AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S TRADITION VIS-À-VIS PHILOSOPHICAL PLURALISM

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Abstract: *Abū Nar al-Fārābī (870-950 A.D.) is referred to as the founding father of Islamic philosophy, who influenced the later Muslim thinkers to treat philosophy as an "authentic science". He managed to reconcile Muslim thoughts with Greek philosophical traditions. Consequently, his efforts were essential for establishing philosophy as a legitimate theoretical practice in the Muslim world. This paper offers an analytical explanation as to why al-Fārābī took a combinative approach in philosophy and how he combined two seemingly disparate philosophical traditions. The paper explains how he harmonized the philosophy of Plato with that of Aristotle; it also explores how he combined Islam and Greek philosophy. The paper then shows how his innovative ideas became a "tradition" in the history of Muslim philosophy. Finally, the paper relates al-Fārābī's philosophical tradition with the challenge of modern pluralism. It is argued that the Muslim world, by following his approach, cannot fully respond to contemporary philosophical pluralism. In this regard, "Perennial Philosophy" as an essential characteristic of many Muslim philosophies, will be analyzed in relation to philosophical pluralism.*

Introduction

I SEE MOST of the people of our time delving into and disputing over whether the world is generated or eternal. They claim that there is disagreement between the two eminent and distinguished sages, Plato and Aristotle, concerning: the proof [of the existence] of the First Innovator; the causes existing due to Him; the issue of the soul and the intellect; recompense for good and evil actions; and many political, moral, and logical issues (al-Fārābī 2001, 115).

In the above quotation, al-Fārābī uses a reflective verb "to see"; and it is reasonable to argue that similar reflections can be applied to our times as well. We too can "see" similar repeated disputes in modern times and even throughout the human history. Studying the long history of ideas, we face not only a "disagreement between the two eminent and distinguished sages", but also a crowded history of disagreements. In this sense, our time is quite similar to al-Fārābī's although, one may argue, a bit more sophisticated. We may ask, then, whether we should embark upon theoretical

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endeavors aiming at removing these doubts and uncertainties as al-Fārābī did. It is our objective here to investigate this question.

"Islamic philosophy" as a term comprises two notions. The first notion points out the Muslim dimension of this tradition of thought and the second expresses the Greek roots of this "science" -at least terminologically speaking. Therefore, this branch of knowledge has two distinct sources: Greek ancient philosophy and Islam. The combination, Islamic or Muslim philosophy, began sometime in the 7th to 8th centuries, when, under the Abbasid dynasty, Muslims were translating books from Greek into Arabic – either directly or via Syriac (Ṣafā 1967). These translations were "covering many crucial texts of Greek cosmology, psychology, metaphysics, and theology" (D'Ancona 2007, 21).

In the beginning of this process, some of the philosophical discussions translated from Greek were not organically related to Muslim discourses of the time. The ancient Greek philosophers did not always agree with Muslims. Issues such as bodily resurrection proved to be highly controversial, for instance. In other cases, Muslims could not easily comprehend the philosophers' arguments. For example, Aristotle's followers suggested that the world was eternal while the *Qur'ān* claimed that God had created the world out of nothingness -which implied that the world was in fact temporal (Leaman 1998, 5:4083). In such circumstances, philosophy could not be an organic element within the Muslim universe of thought and, as a result, was ostracized from conventional discourses.

In the conventional Muslim discourses of the time, there were different branches, such as *Kalām* -i.e. theology-, *Ḥadīth* - i.e. the science of preserving the Prophetic traditions-, Sufism and *Ḥikmat* - i.e. philosophy. The masters of each of these scientific branches were trying to establish their legitimate position. Among these branches, *Ḥikmat* was particularly attacked by its rivals, because it appeared to be a strong competitor for mainstream religious thought. Philosophy was accused of leaning towards reason at the expense of revelation (Nasr 2006, 38). A symbolic dispute took place between the theologian al-Sīrāfī and the philosopher Mattā that illustrates the problematic nature of philosophy in the Muslim world (Leaman, 220, 12).

The opponents of philosophy, the theologians, criticized it in two ways. They argued that it was an alternative perspective to that of religion. Secondly, they argued that it was a fundamentally incoherent in system of thought in itself. They argued that Aristotle and Plato, as great masters of philosophy, should not have had such major disagreements; and that the existence of such disagreements between the two indicated that philosophy was not a comprehensive and systematic science. Consequently, philosophy had to encounter two charges: internal incoherencies and disagreements-among the philosophers- as well as external incoherencies -with religion.

Early philosophers such as al-Fārābī tried to vindicate philosophy in two combinative approaches: showing the harmonies in the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato-to prove the internal consistency of philosophy-, and synthesizing philosophical discussions with Muslim thoughts -to show philosophy as an organic science within the Muslim universe of thought. These early philosophers interpreted, for example, Aristotle through Muslim conceptual systems (Pāzūkī 2007, 139-150); they instituted

a philosophy in which Islamic sources, i.e. the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth,* were inherent elements and Islamic principals were accommodated (Nasr 2007, 27).

I. The Harmonization of the Philosophies of Plato and Aristotle

As mentioned before, the early opponents of philosophy pointed to its internal incoherence. In particular, they referred to the large number of consequential disagreements between two great masters of philosophy, namely Plato and Aristotle. In response, al-Fārābī wrote a number of books in an effort to prove the internal coherency of philosophy and to vindicate it from the accusations (al-Fārābī 1890; al-Fārābī 1972, 268-284). *Al-Jam'* is the culmination of his effort in this regard. He writes:

> So I want to embark in this treatise of mine upon a harmonization of the two opinions of both of them and an explanation of what the tenor of their arguments signifies in order to make the agreement between the beliefs of both apparent, to remove doubt and suspicion from the hearts of those who look into their books, and to explain the places of uncertainty and the sources of doubt in their treatises (Al-Fārābī 2001, 115).

To al-Fārābī, it was important to lay the foundation of philosophy in a harmonized and integrated fashion. "He wished to establish it (philosophy)", Dimitri Gutas writes, "as an independent and possibly even leading intellectual discipline" (Gutas 1999, IX: 219). In *al-Jam'*, he listed seventeen differences between Aristotle's and Plato's philosophies and argued that these disparities were apparent, not inherent. He pointed out that Plato and Aristotle had the same aim and methodology (al-Fārābī 1995, 99); and that even if one considered them to be different, this would be an incorrect assessment. He presented Plato as a respected precursor to Aristotle and believed that Aristotle began where Plato had left off (Gutas 1999, IX: 220). In the other words, in al-Fārābī's view, Aristotle was looking for the same objective as Plato had, namely the knowledge of the perfection of man. Yet, Aristotle believed that Plato's efforts had not been sufficient and he began "from a position anterior to that from which Plato had started" (al-Fārābī 1962, 40). Al-Fārābī believed that the followers of those two great philosophers had wrongly interpreted them as opposing thinkers. After listing the famous disagreements between the two, al-Fārābī tried hard to resolve them one by one.

From the very beginning, al-Fārābī had a prior intention in writing his book. He had felt that harmonizing the two philosophies was a necessity. Consequently, he embarked on doing it. It can be argued that his aim was to satisfy a social need as well as a philosophical curiosity. He thought his contemporary confusion was the result of the alleged disputes between the two sages; and that if he resolved the disputes; his contemporaries would not oppose philosophical teachings anymore and would allow philosophy to be established.

How he embarked upon harmonizing Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies, and the extent of his success are beyond the scope of this paper. What is important here is why he tried to consider such a difficult theoretical task and what consequences his

efforts have left for us. He was a philosopher, not a theologian, jurist or grammarian, and he hoped to nourish philosophy in the Muslim world. He believed that resolving the disagreements between the two great philosophers could realize his goal of establishing Islamic philosophy. He was helped by Islamic theoretical and theological doctrines about the unity of truth and through this, he proved that philosophical truth must be single.

II. The Harmony between Greek Philosophy and Islam

Early Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī were influenced by the Islamic sources based on revelation. In other words, these philosophers approached many philosophical subjects through the prism of the *Qur'ān*. Similar to other Muslims, they believe that *Allāh* -God- is single;[1] that He is omnipotent and has no participant in His Power and Knowledge. He knows "all the mysteries of the world." In fact, the *Qur'ān* thought that His other name was "*Ḥaqq*", which means "truth". The term *"Ḥaqq"* is particularly significant for understanding of the relation between Greek philosophy and Islamic revelation (Nasr 2007, 29).

Al-Fārābī, the philosopher interested in the "essence of reality," believed that Greek philosophy and Islam were similar in their attention to the question of truth, i.e. *Ḥaqq*. Qua philosopher, he intended to discover the "truth of being," the "knowledge of existing things insofar as they are existent." Qua Muslim, however, he regarded God as *the* Truth. As a result, he believed that if he wanted to know the truth, he should try to know God. This meant that if he wanted to be a perfect philosopher, he should be a faithful Muslim.

At the same time, the above approach meant that Muslim philosophers had two sources for knowing the truth/*Ḥaqq*. As Muslims, they were invited to read and reflect upon the "Composed Book"–i.e. the *Qur'ān*. As philosophers, they were to examine the "book of creation"–i.e. the universe.[2] In other words, Islam led them through the teachings of the *Qur'ān* to the Truth–i.e. *Allah*–and Greek philosophy led them via thinking and reasoning to truth–i.e. the essence of things. In their minds, the two ways appeared in parallel and towards the same goal:

> God, in Islamic philosophy, is the source of the book of creation (universe) and composed book (*Qur'ān*). The composed book is orchestrated with book of creation and its order. The philosopher can deduce the statements of *Qur'ān* by watching the universe (Dāwarī 1998, 121).

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[1]Believing in single God is an important principle in revealed religions especially in Islam. Confessing to single God is a fundamental condition to becoming Muslim. Everyone who wants to become a Muslim should Confess 'lā ilāha ill-Allāh' ['The God is single'].
[2]The "Composed Book" -*kitāb-i talīfī*- and the "book of creation" -*kitāb-i tadvīnī*- are two famous phrases in Islamic philosophy. It is believed, that the *Qur'ān*, similar to the universe, can lead human beings to the correct way of life. Man has two equal ways to attain happiness. The *Qur'ān* says "believers are indebted to God for he selected messenger who teaches them book and *ikmat* (philosophy)" (3: 164).

This projected harmony between Greek philosophy and Islam was the result of the efforts by the early Muslim philosophers, and in particular, the writings of al-Fārābī. Philosophy could find a respected status in Muslim system of thought due to these efforts. In a rather simple world of the time where truth -*Ḥaqq*- appeared single and within the reach, the sciences could exist only in harmony with Islam. Al-Fārābī tried to project this harmony and, in doing so, he saved philosophy from accusation of being anti-religion. Under al-Farabi' influence, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī wrote:

> Is not philosophy outward form of spirit and is not religion inward form of spirit?
> When Greek philosophy and Arabic religion combine, the perfection becomes
> accessible (Dāwarī 2003, 120).

When Greek philosophy and the Arabic religion of Muslims were combined, a new branch emerged in the science of the day, namely the Divine knowledge. Al-Fārābī categorized various branches of science in his famous *Kitāb Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm* –i.e. *The Book of the Enumeration of the Sciences*. General Metaphysics or the Divine knowledge includes two smaller sciences, i.e. philosophy and theology–as the science of non-bodily beings (al-Fārābī 2001b). Al-Fārābī allocated four pages to describe General Metaphysics. Of these, three pages were allocated for the science of non-bodily beings –i.e. theology- and only one to philosophy.

In his description of theology, al-Fārābī writes about God, His essence and attributes, His unity, as well as the angels and the creation. On philosophy, however, he only wrote "in this section, beings and their accidents are discussed insofar as they are being" (al-Fārābī 2001b, 75). Al-Fārābī, therefore, attended to theology much more extensively than philosophy. He could unite the two different sciences in one without being accused of heresy. This is arguably, why he chose the title of "Divine knowledge" for General Metaphysics, and this could deflect some of the criticisms.

Al-Taḥṣīl al-Sa'ādat is one of the other writings in which al-Fārābī tried to bring Greek philosophy yet closer to Islam. In this work, his combinative approach identifies two different concepts, namely Imam–i.e. religious leader– and philosopher. He argues that "[t]he philosopher and Imam have the same meanings" (al-Fārābī 1995, 94).

The creation of the new branch of science and the very idea of the unity of Greek philosophy and Islam were the results of al-Fārābī's worldview. His perspective was generally accepted by all later Muslim philosophers. In his own time, he managed to convince many of this unity and to established philosophy as an organic element of Muslim thought. Today, one may ask whether his unifying and synthesizing approach can be used in dealing with contemporary diversities in philosophical thoughts.

III. When an Innovation Becomes a Tradition

It was explained that al-Fārābī had a combinative approach in reading Plato, Aristotle, Greek philosophy and Islam. His brilliant, innovative and powerful approach, however, turned into a stagnant and eventually irrelevant tradition in the Muslim world. He did make a strong foundation for rigorous philosophical discussions in the

Muslim world. Yet, many of the later Muslim philosophers, failed to be as innovative. They simply imitated him so that his brilliant approach became generally irrelevant. This imitation, i.e. trying to combine several different traditions, became a common philosophical practice throughout Muslim history because of an enduring belief: that "we are first Muslims and only then philosophers". From this point of view, al-Fārābī was the perfect pioneer whose method should be copied by the next generations of philosophers. This is why al-Fārābī has been so significant to most of Muslim philosophers; and this is why he was given the title of "the Second Teacher" after Aristotle, who was called "the First Teacher" (Nasr 1975, 23). This is also the reason why he is considered as the "inaugurator of Muslim philosophy" (Dāwarī 1998).

His approach towards proving philosophy as an authentic Muslim science and establishing a new organic Muslim philosophy gradually became the principle of most philosophical traditions throughout the Muslim world. The unity of philosophy and Islam became a fixed criterion: "everything approved by religion is approved by reason and vice versa". This was, of course, a famous jurisprudential statement as well. Consequently, the duty of each philosopher was perceived to be philosophically proving Islamic beliefs. This is why in the history of Muslim philosophy; one can find numerous efforts to prove Muslim beliefs such as corporal resurrection, the existence of angels, or God's knowledge about particular affairs of man.

Avicenna, as one of the first followers of al-Fārābī, was in particular engaged with one of the most problematic aspects of relation between Greek philosophy and Islam, namely God's knowledge about all particular affairs. According to the Islamic beliefs, God knows everything in the entire universe. Muslim philosophers, such as Avicenna, were committed to prove this belief without attributing any flaw to God's knowledge; for one may argue that if God knows every changing particularity, then his knowledge must be variable and thus subject to imperfection. In fact, this subject has remained a controversial one throughout the history of Muslim philosophy and has even caused harmful attacks against a number of philosophers (Abid al-Jābirī 2010 150-185).

In contrast, the philosophy of Suhrivardī was concerned with questions such as the existence of angels, the world of Imagination, and corporal resurrection. Similar to al-Fārābī and Avicenna, Suhrivardī tried to provide a philosophical explanation for religious doctrines. Yet, he could not offer comprehensive arguments on all those questions. Mullā Ṣadrā eventually completed Suhrivardī's philosophical project.

The philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā is centered, for the most part, around his proof of corporal resurrection (Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhhamad Shīrazī 1975). According to the *Qur'ānic* teachings, God will resurrect humanity all with their own bodies–i.e. not only in their spirits but also in their bodies of flesh and blood. This interpretation of the *Qur'ān* has caused quite a number of difficulties for Muslim philosophers. They made special efforts to prove it that culminated in Mullā Ṣadrā's sophisticated and comprehensive argument.

It can be argued, therefore, that most of the Muslim philosophers continued al-Fārābī theory of unification. In fact, some of these philosophers such as Mullā Ṣadrā and Mohammad Hussein Ṭabāṭabā'ī simultaneously wrote commentaries upon the *Qur'ān* and philosophical books. The more they made an effort to rationalize Islamic beliefs, the more the border between philosophy and theology became blurred.

Looking at the history of Muslim philosophy, one can conclude that al-Fārābī's approach in defense of philosophy through combining it with Islam has become a stagnant tradition. The repetition of a novel and original idea, therefore, reduced it to an inflexible and rigid tradition that ignored the necessity of philosophical renovation.

Being helped by the *Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music and Art*, we can define "tradition" as a "Repeated pattern of behaviors, beliefs, or enactment passed down from one generation to the next" (McCormick 2011, 1198).

In this definition of "tradition", three characteristics can be identified, namely a "repeated pattern" that is associated with a "group of people" and it is "coming from the past". In Arabic, the equivalent for "tradition" is *Sunnah*. In Muslim cultures, the term refers to "those actions performed in the past that establish a pattern to be followed, or avoided, in the future" (Newby 2004, 197). Given these definitions, al-Fārābī's novel approach gradually became a thought tradition, a "repeated pattern" for every later philosopher.

Although al-Fārābī's followers played an important role in further elaborating this tradition, it must be noted that his philosophy had an inner potential to become such an enduring tradition. He describes philosopher and *Imām* as synonymous. Consequently, he implies that philosopher is as perfect as an *Imām* should be. In a special part of *al-Jam'* in which he discussed about some contradictions between in Aristotle's ideas and *Theologia*, he believed these statements can entail three possibilities: 1) they are contradictory; 2) some are Aristotle's while others are not; 3) they have same inner meanings, thus correspond to and agree with each other. He surprisingly claimed that because of Aristotle's proficiency and intense wakefulness, it is improbable and reprehensible to say that they are contradictory (al-Fārābī 1996, 67). However, we know that they are contradictory.

The question is why he could ignore obvious philosophical necessities easily. It is a consequential assumption to believe that Aristotle was immune to contradiction throughout all his life and philosophy. When one thinks that two statements by a philosopher are evidently contradictory, it is reasonable to assume that the philosopher has changed his mind. Nevertheless, al-Fārābī did not think so about Aristotle; and he painfully strived for making his philosophy fully coherent (Ṣalībā 1995, 146). One may even argue that al-Fārābī interpreted Plato and Aristotle with emotional devotion to their perfection. He saw them as the "masters of the philosophy for all times". As such, it was impossible for them to contradict each other or, even worse, themselves:

They are the founders of philosophy, and the sources of its principles. They are responsible for its deficiency or perfection, routing it. Everything they say is the confident principle, without suspicion, undoubted. This is asserted by all the tongues and wisdoms (al-Fārābī 1996, 28).

One may argue that this rather absolutist judgment might be the yet another result of combining philosophy and religion.

IV. Perennial Philosophy and Philosophical Pluralism

Throughout the history of Muslim philosophy, al-Fārābī and many other philosophers mistook the identity of the author of *Theologia*, and tried in vain to show the

consistency of this work with the philosophy of Aristotle, whom he believed to be the author.[3] Yet, the reason behind writing *al-Jam'* went beyond the problem of *Theologia*. It can be argued that even if al-Fārābī had known that *Theologia* did not belong to Aristotle, he still would have written *al-Jam'*. He wrote the work for, I think, he believed in Perennial Philosophy.

Al-Fārābī wrote *al-Jam' needing a* new Muslim interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy. He was trying to calm down the fierce attacks against philosophy. He emphasized that there existed only one Perennial Philosophy, according to which all disputes between philosophy and religion and all disputes among philosophers would disappear. In fact, Perennial Philosophy was developed by combination of philosophy and religion in the first place.

Perennial Philosophy has ancient roots in Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. According to the Perennial perspective, all beings, lives and minds in the world have substance based on Divine Reality. Primitive versions of this school of philosophy can be found among primitive people and sophisticated versions in various religions and traditions throughout the world (Huxley 1947, 1).

Perennial Philosophy maintains that there is a universal Truth, based on which we can classify various philosophies and sciences. This is possible for "their ultimate source is one, namely the divine intellect" (Huxley 1947, 1). This is precisely the metaphysical background upon which al-Fārābī wrote *al-Jam'* and *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm* (Bakar 1998, 44). In one famous statement in *al-Taḥṣīl al-Sa'ādat* he directly points out that there has existed a perpetual philosophy in the ancient times among the Chaldeans, and later on among the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Syrians and ultimately the Arabs (al-Fārābī 1962, 43). Although he did not use the term "Perennial Philosophy", he did have a similar concept in mind when he wrote those lines.

In the history of Western philosophy, Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola and Leibnitz have been influential in explaining this school of philosophy. Ficino believed that Platonic philosophy and Christian theology both led us to a single truth about the world, namely love. Pico, who was Ficino's pupil, expanded the sources of this "unity of truth" beyond Plato and Christianity and included in the teachings of *Averroes*, the Qur'ān and Kabala traditions.

One can observe the potentials in this school of philosophy to emerge as a tradition itself. It too combines theological and philosophical views, and then claims to be "perennial." Once one achieves it, in other words, one no longer needs any other –new- philosophy. It is not a temporal philosophy depending on time and place; it is beyond time and place, and thus changeless. The perspective also implies that if all philosophers accept Perennial Philosophy, they would put aside their disagreements. The Perennial tradition, however, may cause a number of complications. In particular, the unity of all philosophies, or Perennial Philosophy, leads us to two –internal and external- problems.

In terms of the external problem, if "everything approved by religion is approved by reason and vice versa", each non-Islamic subject will become non-philosophical too. In the other words, this statement indicates that religion and philosophy are two

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[3]Valentin Rose, the editor of Aristotle's works discovered in 1883 that *Theologia* is not his. Indeed, the work contains some excerpts from *Enneads* of Plotinus.

exactly coincident circles and we cannot find any subject belongs only to one of them. Yet, there are so many non-Islamic -to be distinguished from anti-Islamic- topics that are of philosophical essence. For instance, discussions regarding the fine arts –e.g. aesthetics- are inherently philosophical and yet non-Islamic –i.e. not directly related to Islam. From an Islamic-philosophical perspective, however, they may be considered as non-philosophical. Yet, philosophy of aesthetics is a major field in contemporary philosophical studies. Certain interpretations of Islam oppose some of the visual arts such as painting and sculpture making. As a result, one cannot elaborate philosophically about these fine arts within current Muslim philosophy.

Another field of philosophizing that one cannot easily incorporate into Muslim philosophical traditions is political philosophy. It may be argued that al-Fārābī did have a political philosophy. This is true but only because al-Fārābī was not writing within the later "tradition" of Muslim philosophy. He had written his works on power, justice and politics before the traditional thoughts dominated Muslim philosophy. Although he was one of the chief founders of this tradition, his methodology was innovative and creative in his own time. After him, due to the existence of many "political judgments" by Muslim thinkers, it became unnecessary to discuss about politics from philosophical point of view and in a comprehensive way. This is why Javād Ṭabāṭabā'ī believes that after al-Fārābī, there is no major and comprehensive political philosopher in the Muslim world (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996).

In regards to the internal problem, if "the unity of philosophies by those sages, such as Plato and Aristotle" is undeniable, all later philosophies must be the same as well. This is indeed a Farabian presupposition. Today, however, we regard diversities among great philosophers as completely natural and even beneficial. It seems to be a consensus of our time that there could not be a single definition of philosophy. Consequently, we no longer feel uncomfortable (as al-Fārābī may have felt) when such disagreements arise among major philosophers. In al-Fārābī's view, a philosopher should be the governor and the prophet as well; all sciences should be of religious essence and they must have the same objective of knowing reality as the mirror of God.

Accepting Perennial Philosophy, which has its own internal logic and analytic methods, may cause rejecting other alien philosophies. For instance, any philosophy that arises from of Aristotelian-Islamic logic may be disregarded. Philosophers such as Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger and many of the existentialists appears so far away and thus incomprehensible; for they cannot be understood by Aristotelian-Islamic logic. Many Iranian Muslim thinkers, for instance, consider these philosophers as poets as they appear to them non-philosophical, self-contradicting, and even illogical. They cannot understand, for instance, the Hegelian logic and its basis upon the principle of contradiction. In their opinion, there is only one "logic" as there is only one single "Truth". In the view of some of the Muslim philosophers, thoughts outside these premises are sophistry.

Moreover, when one accepts the Perennial Philosophy, he or she accepts that there is a Divine ground, and a spiritual essence, for everything. Consequently, one could agree with different philosophies only to the extent that they refer to such essence. One accepts the multiplicity of philosophies insofar as they would be phenomenona manifesting that Divine ground. Now if one philosophy denies such

Divine ground altogether or simply does not refer to it, one will not agree with it. Therefore, philosophies such as that of Hume or Empiricism or Materialism appear as devoid of philosophical value among some of the Muslim philosophers.

There is a good example for such a situation. *Uūl-i Falsafih wa Ravish-i Realism,* written by Mohammad Hussein Ṭabāṭabā'ī, is an important encountering between a traditional Muslim philosophers and Marxian philosophy. He uses one of the terms of the Western philosophy, i.e. Realism, in the title of his books. In the book, he encounters several philosophical schools such as materialism to show that they are, in his opinion, sophistry.

In his opinion, Realism means the way to recover the essence of things and Idealism means denying such essence. Consequently, every philosophy that does not accept the "essence of the external things" is Idealistic or an example of sophistry. He strongly opposed the idealistic interpretation of Plato, Pythagoras and Plotinus. Ṭabāṭabā'ī and his pupil, Murtiḍā Muṭaharī who wrote a preface and annotations for the book, believed that existence of several contradictory schools in contemporary Europe is a sign of philosophical crisis. They believed that had Divine philosophy developed in Europe, as it did among Muslims, there would not have been so many disperse and diverse philosophies there. In such an environment, sophists could not have realized their goals and materialists could not have been a mainstream group of thinkers (Muṭaharī, ?, 21). In contrast, in the Muslim world, they believed that Mullā Ṣadrā had combined different philosophical branches in one single philosophy and had managed to end the age-old disputes (Muṭaharī, 7). According to this view, therefore, philosophical pluralism was a sign of weakness, and equal to sophistry, and an adverse condition.

Interestingly Muṭaharī simultaneously believed that one should separate philosophy from theology. This seems to contradict the basic tenets of Perennial Philosophy. He believed that theology and philosophy were two different sciences and had different subject matters. He believed that theology is an independent science, for the sake of its focus on the question of the Divine. Yet, pre-Islamic philosophers combined those questions with philosophical questions (Muṭaharī 2007, 5:467). Muṭaharī defended his proposed separation not in order to make a space for new non-Perennial philosophies. Instead, he separated philosophy from theology by favoring the latter; for he could not accept any non-Perennial philosophies that would oppose the Divine knowledge.

To summarize, one can conclude that the history of Muslim philosophy has been heavily shaped by "al-Fārābī's Tradition". Yet, this seems to be no longer sustainable. On the one hand, an extreme level of combination, or a perfect Perennial Philosophy, has already developed in Ṣadrā's philosophy, which combines philosophy, theology and Sufism. On the other hand, one cannot accommodate several different contemporary philosophies in the context of al-Fārābī Tradition. If Muslim philosophies are to see a new wave of innovation, they need to move beyond Perennial Philosophy. This might be possible by moving towards a fundamentally different philosophy, but the question is: how can emerge this new fundamentally different philosophy?

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