the result of the higher prestige, and of the peculiar theoretical importance, which history and the science of society (as compared to the theoretical part of traditional philosophy) have come to enjoy in modern times. But the more important reason for the singular interest in Ibn Khaldūn in modern times lies in the conclusions of his investigations in history and society.

To the moderns, these conclusions appear to be more scientific than either the conclusions of the legal investigation of Muslim jurists or the politico-philosophical investigations of Muslim philosophers. Perhaps on the analogy of the revolt of modern science against traditional philosophy, and especially of modern political science and social science against traditional political and social philosophy, it has been assumed that Ibn Khaldūn must have attempted a similar, or parallel, revolt against traditional Muslim philosophy in general, and against traditional Muslim political philosophy in particular.

Because of its important implications for the understanding of Ibn Khaldūn’s thought, this crucial assumption deserves critical examination. The larger context of the present work seems to warrant an inquiry into the precise relationship between Ibn Khaldūn’s new science and the Muslim philosophic tradition. This relationship has been for the most part viewed in the perspective, and under the influence, of the modern philosophic and scientific tradition. In the present work, in contrast, the reader comes to Ibn Khaldūn through the preceding Greek and Muslim philosophic tradition, which Ibn Khaldūn knew and in relation to which he can be expected to have taken his bearing. The reader, thus, must be shown, on the basis of Ibn Khaldūn’s conception of philosophy and science, and of his conception of the relation between his new science and the established philosophic science, whether he was in fundamental agreement with that tradition (in which case it must be shown what the specific character of his contribution to that tradition was), or in fundamental disagreement with it, and hence was the teacher of, not only a new, but a novel doctrine. That this procedure is the sound historical procedure is usually admitted. But what has not been seen with sufficient clarity is that, in addition to providing the proper historical perspective for the understanding of Ibn Khaldūn’s thought, it is of fundamental importance to elicit the basic principles or premises of his new science, and thus contribute to the understanding of its true character.

Chapter XIV

IBN KHALDŪN

A

Ibn Khaldūn wrote no major work in fields accepted in the Muslim philosophic tradition, or which he himself considered to be the proper fields of philosophic investigation—logic, mathematics, physics, and metaphysics—politics, ethics, and economics. Consequently, he was not regarded by his contemporaries, or by subsequent Muslim students of philosophy, as a philosopher (fiṣḥāshīf) in the sense in which al-Fārābī, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd were identified as such. Nevertheless, both his contemporaries and later Muslim students of history and society were aware that Ibn Khaldūn had made the most significant contribution to those specialized fields through his

1 The summaries of “many” of the works of Ibn Rushd, which he wrote as a young man (reported by Ibn al-Khatīb, cf. al-Maqāri, Nafḥ al-Tib, ed. Muhammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Hamīd [10 vols., Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah, 1367/1947, Vol. VIII, p. 200]), may prove of value in corroboration the philosophic notions found in the “History.” Ibn Khaldūn himself did not evidently consider them of permanent value; they have not yet been recovered, and it is not known whether they have survived at all.

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Ibn Khaldūn's metaphysical treatise, al-Zanna is a critical evaluation of Kaldūn and of the teachings of the spiritual leaders, the philosophers, and the mystics, from the illuminative (fīshtab) point of view. He fully appreciates the utility and importance of the first three disciplines but takes a serious notice of the inconsistency with Islam of some of the issues raised by them. He believes that philosophy and mysticism both ultimately lead to the same goal, yet he cannot shut his eyes to the eminence and superiority of the latter over the former. Mysticism, in his view, is free from doubt and uncertainty because it is due to divine grace and is, therefore, nearer to prophethood.11

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Chapter XLVI

IBN KHALDŪN

A

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A History of Muslim Philosophy (Khitab al-Thar). That a work exploring the art of history, and largely devoted to an account of universal history, should concern itself with philosophy is justified by Ibn Khaldun on the ground that history has a dual character: (a) an external (fatḥah) aspect which is essentially an account of, or information about, past events; and (b) an internal (ḥadīs) aspect. With respect to this latter aspect, history is contemplation (theory: ṣaqṣ and verification (šakīq), a precise causal explanation of things generated (al-mustad) and their origins (or principles: muddil), and a profound science (al-din) of the qualities and causes of events; therefore, it is a firm and principal part (al-faṣıl) of wisdom (al-ḥikma), and deserves, and is well fitted, to be counted among its sciences.4

Whatever Ibn Khaldun's position concerning the relation between wisdom and philosophy may have been (Ibn Rushd, who was the last of the major Muslim philosophers whom Ibn Khaldun studied, considered that the two had become identical in his own time),5 he frequently uses the expressions "wise men" (al-halaf) and "philosophers" (al-falālis) interchangeably, and it is certain that he identifies the sciences of wisdom with the philosophic sciences.6 Furthermore, in his classification and exposition of the various sciences, he defines the basic characteristics of these sciences, enumerates them, and makes ample reference to the Greek and Muslim authors, who represent the specific philosophic tradition which he accepts as the tradition.

Ibn Khaldun's definition of the philosophic sciences is based on an emphatic and clear-cut distinction, if not total opposition, between the sciences which are natural to man as a rational being (therefore, he names them also "natural"

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6 The Introduction and Book One are known together as the "Introduction" (Muqaddimah), cf. below p. 898. References in this chapter and that in on Ibn Khaldun's Political Philosophy (cf. below, Book IV, Part 6, Chap. XLI) are to the volumes, pages (and lines) of the Quatercentenary edition (Q) together with the corrections and/or additions supplied by de Sane and F. Rosemont in their respective French and English translations, both of which reproduce the pagination of the Quatercentenary edition on the margin. Cf. The Bibliography at the end of this chapter.

4 Cf. the account of the parts of the Thar, below, p. 898.


Or that philosophical questions (i.e., the quest for wisdom) have become scientific logic. Therefore, Ibn Rushd omits the well-known opinions and dialectical segments found in Aristotle's works, and does not hesitate to view current in his own time as Aristotelian did, "because wisdom in his (Aristotle's) time had not become complete, and contained opinions of groups who were believed to be wise. But now that wisdom has become complete, and there being in our time no groups (merely) believed to be wise... the contemplation of these sciences must be according to the mode in which mathematics is contemplated today. For this identical reason we must omit from them also the dialectical arguments." Ibn Rushd, Talhīq al-Samā' al-Tafīl ("Paraphrase of the Physics"), Ms, Cairo, Dar al-Kutub, Ḥakimah, No. 5, fol. 1 of Ahmad b. Abī al-Handah, Talhīq Kūsh al-Naṣr ("Paraphrase of the De Anima"), (Cairo, Imprimerie Musulmane, 1956), Introduction, p. 16; Khitab al-Thar' (Talhīq, "Hābrebaal, Dār al-Maftār, 1365/1946), pp. 2-3.

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3 Q. III, 86-87.


6 There are three schemes according to which these sciences are enumerated. The four sciences or groups of sciences mentioned here appear in all of them. The order is that of the central scheme which divides the philosophical sciences into seven (mathematics, being subdivided into arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music) (Q. III, 88-120). This scheme seems to emphasize the order in which, according to Ibn Khaldun himself, these sciences follow one another. Consider the characteristicization of logic as that which comes first (muqaddam)—note also the use of muqaddām as "principle" or "premise"—and of mathematics as "coming after" logic (bu'dahā). In the first scheme (logic, natural science [or metaphysics, and mathematics), the order seems to be in accordance with the contemplation of these sciences as pursued among them (fīdābaḥ), i.e., among the philosophers (Q. III, 87-88). The third scheme (mathematics, logic) gives a summary exposition of these sciences "one by one" (Q. III, 88-95)."
they differed with Aristotle on many issues, they generally recognized him as the foremost teacher (Ma‘uldun-i Aysa’il). Of Muslim philosophers, Ibn Khaldūn mentions by name al-Fātikī, Ibn Sīna, Ibn Bajjah, and Ibn Ragib. He indicates the decline of the philosophic sciences in western Islam after the disintegration of cultural life in that region, and refers to reports concerning the then flourishing state of these sciences in Persia and eastward, and their revival and spread in western Europe.18

Thus, there seems to be little doubt that when Ibn Khaldūn says that the study of the internal aspect of history is to be made one of the sciences of wisdom, he does not simply mean that it deserves a systematic, rational, and scientific study in general. What he means is much more specific and precise. The study of the internal aspect of history, if it is to be properly scientific, must be recognized as a significant part of, and is to be pursued as belonging to, one of the philosophic sciences or one of a group of the philosophic sciences which he enumerates. These are the Greek philosophic sciences (of the Socrates school)19 epitomized in the works of Aristotle and also in those of the Muslim philosophers who belonged to that school and concentrated primarily on the exposition of the works of Aristotle.

C

To which of these sciences or groups of sciences does the investigation of the internal aspect of history belong? To answer this question, a fuller statement of the character and principles of this investigation is needed. Ibn Khaldūn first formulates what this investigation is to comprise, and how it is to be conducted, through a critique of Islamic historiography and the examination of the causes of the errors of historians in the “Introduction,” in which he illustrates the distinction between the external and internal aspects of history and establishes that these errors are primarily due to the ignorance of the nature and causes of historical events, both in so far as these are permanent and homogeneous as well as in so far as they change and are heterogeneous. Then, in the first part of the introduction to Book One, the true character of history is said to be identical with “information about human association, which is the culture (‘umrū) of the world, and the states which occur to the nature of that culture . . . (and) all that is engendered in that culture by the nature of (these) states.”20 The primary base of errors in transmitting historical information (and, consequently, in writing an untrue account of history), thus, becomes ignorance of the nature of the states of

18 Q. III, 90-92.
19 For the distinction among the various Greek philosophic schools (which had equally distinct groups of followers in Muslim philosophy), and of their different attitudes to divine law, cf. al-Šābābīnī, Al-Malā‘ al-‘Nūn, ed. Ahmed Fāhmi Muhammad, 3 Vols., Cairo, Maktabat al-‘Ilmīn al-Tūhyyah, 1947-48, Vol. II, pp. 164-97, 231 ff.
20 Q. I, 56,6-12.
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asserting the sound definitions of their essences and accidents. Since the subject and problems of the science of culture are said to belong to generated things, it will have to use the rules devised by the logical arts, but it is not itself concerned with the problems of how to achieve sound abstractions or how to distinguish them from those unsound.

It is only necessary to add here, first, that Ibn Khaldūn accepted, without reservation, Aristotelian logic as found in the logical writings of Aristotle (with the addition of Porphyry’s Isagoge) and the commentaries of al-Fārābī, ibn Sina, and ibn Rugḥā. Thus, logic for him deals with mental forms abstracted from things and useful in the knowledge of the essence and the “truths” of things. Its central aim is demonstration or “the syllogism producing certainty,” and “the identity of the demonstration [demonstratio] and the definition,” i.e., the subjects dealt with in the *Posterior Analytics* or *The Book of Demonstration.*19 Ibn Khaldūn doubts the validity of the attempts of Muslim dialectical theologians (Mutakallimūn) who concentrate on purely formal syllogism and forego the fruit of the works of the ancients in the field of material logic.20 Secondly, ibn Khaldūn repeatedly emphasizes that the science of culture must be a demonstrative science in the sense specified here, to the exclusion of dialectical, rhetorical, and poetic arguments which are based on commonly known and commonly accepted premises rather than on self-evident, necessary, and essential premises, or premises that are the conclusions of syllogisms based on such premises, as required by postcriticistic logic.

As to the mathematical sciences, they are concerned with measurements or quantities, either theoretically, such as the study of pure numbers, or practically as applied arts. In the latter case, they are useful in the study of culture, since they acquaint us with the mathematical properties of things, such as the stars, which exercise an influence on culture, and form the bases of many of the crafts which are an important aspect of cultural life.21 But although the science of culture makes use of the conclusions of the mathematical sciences and is concerned with quantity as one of the categories of all generated things, its subject is not quantity as such, but the nature and causes of a specific generated thing which is culture.

This leaves us with natural sciences and metaphysics, or the sciences of natural and divine existents. Since the study of generated things, their natures, their states, and all that is engendered in them,22 is the specific subject of natural science or natural philosophy, the new science of that specific generated thing which is culture seems to form a part of natural philosophy and to belong to it by virtue of its subject. This statement must now be amplified by giving answers to: (a) why does the new science of culture deserve to be a natural

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20 Q. III, 112-16.
22 Cf. above p. 883.
23 See above, p. 890.
24 Q. III, 87-9.16.
26 Q. III, 116-17. This judgment is based on ibn Sina’s own statements and the accusations leveled against him by ibn Rugḥā.
27 Meteorologica i, i, 329a 20-39a 9.
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causes of nature and all natural motion" (Physics); (2) the simple or primary parts of the world, or "the stars ordered in the motion of the heavens" (On the Heavens and the World); (3) the motion of the natural elements, or their generation and corruption, alteration, and growth (On Generation and Corruption); and (4) the accidents and affections common to the elements (Meteorology). Then follows the study of particular existents that are generated and corrupted; (5) the minerals which are the simplest and closest to the elements (On Minerals); (6) plants (On Plants); (7) animals (The Parts of Animals, etc.); and (8) the general principles of the soul and its parts (On the Soul), followed by the particular powers of the soul and the accidents existing in plants and animals by virtue of their possessing soul (Farsa Naturals).

According to this scheme, the science of the soul, which is the form of animal and plant bodies, falls within the scope of the science of nature and the science of the intellect, which is one of the faculties of the soul, falls within the scope of the science of the soul. This raises important problems as to the connection of nature to soul, and of soul to intellect; and the study of these connections certainly did not mean, nor did it lead to the reduction of one to the other. For the scheme was not merely a deductive one by which the more complex is deduced from the more simple or the particular from the general, but a methodological plan of investigation beginning with the general and simple and leading to the particular and complex, recognizing their substantial heterogeneity, and using observation, enumeration, and induction, to a greater extent than, and in conjunction with, syllogistic reasoning. Furthermore, the study of soul and intellect lead the investigator to matters that are beyond nature, and that could no more be, strictly speaking, considered within the scope of a natural investigation; but in this case, these matters cannot claim the advantages enjoyed by natural investigations which are solidly based on human experience and perception. One could then perhaps speak with Ibn Rushd of the possibility of delimiting the investigation of soul and intellect to what corresponds most to the manner of investigation conducted, and, thus, arrive at explanations similar in character to those given by natural science—taking this to be more fitting to the purpose of Aristotle. But to grant the difficulties raised by this scheme does not alter the fact that both for Aristotle and the Muslim philosophers mentioned above, the

Ibn Khaldun

inclusion of the study of soul and intellect within the general science of nature is legitimate. Consequently, the study of man and all that concerns man is considered an integral part of the study of nature or of natural science. This does not hold true only for his body in so far as it shares common properties with all natural bodies, for the properties of generation and corruption which he shares with all composite things, and for the faculties of his soul which he shares with plants and other animals, but also for his specific differentiate as a rational being: his sociability and his association with others and co-operation with them in the development of the arts; his appetite and desire; his purposeful, organized social activity; his practical and theoretical intellect; and his ability to comprehend things through visions, dreams, and prophecy, and to use what he comprehends in ordering his political life. All such matters are dealt with in the science of the soul.

Human association or culture, as Ibn Khaldun conceived it, is a natural property of man as a rational being. He intended to investigate its modes or states, the various accidents that occur in it, and its generation and corruption; and to develop this investigation into a full-fledged inquiry or science.

Since the basis of man’s sociability, and its primary manifestations, can legitimately fall within the scope of natural science, the elaboration of this natural property of man, and the investigation of the various aspects of social organization to which it leads man, can also legitimately belong to natural science and be counted as one of the natural sciences.

Whether the new science will in fact prove well-fitted to be considered a natural science, will of course depend on whether it will remain loyal to the method of investigation followed in the natural sciences. Ibn Khaldun was aware of the fact that the subject he intended to investigate had been studied in contexts other than natural science, notably in the Muslim legal sciences and in the practical philosophic sciences. Thus, even if he had insisted on a science of human association or culture which had to be a part of philosophy or wisdom, he could have chosen to study it as a practical science. The reason for not choosing this alternative can be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

It is sufficient in the present context to insist that what he sought was a natural science of human association. He examined the works of Plato and Aristotle, and of Muslim thinkers, and found that they had not elaborated such a science before. Thus he set out to make good this deficiency in the natural sciences. But if he is to succeed in his effort, he must show unequivocally that the new science is indeed being firmly established on the foundation of natural philosophy.
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E

The "History" was originally divided by Ibn Khaldun into an "Introduction" (Maqaddimah) and three Books. The "Introduction" deals with the problem of history in general, Book One contains the new science of culture, Book Two contains the history of the Arabs and other peoples (except the Berbers) down to Ibn Khaldun's own time, and Book Three contains the history of the Berbers in western Islam.33

Maqaddimah is a technical term meaning "premise." It can be generally defined as that upon which what follows depends and which does not itself depend upon that which follows.34 It can be a general discussion or explanation introducing a subject, a book, or a science, the emphasis being upon what needs to precede these rather than that upon which they strictly depend. In this sense the "Introduction" precedes the three Books and is a useful discussion clarifying the problems that are to follow. But this "Introduction" together with Book One came also to be known as the Maqaddimah, i.e., as an introduction to the last two Books, or the historical account proper. This is a usage which is closer to the technical definition of the word, since, as Ibn Khaldun explains, the writing of a correct historical account depends upon a prior understanding of the science of culture.

The proper technical definition of maqaddimah, however, which is the specific definition used by logicians in the study of syllogism, induction, and analogy, is "that upon which the soundness of the proof depends, without an intermediary" or "a proposition made part of a syllogism or an argument."35 Such a premise should be veracious and properly related to the question or problem. It is of two kinds: (a) definitive (such as being primary, based on observation or experience, or on multiple authoritative reports, or being the conclusion of a syllogism based on such premises) and (b) based on opinion (generally known or accepted notions, etc.).36 These can be made the premises of a single syllogism or argument, or of a whole science. In this latter case, they are named the "premise(s) of the science" and are defined as those upon which the setting out upon the science depends, and upon which its problems depend.37 Apart from the general usages mentioned above, Ibn Khaldun uses maqaddimah in this specific "logical" sense,38 and the first section of Book One, which treats "human culture in genera," is made up of six such "premises. Since the new science "depends" upon these premises, we must examine them in detail.

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1. Association is necessary for man.—Ibn Khaldun presents this premise or proposition as being the same as what the wise men express when they say that "man is 'political' by nature, i.e., he cannot dispense with association, which in their technical usage is the 'polis'; and this is the meaning of culture."39 It is significant, however, that Ibn Khaldun substitutes, here at the outset, "necessary" for "by nature"; and his explanation of this first premise indicates that this substitution was deliberate on his part. For, the way he grounds the need for association in human nature is by explaining that, while the "animal natures" of human beings are the same as those of the rest of the animals (in that like them they cannot exist except through nourishment and self-defense), they are inferior to some animals in that the ability of a single human being cannot possibly be equal to meeting his needs for nourishment and self-defense. Therefore, man associates with others and develops the arts and tools, and the social organizations, necessary for nourishing and defending himself, not because his specifically "human nature" is essentially superior to the rest of the animals, or because he needs these arts and tools and organizations to satisfy his specifically human needs, but because his natural constitution is deficient for conducting a solitary life, and because without associating with others he remains helpless and unable even to exist.40 Thus, Ibn Khaldun, while purporting simply to "explain" what the philosophers meant by "man is political by nature," in fact concentrates on those traits of man's animal nature which render association a necessary condition for the very life and continued existence of man. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that this premise and its explanation as he presents them are also based on the conclusions of the investigation of animal and human natures conducted by the philosophers and confirmed by the investigation of the organs of the human body conducted by Galen—in more specifically, that the "demonstration" of this premise was presented by the philosophers,41 referring to the appropriate passages of De Anima and the commentaries on them.42 On the surface, Ibn Khaldun's only objection is to the attempt of the philosophers to "add" a rational proof of prophecy to their demonstration of the political nature of man, while in fact he seems also to object to the widening of the scope of the proposition in such a manner as to state that association is necessary for man's well-being in addition to its being necessary to his existence. What he seems to indicate is that the study of human nature within the scope of natural science cannot demonstrate this proposition in this wider sense; therefore, the science of culture must restrict itself to accepting the proposition

33 Q. 11, 16.
35 Ibid., p. 1316: 4-7 (cf. Q. 1, 206: 7-8, 345: 20).
36 Ibid., pp. 1216-20, 1217: 2.
37 Ibid., p. 1217: 5-7.
38 Cf. Q. 1, 71-78.
39 Q. 1, 68: 14-16.
40 Q. 1, 68-72.
41 Q. 1, 68-14: 16, 70: 11-12, 72: 3 and 7.
42 Cf. Q. 11, 368-70, where the same argument is present in connection with the practical intellect, with a similar reference to the philosophers Aristotle, De Anima, III, 4-7; Ibn Sina, Naṣf, pp. 196ff; Naẓari, pp. 183-95; Kosība al-Iṣbahānī, Tadhkira (Le Livre de télécroise et des aventures mortelles), ed. J. Forger, Leyde, E. J. Brill, 1982, pp. 134-37; ‘Uṣma, pp. 46-46; Ibn Ṭabīb, Naṣf, pp. 69-72.
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in its narrower sense, susceptible to demonstration within natural science, only. In other words, according to him, the study of culture should be a sociological one without ethical extensions.

2. Distribution of culture on earth.—This premise simply recounts what has already been explained by the wise men who have contemplated the states of the world relative to the shape of the earth, the generation of animals and of the human species, and the inhabited parts of the earth; it is a summary of the geography of the seven zones and the information available concerning the conditions prevailing in each. Here, Ibn Khaldūn restates the various conclusions demonstrated in such parts of natural philosophy as the investigation of the nature of elements, of generation and corruption, of minerals, and of localities of animals, and completes them through such information as has been supplied by observation andauthenticated multiple reports found in the works of astronomers, and, in particular, in the works of Greek and Muslim geographers like Ptolemy, al-Marwānidī and al-Idrīsī. By calling those astronomers and geographers “wise men” or philosophers, he indicates that their investigations fall within the scope of natural philosophy. It is also in these works that the word “asrān,” which Ibn Khaldūn used as a technical term indicating the subject of his new science, is most frequently encountered.

3. Temperate and intertemperate zones, and the influence of the atmosphere upon the colour of human beings and many of their states.—This premise is again based on the investigation of the nature of generated beings, and the nature of heat and cold and their influence upon the atmosphere and the animals generated in it, proving that the colour of human beings and many of their acts and modes of life are caused by atmospheric conditions. The only specific authority he invokes here is ibn Sīrāk’s qiyās; poem on medicine. He refutes the errors of genealogists which he attributes to their inattention to the natural basis of such matters as colours and other characteristic traits. Throughout, the emphasis is upon the natural (in contrast to the specifically human or the divine) basis of culture as a whole; for, in addition to relatively elementary things (such as colour and other bodily traits, and the manner of preparing food and housing), Ibn Khaldūn indicates the dependence of even the highly complex aspects of culture (such as the sciences, political authority, and whether there are prophets, religions, and divine laws) upon the nature of the elements and their effects upon the atmosphere.

4. Influence of the atmosphere upon the habits of character (al-ikhlāṣ) of

Ibn Khaldūn

Human beings.—Ibn Khaldūn indicates that the valid causal explanation of this premise has been established in the proper place in philosophy where gladness and sadness are explained as the expansion and contraction of the animal spirit, and are related to the more general premise establishing the effect of heat in expanding the air. This completely natural explanation, founded on the properties of the elements, is made the basis of myth, excitability, levity, etc. In contrast, the opinion of al-Marwānidī (copying Galen and al-Kindī), which attributes these habits of characters to the weakness or the power of the brain, is considered inconclusive and undemonstrated.

5. Effects of the abundance and scarcity of food upon the bodies and habits of character of human beings.—The causal explanation of this premise is based on the investigation of the quantity of food and the moisture it contains in the various localities of animals; their action in expanding and contracting, and in increasing and decreasing the moisture of the stomachs of all animals including human beings; and the effect of this upon the coarseness or delicacy of bodies, and upon the habits of character of human beings, including their piety and religion. This natural causal explanation is based on experience and confirmed by the students of agriculture.

6. Classes of those who perceive the “asrān” (ghubab) among human beings by natural disposition or by exercise. This premise is introduced in a discussion on prophecy and dream-vision which deals with (1) practical guidance as the aim of prophecy, and (2) the signs of prophetic mission: (a) the psychological state at the time of revelation, (b) good character prior to embarking upon the prophetic mission, (c) the call to religion and worship, (d) noble pedigree, and (e) marvels and miracles. The difference between the dialectical theologians and the philosophers concerning how marvels and miracles take place and concerning their significance, is presented primarily in terms of whether they take place through the power of God or through the power of the prophet himself. The philosophers assert the latter on the basis that “the prophetic soul, among them, has essential properties from which these invasions [of nature] (ahdāridja) emanate through his [i.e., the prophet’s] power and the obedience of the elements to him in the generation [of these invasions of nature].” As distinct from this introduction, Ibn Khaldūn presents his own statement (qudūl) in which he sets down “the interpretation of the true meaning (ḥaṣīd) of prophecy as explained by men of verification (mudhánín),” and mentions the real meaning of soothsaying, dream-vision, etc. The verified interpretation
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which Ibn Khaldun adopts as the basis for his explanation of the true meaning of
these phenomena seems to be a summary recapitulation of the entire
subject of natural science, i.e., the observable world ("ilm al-
dawla") and the observable
effects of unseen powers; sensible bodies, the elements, the spheres, the gener-
able (minerals, plants, and animals ending in man), and the human soul and
its powers. These powers are again arranged in an ascending order: (1) the
active powers; (2) the apprehensive powers which include (a) external senses,
(b) internal senses, i.e., (i) common sense, (ii) imagination, (iii) estimation,
(iv) memory, and (v) the power of thought which the philosophers call
the rational or calculative ("sulhag") power.

"They all ascend to the power of thought [intellect] the instrument
of which is the middle hollow of the brain. It is the power by which we take
the movement of deliberation and the turn toward intellect; the soul is
moved by it [i.e., this power] constantly through the longing instituted in it
[i.e., the soul] towards that [intellection], to deliver [itself] from the abyss of
potency and preparedness which belongs to human [nature] and to come
out into act in its intellect [with which] it makes itself like the Heavenly
Spiritual Host and comes at the lowest rank of the Spiritualities when it
prehends without bodily instruments. Thus, it moves constantly and turns
toward that [intellection]. It may pass over altogether from human [nature]
and its form of spirituality to the angelo [nature] of the upper region, not
by [any] acquiring of [something from outside], but by the original and primary
natural disposition toward it which God has placed in it."

On the basis of the structure and nature of the observable world, and the structure and
nature of the human soul, and on the basis of the natural powers inherent in the latter,
Ibn Khaldun proceeds to classify and explain the various types of the activity
of the soul in relation to the unwise world.

Thus, Ibn Khaldun's own explanation of the foundation and the true mean-
ing of these phenomena seems to be indeed based on the explanations of
the natural world, and of the nature and powers of the human soul, as
presented by "most" philosophers. Like them, he considers all such activities
to be grounded throughout in the natural properties of the human soul which,
in turn, is closely related to the human body and the world of generation,
of the elements, of sensible bodies, and of their motion and rest. All other explanations
are the "guesses and conjectures" of those who are not well
grounded in these matters or who accept them from those who are not such,
and are "not based on demonstration or verification.""#?

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Part 5. The Middle-Roaders

Chapter XLVII

THE SCHOOL OF ISFAHAN

A INTRODUCTION

It is one of the most curious aspects of the Western study of Muslim intellectual life that with one or two exceptions practically no serious research has ever been made into the spiritual and intellectual treasures of Twelver Shi'ism in any of the European languages. As a result, not only Westerners but even the Muslims whose contact with the Shi'ite world is mainly through Western sources have remained totally ignorant of the remarkable intellectual life which has persisted to this very day in the centre of Shi'ism, especially in Persia. Inasmuch as it was mostly in the Shi'ite world that much of the intellectual life of Islam, especially in sciences and traditional wisdom (Hikmat), took refuge after the seventeenth century, this ignorance has helped to strengthen the totally erroneous notion that Islam fell into complete decadence after the Mongol invasion. Just as a closer study of the Muslim world at large will show that in art, government, Sufism, and many other aspects of Muslim life there was anything but decadence until fairly recently, a study of the Shi'ite world will reveal that even in the sciences, philosophy, and gnosis the Muslims have, with one gap of a century and a half, continued to flourish up to the present century. It will reveal that just as Shi'ite art is one of the high points of Muslim art, so is the intellectual life of Shi'ism in this period one of the apogees of Muslim history, producing

1 A few authors like Gobineau, Donaldson, and E. G. Browne have touched upon certain aspects of Shi'ism in their writings; the only European author, however, Henri Corbin, who during the past twenty years has done much to introduce the rich heritage of Shi'ism, especially as it has developed in Persia, to the Western world.

2 For the meaning of this word which denotes wisdom, refer to the chapter on Shi'ah al-Din Suhravardi Maqūli.

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sages like Sa'd al-Din Shāhizā, usually known as Mullâ Sadra. Perhaps one day histories of philosophy will not have chapters on Islam which end abruptly with Ibn Rushd or possibly Ibn Khaldûn but will trace the chain to the present century and end once and for all the dangerous illusion that the present-day Muslims are separated from their own tradition by centuries of intellectual "vacuum." Our aim in this chapter is hardly one of filling this lacuna; rather it is to give some of the background and intellectual perspectives of Shi'ite Persia, where Twelver-Imam Shi'ism became for the first time a completely independent political and cultural entity, an entity which has dominated every phase of life in Persia ever since.

The coming to power of the Shi'ites in Persia is one of the most fascinating chapters of Muslim history and marks one of the instances in which the influence of Sufism upon the social and political life of Islam is felt directly. Beginning as a Sufi brotherhood which traced its lineage as well as its name to the great saint Shaykh Sa'd al-Din Afdâllî,2 the Shi'ites soon developed into a well-organized political force which was to conquer the whole of Persia and to weld it into a political unity for the first time since the fall of the Samanid Empire. The Sufi order continued under the spiritual direction of a series of descendants of Shaykh Sa’d, and its members in the ninth/fifteenth century adopted a twelved-sided red hat for which they became known as the qā’il-ba’d (red heads). The order grew in power in the politically disorganized Persia of the ninth/eighteenth century and under Ismâ’ll (982/1570-930/1523-24) succeeded in defeating the local rulers and unifying the whole of Persia.

Shaykh Ismâ’ll was crowned in Târir in 905/1500 marking the beginning of the reign of the Shi’ites which was to last over two centuries until in 1113/1720 the Afghans conquered Persia, sacked the Shi’ite capital at Isfahân, and killed Shaykh Ismâ’ll, the last of the Shi’ite rulers. During this period Persia, which until now had been partly Shi’ite and partly Sunni, wavering between these two orthodox perspectives of the Islamic revelation, became completely Twelver-Imam Shi’ite, and Shi’ism, which had until now remained a minority creed, found itself as the official religion of an empire and had to face political and social issues it had never been forced to face before.