

## IBN SĪNĀ : GENIUS OF ARAB-ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

MOHAMED FOUAD AINTABI

Aleppo, Syria

“Before he can understand himself man must first understand the universe from which all his sense perceptions are drawn. He wishes to explore the universe, both in space and time, because he himself forms part of it, and it forms part of him.”<sup>1</sup>

Precocious genius radiates in several aspects by the beaming vision and the glittering wisdom, sustained by a strong will, perseverance, standing firm against all difficulties and hardships that obstruct the advancement of human kind.

Abū ‘Alī Ibn Sīnā, the great Arab scientist-philosopher, the pride and genius of Arab-Islamic civilization, was unique in his valuable contributions to the world of knowledge and human thought. He was a precocious genius ; his intellectual growth started at the age of ten. He continued his successful and mental development in spite of all difficulties that obstructed his path. He was a man of courage and indomitable will, endowed with a spirit that led him to become one of the greatest world personalities that lived since the dawn of history.

Ibn Sīnā was the torch-bearer of Arab-Islamic renaissance. He was known for his free will and genius as well, unique for his intellectual knowledge and independent spirit. His knowledge was encyclopedic, as he was physician, philosopher, administrator, man of letters, poet, *etc.*, as he was also deeply interested in all aspects of learning. His interest was not only confined to medicine, philosophy, natural sciences, physics, chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, but even to music, economics and politics.

He was fully acquainted with the legacy of Greece in all its aspects of knowledge that was rife in Greece and the ancient world. He followed the path of Aristotle, pursuing his philosophical ideas to its first sources. He acquired most of his knowledge of Greek thought from Syriac translations and commentaries. His aim was to reconcile science and religion.

Hence there was much in Ibn Sīnā with which Christians could agree and, when he came to the notice of the scholastics, he was on the whole a welcome discovery.<sup>2</sup>

In the fourth century of Islam, the Society of *Ikhwan uṣ-Ṣafā* “the Brethren of Sincerity” compiled 51 treatises on various aspects of knowledge and scientific ideas, their aim being the reconciliation between science and religion. The materials gathered came chiefly from Aristotle with Platonic ideas, and particularly from a universal soul which had a great influence on the Arab-Turkish philosopher, Al-Fārābī, whose paraphrases of Aristotle formed the basis on which Ibn Sīnā constructed his system, and his logical treatises produced a permanent effect on the logic of the Latin scholars.

The mystical poems of Ibn Sīnā are of the first order, ranking high with the sublime and most elaborate poetry in world literature, as shown by his philosophic poem ‘The Dove’. It is a poem of elevated spiritual radiation emerging from a deep source of religious belief.

God has given man an eternal soul for his spiritual life and salvation, because soul is eternal and infallible, free and not affected by material and transient affairs.

Plato argues that the soul (‘psyche’) is the principal of life and motion, and in Plato’s universe there is the Supreme Soul. Plato’s argument, however, established at once the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. Plato believed in immortality as he says : “The soul is immortal, because it has within itself a native source of spontaneous movement” and Plato maintains the “divinity” of the soul, and that because of its inherent divinity it is immortal, partaking of the Supreme Soul, the ultimate ‘unmoved first mover’.<sup>3</sup>

There are mental images which no definite word or sentences are adequate to express and elaborate ; and in a monotheistic sense, the object of Supreme Adoration—God—is the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, the One Supreme God.

After-life to Ibn Sīnā was real and a theme for eternal and happier life, everlasting and a universal Utopia : ideal, spiritual and theosophic.

As our vision has already been enlarged by historical research we have to consider that the works of Ibn Sīnā are the common property and legacy of mankind, and that his influence on the intellectual and scientific world, during a millennium, is supreme and everlasting.

In conclusion, while we are celebrating the millenary of the birth of Ibn Sīnā, we are fortunate in remembering him after such a long time, and his many works which he left for posterity, when all our vision is seeking to penetrate the unknown world of science, technology, and outer space in an ever-widening scope of knowledge, then let us discard and cast away all our base, temporal and whimsical

notions, in order to look forward to a far-widening horizon, in a spiritual magnitude, to common sense and a clear-sighted vision, to everlasting peace and world brotherhood.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup>Jeans, Sir James in *The Universe Around Us*, (C.U.P.).  
<sup>2</sup>Hawkins, D. J. B. in *A Sketch of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 51.  
<sup>3</sup>*Outline of Modern Belief*, vol. 2, p. 34.