

the Campaigner

JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL CAUCUS OF LABOR COMMITTEES

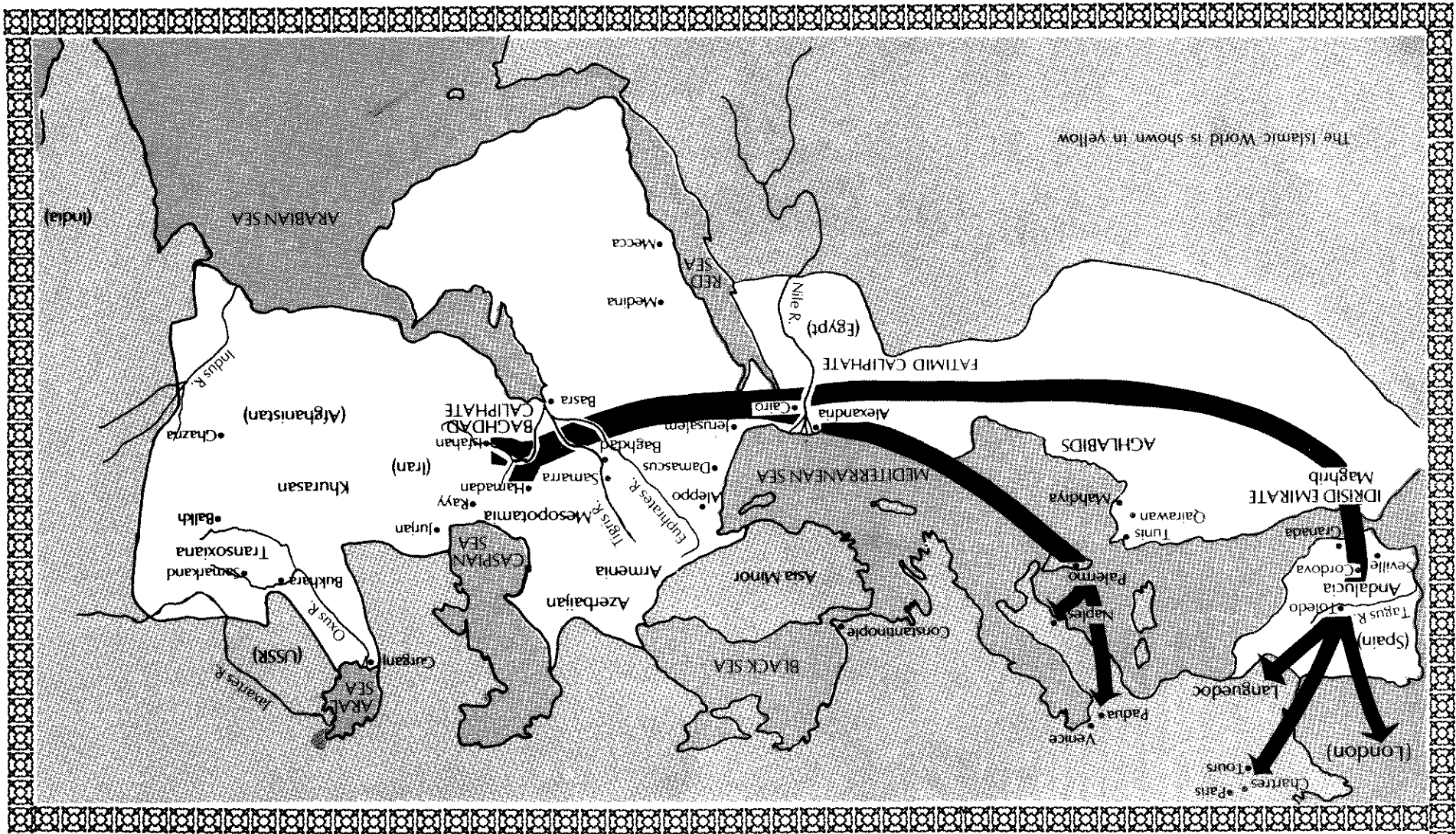
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*Ibn Sina
and the Dawn of
the Humanist Heritage*

The Islamic World and Path of Ibn Sina's Influence



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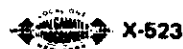
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The ABC of Socialism Today

The present sharp shift in Soviet leadership perceptions and policies can be profitably viewed as representing the Soviets' grudging acknowledgement of the fact that the old socialist movement in the capitalist countries is, with isolated exceptions, dead. Whatever the Soviets' officially and semi-officially stated posture on the subject at any moment, the extinction of the socialist movement as they formerly understood it is a fact which constantly presses upon the shaping of their outlooks and policies.

The Soviets and their immediate allies are themselves socialists in a very meaningful sense of the term. The point of reference from which to develop such a judgment is not the output of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, nor any other formal literary formulation of a credo to that effect. The Soviets and allied nations are essentially *socialist in practice*, more than articulated creed, and imperfectly reflect the implications of their characteristic practice in conscious formulations.

What makes the Soviets socialist in practice is their commitment to technological progress in industrial and agricultural development, and their view of nationalized basic means of production and state economic planning as instruments for continuing technological progress *whenever the institutionalized forms of capitalist society abort the potentialities of technologically directed industrial and agricultural development*. To the extent that Soviet and related institutions articulate such a commitment, that articulation is to be regarded as an expression of socialism, whatever criticism might be properly directed to included features of the proposition otherwise.

Although currents within professedly socialist organizations of the capitalist sector share the conception and outlook we have just summarized, generally speaking such views are not the constitutional or equi-

valent commitments of either Social Democratic or Communist organizations as a whole. The prevailing standard of membership and similar association within nominally socialist organizations in the capitalist sector is defined in contrary terms. Socialist organizations define themselves according to the rubric of "the Left," sorting themselves into categories of "reformist," "orthodox Marxist," and "ultra-leftist"-to-anarchoid gradations of "anti-capitalism." Under the persisting and growing influence of British empiricism and utilitarianism, the most recent flourishing of neo-Fabianism's neo-Malthusian doctrines, the majority of the nominal "Left" is fundamentally opposed not only to capitalist industrial progress, but to socialist alternatives as well.

Although this degeneration of the socialist organizations of the capitalist countries has been in progress, at a generally accelerating rate, since Versailles and the end of the last World War more emphatically, the fact of that degeneration was brought forward in the most unignorable fashion by the October-November 1975 "Eurocommunist" turn of the leadership of the Communist Party of France (PCF). After that turn it became increasingly difficult for the Soviets — or anyone else — to maintain the pretense that the old socialist "movement" continued to exist in some meaningful organized form.

Did this mean that the socialist movement — as it used to be defined — was forever dead in the capitalist sector? The lack of visible means to develop a clear answer to this question by the Soviets and others was reflected in a wishful avoidance of the question itself. For the moment, apart from the leadership of the U.S. Labor Party and its co-thinkers, the question appeared unanswerable.

To the leadership of the Labor Party, the problem was largely moot. We had been "out of the Left" since

the 1968 New York City teachers' strike, a distance which had been made rather official by the neo-Fabian assaults on our organization of spring 1973. Our programmatic analysis and task-orientation were clear and increasingly validated by global developments. With those forces which would join with us in behalf of technological progress and against resurrections of Nazi austerity packages and the like we had a basis for tactical agreements. As for the so-called U.S. Left as a Left, the less we had to engage ourselves with that neo-Fabian, neo-Malthusian obscenity, the better for our purposes.

Meanwhile, we were Marxists and yet not "Marxists." We owed a great intellectual debt to Marx, on the basis of his work in political economy and, more emphatically, his contributions to epistemology and related issues of method. Otherwise, our theoretical and other work was of such a quality and content that *although we subsumed Karl Marx, Marx could not be said to subsume us*. What this or that professor or other agency chose to define as "Marxism" or "Marxist principles" was of little concern to us respecting our own judgments and policies.

We were engaged in a global political war against Nazi-modeled and similar forms of austerity and war-dangers, fighting for technological progress as the issue of immediate and near-term human survival. Our immediate concern was and remains to win that political "war."

Our intellectual concern with nominal forms of "socialism" as such within the capitalist sector was a by-product of our political-intelligence activities. As a force fighting a global political "war" against Nazi-modeled austerity and other horrors, our concern with the socialist movement was practical rather than formal. Which sections of the socialist organizations and their peripheries were viable allies or potentially salvageable to become allies in the political war we were and are conducting? In order to make relevant determinations, it was essential to trace back modern neo-Fabian and other intelligence networks to their origins in preceding decades, and into the early part of the nineteenth century and earlier. It was through that historical aspect of our political-intelligence work that we struck upon the solution to the question of socialism as such.

At the moment, presuming that imminent threats of general war are averted, it is not within our capabilities — or perhaps anyone else's — to foretell the future of the socialist movement in the capitalist sector. This judgment is underlined by our present knowledge that the U.S. Labor Party and its co-thinkers have the potential for keeping capitalist development alive and viable for another quarter century or longer in the present OECD countries. Therefore, unless

there is a general war, and unless the capitalist political forces of the OECD countries are so stubbornly stupid as to make a socialist transformation necessary in the early future, one cannot presently project the objective circumstances under which socialism would emerge in those nations.

That does not, however, suggest that some form of viable socialist movement is not required in those nations during the decades immediately ahead. Quite the contrary. What is required is an *adequate* theory of socialism, in the sense of "adequate" as understood by a qualified student of B. Spinoza. If the issue is posed: *What is an adequate theory of socialism?* To that we can presently offer accurate and durable answers. That is the matter we take up here.

The Inadequacy of Marx's Socialism

The work of Karl Marx must be judged today in the same way one would judge properly the work of any great scientific mind of the past. In its kernel, it is correct as an expression of progress relative to preceding work in that field. Its essential point of view remains correct: technological progress in the development of industry, agriculture, scientific knowledge and popular culture. It is also correct, relative to capitalism, in defining the heteronomic political property forms of capitalist society as a historically progressive but historically delimited phase of social evolution, and as having embedded, potentially devastating contradictions. It is also correct in all basic aspects of Marx's advances beyond G.W.F. Hegel and others concerning dialectical method. It remains valid in respect to the fundamental conception of *scientific* socialism: that socialism is the form of society which exists potentially as the only viable alternative at the point that capitalist societies abort their historical mission of technological progress in the development of the productive forces. However, in two additional features, both of the greatest contemporary practical importance, Marx's developed arguments are either outright wrong or profoundly inadequate.

It is these two important errors and inadequacies of Marx's work which have been corrected by the leadership of the U.S. Labor Party.

The first of these corrections was embedded in the development of the future U.S. Labor Party from the beginning, and bears directly on the Party's work in plasma physics, biology and meteorology. Marx's and Engels' ignorance of the most advanced and relevant work of contemporary mathematical physicists, and incorrect perception — especially by Engels — of the crucial epistemological issues of physical scientific work, not only prompted them to extend Marx's dialectical method to the physical sciences in the wrong

way, but to perpetuate a grave included error in Marx's four volume *Capital* itself. The correction of this epistemological error of Marx and Engels, and the solution of the corresponding question of theoretical political economy, is the basis for the qualitative superiority of the Labor Party's economic-theoretical work over all competitors, and is the root of the party's fruitful approaches to problems of the physical sciences.

Marx's blunders concerning political economy were motivated in large part by his ignorance of the most crucial facts concerning the preceding century of European and North American history. Marx therefore ignorantly mistook Adam Smith for an honest political economist and esteemed David Ricardo improperly as the most advanced point of classical capitalist efforts at defining a theoretical political economy. These blunders of ignorance with respect to Smith, Ricardo and others coincided with Marx's credulous assumption that nineteenth century English capitalist development represented, in approximately a *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fashion, the lawful expression of the leading thrust of capitalist development.

In consequence of those factual blunders of historical judgment, Marx adapted his interpretation of the phenomena of English capitalist development as the empirical basis for formulating his political-economy theory, and consequently failed to solve the fundamental political problems of monetarism or to develop a thoroughly competent understanding of ground rent.

Taking both of Marx's cited major errors in perspective, it quickly becomes apparent to one knowledgeable of the crucial historical facts, that Marx's blunders on both counts were motivated chiefly by his acceptance of the popularized, mythical doctrine of "Thermidor" rampant among the circles of his adolescence and maturity. Accepting largely the fraudulent account of French history offered by one-time William Pitt fiancée Madame de Staël and the scurrilous Lamartine, Marx accepted the notion that the Jacobin factions of British agents-demagogues Danton and Marat represented the "progressive" force in the French Revolution, rather than the battering ram of the most reactionary, British-controlled forces. Hence, although Marx had a deep respect for the genius of Quesnay and of certain aspects of the work of Benjamin Franklin, Marx remained all his life ignorant of the significance of the American Revolution and of the humanist forces around Franklin's French collaborators and followers, Turgot, Lavoisier, Condorcet et al.

In Marx's case, this ignorance is most profoundly

ironical. Marx was a product of Trier, which was a hotbed of the republican currents which consciously and immediately identified with Benjamin Franklin's political leadership, and with the influence of Turgot, Condorcet and others. Marx's most influential teacher was an avowed follower of Franklin. Marx's father and future father-in-law were republicans of this genre. This influence of the American Revolution and allied Neoplatonic Illuminati current shows profoundly in Marx's own matriculation essay, which has been sometimes rightly acknowledged as a germinal reflection of his later development. Yet, as must at first appear astonishing, Marx remained ignorant of his own essential cultural roots throughout his adult life!

Once some additional facts are considered, Marx's ignorance is not surprising.

Once the source references from the late eighteenth and earliest decades of the nineteenth century are consulted, it becomes clear to any modern informed reader that the account of European history given in modern public school and university textbooks and lectures is an utter fraud. Reviewing this evidence, there appear three crucial dates at which the emergence of the popularized fraud can be noted: 1793-1794 in France, the 1815 Treaty of Vienna, and the aftermath of the abortive 1848-1849 revolutions in Europe. In the United States itself, the fraud began to become hegemonic from about 1828, with the election of the traitor Andrew Jackson to the Presidency.

The most efficient point of reference for this matter is Benjamin Franklin. Franklin, scientist, political economist, political organizer, was a central figure in the organizing of leading Neoplatonic humanist circles in North America, England, France, and Germany around himself for the purpose of creating in North America an industrial society, a republic in the humanist sense, whose establishment was to be coordinate with the launching of a wave of transformations throughout Europe to the same effect.

The forces Franklin intersected and represented were the faction gathered around the tradition of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, in opposition to the English-centered forces of Francis Bacon, Locke, the followers of Newton, and so forth. Priestley's "lunar circle" in England, Quesnay, Vergennes, Turgot, Lavoisier, Condorcet in France, and the circles associated with Herder, Mozart and Beethoven in Germany, typified the humanists aligned with Franklin. In England, Franklin's leading enemies included David Hume, the British East India Company, William Pitt the Younger, Jeremy Bentham, and Baring's bank. In France, Franklin's enemies were the followers of Voltaire, Mirabeau, Necker,

Talleyrand and the ultra-materialists around the Encyclopedists. Thomas Paine, the leading Federalist political theoretician after Franklin and Hamilton, was Franklin's personal political heir in respect of the organizing of Franklin's international republican humanist faction.

Under the leadership of William Pitt the Younger, the British monetarist faction, America's enemies in the Revolution and thereafter, mobilized massively to attempt to crush Franklin's allies and to eradicate the influence of the Neoplatonic republican conceptions Franklin and his allies represented. David Hume was not some erring but honest philosopher, but a conscious thug, acting consciously for the British Foreign Service on behalf of allied forces of London, Amsterdam and Geneva bankers in the effort to stamp out the influence of Neoplatonic ideas from both politics and the physical sciences. Over a period of ten years in Paris, Hume operated as a spy, corrupting French citizens into a British-controlled network subsequently deployed against the humanists. Jeremy Bentham, the founder of "utilitarianism," was similarly nothing but a hired thug for the British East India Company, as were his heirs, James Mill and John Stuart Mill. Adam Smith was not an honest but erring economist, but also a hired thug, writing lies in the effort to stamp out the influence of the principles of technological progress and the economic-theoretical conceptions of Franklin, Hamilton, Paine, and their French collaborators. Later, David Ricardo was similarly a lying thug, dedicated to the effort to neutralize the influence of Hamilton's political-economic theories, just as Reverend Malthus was also nothing but a paid thug of the same anti-American circles.

The center of Franklin's influence in France was the Académie Française — the leading scientific thinkers of Europe, and the humanist faction in the Paris Freemason lodges. All the great names of French eighteenth and early nineteenth century science were members or direct heirs of Franklin's circles of collaborators. The center of this network was the so-called Illuminati, a predominantly Neoplatonic humanist association, founded in the eighteenth century as a political organization of the ideas of the Enlightenment. Mozart, for example, was a member of this association, as was young Beethoven's teacher Neefe. Herder carried Franklin's ideas, in translation, into many parts of Germany, including Goethe's Weimar. Gneisenau and Scharnhorst were members of the association.

With the British-directed murder of Franklin's leading collaborators in France, during the 1793-1794 Terror, the British pressed their effort to eradicate

once and for all the organization and influence around the ideas of Franklin and his associates. After the Treaty of Vienna, the efforts to that purpose were massive.

The case of Madame de Staël's fraudulent history is exemplary. Madame de Staël was the daughter of Necker, Louis XVI's last finance minister and the agent of the Geneva bankers. It was Necker himself who caused the French Revolution. He undid the efforts of Vergenne and Turgot to reorganize the French economy with the industrial orientation later adopted for the U.S. under George Washington and Hamilton. He pyramided the debt and provoked the crisis which set off the Revolution. Originally, Necker's daughter was to have been married to England's William Pitt the Younger; the English aristocracy being what it was, the marriage did not occur. She became Madame de Staël, and celebrated the Treaty of Vienna with her widely circulated lies concerning the events of the 1790s.

After 1815, the British networks, who already had a foothold in the continental Freemason organization, moved in heavily, crushing the vestiges of the old Neoplatonic Illuminati. By Marx's adolescence, this propagation of historical fraud had become so massive and intense that young Karl Marx did not know some of the simplest sort of facts generally known to his father and prospective father-in-law. By 1828, the British and Amsterdam agents of influence centered in the New York City banks had made their monetarist counterrevolution against the United States through the Andrew Jackson election. During the presidencies of Jackson and his puppet-master, New York financier Martin Van Buren, the United States' Second National Bank was dissolved, the nation's national credit was destroyed by the New York bankers to whom Jackson and Van Buren turned over the national treasury, and technological progress was halted as a matter of government policy. By Marx's adolescence, all but the fading memory of the history of the two preceding generations had vanished from popular knowledge.

Out of that set of circumstances, Marx inherited the following, profoundly disorienting misconceptions. First, he accepted throughout his life an incompetent historical view of British capitalist development. Apart from his limited knowledge of Franklin's and Quesnay's writings, Marx had no competent knowledge of the history of sixteenth through eighteenth century political economic theory, and did not know, for example, that Alexander Hamilton had developed the labor theory of value as United States national policy in 1791! He had no competent historical knowledge of the great social struggles of the eigh-

teenth century, either the American or French revolutions, and thus developed his political conceptions with crippling accommodations to the falsified picture of the French Revolution handed down to him. He and Engels developed a predominantly incompetent epistemology respecting the development of so-called "idealism" and "materialism" up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, and reached fundamentally wrong conclusions concerning the principal currents of European scientific thought. Most broadly, Marx and Engels not only ignored but refused to take into account the importance of the continuing, endemic struggle between monetarism and industrialism. By misdefining capitalism as a phenomenon as a blend of monetarism and industrialism, the hybrid form of nineteenth century English capitalism, Marx's *Capital* accommodated itself theoretically on all relevant points to a doctrine which confused these two antagonistic impulses.

Marx's theoretical and related accomplishments originated in the excellence of his application to the evidence immediately at hand. Thus, his greatest and lasting accomplishment is exemplified, almost fully developed, in his 1845 "Theses On Feuerbach" and the "Feuerbach" section of *The German Ideology*. The application of this method to the materials of existing nineteenth century political economy and to other materials resulted in his achievements in *Capital*. *Capital*, excepting the error previously cited, is systematically correct vis-à-vis all hybrid forms of capitalist development converging upon the nineteenth century British case, and all the main features of *Capital's* theoretical aspects are the wholly salvageable elements of a correct theoretical conception once the distinction between monetarism and humanist industrialism is applied.

The further, most significant error of bias in Marx's work is his incomplete distancing of himself from that notion of the "Left" emergent from the fraudulent account of the Jacobin "mountain." In practice, as vis-à-vis Proudhon, the "utopians," Stirner and anarchism, Marx broke intellectually and immediately from all theoretical manifestations of a "Leftist" doctrine, but did not go so far as to recognize that these atrocities are a consistent expression of "sansculottism" in general.

The Correction of the Error

The most significant and historically fruitful irony of the American and French revolutions was that the chief nominal adversary of humanity in these affairs was the Mr. Guelph then squatting upon the throne of England. The name of Guelph is rightly prominently

associated with every horror European civilization has endured since the thirteenth century. It was the Guelph house, allied with the Bardi and Peruzzi, which led the faction whose hyperinflationary austerity brought the Black Death upon fourteenth century Europe. Since that time, the great struggle of civilized humanity has been centered around the efforts to rid our species of that monetarist-nominalist obscenity typified by the Guelph house and its factional allies.

The thieving embezzler and reactionary, Francis Bacon, the corrupt enemy of humanism, represented that tendency of ugly reaction for politics and science. So did David Hume and his thug-scribbler successor Jeremy Bentham. So did the wicked James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Lord John Russell and his arch-evil grandson Bertrand Russell.

The cause of humanity has been continuously represented by the opponents of nominalism: the Neoplatonic humanists. Rooted significantly in the contributing influence of the great Arab Renaissance thinker, Ibn Sina, through Roger Bacon, through the humanists of Florence — including Ficino, Pico, and Machiavelli — and through the Erasmians of England, France and Germany, there has been an ongoing struggle for basic scientific knowledge and urban-centered technological progress. Benjamin Franklin's collaborators in America, France, England and Germany, with their struggle to continue Gresham's, Gilbert's, Descartes', Colbert's, and Leibniz's fight for scientific and technological progress, represented the force for establishing industrially oriented republics against the evil nominalists then centered in the City of London.

With the crushing of the capitalist humanist faction during the 1793-1828 period, and its utter rout in 1850, the theoretical center of the struggle for industrial progress shifted toward the influence of Karl Marx. However, Marx, largely ignorant of the vital facts of preceding history, proceeded with ignorance of his own historical roots.

Given the monetarist rule of capitalist development at the beginning of the present century, the Russian Revolution and other efforts to the same effect represent historic achievements, and represent in fact a continuation of the work of Franklin, Washington, Hamilton, Turgot, Condorcet and others during the eighteenth century. Humanity must have republics based on the principled policy of scientific and technological progress. Wherever capitalism fails or refuses to pursue these policies, capitalism must be brushed aside in the vital interest of humanity. Socialism is the form in which this supersession must occur.

However, the previously hegemonic notion of socialist transformation obviously includes a significant

error in that it ignores the fact that the capitalist revolution itself is presently incompleting. Industrial capitalism has not yet, with the exception of the early United States republic, thrown off the medieval burden of nominalist-monetarist rule. Consequently, the socialist perception of political alternatives has been excessively narrowed and in large part unworkable as political practice.

Those socialist currents which have termed themselves "Marxist" have not proceeded from the standpoint of Marx's fundamentals, but have attempted to situate fundamental issues as relatively secondary issues within a ruling ideology of Leftism. Instead of continuing the fight of Franklin and his allies for republics based on the Neoplatonic principles of scientific and technological progress, and mobilizing the labor movement as an independent political force for this purpose, the self-styled socialist currents have proceeded from the "principle" of anti-capitalist Leftism, and have included the issues of technological progress as either secondary or no better than optional. The "wealth-redistributionist" demagoguery of British agent Marat has been the broad basis for tactical and other agreement among self-styled socialist forces.

It is therefore not accidental that socialist movements have been relatively most influential in colonial and semi-colonial countries, and have been relatively a failure in industrialized capitalist countries. All of the principal explanations for this paradox, most notably those given for the Russian, Chinese and Cuban revolutions, have an element of truth in them, but nonetheless all those explanations miss the vital points. For perverse reasons, the application of the "Leftist redistributionist" perspective to the case of *foreign* ownership and looting creates nationalist movements which can become socialist instruments by a kind of default, since the appropriation of foreign holdings does lead — with a basic application of common sense — to nationalized production in place of foreign-owned capitalist forms. However, that same logic cannot apply within industrialized capitalist nations in anything approximating the same terms, since redistributing ownership of means of production does not, *in itself*, make the slightest contribution to the solution of the material aspects of a social crisis, but would probably aggravate such problems.

The only viable basis for revolutionary political movements (capitalist or socialist) is a competent programmatic conception for solving the problems of life *through the more effective operation of the economy*. This means increase of the utilization of existing productive capacities, but that by itself is merely a one-time solution. The basic issue is the

promotion of basic scientific progress as the source of technological advances effected through high rates of new productive capital formation in industry and agriculture.

The Left critics of the U.S. Labor Party have frequently denounced the Labor Party precisely because of the Party's basing its program centrally upon scientific progress and technological advancement through high rates of productive capital formation. The Left critics say that such programs are indistinguishable to them from a capitalist program. Such critics are nominally correct in one respect. Such a program is *also* a capitalist program in the Hamiltonian sense. There is no significant difference on this account between an industrial capitalist political program and competent socialist program! The difference is simply posed as a question: Will this be done as a capitalist measure, or are we obliged to bypass the capitalists to get the necessary job done?

If we put aside what might occur in the aftermath of general war, or after a period of biological holocaust under the Carter-McNamara hyperinflationary austerity measures, the question of socialism in the industrialized capitalist sector is most efficiently posed: At what point will the capitalists refuse to maintain high rates of technologically vectored productive capital formation? At that point, socialism is required.

The complementary fact, which most professedly Marxian socialists do not take into account, is that if capitalist forces accept such programs, capitalism continues to represent a historically progressive force, and thus according to Marx's principles, ought to and will persist.

In sum, in the industrialized capitalist sector, the task of the socialist movement is to mobilize for high rates of productive capital formation on the basis of a heavy emphasis on basic scientific and applied technological progress. If that programmatic policy is adopted as capitalist policy, capitalism continues; if not, that same program becomes the program for socialist transformation.

The Socialist Movement

For such reasons, the socialist movement — at least what we signify by it — is a current within a broader Neoplatonic humanist movement. This broader movement has the principled basis of being a Neoplatonic humanist force for scientific progress in opposition to nominalism and monetarism. *The fundamental political division within modern society is between Neoplatonic humanism and nominalism —*

the rest is simply ignorance and confusion.

The "norm" for the socialist faction's overall character is the U.S. Labor Party, in the sense that the Labor Party continues the humanist tradition of an immediate, all-sided concern with scientific knowledge and political work. Bodies such as the leadership of the Labor Party represent the normal type of an intellectual-cadre leadership for the socialist faction of humanists as a whole.

Otherwise, the distinguishing quality of the socialist faction is that it situates its humanist programmatic perception and posture in terms of the interests and political organization of the labor movement. Within capitalist society, the labor movement must be mobilized to the extent possible as an independent political force. That cannot always be so easily realized in immediate practice, but that policy objective is nonetheless properly constantly governing.

The immediate issue around which this independence of the political labor movement is prescribed is the tendency among capitalists to cover up the failures of capitalist management and other economic problems at the expense of the labor force's wages, social services and so forth. In part, this issue can be attacked by trade union organization. However, trade unionism as such cannot deal with the issue in the most important respects. Labor requires a political movement to determine and mobilize for an appropriate national policy concerning the interests of the labor force as a whole.

More important, for the longer-term results, is the fact that working people cannot effectively conceptualize the problems and policies of economic development without a political institution of the labor movement which acts on such matters of national and international policy in a holistic way. Without the active involvement of a significant, leading sector of the labor force in the activity of programmatic analysis and policy-formulation, the labor force as a whole cannot develop the cultural level indispensable for competently judging its own interests from the standpoint of overall economic policy.

What remains unclear, for reasons given above, is how and when the transition to socialist forms will occur. That such a transformation should occur under certain conditions is clear, as we have identified that above. What is unclear is how and when socialist transformations might occur if industrial capitalism prevails over monetarism.

The classical professed Marxist would stipulate that the cyclical contradictions of capitalism, as summarized in Volume III of Marx's *Capital*, will create such conditions. Ah, but that is not quite so simple a matter as Marx himself tended to believe. Although

the internal contradictions of capitalist accumulation, as Marx outlined these, exist for industrial capitalism, these contradictions, although tending to periodic crisis patterns, do not have the effect under industrial capitalism that they have in the hybrid, monetarist-dominated form of capitalist accumulation Marx considered. Just as this writer and his associates have demonstrated that under their leadership the current breakdown-crisis of capitalism can be resolved, a similar policy would always be available to solve any future periodic crises in industrial capitalist republican forms of development.

Assuming, for the moment, that we finish Benjamin Franklin's unfinished business, the brushing-aside of Mr. Guelph's nominalist-monetarist faction, industrial capitalism becomes a pretty durable form of society both objectively and subjectively. This writer could make it work, and it is a fair assumption that if the present crisis is resolved, the kind of knowledge this writer represents will come into general currency for practice among most leading capitalist and other circles.

Under those conditions — which, at the moment, admittedly represent still a large, big, "if" — the emergence of socialism in industrialized nations will proceed by a rather different sort of "withering away" than has been considered heretofore.

The historic reason for socialist transformation would persist for the same fundamental reason given by Karl Marx: the heteronomic form of ownership of means of production and distribution is both a subjective and objective obstacle to the full development of the productive forces, and heteronomy, together with the subjective conditions associated with it, represents a form of backwardness, rendering man less than present technological culture makes possible for him. These conflicts and sources of conflicts will continue to assert themselves, even under the hypothetical optimal conditions we are considering for this purpose.

The general rule, therefore, is that the socialist movement, as a current of the Neoplatonic humanist movement, must be vigorously developed and constantly alert to its historic duties. We must strive for and take into account the optimal path of industrial capitalist development, while developing our "insurance policy" for the condition that that approach fails.

What the U.S. Labor Party has demonstrated in fact is the assertion by Karl Marx and Rosa Luxemburg that only a socialist can master the principles of capitalist development. It is we who have discovered a way out of the world's present economic and associated crises. Without our active role in the

situation, no such solution could conceivably have been discovered and advanced. For the period ahead, always presuming general war and biological holocaust are avoided, it is forces set into motion by the ideas of the Labor Party that are going to increasingly shape the policies of governments, and perform an increasing role in government itself.

That consideration itself illustrates the necessary character of the socialist movement for the period ahead. Like the leadership of the U.S. Labor Party, the socialist movement of the period ahead will be a "tough bunch."

The study of the Illuminati forces of the eighteenth century around Benjamin Franklin and others makes the socialist somewhat more modest in his criticism of industrial capitalism, but does not lessen the toughness of the socialist. Exactly the contrary. Seeing, so to speak, the finest minds of France sent to the guillotine by British agents-demagogues of the like of Danton and Marat, knowing the treason imposed

upon the United States in 1828, and considering what humanity has suffered since 1815 in consequence of the defeat of Franklin's forces, the lessons of that history instruct us to be very tough. It is merely essential to know at last the proper distinctions among potential humanist allies and the socialist movement's "Left" enemies, and to be tougher than ever before, but in the right way, against the proper opponents, and for a more appropriately-defined purpose.

What would Karl Marx say of all this? He could only nod with satisfaction and add, "At last we have the matter properly defined for practice."

— Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.
National Chairman,
National Caucus of
Labor Committees

Wiesbaden, BRD
June 13, 1977

*Ibn Sina and the Dawn
of the Humanist Heritage*
by Criton Zoakos



Ibn Sina: drawing by Judy Wyer

Philosophy as Real Politics

Then he should set out next upon the science of man and investigate the *what* and the *how* of the purpose for which man is made, that is, the perfection that man must achieve. Then he should investigate all the things by which man achieves this perfection or that are useful to him in achieving it. These are the good, virtuous, and noble things. He should distinguish them from the things that obstruct his achieving this perfection. These are the evils, the vices, and the base things. He should make known *what* and *how* every one of them is, and *from what* and *for what* it is, until all of them become known, intelligible, and distinguished from each other. This is political science.

Al Farabi (c. 870-950), from *The Attainment of Happiness*, i, 20

The great philosopher Ibn Sina is of extraordinary pertinence to statesmen and commanders today. He is the founding father of what became the modern systematic, voluntarist world outlook.

As a result of certain events for which the leadership of the Labor Party and the Labor Committees are exclusively responsible, the present worldwide political conflict has been reduced to a relatively simplified two-sided split. On the one side stands a relative handful of clinically insane men around Jimmy Carter, David Rockefeller, Zbigniew Brzezinski, James Schlesinger, et al., who are fully committed to a program of massive deindustrialization of this planet, destruction of science and technology on behalf of the bestial Naderism, wholesale depopulation, and a fantastic reduction of the remaining world population's consumption of energy and food. They are fully committed to provoking thermonuclear war in order to achieve their goals.

On the opposing side is a much larger number of individuals, of all persuasions and backgrounds: capitalists, socialists, Gaullists, political leaders of the Third World, scientists, industrial spokesmen, trade union leaders, military men and others. They oppose, by varying degrees, the monetarist policies of the Rockefeller-Carter group, because to one degree or another they have a deeply ingrained faith in the

Idea of Progress, in the proposition that there is no task that man's genius and hard work cannot master. No matter what the peculiarities and background of these individuals, they share one thing in common: in their heart of hearts, they hail from the heritage left to us by the struggles of the humanist factions of the past, the men and women who led the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Renaissance of Italy and Tudor England.

What justifies our making this present report on the great Islamic genius Ibn Sina public at this time is our profound concern with the quality of the various political leaderships with which our party collaborates or otherwise coordinates in the course of our current endeavors. We find these friends of ours wanting in certain key moral-intellectual qualities and we are concerned.

The story of Ibn Sina is important at this time, because it is a story of political and scientific excellence presently very much in demand. For one thing, Ibn Sina is literally the spiritual father of Western civilization's humanist faction which from the thirteenth century A.D. onwards has been responsible for carrying the banners of progress forward. Therefore, in every truly modern scientifically and morally cultivated mind, there is a little bit of Ibn Sina.

political leader provides a most excellent instruction on the mental habit and method required to overcome the present, identified shortcomings among political leaderships whom today's awesome circumstances have placed in positions of great responsibility. If their efforts and ours fail during this period, it has been determined that the world will be destroyed in a thermonuclear war, probably during this year.

When, during the recent Constitutional Convention of the U.S. Labor Party, I advanced the proposal to the Arab governments and to the Italian government to jointly launch an *Ibn Sina Institute* in Palermo, Sicily, what I had in mind was the special features of statecraft and heroic leadership that will be demanded, especially in the Middle East and Europe, if we are to be successful in meeting the challenges of the concluding portion of the 1970s.

There was a time when the core of political concerns of great statesmen and gifted princes was to advance, day-by-day and inch-by-inch, the cause of science, of technological advancement, and, through great art and great instruction, the cause of enhancing their peoples' creative ability to assimilate and put to use the new findings of science.

Such was the time of Harun al-Rashid in the early Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad, also the time of Fatimid Cairo before the Mameluk slave soldiers carried the cause of steppe reaction on their spears, and the time of the eleventh century Ismaili propagandists. Ibn Sina's own best political struggles were fought in the court of Ala al-Dawla, the last great prince of Isfahan. And Ibn Sina himself was the great fruit of the splendid court of Bukhara's Samanid family.

The Papal Curia under the sway of Nicholas of Cusa, the Medici of Florence, the Venetian Republic's leading bodies around the University of Padua, the court of the Tudors in England, among others, are examples of the political elites of Ibn Sina's vintage, centers where the idea of scientific progress was recognized as the *raison d'état* as well as the most potent weapon for the political struggles of the day.

These political powerhouses, the subject of our attention, to be emulated and surpassed today, had nothing in common with the *belle-lettrisme* which passes as "enlightened despotism." They were groupings of people with raunchy humor, lust for knowledge, passion for progress, love for people and an irrepresible desire for political victory.

They were political elites where scientists, mathematicians, physicists, philosophers, and politicians were passionately engaged in the political affairs of their state, its defense, its growth, and its fulfillment. And those states, in their day, were worth fighting for. But the important thing about them is that these

humanist elites were groupings where the split between thought and action had been overcome. Where the vicious Aristotelian pathology of dividing one's life into *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* had been defeated.

Politics was then, and must again become today, the noblest of man's occupations, because it was guided by scientific thought and profound emotions. Politics, the profession of running humanity's public affairs, must once again be taken away from the money-changers and the whoremasters to become, as a profession, worthy of its nobility. But today's politicians must draw on the shining precedent of our Avicennean, humanist forefathers.

The scientific attitude toward practical, political affairs must go together with the practical, political attitude of scientists toward science. Without this, no great republics are possible, because the scientist who suffers from the Aristotelian dichotomy of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, is not the scientist who will be propelled by the moral, republican fervor of a Spinoza or a Roger Bacon, and will therefore not be the kind of scientist who will give us today fusion power and the future technologies of a fusion-based economy.

The person who created this exceptional tradition of unified thought and action, of active intellect — the humanist tradition — is the great Islamic thinker Ibn Sina, who was born in the year 980 A.D. in the ancient city of Balkh (Bactra) near Bukhara and died fighting in Isfahan (Aspadana) in 1037. In medieval Europe, where his teaching reached shortly after his death, he completely dominated the learned communities a long time before the great translations of Aristotle were made. He was known to the medieval Schoolmen by the name Avicenna, a Latin corruption of the Hebrew equivalent Aven Sina.

He has been subjected, throughout modern history, to a vicious conspiracy of silence from the accredited academic powers-that-be, because these so-called powers are, for the most part, afflicted by the hideous disease of Aristotelianism, either admitted or implicit: they are incapable of conducting scientific thought as a sensuous, practical matter whose purpose is to deliberately alter man and nature.

Ibn Sina, however, is credited with being the first to put forward a systematically elaborated *voluntarist* world outlook, proving that the laws of the universe are not eternal, but change and change willfully. Subsumed under this discovery is a fundamental shift in scientific outlook toward every aspect of scientific and moral life — the discovery, for example, that this quality of nonlinear, negentropic universal evolution is coherent with the quality of the human mind to conceptualize not merely new solutions to problems posed by reality, but, in fact, new modes of thought.

As we shall see later on, these fundamental discoveries of Ibn Sina provide the framework within which the "fundamental antinomies of pure reason" are resolved, and thus open the way which was followed by what today is modern natural science.

Having studied the case of Ibn Sina, no modern politician will tolerate for a moment more the customary habit of taking intellectual nourishment in

U.S. Government c-rations, canned and prepackaged by the Rand Corporation, the Institute for Policy Studies, or Brookings. As our story unfolds, it will become evident to the reader why the idea of an Ibn Sina Institute in Sicily's Palermo is uniquely suitable for the fight to end the world's intellectual bondage to Lower Manhattan's vicious and hysterical, but quite impotent and unheroic academia.

The Epistemological Achievement

Adopting the economies implicit in V.I. Vernadski's concept of the noösphere, (1) i.e., human mental activity over nature, as the latest stage of terrestrial evolution, we view Ibn Sina (980-1037 A.D.) as a crucial qualitative leap in that evolution.

When the project of writing the history of the evolution of epistemology is undertaken, it will be obvious that the most efficient way of mapping that evolution is by first establishing certain indispensable milestones beginning with the sixth and fifth century B.C. developments in Ionia. Ibn Sina will represent the second such milestone after Heraclitus and the other Ionians.

The instance of Ionia represents a fundamental break in the mental behavior of mankind in the sense that humanity's thinkers and investigators, for the first time on record, identified and isolated for investigation a new subject of inquiry: the human mind itself.

From that point onward, the evolution of the human mind has been singularly determined by the way in which key powerful thinkers decided to design their projects of inquiry into the human mind.

Plato's and Aristotle's are the most celebrated such post-Ionian projects, even though both these projects are decidedly inferior to the original Ionian both in the scope and in the depth of discovery. In certain instances they are downright retrogressions, as I shall make obvious below. (2)

To recapitulate, both Plato's and Aristotle's investigations remain *inside* the domain circumscribed by the original Ionian discoveries; they never go beyond it. Their concern is to discover, classify, and analyze the elements and functions of the entity already discovered: mind. Their implicit attitude toward mind is that it is fixed and eternal, governed by fixed and eternal rules. Projecting the same attitude toward nature as a whole, they establish the axiomatic assumption that the laws of the universe are also fixed, unchanging and eternal.

This assumption, as we shall see, is the ultimate source of Kant's antinomies of pure reason, and hence, these antinomies existed as matters of profound concern among epistemological investigators long before Kant classified them — they coexisted along with and as a part of the Aristotelian and Platonic outlooks ever since the time of the original authors.

To backtrack a bit, Plato's lasting contribution to the inquiry into the mind is his so-called *Theory of Ideas*, or universals, i.e. the discovery that the human mind's basic building materials are synthetic, *a priori* judgments, axioms, "pre-existing" gestalts.

Aristotle, in the main, cuts a more cautious, conservative figure, in his polemic against Plato's Ideas and in his veritable hysteria against Heraclitus. His main preoccupation, on the whole, is to *analyze* a few selectively identified such synthetic, *a priori*

resolve the problems that the institution of slavery posed for the development of labor power. The Athenian Republic started its career as a result of the sea-going, mercantilist "Paralian" tribes imposing their modified notion of slavery over that of the conservative, land-owning elite of Attica (Solonian reforms). Just as Plato and Aristotle represent a retrogression from the epistemological outlook of Thales and Heraclitus, Athenian science and technology was merely a linear elaboration of the earlier Ionian breakthroughs. The Sophist movement of indifferentism merely typifies the ultimate conclusion to which the Athenian retrogression had to lead lawfully.

1. Cf. Warren Hamerman, "The Self-Development of the Biosphere," *The Campaigner*, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (Jan.-Feb. 1975).

2. Contrary to prevailing opinion, the Athenian Commonwealth's Periclean Age does not represent the "Golden Age" of Greek history, either in political or in scientific achievement. The so-called "Golden Age of Athens" is a decisive retrogression from the seventh and sixth century Ionian achievement which was centered around primarily Miletus and Ephesus. The Ionian republics were eclipsed only after a bitter civil strife by means of which they attempted to

judgments *in order to avoid* concerning himself with the issue that Plato's approach raises: What is the source of these entities of the mind?

In a certain sense, Aristotle fell behind Plato because he went one step beyond him. To him we owe the first attempt to go beyond the mind's synthetic, *a priori* judgments — as well as the first panicky retreat as he settles, in terror, behind a wall of schizophrenia to lead a double life, one *vita contemplativa* and a second, "dirty" *vita activa*.

Aristotle, in his *Posterior Analytics* formulates the problem in almost as elegant a way as Immanuel Kant twenty-one centuries later: "What accounts for synthetic, *a priori* judgments?" He retreats immediately as he realizes the implications of the question. He never answers it.

Hence, he has no other path left but to fall back to a world outlook of vulgar empiricism, as in his later *Metaphysics*, where primary existence is attributed only to empirical objects (Kantian thing-in-itself) while processes and causalities are treated as mere features or *properties* of empirical objects.

Despite the rivers of ink that have flowed across the centuries to feed laborious pens writing on the Aristotelian-Platonic faction fights, both philosophies are the two sides of fundamentally the same world outlook, an outlook predicated on the axiomatic assumption of unchanging universal laws. This fundamental axiom is the cause of the Kantian antinomies, and one can say that the Plato-Aristotle debate throughout the centuries is proof of Hegel's discovery that the fundamental antinomies of pure reason are not just four, as Kant claims, but potentially innumerable.

It is worth resummarizing the issue of the antinomies at this point because, contrary to most experts, Ibn Sina's philosophical work is the systematic fruit of the first successful struggle to solve the problem of the Kantian antinomies — seven centuries before Kant!

And this places Ibn Sina way beyond the position of "commentator of Aristotle" that was assigned to him by Dominican propaganda.

The Antinomies

Ample historical material has been made available to demonstrate that, from its outset with al-Kindi (b. 805), Islamic epistemology was preoccupied with efforts to resolve the "Kantian" antinomies — in more or less the form later presented by Kant! Success was achieved two generations after al-Kindi by Ibn Sina, by means of a frontal assault against the axiomatic assumption of "unchanging laws of the universe."

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant reports the following four pairs of propositions. Each pair consists

of a syllogistically proven thesis and its — also syllogistically proven — antithesis:

1. *Thesis*: The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited in regard to space.
1. *Antithesis*: The world has no beginning, and no limits in space, but is, in relation both to time and space, infinite.
2. *Thesis*: Every composite substance in the world consists of simple parts; and there exists nothing that is not either itself simple, or composed of simple parts.
2. *Antithesis*: No composite thing in the world consists of simple parts; and there does not exist in the world any simple substance.
3. *Thesis*: Causality according to the laws of nature is not the only causality operating to originate the phenomena of the world. A causality of freedom is also necessary to account fully for these phenomena.
3. *Antithesis*: There is no such thing as freedom, but everything in the world happens solely according to the laws of nature.
4. *Thesis*: There exists either in, or in connection with the world — either as a part of it, or as the cause of it — an absolutely necessary being.
4. *Antithesis*: An absolutely necessary being does not exist, either in the world or out of it — as its cause.

There is only one remarkable thing about these much-touted antinomies, namely, the *method of proof* of each proposition. All of the eight propositions are proven *reductio ad absurdum*, i.e. "if such and such were not the case, then no mental lawfulness exists, therefore, such and such *is* the case." Now, a thing or two can be said to recommend the faith which this method of proof places in the lawfulness of mentation, except that Kant premises it on the axiomatic assumption that this lawfulness is ruled by absolutely immutable, eternal laws.

It ought to be said that Kant, in his discussion of the celebrated third antinomy on Freedom versus Necessity, does briefly consider the possibility of assuming a "faculty of freedom." He dismisses it with the observation: "In proximity with such a lawless faculty of freedom, a system of nature is hardly cogitable; for the laws of the latter would be continually subject to the intrusive influences of the former, and the course of phenomena, which would otherwise proceed regularly and uniformly, would become thereby confused and disconnected."

It is ironical that Kant's denial of evolving universal laws, his insistence on logical "regularity and

uniformity," gives him a Reason riddled with the threat of insanity embedded in the antinomies. Ibn Sina's solution is the obvious: the antinomies melt into harmless transitory moments provided one replaces the axiomatic assumption of immutable laws with the discovery that human mentation transforms the laws of the universe!

As we shall see, Ibn Sina's elaborated solution to each of the cited Kantian antinomies proceeds from the application of this fundamental discovery. With respect to the cosmological antinomy, for instance, the question of whether or not the universe has a beginning, the relevant subject for investigation becomes not whether there exists a beginning of any given lawful universe, but rather those unique moments where the very rules of lawfulness of the universe are revolutionized to launch a new fundamental quality of existence of the universe, i.e. a "beginning."

Similarly, with respect to the second antinomy, Ibn Sina's solution is located in the explicitly qualitatively superior content he places in *existence*. A "thing" for Ibn Sina is a singularity-moment in a process of perfection, the process being the primary existent. For Kant, as for Aristotle, the existence of the "thing"-in-itself as a meaning has some rather humorous psychoanalytical cause. This point is not irrelevant since Ibn Sina's discussion and resolution of the second antinomy in chapters five, six and seven of his *Metaphysics* of the *Danish Nama-i Ala'i* would easily be mistaken to be similar in form with the ostensible solution advanced by Aristotle in Book Lambda of his *Metaphysics*.

The implicit but crucial difference lies in the fundamentally distinct notion of existence of the two philosophers. For Ibn Sina, existence is the essence of a *purposeful* singularity in a process of perfection, a singularity which is necessary for the realization of the freedom of perfection. I.e. substance *exists* through its purposeful self-differentiation. Now for Aristotle, existence, being, is more or less the *state* of a thing which is just lying there, aimlessly in the middle of the cosmos waiting to be plucked. Review Aristotle's pathetic dichotomy of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, the petty affectations of his daily life, his hideous little degrading pact with Olympias, the psychotic mother of Alexander the Great, and you can easily locate the source of the quality of being that Aristotle imputes to his "thing," that banana-like entity which aimlessly exhibits its existence, expecting its purpose in the universe to be accidentally realized when and if a passerby takes the trouble to peel it and eat it.

In short, all-pervading *purposefulness* is the characteristic of Ibn Sina's world outlook. The very

course of his life and thought, as we shall briefly portray later on, is the elimination of the impotent Aristotelian split between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. It is a redefinition of "vita" as "active intelligence."

Otherwise, it has been correctly claimed that Avicenna is distinct from his Greek and Arab predecessors by having conceptualized Absolute Being (3). To answer Aristotle's (and Kant's) question of "what accounts for synthetic *a priori* judgments?" a conceptual leap is required by means of which the mind actually experiences the genesis of the ultimate "synthetic *a priori* judgment": the mind's own axiomatic self-perception as a willful, purposeful axiom-generating process, i.e. self-conscious creative mentation sensuously experienced as identity-being.

This identity-being, the *final cause* which accounts for the genesis and existence of mental phenomena such as universals, synthetic *a priori* judgments, axioms and so forth, necessarily is a superior order of existence, is a singularity in this universe representing a more substantial reality than all of its mere products in the realm of mentation. Moreover, Ibn Sina establishes, as we shall see, that this singularity-existence of creative mentation is of the same order as whatever it is that accounts for the evolution of the laws of the universe!

Hence, with Ibn Sina, the very grounds of all epistemological inquiry are shifted forever. The starting point and subject of all such inquiry from now on will be the self-subsisting, self-necessitating creative process as that unique, purposeful force which transforms (i.e. *creates*) the universe. It is this that makes Ibn Sina the founder of the humanist faction which kept the human race alive in the last eight centuries. Almost as soon as he articulated his discovery, both Islamic and Christian theologians started the pyres on which countless "heretics" were burned in the centuries that followed.

Being the first to place Being outside and above the Categories, Ibn Sina was the first to survive the horrors and threats of psychological extinction which assail men's minds each time they challenge the assumed sacrosanct eternity of axioms and fundamental assumptions whose unconscious supreme reign over social relations keeps humanity in bondage.

He is one of the world's truly great revolutionaries because his discoveries proved to others that followed him that the mind of man need not be slave to its mere creations.

3. See Parviz Morewedge, *The Metaphysics of Avicenna (Ibn Sina)*, New York, 1973, especially those sections of the commentary which present an engaging discussion of "Absolute Being."

The Political World of Ibn Sina

The civilization that sired Ibn Sina, tenth and eleventh century Islamic Persia, is much more remarkable in political achievement, intellectual wealth, and social accomplishments than most educated individuals in the West would ever suspect.

Centuries before the exciting breakthroughs of the Italian Renaissance, certain important political struggles were fought in the Islamic world. The short-term result of these struggles was the fascinating material splendor whose remnants today embellish museums from Cordova to Kabul. The more lasting fruit of these struggles, the one for which the human race will remain forever indebted to Islamic culture, is the scientific achievements which both fueled and in turn were inspired by those struggles.

These political struggles had started a few generations before Ibn Sina appeared on the scene. He was the last of a grand tradition of scientist-politicians and philosopher-warriors, no doubt the greatest and the most majestic of their ranks, but, nonetheless, not an exception. (4) What was exceptional about him was the maturity with which he synthesized and articulated the loftiest and the most daring aspirations and purposes of the best human beings that his culture produced.

What is also exceptional about Ibn Sina that is not shared by his predecessors is that he was the last great spokesman and fighter of medieval Islam's embattled humanist factions — he had no successors. After him came the long night of reaction and defeat from which the peoples from that part of the world have yet to recover.

Many important things are yet to be said about Islamic civilization, and they will be said as we intend to wrest historiography from the clutches of the academic employees of imperialist intelligence services who have, for the most part, dominated the field over

4. The history of Islamic Philosophy is still in search of its Hegel, as no systematic compilation of this heroic era has been produced yet (and as G.W.F. Hegel was a victim of hideous misinformation regarding the achievement of Islamic philosophy). The Kantian antinomies, in fact, were the subject of political-religious strife that rocked the Caliphate one generation after the great Baghdad translation and two full generations before Ibn Sina. The voluntarist impulse, in its germinal form, was represented during that exciting period by the Muzatelite faction. A good starting point for research into this subject is an essay by J. L. Teicher, *Avicenna's Place in Arabic Philosophy*, published in the collection *Avicenna, Scientist and Philosopher: A Millenary Symposium*, London, 1952.

the last century and a half. In the meantime, I shall have to limit myself to making a few key points on this matter that are necessary to meaningfully locate the times and life of Ibn Sina.

The political economy of Islamic civilization was rooted in the supremacy of mercantilist interests over feudal and pre-feudal forms of organization. It can be said without exaggeration that the purpose behind the prophet Muhammad's movement as well as the purpose of the moral code embedded in the Koran was to create a society that allowed trade and industry to flourish by rescuing a mercantile society from the heteronomy of its individual merchants.

The irony of the Islamic conquest was that it created a unified common market area where goods could travel freely from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic and from Zanzibar to Sicily and where a check issued in Samarkand could be cashed in Toledo — all based in the formative phase of the Umayyad Caliphate, on the unifying force of Bedouin garrisons stationed in cities and ports throughout the realm. The merchant class had no choice but accept a compromise whereby these garrisons would meet their expenses by taxing the surrounding populations.

The problems that this situation created led to an early civil war which resulted in the overthrow of the Umayyad caliphs, their replacement with the Abbasids, the transfer of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad in 750 A.D., and the victory of the non-Arab Muslims over the Bedouins. The splendor of Baghdad under the caliphs al-Mansur and Harun al-Rashid was the result of this defeat of the Bedouin garrisons, but it was a splendor that spent itself very quickly. (5)

In the early part of the ninth century, the mercantilist interests of Islam resolved their problem of state organization by introducing a novel institution, the slave armies. In the long run, this institution, with its slave officers and its slave generals, proved to be the executioner of Islamic civilization. It combined the worst features of ephemeral mercenary armies and permanent Bedouin garrisons, especially when Turkish and Mongol tribes from the steppes started joining these armies *en masse*. (In retrospect, it would be interesting to speculate how the rulers of the

5. Judy Wyer, "The Political Economy of Medieval Islam," to appear in *The Campaigner*, Vol. X, No. 4.

Venetian or the Florentine republics would have tried to solve the military problems of securing a world market as extensive as that of Islam. Condotierri?)

This key military-economic feature of Islamic statecraft was the one side of the Baghdad Caliphate, one associated and allied with religious reaction and political conservatism. The other side was the amazing revolutionary wing of Islam which started its mature phase almost simultaneously with the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate and carried its defiant banners up until the time of Ibn Sina's death. This was the so-called Ismaili movement, a rich and multifaceted but on the whole coherent movement which, in recent times, won the appellation "the Bolsheviks of Islam." (6)

After the defeat of Ibn Sina's cause and the final fall of Isfahan to the reactionary Ghaznavid dynasty in 1041, the Ismailite movement embarked on a course of degeneration which produced such aberrations as the Syrian Assassin movement and its Old Man of the Mountain of which Marco Polo gives an account.

When Ibn Sina was born in the city of Balkh, near Bukhara in the year 980, the general political situation in the Islamic world was as follows:

The caliph of Baghdad was a puppet in the hands of the liberal Persian Buwayhid dynasty, whose most illustrious Sultan, Adud al-Dawla (reigned 949-984), had also appointed himself vizier to the caliph. Adud al-Dawla's reign was remarkable for the sheer mass of public works it initiated and completed, for its liberal commercial and agricultural policies, for its repression of Baghdad banking interests and for its nagging opposition to the reactionary religious establishment. The fact that the Buwayhids failed to completely abolish the Baghdad Caliphate despite their recorded intentions to this effect merely testifies to the relative strength and resiliency of the conservative minority, whose political muscle was based on an alliance between steppe-reared, slave-army officers and the religious bureaucracy.

6. The Ismailite movement, with its origins rooted in controversies over succession after the Prophet Muhammad's death, came into its own with the establishment of the Baghdad Caliphate, in the initial form of "left" opposition to the Sunni compromise. It grew over the years into a broad-based, multifaceted revolutionary movement with a propagandistic-educational organization that penetrated every layer of society from slaves to merchants, artisans, professionals, and political and military leaders. The strategic center of the Ismailite movement proved to be the philosophical-scientific elite of the Brethren of Purity, whose explicit programmatic aim was to replace the Caliphate with a political republic ruled by principles of scientific excellence. The movement was behind not only the most advanced scientific breakthroughs of Islamic civilization but also behind critical political events such as the Zanj slave revolt, the establishment of the impressive Bahrein Republic and of course the launching of the Fatimid Caliphate. Contrary to still prevailing myths, before its degeneration, the Ismaili movement was not a religious movement, though it was not averse to exploiting religious propaganda for the achievement of certain aims. Some of its leading members were of Jewish and Christian extraction as well as of Muslim background.

To the left of Adud al-Dawla and the Buwayhids in general was the rival caliphate of the Fatimids, which had been established in 909 as a result of decades-long struggles of the Ismaili movement. Upon assumption of state power in Cairo, the leading Ismaili intellectuals formally established the philosophical society known as the Ikhwan al-Safa or "The Brethren of Purity," with whom Ibn Sina developed close relations.

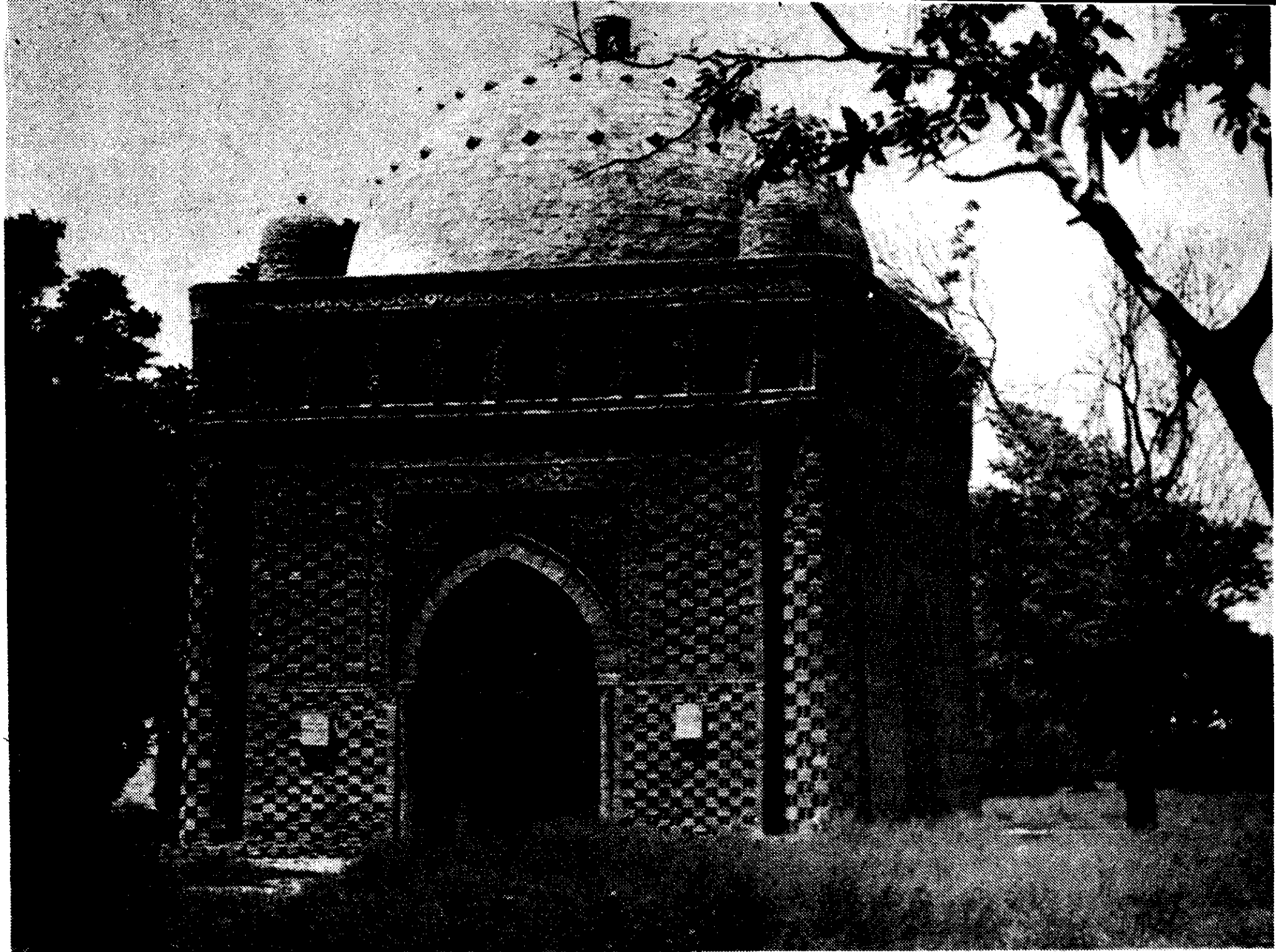
To the east of Baghdad, the Cairo-directed propaganda teams of the Ismailis, with deeply embedded clandestine organizational infrastructures among merchants, civil servants and members of the liberal professions, were bent on doing away with the Buwayhid dynasty's liberal compromise with religious reaction. Ibn Sina in his autobiography informs us that his family belonged to the Ismaili movement:

My father was one of those who responded to the propagandist of the Egyptians and was reckoned among the Ismailiyya. From them, he, as well as my brother, heard the account of the soul and the intellect in the special manner in which they speak about it and know it. Sometimes they used to discuss this among themselves while I was listening to them and understanding what they were saying, but my soul would not accept it and so they began appealing to me to do it (to accept the Ismaili doctrines). And there was also talk of philosophy, geometry, and Indian calculation. My father used to study and ponder over the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* (The Treatises of the Brethren of Purity) and I also pondered over it from time to time. (7)

Besides Ismaili Cairo and centrist-liberal Baghdad, the third (and eventually victorious) political powerhouse at the time of Ibn Sina's birth was a dynasty established by slave soldiers in the city of Ghazna, the so-called Ghaznavid dynasty. Its real founder was the slave Sabaktigin, ruler at the time of Ibn Sina's birth and the father of Sultan Mahmud — Ibn Sina's implacable enemy until his death.

The Ghaznavids' grand strategy for conquest was based on a long-term program of systematic exploitation of the obvious political vulnerabilities of Buwayhid rule, through meticulous cultivation of ties with the religious bureaucracy and the heavily infiltrated slave armies in the various cities. When a Buwayhid ruler was considered sufficiently weakened

7. *The Autobiography of Ibn Sina*. The initial portion written by Ibn Sina himself and then completed by his pupil and companion al-Juzjani. From William Gohlman's critical edition: see bibliography.



The mausoleum of Ibn Sina's patrons and protectors the Samanids, located in Bukhara where Ibn Sina spent his youth. The mausoleum was erected c. 907 A.D., some seventy years before Ibn Sina's birth.

by such systematic conservative internal subversion, the Ghaznavid armies would move in for the kill. Ironically, when the basically irreligious Buwayhids took over the Caliphate and tried to bend it to their enlightened use by installing puppet caliphs, they gradually realized that they were becoming captives of the religious bureaucracy of the Ulemas. As Ghaznavid military power grew, the religious establishment found it easier to subvert and outright disobey orders. This state of affairs provided the requisite motivation to turn Ghazna's military looters into veritable religious fanatics.

The city of Bukhara during the time of Ibn Sina's childhood was run by an exceptional family which will be remembered for the brave fight it led to avert the liberal compromise of the Buwayhids. This was the glamorous Samanid dynasty, of ancient Zoroastrian noble stock and comparative newcomers to Islam. Under their rule (875-999) Transoxiana, the land between the Oxus and Jaxartes rivers, and its capital Bukhara became the places of legend and dream that live on down to our day in the folklore and fairy tales of Asia Minor, the Caucasus and the shores of the Black Sea. The advanced agricultural technologies introduced by the Samanids, the irrigation works, state support programs, etc. resulted in a veritable

agricultural miracle which centuries later inspired the great historian of the Maghrib, Ibn Khaldun, to exclaim that the Garden of Eden was indeed located in Transoxiana.

The Samanid court in Bukhara had the reputation of being the most splendid gathering place for the intellectuals of the period, outshining by far anything that their rival Buwayhids had to show. In the words of a contemporary, one Abdul Malik of Nishapur, "Bukhara was, under the Samanid rule, the Focus of Splendour, the Shrine of Empire, the Meeting place of the most unique intellects of the Age, the Horizon of the literary stars of the world, and the fair of the greatest scholars of the period."

In the days of Ibn Sina's boyhood, the political power of the Samanids, for whom Ibn Sina's father was a provincial administrator, had been broken. The intellectual splendor and the commercial vitality of Bukhara was still intact, but the Samanids were now captive of military cliques, conducting a defensive struggle against the Baghdad-directed conspiracies of the religious establishment and slave officers. Their challenge to Buwayhid hegemony had collapsed some time back, in the year 943 during the reign of the Emir Nasr. At that time, when it had become obvious that the Buwayhids were about to capture the caliphate in

Baghdad and use it for their political maneuvers, Nasr, the Samanid ruler decided on a desperate gamble. He moved to publicly convert to Ismailism as a way of preempting the authority of Baghdad. In response, the religious establishment of Bukhara under the leadership of the local Ulema, with strings being pulled by Baghdad and the Buwayhids, entered into a conspiracy with the Turkish guards. The dynasty barely survived by means of a compromise whereby Nasr was deposed and his son Noh took over, now a captive of the Turkish guards. Nasr was put in jail and a ruthless witchhunt of "heretics" was launched.

Two years later, in 945, the Buwayhids had captured Baghdad and installed a puppet caliph. The battle for political hegemony in Persia was now over and was about to soon be replaced by the struggle against the threat from Afghanistan: the emerging power of the slave-sultans of Ghazna.

When Ibn Sina was seventeen years old, already an accomplished physician who had just cured the Samanid ruler Noh II of "an illness that had baffled the doctors," the dynasty was set on a course of being overthrown as a result of an astonishing series of conspiratorial maneuvers:

Noh II's palace guard conspired against him and invited one Boghra Khan, ruler of Turkestan, to invade Bukhara. Boghra Khan did, and won. Only two years later, after Boghra Khan's death, the Samanid Noh II attempted a comeback, but the court camarilla, still controlled by the Turkish conspiracy, turned to the Buwayhid ruler of nearby Khurasan for help. Noh II, in return, resorted to the last available desperate maneuver: he invited the slave-ruler of Ghazna, Sabaktagin, to fight under his banner. Sabaktagin won for Noh II in the battle of Herat, where his son Mahmud, the future sultan and Ibn Sina's implacable lifelong enemy, for the first time distinguished himself on the battlefield. There followed two hectic years of continuous desperate military campaigns during which both Noh II, the man once cured by Ibn Sina, and his successor Mansur II, the poet-warrior, died. Their successor and the last of the line, Abdul Malik; was captured by the Turkestani Khans and died in jail.

The end of the Samanids, one of the wisest and most refined humanist factions in history, in the midst of this orgy of slaughter and bitter warfare, is captured in a poem written by the prince Mansur II:

They ask me why fine robes I do not wear,
Nor covet stately tent with carpets rare.
'Midst clash of arms, what boots the
minstrel's power?

'Midst rush of steeds, what place for rose-girt
bower?

Nor wine nor sweet-lipped Saki aught avail
Where blood is splattered o'er the coats of mail.
Arms, horse for me, banquet and bower enow,
Tulip and lily mine the dart and bow.

These bloody and turbulent years were also the years during which Ibn Sina, still a teenager, received his education in the court and the private libraries of the embattled dynasty. In his autobiography, he has the following to report of his relations with the Samanid family which, even in the darkest hour of their last military struggle, went to lengths to offer the young thinker the best of their generosity and care:

It happened that the Sultan of that time in Bukhara, Noh ibn Mansur, had an illness which baffled the doctors. Since my name had become well known among them as a result of my zeal for learning and reading, they brought me to his attention and asked him to summon me. Thus I presented myself and joined with them in treating him, and so became enrolled in his service. One day I asked him to permit me to go into their library, to get to know it and to read its books. He gave me permission and I was admitted to a building which had many rooms; in each room there were chests of books piled one on top of the other. In one of the rooms were books on the Arabic language and poetry, in another on jurisprudence, and likewise in each room (were books on) a single science. So I looked through the catalogue of books by the ancients and asked for whichever one I needed. I saw books whose names had not reached very many people and which I had not seen before that time, nor have I seen since. I read these books and mastered what was useful in them and discovered the status of each man in his science.

So when I had reached the age of eighteen I was finished with all of these sciences; at that time I had a better memory for learning, but today my knowledge is more mature; otherwise it is the same; nothing new has come to me since. . . .

. . . Then my father died and I was free to govern my own affairs and so I took over one of the administrative posts of the Sultan. Necessity then led me to forsake Bukhara(8)

From Bukhara to Isfahan

The young man whom "necessity led" to forsake the defeated Bukhara launched then an astonishing career of intellectual and political struggles which shook slumbering humanity for centuries to come. After the loss of Bukhara, "necessity led" him to forsake many more cities and kingdoms that were collapsing before the Ghaznavid onslaught. Between the years 1002, the last time he saw Bukhara, and 1014, when he first met the remarkable al-Sayyida, the Lady of Rayy with whom, one must conclude, he entered into a political pact against the Ghaznavids, Ibn Sina sought refuge and forsook Gurganj, Nasa, Baward, Tus, Samanqan, Jajarm, Jurjan, Dihistan.

He was, already at this time, an accomplished physician and a prolific author, and he was thoroughly educated in a number of other fields, most notably philosophy, mathematics and astronomy. Before he departed from Bukhara, he had already written the *Sum and Substance*, *Good Works and Evil*, the *Compilation*, *Ten Questions*, *Six Questions*, *Defense of Poets*, *On the Soul*, *Chapters*.

During this first period of exile and travels he also wrote the *Ode* on logic, the *Position of the Earth*, *Correcting Errors in Medical Treatment*, a polemic against *Alchemy*, the *Middle Summary*, *Comprehensive Observations*, the *Angle* and the first book of his celebrated *Canon of Medicine*.

It should be noted that his stay in Gurganj, capital of the little kingdom of Khwarazm which was his first place of residence after Bukhara, came to an abrupt end when the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud sent a message to the local king demanding that the large number of scientists and intellectuals, including Ibn Sina and the great astronomer al-Biruni, be sent to his court at Ghazna. The king informed his friends of the demands of his menacing and powerful neighbor and asked them to decide on their own whether to go to Ghazna or escape elsewhere. Ibn Sina and a friend of his, the physician Abu Sahl al-Masihi, decided to escape (some time after 1009). According to one account, Ibn Sina's friend died in a sandstorm in the desert during the flight.

There followed, for Ibn Sina, a period of continuous flight for which there is very little information available. The little information available in European-language sources forms an interesting pattern if one com-

pares Ibn Sina's known itinerary with the known moves and positions of Ghaznavid authority: Ibn Sina is evading Sultan Mahmud until he reaches Jurjan in eastern Tabaristan in the court of Emir Qabus of the Ziyarid dynasty. Qabus, an old friend and ally of the Samanids against the Buwayhids, is one of the famous personalities of that period, a close friend of al-Biruni and himself a scholar and poet of independent standing. Qabus was overthrown in 1012, the same year that Ibn Sina had arrived in his court. He died in 1013, whereupon once again, "necessity led" Ibn Sina to "forsake" Jurjan.

There followed a year of wandering, uncertainty and illness. Humorously, Ibn Sina marked the occasion with a little verse:

When I became great, no country would hold me;
When my price went up, I lacked a buyer.

He reappears again in 1014 in the city of Rayy, a few kilometers away from present-day Teheran. With him he carries some otherwise unidentified "letters of introduction" and "references," which open for him the court of al-Sayyida, "The Lady" who rules the place in the name of her twenty-year old son.

This is the appropriate point to pause for some remarks about the still sad state of affairs regarding historiographical research about this important period and to advance a certain hypothesis that should contribute toward the solution of this problem, a hypothesis which I fully expect to be validated once the necessary research into the extant sources is done.

From the bibliography available to me in various European languages at this time, I have concluded that no competent account exists of the last struggles of Persia's humanist-renaissance factions against the final onslaught of Ghaznavid reaction. It is quite possible that nobody to date has mustered sufficient motivation to investigate this matter. There is no doubt that sufficient source materials exist both in Pahlavi and Arabic to allow a reconstruction of this heroic page of human history by researchers to whom these languages are accessible.

Be that as it may, the available fragmentary

evidence has led me to conclude that the strategic axis of this resistance to Sultan Mahmud and Ghaznavid reaction generally was an alliance between al-Sayyida, Ibn Sina and al-Sayyida's brother (or according to some other sources cousin), Ala al-Dawla.

Al-Sayyida, the widow of the Buwayhid prince Fakr al-Dawla, was a princess in her own right, who hailed from the Caspian shores of Tabaristan, which historically was the springboard of the Persian renaissance movement. Her family's obvious close connections with Emir Qabus of Jurjan will probably explain the author(s) of Ibn Sina's mysterious letters of introduction on whose basis al-Sayyida took him into her confidence. Moreover, al-Sayyida's husband Prince Fakr, had, while alive, raised the standards of revolt against his brother, the Buwayhid of Baghdad, and when temporarily defeated and persecuted, he had found support and encouragement in the court of the same Emir Qabus of Tabaristan who, years later, extended his hospitality to Ibn Sina.

But more important for understanding al-Sayyida's political mettle is her conduct of affairs after her husband's death in 997. Fakr al-Dawla, who died in the year of the Samanids' collapse, left his widow two children and the throne of Jibal, with its three capitals, Rayy (Teheran), Isfahan and Hamadan (the ancient Ecbatana).

Her political attitude indicates that (1) she was driven by a fiery motivation to stop Sultan Mahmud, and (2) she didn't trust her sons for this task. Hence, she succeeded in maintaining power in Rayy until her death in 1028 even though the ruler was supposed to be her son Majd al-Dawla. In Isfahan, she appointed her brother (or cousin) Ala al-Dawla as governor. In Hamadan, where her erratic son Shams al-Dawla was ruling, she sent Ibn Sina!

Each one of these strategic moves proved to be exceptionally insightful. Majd al-Dawla, upon his mother's death in 1028, proved to be in possession of the full measure of political imbecility that his mother had suspected: as soon as his troops rebelled after al-Sayyida's death, he called in Sultan Mahmud to put down the revolt. Mahmud promptly did, simultaneously deposing Majd al-Dawla and taking him prisoner to Ghazna.

Secondly, her sending Ibn Sina to Hamadan between the years 1015 and 1024 also proved to be a politically astute move. All Ibn Sina's biography reports on this matter is that he departed to "Hamadan where he joined the service of Kadhabanuyah and managed her business affairs." "Kadhabanuyah" is the Persian word for the Arabic "al-Sayyida."

However, his activities during his stay in Hamadan are politically remarkable. The power of Shams al-Dawla, al-Sayyida's son there, depended on a precar-

ious balance between the court faction (which proved to be pro-Ibn Sina) and the guard faction, which eventually fell under the control of the foolish Taj al-Mulk, the Kurdish adventurer who once led his troops against Ala al-Dawla, the ruler of Isfahan. Whether there were treacherous qualities other than foolishness in Taj al-Mulk is a matter worth looking into. He continuously factionalized against Ibn Sina for the position of Vizier, and he once succeeded in throwing him in jail. But let us follow the narrative of the Hamadan story as it is told in Ibn Sina's autobiography:

Then he (Ibn Sina) made the acquaintance of Shams al-Dawla, who summoned him to his court because of a colic which had afflicted him. He treated him until God cured him and he obtained numerous robes of honor from that court. He returned to his house after staying there for forty days and nights, having become one of the companions of the Amir. Then the Amir went to Qirmisin to make war on Annaz with the Master (Ibn Sina) riding out in his service. He fell back in flight toward Hamadan, and they (the court) asked him to take over the vizierate, which he did, but the troops mutinied against him, being apprehensive about their position on account of him. So they surrounded his house, took him off to prison, ransacked his goods, took everything he owned, and even demanded his execution by the Amir. He refused to execute him, but compromised by banishing him from the state, since he desired to satisfy them. And so the Master concealed himself in the house of Shaykh Abu Sa'd ibn Dakhdul for forty days; but the colic seized Amir Shams al-Dawla again, and he sent for the Master, who came to his court. The Amir apologized to him profusely, and he devoted himself to treating him. And so he remained with him, honored and revered, and the vizierate was given back to him a second time. (9)

According to the narrative, this continues until the death of Shams al-Dawla in 1021. After that, Ibn Sina declines the vizierate, begins secret correspondence with Ala al-Dawla and goes underground to write his famous treatise the *Shifa* (Latin *Sufficientia*), which one century later shook the foundations of European Christendom. His autobiography notes:

The Master wrote down the main topics in approximately twenty quires of one-eighth

9. *Ibid.*

(octavo) size, continuing on it for two days, until he had written down the main topics without the presence of a book or a source to consult, but entirely from his memory and by heart. Then he placed the quires before him, took a sheet of paper, examined each problem and wrote a commentary on it. He would write fifty pages every day, until he had finished all of the "Physics" and "Metaphysics" with the exception of the Book on Animals. He then began the "Logic" and wrote one section of it; at that point Taj al-Mulk (his old rival of the guard — C.Z.) became suspicious of him over his correspondence with Ala al-Dawla, became angry at him for doing so, and consequently instigated a search for him. Some of his enemies informed on him; they seized him and took him (to jail) to a castle which is called Fardajan. (10)

10. *Ibid.*

Once again in a humorous mood, Ibn Sina remarked on his incarceration with a verse:

As you can see, my going in's a certainty,
And all the doubt is on the point of getting out.

Four months later, Hamadan was overrun by Ala al-Dawla and Taj al-Mulk was reduced to the status of a dependent tributary. Ibn Sina was free again, and with political fortunes reversed, Taj al-Mulk was making desperate promises and offers to keep him in Hamadan. But that period of Ibn Sina's life was over. He took some time to arrange personal matters and then joined Ala al-Dawla in Isfahan, where he spent the last thirteen most intense and most fruitful years of his life.

By that time, 1024, Hamadan had been made secure, al-Sayyida was ruling unchallenged in Rayy, and Isfahan was bracing for its final military showdowns with the Ghaznavids. Al-Sayyida's early deployments had proven wise.

"Dux et Princeps Philosophorum" in Isfahan

Upon reviewing the energetic, purposeful, multifaceted and intense life that Ibn Sina led in the last thirteen years of besieged and combatant Isfahan, one can confidently declare that he knows exactly what Goethe meant when he told Hegel that he found the latter's *Phenomenology of Mind* "boring." Karl Marx, with his revolutionary discovery of the "this-sidedness" of human thought, made the same point with greater rigor. But there is something in the attitude of the minister-scientist and poet of Wiemar that puts him closer to Ibn Sina than Marx is. The loss in the comparison is not Marx's of course, but this doesn't make Goethe's proximity to Ibn Sina less intriguing. Both men's attitude toward statecraft represents the loftiest that pre-Marxian political science has to offer — only Goethe was not the warrior that Ibn Sina must have been.

This attitude, the bedrock of every humanist political movement in history, is rooted in the profound conviction that mind, knowledge, and the mind's

power to create and realize knowledge is the one distinctive and unique feature which accounts for the human species' *humanity*. Therefore the conduct of anyone's social relations, the conduct of a society's public affairs, its *politics*, must be singularly purposefully aimed at creating and spreading the practice of science, no matter what the short-term political expediencies may appear to be.

This commitment to science, throughout history, has always been an eminently practical political program. Indeed, the only possible practical political program. Even the lowliest farmer in Transoxiana would be able to tell you the practical difference between Ibn Sina's politics and those of Sultan Mahmud, his archenemy: twenty years after the defeat of the Samanids and the establishment of Ghaznavid hegemony, cultivation in the agricultural miracle of Transoxiana, the "Garden of Eden," (11) had

11. Remembered as "The Garden of Eden" by the great historian of the Maghrib, Ibn Khaldun.

collapsed, the desert started setting in and the cities were being rocked by food riots. It was the immediate result of looting, plunder, excessive taxation, and collapse of the population's skills imposed by the boorish slave armies.

So, viewed against the spreading destruction that was surrounding Ibn Sina's besieged and embattled Isfahan, one gains all the greater an insight into his tempestuous scientific activities. The numerous fragmentary notes and anecdotes that have come down to our times do not fail to give a clear picture of his scientific and educational activities.

First of all, when he arrived in Isfahan, Ibn Sina was at the peak of his intellectual power at the age of forty-four. He had completed a number of books in addition to the ones mentioned earlier, including the completion of his *Canon of Medicine*, virtual completion of his *Shifa*, a number of specialized medical works such as *Cardiac Drugs*, the *Colic*, on treating *Melancholy* and others. Already in Hamadan he had established revolutionary medical practices of experimentation and diagnosis as well as of training young physicians. He had established a solid reputation of actually curing his patients — something virtually unheard of in those days and, no doubt, something to look forward to among the physicians of our own day who are under the merciless bombardment of the New York Times' "right to die" and "triage" propaganda.

Surrounded by students and scientific colleagues and with the full backing of Prince Ala al-Dawla, he launched a series of research and experimentation projects in a number of sciences. From the earliest days of his youth he had developed a rigorous reliance on the experimental method of advancing empirical science to which in Isfahan he gave comprehensive, systematic scope. Two minor works of his youth, one a polemic against astrology, the other against alchemy, give the reader a refreshing glimpse of the quality of scientific rigor ruling Ibn Sina's scientific work. On alchemy, he wrote:

As to the claims of the alchemists, it must be clearly understood that it is not in their power to bring about any true change of species. They can, however, produce excellent imitations, dyeing the red metal white so that it resembles silver, or dyeing it yellow so that it closely resembles gold. They can, too, dye the white metal with any color they desire, until it bears a close resemblance to gold or copper; and they can free the leads from most of their defects and impurities. Yet in these dyed metals the essential nature remains unchanged; they are merely so dominated by induced qualities that errors

may be made concerning them, just as it happens that men are deceived by salt, qalqand, sal-ammoniac etc.

I do not deny that such a degree of accuracy may be reached as to deceive even the shrewdest, but the possibility of eliminating or imparting the specific difference has never been clear to me. On the contrary, I regard it as impossible, since there is no way of splitting up one combination into another. Those properties which are perceived by the senses are probably not the differences which separate metals into species, but rather accidents or consequences, the specific differences being unknown. And if a thing is unknown, how is it possible for anyone to endeavour to produce it or to destroy it?

. . . It is likely that the proportion of the elements which enter into their composition of the essential substance of each of the metals enumerated is different from that of any other. If this is so, one metal cannot be converted into another unless the compound is broken up and converted into the composition of that into which its transformation is desired. This, however, cannot be effected by fusion which maintains the union and merely causes the introduction of some foreign substance or power. (12)

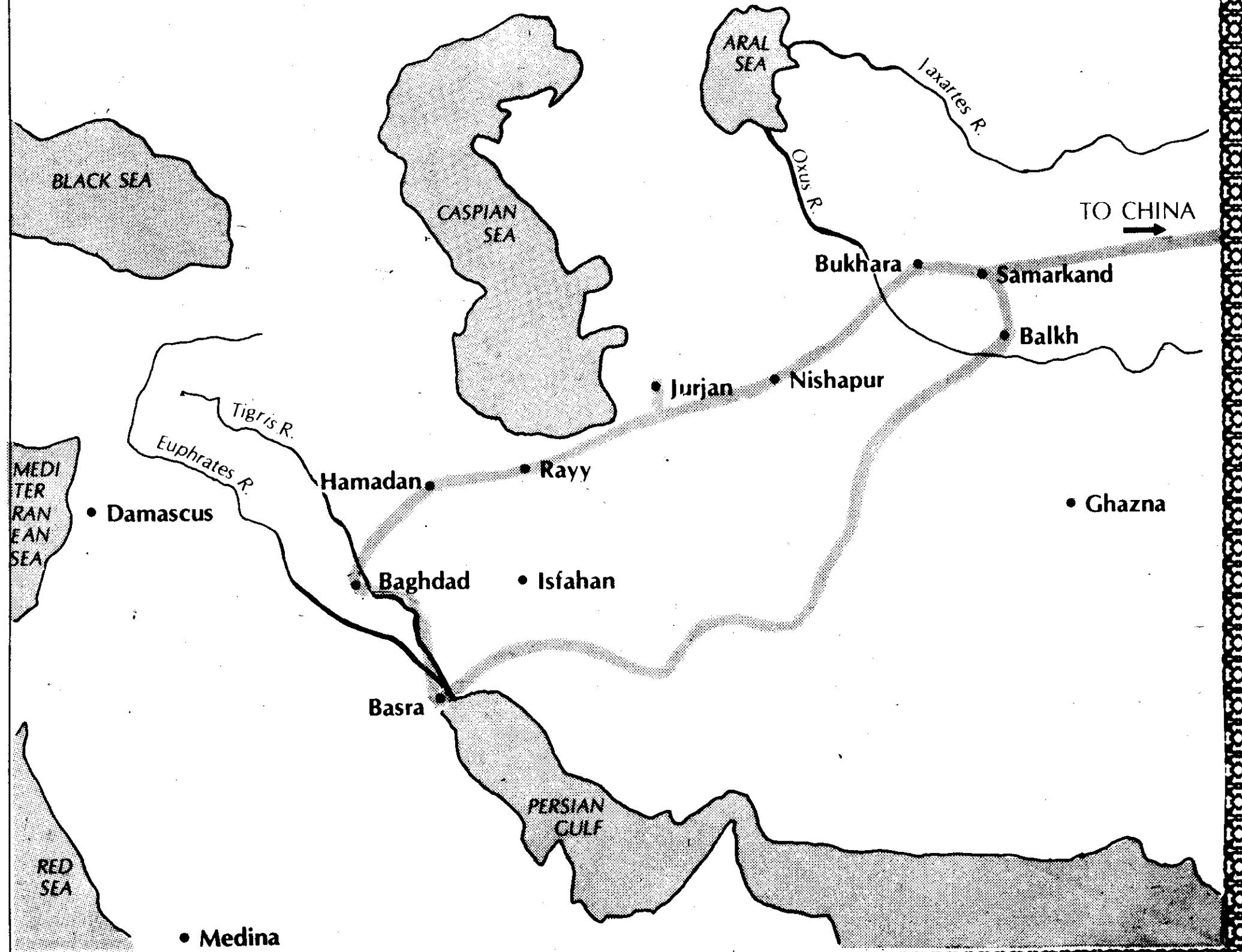
His known projects in Isfahan include extensive experimentation in medicine and botany, extensive pioneering work in astronomy which led him to humorous and occasionally bitter disputes with al-Biruni as well as the construction of novel astronomical instruments (and a treatise on instrument construction), a major project of philology which lasted three years (also with humorous implications), and extensive work on mathematics which, in addition to his standard *Arithmetic* and *Summary of Euclid*, also yielded two more interesting treatises: *Infinity* and *The Angle Formed by the Circumference and the Tangent has no Magnitude*.

The various anecdotes and fragments of information about his life reaching us today, found in his autobiography-biography, in various historiographical and biographical compilations of the time, and in the odd manuscript here and there, are by no means a complete accounting. Yet, invariably, each one of these precious pieces of evidence, like the gigantic footprints from which paleontologists reconstruct their long lost megatheria, bears testimony of the greatness of the creature that left them behind.

12. G.M. Wickens, ed., *Avicenna, Scientist and Philosopher: A Millenary Symposium*, London, 1952.

The Khurasan Road

The Khurasan Road, linking the Persian Gulf, Baghdad, Iran and the Far East. From approximately 700-1400 A.D. the Khurasan Road was one of the world's most heavily used commercial routes.



Invariably, the reports on Ibn Sina that reach us are always tainted by the various specific biases of the reporters. The historian Ibn Funduq never seems to forgive Ibn Sina's arrogance. It was after all that same arrogance, Ibn Sina's profound intolerance for ignorance, which had so incensed al-Biruni as well; but al-Biruni seems to have found his better in Ibn Sina, as is evident in the quarrelsome correspondence between the two men: the astronomer was so incensed by Ibn Sina's presumption to take up original research in astronomy that he once wrote to him asserting that Ibn Sina's admitted accomplishments in the field of philosophy did not give him the authority to presume wisdom in astronomy — apparently for lack of better argument.

Ibn Sina's response to this sly non-aggression pact proposal ("I won't bother your philosophy if you don't bother my astronomy") is not known, but his attitude generally on such matters is illustrated in the story of the reasons that prompted him to take up his philological project in Isfahan. The story is told by his pupil and biographer Ubayd al-Juzjani:

One day the Master was sitting in the presence of the Amir (Ala al-Dawla) while Abu Mansur al-Jabban (the resident philologist) was present. A question concerning philology was raised, and the Master had spoken his thoughts in the matter when Abu Mansur turned to the Master and said, "You are a philosopher and a physician, but you have not studied enough philology so that your remarks on it should be accepted." The Master became incensed at this remark and devoted himself to an intensive study of books on philology for three years, even sending to Khurasan for the *Correct Philology*, one of the works of Abu Mansur al-Azhari. And so in philology the Master reached a stage the like of which seldom occurs.

He wrote three odes in which he included words rare in the language, and he wrote three letters, the first of which was in the style of Ibn al-Amid, another in the style of al-Sabi, and the last in the style of al-Sahib. He ordered them to be bound and their leather made to look worn. He then asked the Amir to present this volume to Abu Mansur al-Jabban while saying, "We came into possession of this book while hunting in the desert; you must examine it and tell us what it contains." And so Abu Mansur examined it carefully, and much of what was in it was difficult for him. So the Master said to him, "Whatever material in this book is incomprehensible to you

is mentioned in such-and-such a place in one of the books on philology," mentioning to him well known books in philology, from which the Master had memorized those passages. Abu Mansur had been prattling in the philology he had put forward, without authority to back it up; so then he realized that these letters were written by the Master, and that his insulting him that day was what brought it upon him. The Master then wrote a book on philology which is called *The Arabic Language* which has not been equaled in philology, but he did not transcribe it into clean copy . . . (13)

Neither the prank nor the enthusiasm with which he threw himself into yet another project were uncharacteristic of Ibn Sina. His project on astronomy grew out of a discussion in Ala al-Dawla's court where concern had been voiced about "the discrepancies contained in the ephemerides compiled on the basis of the ancient astronomical observations." This prompted him to launch a program of observations which led him to inspections of observation instruments, consultations with instrument-makers, new designs, hiring of craftsmen to build new instruments, and the writing of a book on astronomical instruments. The final fruit of the project, apart from the results yielded by the observations themselves, was the diagnosis of why the "ancients" had erred: "The discrepancies," writes his biographer, "in the matter of observation had occurred because of the great number of journeys and the attendant errors."

This minor detail is not inconsequential, but it reveals Ibn Sina's fundamental attitude: what he concerns himself with as a scientist is not, primarily, ideas per se; it is rather with human minds which produce ideas and the way in which they produce them. The prima facie evidence for this is, of course, his "Metaphysics," but apart from that, it permeates his whole life and work. In the part of his autobiography-biography written by himself, he reports on the way in which he studied as a young man in the Samanid library in Bukhara: "I read these books and mastered what was useful in them and *discovered the status of each man in his science.*" (emphasis added—C.Z.). (14)

Later, when the faithful al-Juzjani continues the text, he reports with admiring astonishment:

One of the remarkable things about the Master was that for the twenty-five years that

13. *The Autobiography...*

14. *Ibid.*



Page of an eleventh century Arabic manuscript containing translations of two works by the Greek physician Galen (second century A.D.). It bears the notation that it came "into the possession of poor Hussein ibn Abd Allah ibn Sina in the year 407" (1016 A.D.), which would be during the philosopher's deployment in Hamadan in the service of al-Sayyida. Just as Ibn Sina's influence moved westward, so this manuscript later found its way into the library of an Arab physician in Cairo, in the late thirteenth century.

I was his companion and servant, I did not once see him, when he came across a new book, examine it from beginning to end. Rather he would go directly to its difficult passages and intricate problems and look at what its author had to say about them. Thus he would seek to ascertain the level of his knowledge and the degree of his understanding. (15)

This little piece of information is so indicative of Ibn Sina's fundamental attitude toward mental life that it justifies a few side remarks about the reactions it has caused among modern scholars who have taken a certain interest in Ibn Sina. When Professor A.J. Arberry of Cambridge delivered a speech in 1951 in commemoration of Ibn Sina's millenary, he read the above cited passage and then added: "This little aside would surely justify us if we wished to propose Avicenna for nomination as the patron-saint of examiners of Ph.D. theses!" (16)

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Avicenna, Scientist and Philosopher...*

Of course, Professor Arberry, one of the most gifted scholars in his field, has not committed a horrible crime with this little joke; he merely served as a case study of how scholars steeped in the impotent Aristotelian outlook of *vita contemplativa* will never fail to grossly misunderstand what Ibn Sina has been about. But a more systematic discussion of this will follow later.

The subject here still is Ibn Sina's practical attitude toward life and human beings around him, during his sojourn in Isfahan. To the young he was a teacher, to the unfortunate a healer, to his colleagues a discreet helper, to the pretentious a menace, to the quarrelsome a delightful and biting opponent, a great lover of other people's company, a man known to drink wine liberally for two principal reasons: to spite the orthodox religious abstentionists and to drink his friends under the table before he went to write a major piece of scientific work. But behind all this was the excitement and joy of challenging and touching and stimulating other minds and seeing them grow from the radiance of his own mind.

There is a hilarious incident that illustrates the point. There was a pretentious, nagging old "mystic"

(your proverbial "old fart") who always complained bitterly about Ibn Sina's writings, always sending letters to register his disagreements on this point and that or demanding various explanations and clarifications. When Ibn Sina had just written his celebrated *Najat*, one of his three encyclopedias of science, this nagging old fellow got some friends of his from the nearby city of Shiraz to sit down and write on paper their various objections and gripes. His name was Abu al-Qasim al-Kirmani, and Ibn Sina's pupil-biographer reports the following on the incident:

He (Abu al-Qasim al-Kirmani's friend from Shiraz) send them both (a quire of paper and a letter of transmittal) with an express courier and asked that he present the quire to the Master and request a reply from him concerning it. So one warm day as the sun was paling, Shaykh Abu al-Qasim came to the Master's house and presented the letter and the quire to him. He read the letter and returned it to him, placed the quire before him, and examined it while the people around were chatting. As soon as Abu al-Qasim left, the Master ordered me to bring blank paper, so I sewed five quires for him ... After we prayed the evening prayer, he set out candles and ordered wine to be brought. He asked his brother and me to sit down and asked us to have some wine while he began replying to these problems. He wrote and drank until the middle of the night, at which time sleep overcame his brother and me, and he asked us to leave. In the morning his messenger appeared, summoning me, so I presented myself while he was at prayer. Before him were five quires. He said, "Take these and deliver them to Abu al-Qasim al-Kirmani and tell him I was in a hurry to answer them so that the messenger might not be delayed." When I delivered them he was greatly astonished; he sent back the messenger and informed them (in Shiraz) about this matter, and so the story became historic among the people. (17)

The poor Abu al-Qasim must have taken some time to recover from this. The *Najat*, the original work on which he had voiced his objections, was written by Ibn Sina literally on horseback in the course of a military campaign against Sabur Khwast. The reply to his objections was written in the course of one night by an author pleasantly sipping his wine among chatting

and otherwise soused companions. Ibn Sina's obvious show-off of his power of concentration, besides causing a good hearty belly laugh at the expense of poor Mr. Abu al-Qasim, must have also gone a long way toward curing him of his delusions about "mysticism" and esoteric interpretations.

Two surviving titles from among the books that Ibn Sina wrote, *Throne Philosophy* and *The Management and Provisioning of Soldiers, Slave Troops, and Armies, and the Taxation of Kingdoms*, are indicative of his concerns in this domain.

We do not know how many of those Friday court sessions were held in time of peace and how many under combat conditions. We know that half of Ibn Sina's years in the court of Isfahan were years of merciless warfare against the Ghaznavids. In the year 1030, when Ibn Sina marched with Ala al-Dawla against Sabur Khwast in the north (when the *Najat* was written), Isfahan had fallen to the armies of the Ghaznavid prince Mansur, the son of Sultan Mahmud. The Ghaznavid occupation provoked a mass uprising which resulted in the massacre of five thousand civilians.

Ala al-Dawla took advantage of Sultan Mahmud's death in 1031 to recapture Isfahan. But very soon, in 1034, he was forced to meet the troops of Mahmud's successor Mansur at al-Karaj, near Hamadan. Ala al-Dawla was routed and forced to retreat south. In the course of this campaign, Ibn Sina suffered a serious attack of colic. He prescribed for himself a risky shock treatment rather than fall behind the retreating columns and risk capture, and thus ruined his health forever. In the meantime, Isfahan was being sacked for a second time, with Sultan Mansur's soldiers robbing Ibn Sina's household and hauling off his library, notes and work in progress included, to Ghazna.

Somehow, Ala al-Dawla's battered forces managed to recapture Isfahan, but in 1036, they were forced once again to stand and do battle at al-Karaj. Ibn Sina, sick but indomitable, took part in the campaign. In a replay of the 1034 battle, Ala al-Dawla's forces were

Ibn Sina held no formal political-administrative post in Isfahan as he had in Hamadan. Yet he must have been the dominant force in Ala al-Dawla's court. Every Friday the prince would hold court for Ibn Sina, where the intellectuals and high officials would engage, under Ibn Sina's direction, in far-ranging discussions on scientific, philosophical, psychological and political issues. Reports of those sessions portray Ala al-Dawla, the devoted commander, as joyfully basking in the radiance of Ibn Sina's presence, proudly "admiring him for his beauty of appearance and strength of intellect."

routed and forced to retreat toward Hamadan. Ibn Sina fell ill again, and this is how his biographer concludes his story:

When Ala al-Dawla set out for Hamadan, the Master went with him but the illness seized him again on the way, so that by the time he reached Hamadan he knew that his strength had wasted away and that it was not sufficient to repel the illness. So he ceased treating himself and would say, "The governor who used to govern my body is now incapable of governing, and so treatment is no longer of any use." He remained like this for a

few days; then he passed away into the presence of his Lord and was buried in Hamadan in the year 428 (1037 A.D.). The year of his birth was 370 (980 A.D.) and so the sum of his years was 58 (lunar years). May God find his deeds worthy." (18)

Ala al-Dawla continued his struggle until his death in the year 1041. To him Ibn Sina had dedicated a very important book, his Persian-language encyclopedia of science entitled *Danish Nama'i Ala'i*, meaning *The Book of Knowledge of Ala (al-Dawla)*.

18. *Ibid.*

The Metaphysics of *Danish Nama'i Ala'i*

In the centuries following Ibn Sina's death, whenever there was no conspiracy to extirpate his name and his memory, either in the Islamic world or in Christendom, a lot of nonsense has been written about his thought. Most of this nonsense focuses on his so-called "philosophical world outlook," rather than on his discoveries and writings on the natural sciences and mathematics which, on the whole, were accepted, made use of and not much controverted.

But the rubbish one encounters upon examining what most scholarly minds have written with respect to Ibn Sina's Metaphysics gives one food for very amusing thought with respect to the wretched moral and intellectual standing of the vast majority of the last thousand years' lettered strata, the so-called intelligentsia.

Upon inspection of the state of affairs among 99.44 percent of members of society who justify their existence (and occasionally earn their living) by the use of their trained faculties of mentation, a good physician ought to pronounce that a disease of epidemic proportions has been inflicting this poor lot for approximately one thousand years. Having isolated the virus, the good physician will give this terrible disease its proper name: *Aristotelianism*.

The symptoms are so well known that most people

tend to mistake any vicious outbreak of the illness as a sign of vigorous health (as a matter of fact, *humans* who suffer of this affliction invariably brag about their *horse sense*).

One primary symptom is a profound split in the victim's attitude toward the universe and life. Everything is torn asunder; there are two lives for each person, *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. By definition, peoples' actions, engagements in worldly affairs are ultimately thoughtless while, conversely, their thoughts must be passive. To the Aristotelian, the more removed a thought is from practical implications, from real effects, the purer and the more scientific it is. When a scientific thought is presented to him with a demand for immediate, practical application in life, he will tend to display a profound hysteria and resort to highly unscientific, untempered *vita activa*, in short he will throw a fit.

Other symptoms of the affliction are equally painful. The victim is afflicted by an acute, awesome worship of ideas. His mind, the very creator of all ideas, is their complete and eternal slave, it is ruled by immutable, eternal laws of mentation, and their terrible Furies and guardians, the Categories. No matter that both the laws of mentation and the categories are the mere creatures of mind. The Aristotelian mind pre-

fers to remain their eternal slave — rather than face what it regards as the absolute terror of creating anew ideas and laws.

Likewise for the universe at large, the victim is convinced that it is ruled by eternal, immutable natural laws. The task of science, the human mind, is simply to discover these immutable, eternal laws of nature, guided and *ruled* by the equally immutable and eternal laws of mentation.

Neither changing the natural universe, nor changing the mind of man (nor their “laws”) occurs as a possibility or even as a passing concern for the afflicted Aristotelian. Changing nothing, i.e. creating nothing, the Aristotelian intellectual conceives himself to be impotent. Most of the time he is right about this particular conception, thus finally bringing reality and thought in harmony. Whenever he deludes himself with fantasies of intellectual potency, he merely acts out his admitted discrepancy between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.

The epidemic of Aristotelianism has afflicted mankind’s intelligentsia almost to the man. Only the very exceptional, world-shaking revolutionary giants have defeated the virus. Yet among the victims, the disease manifests itself in a great variety of intensities. You have the extreme, raving cases like Bertrand Russell and Noam Chomsky, and you have the mild, gentle cases, the victim who is aware of the disease, who is also aware of what mental health might look like and even what the cure might have been, but who still lacks the strength and the constitution to put up the fight and defeat the virus.

Now, consider how Ibn Sina’s Metaphysics was greeted in this Aristotelianism-ridden world. First, it is a matter of *how* one reads such a book. There is Ibn Sina’s way of reading and then there is the Aristotelian way. Ibn Sina would “go directly to its difficult passages and intricate problems and look at what its author had to say about them. Thus he would seek to ascertain the level of his knowledge and the degree of his understanding.” In short, he would go straight to identify the *differentia specifica* (as he would say) of the author’s *mind*, and locate the source of his uniqueness which would account for any particular ideas and other predicates.

The Aristotelian, on the other hand, would study a book by studying the various ideas themselves written in it. The *mind* which produced such ideas would not really interfere with our Aristotelian’s contemplations. Nor, of course the driving force and the purpose of such a mind.

This is how Ibn Sina’s Metaphysics has been studied by virtually all of the known modern commentators. True, many of them have produced really gifted studies on the subject, and among them I would count

Amelie Goichon’s *La distinction de l’essence et de l’existence d’après Ibn Sina*, Carra de Vaux’s *Avicenne*, even J.L. Teicher’s *Avicenna’s Place in Arabic Philosophy* and definitely Parviz Morewedge’s meticulous commentary of his own translation of Ibn Sina’s Metaphysics from the *Danish Nama’i Ala’i*.

Yet even the most gifted fail to study Ibn Sina’s mind, by proceeding, as he would have done in his studies, from that mind’s *differentia specifica*, which, in the case of the Metaphysics of *Danish Nama’i Ala’i*, is the fundamental discovery of the changing of the laws of the universe and concomitantly, the nonlinearity of the human mind’s creative activity.

There is a typical episode that has been reported to recur in most ordinary readings of the text of Metaphysics of *Danish Nama’i Ala’i*, namely the reactions of discomfort caused by chapter 19 which, seemingly out of the blue, introduces Ibn Sina’s central epistemological concept, the Necessary Existent.

In the midst of a systematic exposition of what to a plodding academic must necessarily seem as ordinary Aristotelian items, the following provocative conception is introduced to seriously disturb any self-respecting Aristotelian’s *vita contemplativa*:

In Itself, the Necessary Existent cannot be united with any cause. Since its being is necessary in Itself without being caused, Its being cannot be due to a cause. Thus, It is not united with any cause. If Its being were not necessary without a cause, It would not be the Necessary Existent in Itself. (19)

Before proceeding to the Aristotelian reactions to this passage, a word about Ibn Sina’s reasoning which leads to the formulation just cited. In his earlier discussion of the causes and purposes of everything that exists in the universe, he proceeds from the axiomatic basis of all rationalism, namely that everything must have a cause (hence a purpose), i.e. everything can be subjected to the rational mastery of the human mind.

He then proceeds with the following astounding arguments:

1. The primacy of the *existence* of a phenomenon over its nonexistence proves the *reality* of the cause of such a phenomenon.

2. Whenever there is a structured series of causes, i.e. the aggregate of the causes of all phenomena of nature, there must necessarily exist a First Cause subsuming this series of causes (i.e. “external to the set”), or, in short, the cause which coherently explains both the causality in nature and the way this

19. This and all subsequent quotes from Ibn Sina’s Metaphysics are taken from the cited work of Parviz Morewedge (note 3 supra.).

causality is conceptualized by the rational mind can be nonlinearly conceptualized as the First Cause.

3. As per point 1, this First Cause possesses an order of existence superior to that of the 'subsumed set whose cause it is. The human mind's sensuous experience of the existence of this purposeful ordering of the universe is the same as its own self-experience as the being which gives birth to this sensuous concept of First Cause. The Necessary Existent!

When our typical Aristotelian first encounters the first spelt out identification of the self-subsistence of the Necessary Existent in the quoted above chapter 19, he generally reacts with astonishment. An amusingly large number of footnotes and other rationalizations have been written in most of the relevant treatises and commentaries, which justify a word or two by us.

Two significant types of pathological reactions have been observed. One, the reductionist-empiricist's who, not having encountered the term "Necessary Existent" previously in the text, doubts for a second the powers of his memory, leafs through the preceding pages once again, specifically searching to verify if he inadvertently missed any previous mention of the words "Necessary Existent" in the text. Having satisfied himself that no such omission has occurred, he concludes that chapter 19 indeed has violated the continuity of the treatise. He also concludes that Ibn Sina is rather poorly mannered, temperamental, and unruly.

The second sort of reaction is the theologian's. As he is struck in the face with the cited paragraph, he grasps his jawbone firmly between his index finger and his thumb to make sure he won't turn the other cheek, and with elbow on the desk, a slight upward tilt of the head and a blank, bovine stare into the opposite wall, sneakily he says: "Aha, the Necessary Existent, eh? Well, that means *God!*"

And thus, the Necessary Existent is turned from a strictly scientific conception to another idea that would rule over an enslaved mind, the *theologian's* idea of God. (20)

Now, contrary to standard theological practice, the

20. The hypothesis has recurred over the past nine centuries that Ibn Sina's "Necessary Existent" is equivalent to "God." This must be rejected. The "Necessary Existent" is a rigorous epistemological conception of the negentropic content of nonlinear effects as the origin of causality. The religious notion of God, as Emil Durkheim points out, is designated in any given culture to account for that which is unknown or unknowable to the scientific practice of that culture. There exists however a unique affinity between the "Necessary Existent" and "God," on the affective level: the quality of emotion associated with the effective conceptualization of the "Necessary Existent" is identical with the way the intensely religious personality "experiences God." The implications for a culture that succeeds in evolving a scientific practice whose subject is the laws of causality governing the negentropic content of nonlinear effects, are that the practicing members of such a society transcend religion by "becoming Gods."

concept of God and its historical evolution, even including the phase of its degeneration in post-Augustinian Christianity, is one of the most vital and precious discoveries of socialized humanity, and we by no means intend deprecation when we assert that when Ibn Sina thinks of the Necessary Existent, he definitely does not think of God.

The theologian may solemnly protest that he is not an Aristotelian but rather a Platonist, but no matter, because our tale hangs elsewhere, on a crucial point where both the Platonist and the Aristotelian are at a loss. And that is the discovery that the laws of the material universe and the laws of mentation change qualitatively (i.e. nonlinearly), which is Ibn Sina's *differentia specifica* which sets him, as a thinker, apart from his great Greek predecessors.

This should for ever put to rest the perennial literary gossip among those factional opponents of the Aristotelian Thomas Aquinas who, opposing Thomas's ludicrous claim that Ibn Sina is merely Aristotle's commentator, try to present Ibn Sina as a mere Augustinian monk grafting Neoplatonism over Aristotle's (rather unalarming) nakedness.

The truth of the matter, Ibn Sina's *differentia specifica*, his qualitative advance beyond both Plato and Aristotle (and the secret concealed by all, even the most gifted, modern commentators), is that Ibn Sina is a consummate *voluntarist*, the first one in history before Karl Marx: he proves that the laws which govern the evolution of the universe change *willfully!* And that this subsumes the willful evolution of the laws of the human mind itself!

Voluntarism in the Material Universe

In chapters 46 and 47 of the *Metaphysics* contained in the book which Ibn Sina wrote for the instruction of Ala al-Dawla, he develops his theory of voluntarism in the context of his examination of natural forces (referred to in the text as "movers" or "causes") which account for the processes of change and motion both in quality ("circular motion" in the text) and also linear change and motion ("straight motion" in the text). (21)

Chapter 46, after a discussion in rather archaic predicates which we can omit for our purposes here, concludes in the following way:

Consequently, circular motion which is not external (to a "body" or material object) is

21. For the role that the "straight-line motion versus non-straight line motion" heurism has played in the discussion of the freedom-determinism problem, see Karl Marx's doctoral dissertation, "The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature," in *The Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, Vol. I, New York, 1975.

due to free will — not to its nature alone. That kind of body having such a motion is therefore moved by will.

Then follows chapter 47 which we reproduce in full below:

47. Finding that this mover is not an intelligent kind of entity which is neither unchangeable nor ignorant of past, present and future states.

• It has become apparent that nothing is realized from its cause unless it becomes a necessity. It has also become known that a necessity due to a determined cause is in a single state, whereas a change is never due to a single state. Should there be a change from one state to another, this change will differ from a change from the second state to a third state. If the first of two motions is brought forth due to something, the second and third motions will result from another thing. In short, one movement in itself is not to be preferred to another movement in itself, nor should it matter whether one comes first or last. In order to have a particular motion, one of the following conditions must be met. (1) Instead of being in another motion, the thing being moved may not be in its natural state. (2) Its natural place may be at another place, as for example in magnetism where a body is moved from one place to another place. (3) There may be a change from one quality to another quality, as when something is moved one way when it is hot and another way when it becomes cold. (4) There may be a change from one will to another will. In short, there must be a change in a state, for a stationary entity does not in itself necessitate a change of state. Moreover, if an entity rests at one place, it does not move from that place to another place unless it is receptive to motion.

Thus, the mover responsible for motion must undergo a change of condition from one state to another state, and when this motion is due to its own will, then the change takes place because of its will. The mover may will to move from this one place to another place at one time, while it may will to move at another time from a second place to another place. And if its will were not particular, a particular motion could not result from its will. The cause of the second will is to be found in the first will. For example, there may be an

inclination for a union which takes something from here to another place. As it desires to be taken to that place and to be united with that previous will, it has the desire to become straighter (more correct, more perfect). Such motions are due to will. Yet for a body, as body-*qua*-body, there is no will. Since the will proper to the mover of the body is such that whatever is moved by it is a thing which is in motion due to it, the moved is different than the mover. Thus, the mover (natural forces, causes) of this body is neither an intelligence nor a bodily substance, but is a kind of soul-self. Such a thing we call "soul-self."

The psychophysical parallelism!

What Caused Modern Humanism

The next task is to establish the lawfulness by which this will transforms the universal order, causing its intelligent evolution; this Ibn Sina accomplishes in a tour de force in chapter 52 with a lucidity, power and poetry that has been hardly surpassed since the eleventh century, and only rarely equaled by our predecessors.

52. Finding that the goal and the choice of this movement are intelligent in nature and aim towards the superior states, their direction being not from their inferior states, but towards other modes.

The mover of circular, continuous, unbounded motion is a power without a boundary. That is to say, it is a power capable of acting without any restrictions. We claim that power is never embodied. If it were embodied it could be divided by the imagination because a body is divisible in the imagination. The imagination can divide a body and its features. A part of this power is also equal to that total power while being less than the entire power. Consequently, it is possible to move it in a limited time. It is either unlimited as a whole, or it has a limit. If it were unlimited, the effects of a lesser power and a greater power would be equal, and this impossible. If it were finite and limited, however, and remained similar to the former in other respects, the sum of two powers, being the totality, would be limited and finite when applied to limited motions. To move the primary being, a mover is required whose force is unlimited and who is separated from the

body in motion. Furthermore, there are two kinds of mover. The one can be compared to a beloved who moves a lover or to desire which moves a mover, whereas the other resembles life which moves a body, or weight which moves a stone. While motion is due to the first, action is due to the second. Since the motion results from the mover of this motion, it is undoubtedly due to the action of the mover, and the agent (mover) of this motion is necessarily a soul-self. Furthermore, the mover possesses a material nature since an intelligence-type of entity cannot be a cause of the motion of a body, as has been made clear. For these reasons, the motion coming from this mover is restricted to itself. Its support comes from the other mover since the latter is not restricted in power. Its mode, however, could not be of such a mode that such a motion comes from it, because the mover would then be embodied in that type of mode. The intelligence is not separated from the body. There is, then, a mover of an unlimited power, alien to being united with bodies, which moves the body because it is its goal, its aim and its beloved . . .

Two additional steps are then required to complete the concept which constitutes the core of modern humanism. Identify this intelligent, non-embodied "mover" which accounts for the willful transformation of the causality of other "movers" (laws of nature) with the Necessary Existent, and then review the psychophysical parallelism from this standpoint. What you then have is a restatement of the Cartesian Perfection Theorem from a very emphatic voluntarist standpoint. This Ibn Sina accomplishes in chapters 53, 54 and 55 where he identifies this "mover" with the Necessary Existent, and proceeds with an astounding dialectical operation:

"The Necessary Existent is the absolute good, the absolute perfection and the foundation of all beauty." But any possibility of interpreting "absolute perfection" as an already attained, eternal, terminal i.e. "static" state of perfection is hermetically barred by what is Ibn Sina's most outstanding epistemological achievement, namely his formulation of a unique content to the notion "existence." Existence as a grasped experience, for Ibn Sina, is literally "beyond," on the other side of the chasm, from Aristotle's definition of "potential being" (*on dynamei*), "actual being" (*on energeiai*) or entelechy; Ibn Sina's concept of Existence could be approximately articulated in Aritotelian lexikon by something like "actualized entelechy" or the phenomom of entelechy ac-

tualizing itself in the process of creating actual-ness (*energeia*) — an epistemological conception roughly approximating modern negentropy!

Thus, in the matter of the willful mover which accounts for changing universal laws, Ibn Sina reports: "One must know that the peculiarity of the Necessary Existent is that It is always an actuality." I.e. it self-subsists as an "Existent," an "entelechy actualizer," at all times.

Ibn Sina's viewing the issue of psychophysical parallelism from this standpoint has resulted in an exceptionally powerful passage, his celebrated chapter 29 in which he elegantly synthesizes, in one single, compact unity, what in the West is known as Descartes' Existence Theorem and his Perfection Theorem (his Second and Third Meditation).

Ibn Sina's chapter 29 is as follows:

29. Finding the idea which must be understood in regard to the knowability of the Necessary Existent.

It shall become evident later that the cause by which the object of knowledge becomes known is due to its ability to separate form and essence from its substratum. Likewise, the cause of a thing's knowing is that its being does not subsist in its substratum. Whenever a being abstracted from the substratum is a form, that being is knowable by being abstracted from the substratum. The form of humanity is such that when it is abstracted from the substratum of humanity it is knowledge as it subsists in man's soul. A soul moreover, whose form is abstracted from substratum exists sufficiently due to itself. Hence, due to its own self the soul is a knower because as a knower it is independent of the substratum, as we shall make evident when it is proper to do so. It is a knower of a thing which is not separated from it but which comes to the soul. That which is independent of the soul is known to that which is not separated from it. The soul cannot be separated from itself. In relation to itself, therefore, it is both a knower and a known. The Necessary Existent is independent of substratum in being absolutely separated from it. But its essence is neither hidden from Itself nor separated from Itself. Indeed, It is knowledge Itself. Among entities which are abstractions is that whose essence is known by that with which it is united. Since it is an independent entity which is not separated from itself, it is a knower and a known by itself. As a matter of fact, that



Avicenna, "The Persian Galen"

which is known is knowledge. A known to us is that form (i.e. that concept) which subsists in us, rather than that which is its form. A thing which is known exists otherwise than in reality. The sensible is that effect which arises from our perception of it, not that external reality whose result is sensation. Thus, in reality, what is known is knowledge itself. Since that which is known to the soul is a knower, knower, the known and knowledge are identical in this context. The Necessary Existent is, therefore, a knower of its own essence. Its essence is the existentiator of things according to the order in which they exist. Hence its essence, the existentiator of

all things, is known to It. All things are known to It, then, due to Its own essence. It does not become a knower of things because It is caused by them but on the contrary, Its knowledge is the cause for the existence of all things. Similar to such knowledge is the scientific knowledge of the builder with regard to the form of the house he has conceived. His conception of the form of the house is the cause of this form in external reality which is the cause of the builder's knowledge. But the form of the heavens is the cause of the form of our knowledge because the heavens exist. For this reason, the agreement of all things with the first science, the agreement of things

which we realize in thought and in knowledge because their external form is due to that form which is in our knowledge.

The implications for a concept of man and humanity that emerge out of this discovery, which constitute to this day the root of all humanism, are obvious but too important to omit spelling out: Ibn Sina has concluded that "internal reality," i.e. the human soul, is the internal dynamic of the emotional forces which forge the fusion of identity of *knower*, the *known* and *knowledge*.

The individual can only know his human soul as *desire*, the only possible form of self-consciousness. This flows from the fact that the only possible *true* knowledge is sensuous knowledge, experienced as intelligent impulse to transform, i.e. enter into potent relationship with the object of knowledge; any other form of assumed knowledge, leading to no real consequences in the outside, real world, is not true knowledge.

Therefore, the individual human being can only know himself or herself from the standpoint of experiencing the necessity of his or her perfection: *desire!* (22)

As humanity's essence is being a *knower*, the individual's path of perfection is to, as *knower*, bring his or her identity into unity with *humanity's* object: knowledge of the evolving natural universe mediated through socialized practice. The individual human being's destiny, then, is to become one with humanity's cause to perfect its practiced, world-transforming powers of knowledge of the universe.

This is also the individual person's cause of striving to perfect his or her fellow human being's powers of knowledge for transforming both the universe and the society through whose mediation the individual mind transforms the universe. Therefore, the cause of the individual's perfection is realized in the perfection of others.

This was Ibn Sina's politics. The fragmentary evidence of his life which we reviewed leaves no doubt that his life was perpetually driven by this conception of humanity. The written record of his thought, when it reached medieval Europe, caused the formation of the West's first humanist factions from which we ourselves hail. But at that formative period, the reaction to Ibn Sina's humanist-scientific faction was ferocious. The response of the Church's hastily summoned militancy was best portrayed, seven centuries later in Goethe's *Faust*:

Nature and Mind! — Terms Christian ears resist!
For talk like this we burn the atheist.
Such words are full of danger and despite:
Nature means sin, and mind the devil!

But before we go on to give an account of Ibn Sina's influence over the course of European civilization, we ought to summarily identify certain additional points that are of importance for the evolution of epistemology.

Miscellaneous Epistemological Implications

In addition to the Kantian antinomies which we cited in an earlier chapter, the Aristotle-Plato dichotomy in pre-Ibn Sina epistemology has created a number of additional classical antinomy-problems of profound implications in the history of epistemology and natural science.

The more celebrated of these are the so-called Parmenides problem on the relation between particular and universal (whether the one *exists* primarily or the many *exist* primarily), the Cratylus problem, which also occupied Parmenides, on whether change or changelessness has primary *existence* (this paradox drove Cratylus, Heraclitus's pupil, to virtual insanity), and the problems of infinity as an *existent*.

Upon reflection on these very well known problems, it becomes evident that Ibn Sina has provided the basis for their solution by means of his discovery of "existence" as willful "actualness (*energeia*) generation," which is the (historically) first approximation of negentropy!

Ibn Sina did not fully elaborate on the solution of these antinomies. However, he launched the approach within which their ultimate solution necessarily must be located. On the issue of infinity, his *Metaphysics* contains the following, virtually Cartesian item:

16. Finding the condition of finitude of whatever admits of priority and posteriority as well as determining the finitude of particular causes.

Priority and posteriority are due either to nature, such as in the case of numbers, or to suppositions as we make them concerning dimensions — for example, that one can initiate a dimension from any direction according to one's will. Whatever admits of priority and posteriority due to nature is a quantity. Furthermore it is limited since the location of parts belonging to it is specified. The reason for the aforesaid statement is that

22. Cf. the notion of "desire" in Spinoza's *Ethics* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*; also its political equivalent in the Clausewitzian notion of "ambition."

if it were either a countless measure in things having by nature priority and posteriority or a quantity such that its elements existed as a totality, then it would be possible to point to a limit or to a boundary of it by means of sensation or by reason.

A J D B

Let there be an infinite line AB . Let us indicate on it the point J and consider the line JD a finite measure or a finite quantity. If the line DB is infinite, and we augment it by JD , then JB will also be finite. If the line DB is infinite, let us allow DB to correspond to JB until they are at the same place. If DB should correspond to JB then a lesser and a greater would correspond, which is impossible, DB being the lesser and JB being the greater. If DB stands still while JB continues, then the end-point B will be limited and JB will be greater than DB by a measure equal to JD which is finite. Thus JB is also finite. It becomes evident, then, that such a number and such a measure are not infinite.

In a series of efficient causes for one thing, where one is a cause and another the cause of a cause, and where by nature there are also priority and posteriority for the causes (i.e. the series is ordered), these causes cannot be without a limit (i.e. they are not infinite). Accordingly, wherever there is such a structured series of causes, there must necessarily be a first cause. If there were an unlimited number of causes, either none of them would have a cause, or there would be a cause within the series which would have no cause. If there were one without a cause, then that would be the limit, and thus the series would not be unlimited. If no member of the series had a cause, then all would be effects and would be realized by an act. Since they form a sum which is one among the infinite entities, that sum will certainly not be uncaused for the reason that that sum itself is realized due to its effects. Since it is a series brought about by effects, there must be a cause for it external to the series. If that cause were also an effect, it would then have to belong to the sum. We have already asserted that it was external to the aforesaid sum. Hence it must be without a cause. As such it is a limit, and therefore the sum is finite having that cause as its limit.

To my knowledge, this is the first heuristic approximation of the concept of the transfinite in history.

We shall omit any discussion of the solution that Ibn Sina's definition of "existence" affords to the "Cratylus" problem of change versus changelessness, since it is rather too obvious — and also a rewarding exercise for the reader.

As a last item, I will point out the Avicennean solution to the Parmenides problem. Despite possible protestations from any number of quarters, the Parmenides problem must be proclaimed as already solved!

But it is not solved within the terms of the problem presented in Plato's celebrated dialogue. That is an absolute impossibility. Just like so many of the "Aristotle-Plato" antinomies whose solutions have been discussed in this report, the Parmenides problem is solved by attacking and demolishing its premises.

The premises of this particular problem are demolished when we make an assertion that will set all egalitarians, Maoists, democrats, and a goodly number of seasoned "dialectical materialists" howling and shrieking against us. To wit: there is a hierarchically structured order of "existence" of universals which constitutes the evolving material universe. This is fully spelt out in Ibn Sina's "hyperelitist" and most controversial theory, namely the theory of emanation.

The Parmenides paradoxes immediately cease to be of any interest once the universe is understood to be constituted by a hierarchically nested succession of existent universals. Then the so-called problems of whether a superior "existence" is embedded in the one (the universal) or the many (its particulars) becomes an idle game of fantasy!

Again, one proceeds from Ibn Sina's definition of the content of existence. An entity, whether bodily-material or intellectual, is said to actually exist when it willfully actualizes its essence. The essence of any such entity is located in its genus, the universal to which it belongs. Hence, a particular actually exists when living in the process of willfully actualizing its universality, its species being. And conversely, a universal does not exist except through this actualizing activity of its individual parts: substance undergoing self-differentiation by means of individuation. (23)

If you apply this dialectical reasoning to the evolving material universe as a whole, where in the ordered succession of universals whole classes of existent-universals act as individual member-parts of a higher-order universal, what you get is Ibn Sina's theory of

23. Uwe Parpart's "The Concept of the Transfinite," *The Campaigner*, Vol. IX, Nos. 1-2 (Jan.-Feb. 1976) provides the appropriate context.

emanation — a stroke of genius very damn close to the nested-manifold/world-line centered concept of universal evolution of modern physical science! (24)

Ibn Sina, at a time when not even the law of universal gravitation had been articulated, through his mastery of the totality of natural and social sciences of his time, had adduced the following conclusions, in the concluding parts of chapter 54 and the whole of chapter 55 of his *Metaphysics*:

... It has become apparent that the cause of these bodies is neither a body nor a material form. Consequently, there must be an immaterial cause and a separate intelligence for each. It has also become evident that such a moving separated intelligence is in no manner an agent of causation. Accordingly, its mover is a soul rather than a body which recognizes particulars. The soul of that substratum and of that body are of similar nature. Thus, a separate intelligence, unique as its beloved, is the cause for each body. From this separated intelligence each body seeks its proper direction, so that there is an independent, distinct motion for each. Indeed, bodies must be of such a nature that there will be distinct motions for different natures. Since we have established that this motion is due to the soul,

24. See Warren Hamerman, op. cit.; Lyn Marcus, *Dialectical Economics*, Lexington, Mass, 1975.

these natures are the very soul-selves themselves.

55. Finding how these intelligence substances, soul-self substances, and the primary bodies emanate from the Necessary Existent.

The intelligence-existent must come first from the Necessary Existent, as we have asserted. In one respect another intelligence emanates from that intelligence, whereas in another respect a body emanates from the primordial bodies. If they are numerous, and we shall establish that they are numerous, then from that intelligence another intelligence must proceed, and from the primordial body another body must emanate. Subsequent emanations continue similarly to the last level of the primordial bodies. And from any intelligence comes another intelligence substance according to the aspect to which it has become a Necessary Existent in essence, which is essentially due to the Necessary Existent and due to the intuition and conception it has of the Necessary Existent. Inasmuch as it contains a contingent being, a material substance can come from it. It has already been affirmed that the possibility of realizing the emanation of diversity and multiplicity from the one reality in this manner is fundamental to the process.

Ibn Sina's Influence in Europe

Shortly after Ibn Sina died, the inevitable collapse occurred in Islamic civilization. The Ghaznavids took over the lands of the Eastern Caliphate, soon to be overrun by the armies of the Seljuk Turks. As a result, religious reaction triumphed, Ibn Sina was outlawed and his books burned. The theologian al-Ghazali led the witchhunt with his notorious book *Destruction of Philosophy*. The last salvos of resistance were fired far in the West, in Cordova where Ibn Sina's teachings had reached soon after his death: Averroës (Ibn Rushd), a native of Muslim Cordova, wrote his *Destruction of the Destruction* in retaliation to al-Ghazali. The matter was terminally concluded in the Islamic world with a ludicrous little treatise, entitled *Destruction of the Destruction of the Destruc-*

tion, written by one Hodja Zada on orders from Sultan Mohammed II the Conqueror right after the capture of Constantinople in 1453.

But as the lands of Islam were falling into barbarism, in the year of Constantinople's fall, the first spectacular conquests of the humanist faction began registering with the Italian Renaissance. But those developments and the men and women that shaped them during the fifteenth century, had not appeared on the scene accidentally. They were the fruits of a heroic struggle which had started in the years 1130-50 when the first translations of Ibn Sina's works into Latin were being made in Toledo and Sicily.

Those were the formative years of the West's humanist faction, a heritage which down to our day

has been arrogantly mistaken as the exclusive contribution of the West. This is not true. The father of European humanism is the great Ibn Sina.

The First Period of Western Avicennism

From a certain vital standpoint, virtually all extant European historiography up to now is pure rubbish! Rewriting it competently, which is rewriting from the standpoint of the fact that the present populations of that continent owe their existence and all the defensible features of their civilized achievement to a tiny, pugnacious band of revolutionary intellectuals, the humanist faction, will bring to light the fact that the actual creator and inspirator of this faction, through the centuries, was the philosopher-warrior of Isfahan.

This faction was made up of exceptional individual members who throughout the centuries, from generation to generation, maintained closely knit personal or intellectual ties and fought. They fought with arms in hand, with books, with deceit, with heroism, with wit, desperation, ruthlessness, compassion but above all with absolute determination. In short, they fought with all means. Their ranks include Roger Bacon, Michael Scot, Nicholas of Cusa, Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, the fiery Giordano Bruno, Benedict Spinoza, René Descartes and others. Their ranks included great politicians and soldiers the most remembered of whom are the Hohenstaufens with their great Frederick II, nicknamed in his time "Stupor Mundi," and the English Tudors with their Henry VIII.

The first phase of this faction's formation occurs during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, of which we are going to outline two features to be filled in when more rigorous practices are subscribed to by our generation's scholars and historians. The first feature will be the broad socio-economic issues that shaped those two centuries. The second, Ibn Sina's specific role in forming the group of men who started the humanist faction under those adverse conditions.

The political map of Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was fundamentally shaped by the interaction of three forces: 1) Guelph feudal reaction led by an alliance between the Pope and France's Capetian kings; 2) Ghibelline efforts to build secular power that would break the united front between religion and feudal local control, led by the Hohenstaufen family with its power centers in Sicily, Lombardy and Germany; 3) the leading figures of the just emerging urban intelligentsia which had begun forming around cathedral schools and university towns since the end of the Carolingian renaissance. This was the "balancing factor" whose alignment would tilt the

balance either way — without them neither Pope nor Emperor could run Europe.

These three factions fought over which way the problems raised by Europe's then rapidly growing population should be solved. The marginal reforms and technological improvements introduced by the Carolingian renaissance had resulted in rapid increases of both arable lands and agricultural yields in the tenth century and led to a rapid increase, during the eleventh, of feudal surplus in the form of a "population explosion." Then available technologies severely restricted what was to be considered arable land after the initial expansion was completed. Feudal estates soon found themselves at each others' throats as each one's excess hands were being turned into soldiers bent on taking over their neighbors' agricultural estates. The entire continent was thus engulfed in an ocean of thuggery and gang warfare threatening to tear society to pieces.

The Guelph-Papal faction, faced with this problem, opted programmatically for generalized, organized total warfare, the Crusades. In the year 1090, the Pope, in a great assembly of landlord bishops and land-starved feudal lords gathered from all over Europe, proclaimed the First Crusade:

"Go fight over there!"

It turned out that not only the looting expeditions against the "infidels" but all military operations against every kind of opponent to the Pope-Guelph coalition were proclaimed a "crusade." The Fourth Crusade was directed against the schismatic Eastern Orthodox church. A civil war between France's Capetian monarchy and the commercial culture of Languedoc was proclaimed a crusade. The final struggle of the Pope against the Hohenstaufens was proclaimed a crusade; Emperor Frederick II was proclaimed the Antichrist on earth and excommunicated no less than three times. Pope Innocent IV tried to beef up his troops for his campaigns in Italy by forbidding the preaching of crusades for the Holy Land in Germany. Every available German soldier was to be sent to the Italian front; it had been resolved early in the thirteenth century by the Popes that the virus of Hohenstaufen-Ghibelline ideology had to be destroyed in Europe before the overseas looting expeditions could resume.

The direct opposition to this political platform of war and plunder was the political program advanced by the Avicennean intelligentsia, the great intellectual Roger Bacon (1214-1294) and his faction in the universities of France, England and Italy, which at one point had succeeded in infiltrating the Papal Curia.

Roger Bacon's major written work, his *Opus Maius*, is an explicitly political programmatic document which from the standpoint of complete rejection of the

Pope's program of war and plunder lays out the alternative solution to the problems of disintegrating feudal society.

Christian princes who labour for the unbelievers' conversion, especially the Teutonic Knights, really wish to reduce them to slavery, as Dominicans, Franciscans and other reliable men throughout Germany and Poland have clearly ascertained. And therefore the pagans defend themselves, not because they have a better religion, but simply because they are resisting violence. (25)

After a sharp attack against the four principal causes of ignorance — authority, habit, prejudice and conceit — the *Opus Maius* of Roger Bacon presents the program for a complete renovation and reorganization of man's intellectual forces for the purpose of resolving the social crisis. It calls for what today would amount to a "Manhattan Project" crash program to boost experimental science, mathematical research, wide dissemination of foreign languages in the population, initiation of research projects in chemistry, optics, medicine, mechanics, agricultural technologies and a general upgrading of the population's skills, productivity and education. In this work, he invokes Ibn Sina's scientific authority on behalf of his arguments. And he calls Ibn Sina by the celebrated appellation "Dux et Princeps Philosophorum."

On the other hand, as Roger Bacon's sly sniping against the "Teutonic Knights" in the above quoted passage indicates, the third European faction, the Hohenstaufen-Ghibellines, did in the earlier phase of the conflict take advantage of the Crusades to help themselves to some extra land. But when it came down to irrepressible fundamentals, the Hohenstaufen policy was to build a centralized secular state, based on urban-commercial classes which were to be brought into existence by means of an imperial implementation of the general program advanced by the Roger Bacon faction.

It was not, of course, a Roger Bacon faction in a literal sense. Bacon himself was the product of a ferment that had stirred the continent from 1130-50, the years during which the passionate Peter Abelard (26) was beginning to identify the political issues

and also the years of the Toledo translations of Ibn Sina's works. These translations, one full decade before Peter Abelard's death, had already flooded every single European center of learning, conduited through the channels among the schools of Toledo, Palermo, Bologna and later Padua on the southern route, and Toledo, Chartres, St. Victor, Paris, and Oxford on the northern. And men like Roger Marston, Siger of Brabant, Michael Scot, David of Dinand, and Amalric of Bene had become or were becoming in Bacon's time recognized public spokesmen of Ibn Sina's works.

During that time, there was virtually no Aristotle or Plato in the European universities. Translations of Aristotle's major works did not appear until 1210, a full seventy years after Ibn Sina had become the hegemonic force among literate Europeans.

The mood of the population at large during that time was rebellious, raunchy, irreverent, full of "rising expectations," in short ready to respond to the Avicennians' call. Characteristic of the popular jokes of the period was the reference to Carolingian law not as *lex* (law) but as *fex* (dung). As for the proper use of biblical quotations, your thirteenth century wiseacre was giving the following advice:

A fellow who carnally knew a nun said "I have not violated the divine bed, but, because the Lord delighted me in his creature, I have striven to exalt his horn." Again a nun could say to her lover: "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Or wives may say to their lovers: "Give us of your oil, for our lamps have gone out."

Therefore, the reaction of the religious establishment to this explosive mix of Avicennean-scientific awakening in the universities, Hohenstaufen arms, and grand popular humor (always a herald of the coming of great days) was one of great alarm and mobilization. The Church militant came into existence. It was then that the Dominican Order was formed for the great twin task of burning at the stake every humorist in the raunchy towns of Languedoc and of extirpating the influence and memory of Ibn Sina forever.

Of course they failed in their latter undertaking even though, as everyone knows, French humor did

excellence of neighboring Moorish Spain, Abelard rapidly created a polarized revolutionary climate among the clerical and lay Schoolmen of France. His debate-duels with rival theologians invariably drew enormous crowds of enthusiastic audiences. He virtually wrecked organized ecclesiastic life singlehandedly. The Church retaliated with a vicious repression, dispersing his disciples, forbidding him to talk, castrating him physically and sending him into exile. When the first translations of Ibn Sina reached the Cathedral University of Chartres, Peter Abelard was still living in exile. We have no record that he ever read Ibn Sina.

25. Roger Bacon, *Opus Maius*.

26. The case of Peter Abelard (1079-1142) is of crucial significance because it embodies the spirit of intellectual ferment in Western Europe right before Ibn Sina's great works were translated in Toledo and Sicily. Abelard, with his celebrated companion Heloise, created a veritable revolution throughout France by forcefully reintroducing a fascinating, near-voluntarist, Neoplatonic epistemological interpretation of the Scriptures. Drawing on the heritage of the great fifth century African Neoplatonic Saint Augustine and on the cultural

not survive the Dominican onslaught despite Rabelais' great counterattack.

The Dominicans, however, are responsible for the widespread myth of Ibn Sina, the "commentator of Aristotle." The episode which created this tradition involved three illustrious Dominicans, Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus and William of Auvergne and is as follows.

The Dominican Reaction

The first churchman who developed the tactic of praising Aristotle in order to obscure the issues raised by Ibn Sina was a man who despised Aristotle, one William Bishop of Auvergne, later Bishop of Paris and Chancellor of the University of Paris from 1210 to 1249. His tenure as Chancellor included the memorable events of the official condemnation, en masse, of Aristotle, Ibn Sina, Plato and others in 1210 and the complete shutdown of the university during 1229-31 when the revolutionary ferment was posing a very serious threat to the alliance between the Pope and the French king.

William Bishop of Auvergne led the Church's war against the "Albigensian heresy" of Languedoc and Provence, Europe's first, almost successful mass Protestant movement. There, he first experienced the horror of seeing his lay and clerical subordinates join his enemies' ranks while quoting Ibn Sina and on occasion Aristotle in his face. William's efforts against the heresy had proven a complete failure when the adventurer Dominic arrived on the scene with a brand new charter from the Pope for the establishment of the Dominican Order for the purpose of defeating the Albigensian heresy.

The Dominican counterinsurgency plan failed to work, and Dominic withdrew, advising the Pope to send in the troops. William of Auvergne moved to Paris while the armored cavalry of the king of France ravaged southern France for the next twenty years. In Paris, William started a close collaboration with another famous Dominican, Albertus Magnus, the teacher of Thomas Aquinas.

The two men, William and Albertus, after the initial clumsy prohibition of 1210 which was soon revoked, concentrated their efforts against Ibn Sina's influence in particular. Ibn Sina's doctrine of creative mentation as the necessity for freedom, with its explicit claim that the human intellect is a direct participant in the creation of the universe — and its corollary that the "creation" is a perpetually ongoing process — was correctly seen as a deadly threat to the doctrine and the institutions of the Church.

Hence, William and Albertus concluded that the

authority of Aristotle was required to break the hold that Ibn Sina was maintaining among the intellectuals. At this point, the myth began being cultivated that Ibn Sina was a "commentator" of Aristotle. The available evidence indicates that this ploy was a failure until the conclusion of the military operations in southern France. When that mass movement was drowned in blood, William launched a terror campaign against the University which included excommunications, assassinations, burnings at the stake, imprisonments, the exhuming of heretics' cadavers and their macabre burning along with books, and other atrocities. It culminated with the complete shutdown of the University for two years.

When the University reopened, terror was institutionalized with the Inquisition. The mass movement was smashed, the leading intellectuals exiled, isolated or under the ground. Finally, the thus decapitated Schoolmen of Paris and other parts of Europe started succumbing to the teaching of Albertus Magnus and, later, Thomas Aquinas which relegated Ibn Sina to the status of "Aristotle's commentator." The extent of this terror explains the cautious tones to which Roger Bacon resorts whenever he discusses immediate political subjects.

The Case of Thomas Aquinas

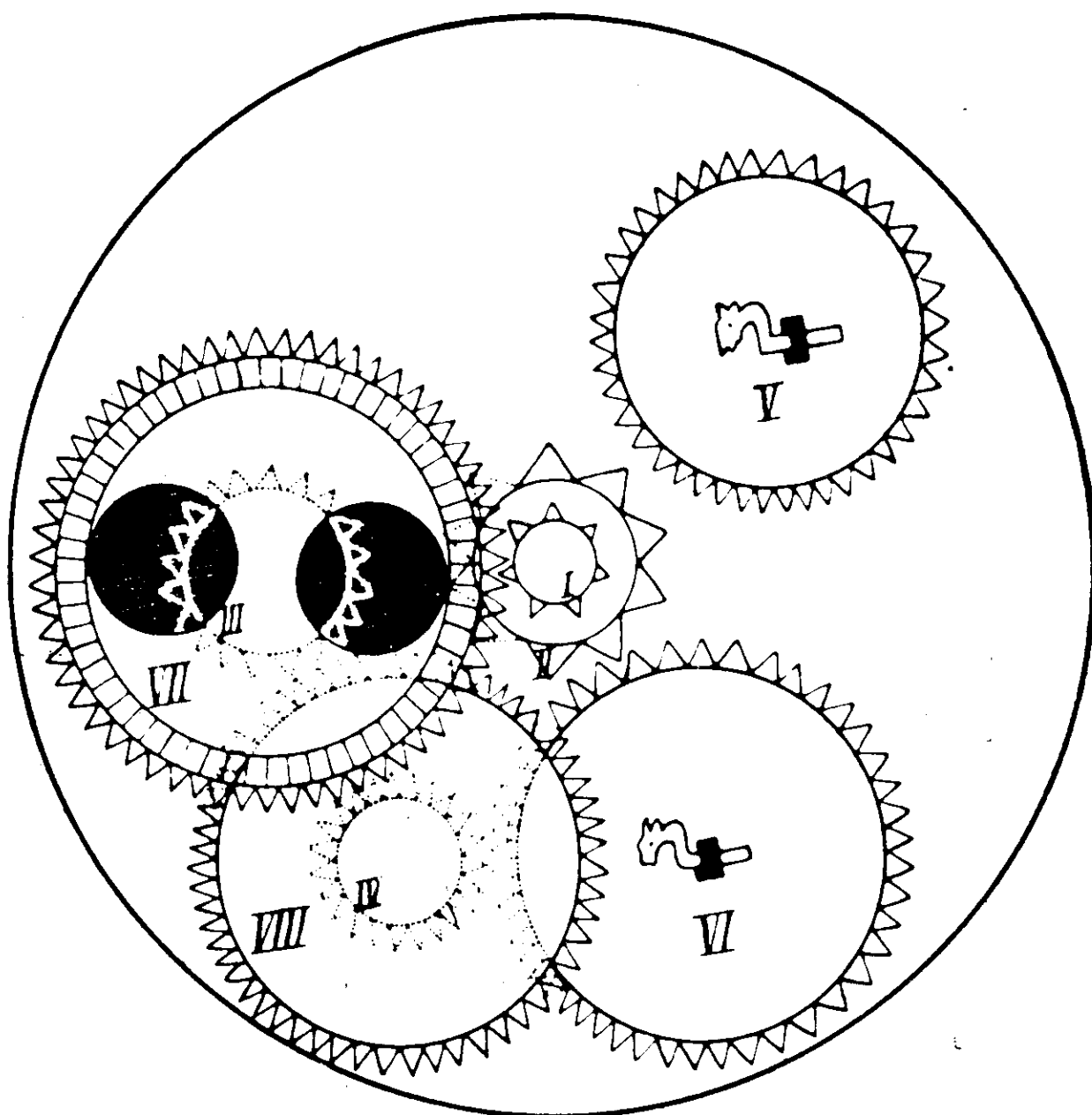
When the Saint Thomas Aquinas went to teach the Church's Aristotle in Paris as a young man in 1252, his Avicennian opponents were still fighting, even though the terror of the earlier years had made them wise in the ways of the world. The putrescence of spirit that prevailed at the university is captured by the way in which Roger Bacon, freshly arrived from Oxford to Paris in 1245, reports on his impressions of the University's prize Aristotelian, Alexander of Hales who was Aquinas' predecessor: "There is only one remarkable thing about Hales, and that is that his Summa Theological weighs more than a horse."

In the struggles that followed, none of Aquinas' opponents known to us was defeated by the Saint's arguments, and Roger Bacon eventually died in jail, defiant and unrepentant. Bacon, whose death came twenty years after that of his junior Aquinas, might have experienced a thoughtful sort of bitter vindication if he knew the circumstances that led to the remarkable death of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

From the evidence available one may justifiably assume that the spirit of Saint Thomas was broken when he experienced the full intellectual terror that Ibn Sina's theory represents to minds afflicted by the Aristotelian disease. There is evidence in Aquinas' most controversial, least organized and seemingly



The astrolabe was the device most widely employed in the Middle Ages to record the positions of stars and planets, and to guide ships. The Islamic world was the acknowledged leader in their production and development. Above right, Syro-Egyptian astrolabe of the late ninth century; above left, more crudely crafted English astrolabe of about 1260, the period when Roger Bacon was the leading exponent of Ibn Sina's ideas in Europe. Important innovations in calendrical gearing of astrolabes were made by al-Biruni, Ibn Sina's sometimes contentious astronomer colleague (illustration of his gear assembly, right), and Ibn Sina was himself an innovator in astronomical instrumentation. The development of the geared astrolabe was a step toward the modern mechanical clock.



most puzzling work, his *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei*, that he had already gotten very close to facing Ibn Sina's challenge in its pure form, in the form of mind conceptualizing Absolute Being as its own.

This would have put Aquinas in the following paradoxical position: Ibn Sina argues that man is creative mentation, self-consciousness acting as God's power of creation.

Any human mind which sets itself the task to disprove this is placed in the paradoxical position of trying to create concepts which prove the thesis that mind cannot create concepts.

Now, Aquinas' circumstances of life were not similar to the ones which allowed Aristotle to retreat from the horror of Absolute Being and continue to live a compromised life. After his last intellectual struggles against the Avicennean faction at the University of Paris from 1269 to 1272, Aquinas had hoped to withdraw from public life. But when Pope Gregory X ordered him to attend the 1274 Council of Lyons, the road to compromise had been cut off. Thus, the historian of the Dominican Fathers records:

The writing career of Thomas came suddenly to an end on December 6, 1273. While saying mass that morning a great change came over him and afterwards he ceased to write or dictate. Urged by his companion to complete the *Summa*, he replied: "I can do no more; such things have been revealed to me that all I have written seems as a straw, and now I await the end of my life." Early the following year he was appointed by Pope Gregory X to attend the General Council of Lyons. Overcome by illness shortly after his departure from Naples, he retired to the Cistercian monastery of Fossanova. There he commented on the Song of Solomon at the request of the monks and died, March 7, 1274. (27)

Despite this, by the time of his death Aquinas' faction had carried the day. The Hohenstaufens had been broken militarily, reaction was dominant in the Universities and the victors, the Pope-Guelph-Capet-Anjou faction, were utterly exhausted — after the Sicilian Vespers revolt, no more crusades and looting expeditions abroad were possible.

With this defeat of the humanist faction, there followed a century of suffering and disaster for the popu-

lations of Europe — the fourteenth century of the Hundred Years' War, the Black Death, and the Avignon Schism.

From the Devotio Moderna to Spinoza

After the debacle of the fourteenth century, the threads of Ibn Sina's influence are picked up again with the Italian Renaissance. The remarkable Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa introduces into the Papal Curia the study of Ibn Sina. His political program is very much like Roger Bacon's both in its attempts to foster grandiose scientific projects and in its diplomatic efforts to forge a commercial alliance between Western Europe, Byzantium and the Caliphate of Cairo.

Also, the leading intellects of the Florentine Renaissance, Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola are systematic students of Ibn Sina, the latter an accomplished Arabist who studies him in the original. Two additional remarkable events during this period give Ibn Sina's influence a dramatic boost. One is the flowering of the remarkable University of Padua where all the great intellects of Europe gather, including the men who shaped and launched the Tudor Renaissance, John Colet, Thomas More and their friends. The University of Padua was during that time Europe's most iconoclastic center where the study of Ibn Sina's works, both philosophical and scientific, was carried out systematically as part of the curriculum. The second remarkable event was the introduction of printing which made Ibn Sina's works available on a mass scale.

The world shaking developments that were caused by this great intellectual revival are well known. Despite the political ups and downs, scientific progress maintained an uninterrupted course down to our day. Some of the more spectacular personalities of this epic, who were directly influenced by Ibn Sina's works, are Giordano Bruno who was burned at the stake on Easter Sunday 1600, probably on orders from the Fuggers, because he claimed that the mind of man participates with its actions in the eternally ongoing creation of nature; also René Descartes who hails from the same Paduan circles where Bruno had conducted his struggles.

But Descartes presents a curious feature. He never seems to have mentioned either Ibn Sina or Arab Avicenneans such as, for example, Averroës. If one considers Descartes' very sly and cautious attitude toward clergymen, one can assume that the memory of Bruno's burning had inflicted him with a serious case of Galileo's disease — a certain sort of precautionary political cowardice. Nevertheless, it has been established that there is more than coincidental intellectual

affinity between Descartes and Ibn Sina. In the year 1927, a study appeared in the periodical *Islamica*, by Prof. G. Furlani, "Avicenna e il Cogito Ergo Sum di Cartesio," which demonstrates that Descartes' celebrated Existence Theorem is not only "like" Ibn Sina's arguments but that indeed, it was written as a result of Descartes' studying a 1508 edition of Ibn Sina's works on psychology that was circulating in Padua.

The case of Benedict Spinoza's relation to Ibn Sina is slightly different. We know that the libraries of Holland, especially Leyden, were carrying Ibn Sina manuscripts from the very early times, probably in connection with the activities of the Brotherhood of the Common Life. (28) We also know that continuously through the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries there were tiny, agile groups of doctors, scholars, Arabists, travelers, and all passionate devotees of Ibn Sina who made sure that his works were translated and circulating between Padua, Paris, Oxford and Leyden. (29) But again there is no evidence that Spinoza read Ibn Sina.

On the other hand, Spinoza is known to have studied Averroës (Ibn Rushd) and Averroës's Jewish follower Avicbron from whom his philosophy is profoundly influenced. At any rate, one must regard Averroës as a follower of Ibn Sina, and thus Spinoza is influenced by Ibn Sina indirectly precisely to the extent that Averroës is. Characteristically, Spinoza's and Averroës's celebrated "pantheistic" *natura naturans* is a purely Avicennean conception; at the same time, Spinoza differs from Ibn Sina on exactly the same crucial point that Averroës differs with him; the theory of individuation.

This difference (and we must make the point here to dispense with issue of Averroist versus Avicennean influences in the development of European thought) is, as Hegel reminds us with respect to Spinoza's death: "The cause of his death was consumption, from which he had long been a sufferer; this was in harmony with his system of philosophy according to which all particularity and individuality pass away in the one sub-

stance." This was precisely the *differentia specifica* between Averroës and Ibn Sina. Averroës was rather vehement in rejecting Ibn Sina's theory of individuation in a very peculiar way, namely by discussing the issue in terms of the soul of the individual. Averroës insisted that the individual soul does exist after death because it melts away into the One substance, becomes one with God, and thus all the threats of Hell-fire and Divine Retribution are idle boasts of religious reactionaries. He also imputed from Ibn Sina's theory of individuation that Ibn Sina subscribed to the theory of immortality of the soul and was thus making an unprincipled concession to the pressure of theologians.

In retrospect we know that Averroës was wrong in fact as well as in theory. First of all, Ibn Sina, having had the fortune to die some twenty years before the birth of the reactionary theologian al-Ghazali, who was Averroës' nemesis, did not have the religious hangups from which Averroës necessarily suffered as a result of the religious persecutions of his own time.

However, this controversy over immortality and Hell is very important as a practical matter for thoughtful people. In a certain sense, Hell exists, so long as the souls of men are tormented by fear, ignorance and servitude. But this Hell exists not in some other world, but in the deep, unconscious processes of living minds. It would be amusing to try to reconstruct how Ibn Sina would react to the scene from Goethe where Mephistopheles informs the inquisitive Faust that "Hell is here, where we are walking."

It would be appropriate, however, to let the reader draw his own conclusion on the subject after reading what Ibn Sina's views on the matter are, not in one of his usual tightly structured arguments, but in a poem that he once wrote entitled *Ode to the Soul*:

Out of her lofty home she hath come down
Upon thee, this white dove in all the pride
Of her reluctant beauty; veiled is she
From every eye eager to know her, though
In loveliness, unshrouded radiant.
Unwilling she came, and yet perchance
Still more unwilling to be gone from thee;
So she is torn by griefs. First she refrained,
Being all unaccustomed; but at last,
When she was firmly knit, she loved the use
Of being neighbor to this arid waste.
And now methinks she hath forgotten quite
The tents where once she dwelt, the far abodes
She was so little satisfied to leave.
So, being now united with these depths
And parted from the sandy hills of yore,
Her wings are heavy upon her, and she rests
Dejected 'mid these waymarks and mean mounds

28. The Brotherhood of the Common Life, established in Holland in 1384, was the institution which launched the Devotio Moderna and thus a crucial project of the historical Western humanist faction. In some ways reminiscent of the "Brethren of Purity" in the caliphate, the Brotherhood established a network of educational institutions throughout Western Europe from which virtually every leading European humanist got his education: Nicholas of Cusa, Erasmus, Thomas a Kempis, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Paracelsus, et al.

29. Leads for research into this are supplied by Nicholas Rescher in his *Studies in Arabic Philosophy*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966, chapter 10, The Impact of Arabic Philosophy on the West. The evidence is there, despite the author's flawed — and puzzling — assertion that Arab philosophical influence on the West is insignificant.

Weeping (yet she remembereth not her home
 Of yore), until her tears abundant flow,
 And she not yet set forth. But when the time
 Is nigh for her departing to that place
 And near the hour to be upon her way
 Unto the broader plain, then perching high
 Upon the topmost steed, she carolleth —
 For knowledge doth uplift the lowliest heart —
 With ken of every hidden mystery
 In all the world returning, still unstopped
 The orifice of heeding; and it proves
 Her coming down was necessary woe
 That she might list to truth else all unheard.
 Why then was she cast down from her high peak
 To this degrading depth? God brought her low,
 But for a purpose wise, that is concealed
 E'en from the keenest mind and liveliest wit.
 And if the tangled mesh impeded her,
 The narrow cage denied her wings to soar
 Freely in heaven's high ranges, after all
 She was a lightning flash that brightly glowed
 Momently o'er the tents, and then was hid
 As though its gleam was never glimpsed below.

Hence, the last item that remains to be said is how Ibn Sina's spirit lived on — what was the specific way in which he influenced the course of events.

Avicenna created no school of followers, nor has there really existed any faction with the self-designation "Avicennian" as there are self-designated Aristotelians, Platonists and so forth. This is justly so. Those thinkers most profoundly affected by his discoveries themselves rose to great heights of independent achievement where any classification by "school of thought" would be superfluous. His enemies engaged in a systematic effort to obliterate both his scientific work and his memory. The larger number of lettered people in the middle were swayed by the power of his influence without, for the most part, being conscious of it.

Avicenna's epistemological discoveries created a powerful, all-pervasive field of intellectual force which, like a gravitational field, influenced everything around it without that influence being necessarily contingent on consciousness of the existence of the field.

When one reflects upon the influence over history exerted by geniuses who themselves were influenced by Avicenna, one is tempted to resort to Avicenna's own formulations to describe the quality of this ever so subtle and yet so pervasive influence.

In his *Metaphysics*, which is a systematic description of the creative process often bordering on the autobiographical, he demonstrates that "the aim

of the Necessary Existent is not direct motion or interference with the order of the world, but is represented as an influence on the appropriate agents which move the world." (30)

The distinctive feature of this passionate, heroic, nearly autobiographical *Metaphysics* which places it apart from any other product of human genius that preceded it, is its persistent and systematic aim to communicate, by means of then available tools of language, the existence of creativity as a primary existent.

Reviewing that epic effort from the intervening distance of one thousand years, one is struck by how little civilization has progressed in its ability to communicate the experience of creative mentation through the mediation of written (or spoken) language.

How fiery Avicenna's preoccupation was with this problem of communicating to his fellow human beings a fundamental *immediate* existent, creativity, through the *mediation* of language, is seen by the fact that in the course of his life he wrote three entirely different versions of his *Metaphysics*, each with its own poetical innovations, rich metaphors and striking devices of communication.

Thus, for the eye of the thirsting reader, what is laid out in the pages of the *Metaphysics* is not merely the structured succession of axioms, proofs, theorems and descriptions. These are there, to be sure. But only as beautiful artifacts whose purpose, cause, and design are to guide the reader, as directly as possible, to the force that causes them — the very process of mind as axiom-generating force which is realized by means of generating an axiomatic experience of creative mentation *in the reader's own mind*.

Avicenna's pen is guided by the knowledge that the only possible *description* of the object of his fierce concern, creativity, is the actual replication of the very process in his reader's mind.

The impact on the qualified reader of a work of such design is that, in the course of reading and replicating Avicenna's thoughts, he or she discovers a growing ability to willfully access his or her own creative powers, and thus willfully bringing them forward, to make them the explicit, immediate subject matter of study.

The mental process which occurs in the mind of the qualified reader (the one who has known the experience of creativity) establishes a bond — an *existent* relationship which has the character of identity between the knower, the known, and knowledge as their in-betweenness — between himself and the author. This unique result occurs specifically

in studying the work of such exceptional thinkers as Hegel and LaRouche whose primary concern and subject is, identically with Avicenna's, the replication of the creative process per se in the reader.

The cause of this is what Avicenna discovered to be, in heuristic approximation, the principle of universal lawfulness, the Necessary Existent: for a self to be realized as a creative *existent*, it must, *necessarily*, replicate the process of creativity in other individuals.

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Appendix

Major Events in Islamic History

The extent of medieval Islamic territory and important locations cited in this table are indicated on the map on the back cover.

- 570: Birth of Muhammad.
- 632: Death of Muhammad.
- 661: Assassination of Muhammad's son-in-law Ali, leading to the usurpation of the caliphate by the Umayyads, who transfer the capital of Islam from Mecca to Damascus.
- 670: Founding of Qairawan in North Africa, near the site of Carthage, which played a significant role in the reemergence of Mediterranean trade.
- 711: Islamic conquest of Spain.
- 712: Islamic conquest of Sind (India).
- 718-32: Islamic invasion of France.
- 750: Abbasid revolution: the Abbas wing of the Quraysh family (Muhammad's family) seizes power from the Umayyads and moves the seat of Islam to Baghdad.
- 754: The great Abbasid Caliph Mansur comes to power.
- 755: The Umayyad Abdul Rahman establishes Umayyad rule in Spain, and remains independent of the Abbasids.
- 763: Foundation of the city of Baghdad, the new capital of the Abbasid caliphate.
- 786: Harun al-Rashid comes to power in Baghdad.
- 788: Establishment of the independent Idrisid emirate in the Maghrib (Northwest Mediterranean coast of Africa).
- 800: Establishment of Aghlabid rule in North Africa.
- 809: Death of Harun al-Rashid.
- 812-13: The "Siege of Baghdad": civil war between Harun's two sons Amin and Mamun over the throne. Mamun succeeds in gaining power in 813, and establishes the famed "House of Wisdom," the first centralized translating institution, which made available numerous works of Greek science and philosophy in the Islamic world.
- 821: General Tahir receives provisional independent status in the Persian trading province of Khurasan and thus creates the Tahirid emirate.
- 827-43: Islamic conquest of Sicily and southern Italy.
- 833: Death of Mamun, the last of the enlightened Abbasid caliphs. From 833 on, the period of Abbasid disintegration begins.

- 838: Caliph Mutasim moves the seat of Abbasid government to a newly constructed site north of Baghdad, Samarra. The move is made as a result of growing political instability in the caliphate.
- 847: Accession of Caliph Mutawakkil marks a sharp reactionary turn in the Abbasid royal family, as Turkish guards become more active in determining caliphal policy.
- 861-974: Succession of 13 puppet caliphs in Baghdad controlled by various Persian-dominated factions including, toward the end of the period, the Buwayhids. Five were murdered, three deposed and blinded, and five died natural deaths.
- 875-99: Independent Samanid emirate rules in Transoxiana. Its capital is the trading center of Bukhara, where Ibn Sina spends part of his youth.
- 909: Establishment of the Fatimid (from Fatima, Muhammad's daughter who was married to Ali) caliphate in Mahdiya near modern Tunis by the Ismaili movement, as a counter-caliphate to degenerated Baghdad.
- 912-61: The great Umayyad Caliph Abdul Rahman III rules in Andulus (Andalucia).
- 943: Samamid ruler Emir Nasr publicly converts to Ismailism in an effort to block the ascendancy of the Buwayhids.
- 944-67: Enlightened Saif al-Dawla is Emir of Aleppo, and sponsors the philosopher and music theoretician Al Farabi.
- 945: Buwayhid Emir Muizz al-Dawla gains power in Baghdad, leaving the caliph only a figurehead. The Buwayhid move into Baghdad occurs during a period when the Abbasid treasury was bankrupt. Buwayhid power is based on compromise with religious reaction.
- 969: Fatimid Caliph Al Muizz conquers Egypt from the Abbasids.
- 972: Fatimids found the city of Cairo as the new capital of the caliphate.
- 978: Umayyad rule breaks down in Spain into a network of smaller, party alliances.
- 980: Ibn Sina born in Balkh, spends his youth in Samanid Bukhara.
- 983-1055: Decline and civil wars of the Buwayhids.
- 999: Founding of the Ghaznavid Dynasty by the Turk and ex-Samanid guardsman Mahmud.
- 999: Collapse of the Samanids under the Ghaznavid dynasty of Seljuk Turks.
- 1002: Ibn Sina leaves Bukhara for Gurganj, to escape the Ghaznavids.
- 1014: Ibn Sina allies himself with al-Sayyida and her brother Prince Ala al-Dawla, the last rulers of the Persian Renaissance, against both the Turks and the Buwayhids.
- 1029: Seljuk (Turkish) invasions of Khurasan.
- 1037: Death of Ibn Sina.
- 1055: Capture of Baghdad by the Turk Tughril Beg.
- 1095: Pope Urban II appeals for aid for eastern Christendom; beginning of the Crusades.
- 1146: Fall of Fatimid rule in Egypt to the Sunni, Saladin.
- 1220-25: Genghis Khan devastates Persia.
- 1231-43: Mongol conquest of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Asia Minor.
- 1258: Mongol Hulagu captures Baghdad, ending the 500 years of Abbasid rule.

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