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III. THE PYTHAGOREAN PHILOSOPHY.

1. NATURAL PHILOSOPHY.

1. Euclid and Ptolemy, Hippocrates and Galen, some portion of Aristotle, and, in addition, an abundant Neo-Platonic Literature,—indicate the elements of Arabic Natural Philosophy. It is a popular philosophy, which, chiefly through the instrumentality of the Sabaeans of Harran, found acceptance with the Shi'ites and other sects, and which in due course impressed not only court circles, but also a large body of educated and half-educated people. Stray portions of it were taken from the writings of the "Logician",—Aristotle,—*e.g.* from the "Meteorology", from the work "On the Universe", which has been attributed to him, from the "Book of Animals", from the "Psychology", and so on; but its general character was determined by Pythagorean-Platonic teaching, by the Stoics, and by subsequent astrologers and alchemists. Human curiosity and piety were fain to read the secrets of the Deity in the book of his Creation, and they proceeded in this search far beyond practical requirements, which merely called for a little arithmetic to serve in the division of inheritances and in trade, and a little astronomy besides, to determine the proper times for celebrating the functions of religion.

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Men hastened to gather wisdom from every quarter, and in so doing they manifested a conviction, which Masudi accurately expressed, when he said "Whatever is good should be recognized, whether it is found in friend or foe". Indeed Ali, the prince of believers, is reported to have said: "The wisdom of the world is the believer's strayed sheep: take it back, even though it come from the unbelieving".

[paragraph continues]

Pythagoras is the presiding genius of Mathematical study in Islam. Greek and Indian elements are mingled in it, it is true, but everything is regarded from a Neo-Pythagorean point of view. Without studying such branches of Mathematics, as Arithmetic and Geometry, Astronomy and Music, no one, they said, becomes a philosopher or an educated physician. The Theory of Numbers,—prized more highly than Mensuration, because it appeals less to the outward vision, and should bring the mind nearer the essence of things,—gave occasion to the most extravagant puerilities. God is, of course, the great Unity, from whom everything proceeds, who himself is no number, but who is the First Cause of Number. But above all, the number Four,—the number of the elements and so on,—was held in high favour by the philosophers; and by-and-by nothing in heaven or earth was spoken of or written about, except in sentences of four clauses and in discourses under four heads.

The transition from Mathematics to Astronomy and Astrology was rapid and easy. The old Eastern methods, which came into their hands, continued to be applied even by the court-astrologers of the Omayyads, but with still greater thoroughness at the Abbasid court. In this way

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they arrived at speculations which ran counter to the revealed Faith, and which therefore could never be approved of by the guardians of religion. The only antithesis which existed for the Believer was—God and the World, or this life and the next; but for the Astrologer there were two worlds, one of the Heavens and another of the Earth, while God and the life beyond were in the far distance. According to the different conceptions entertained of the relation which subsisted between the heavenly bodies and sublunary things, either a rational Astronomy was developed, or a fantastic Astrology. Only a few kept entirely free from Astrological delusions. As long, in fact, as the science was dominated by the Ptolemaic system, it was easier for the completely uneducated man to jeer at what was absurd in it than it was for the learned investigator to disprove the same. For the latter indeed this earth with its forms of life was a product of the forces of the heavens, a reflection of celestial light, an echo of the eternal harmony of the Spheres. Those then who ascribed conception and will to the Spirits of the stars and spheres, held them as the representatives of Divine providence, and thus traced to their agency both what is good and what is evil, seeking also to foretell future events from the situation of their orbs, by means of which they bring their influence to bear upon earthly things in accordance with steadfast laws. Others, it is true, had their doubts about this secondary providence, on grounds of experience and reason, or from the Peripatetic belief that the blessed existences of the heavens are Spirits of pure intellect, exalted above conception and will, and in consequence above all particularity that appeals to the senses, so that their providential influence is directed only

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to the good of the whole, but never can have reference to any individual occurrence.

3. In the domain of Natural Science Muslim learned men collected a rich body of material; but hardly in any case did they succeed in really treating it scientifically. In the separate Natural sciences, the development of which we cannot follow up in this place, they clung to traditional systems. To establish the wisdom of God and the operations of Nature,—which was regarded as a power or emanation of the World-Soul,—alchemistic experiments were instituted, the magical virtues of talismans tested, the effects of Music upon the emotions of men and animals investigated, and observations made on physiognomy, while attempts were also set on foot to explain the wonders of the life of sleep and of dreams, as well as those of soothsaying and prophecy, &c. As might be expected, the centre of interest was Man, as the Microcosm which must combine in itself all the elements and powers of the world together. The essential part of Man's being was held to be the Soul; and its relation to the World-Soul, and its future lot were made subjects of enquiry. There was also a good deal of speculation about the faculties of the soul and their localization in the heart and the brain. One or two adhered to Galen, but others went farther than he did, and made out five inner senses corresponding to the five outer ones,—a theory which, along with similar natural mysteries, was traced to Apollonius of Tyana.

Obviously the most diverse attitudes towards religious doctrine were possible in the study of Mathematical and Physical Science. But the propaedeutic sciences, as soon as they came forward on their own account, were always

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dangerous to the Faith. The assumption of the eternity of the world, and of an untreated matter in motion from all eternity,—was readily combined with Astronomy. And if the movement of the Heavens is eternal, so too are, no doubt, the changes which take place on earth. All the kingdoms of Nature then, according to many teachers, being eternal, the race of man is eternal also, wheeling round and round in an orbit of its own. There is therefore nothing new in the world: the views and ideas of men repeat themselves like everything else. All that can possibly be done, maintained or known, has already been and will again be.

Admirable discourse and lamentation were expended upon this theme, without much advancing thereby the interests of Science.

4. The science of Medicine, which on obvious grounds was favoured by the ruling powers, appears to have proved somewhat more useful. Its interests furnished one of the reasons, and not the least considerable, which induced the Caliphs to commission so many men to translate Greek authors. It is therefore not to be wondered at that the teachings of Mathematics and Natural Science, together with Logic, also affected Medicine intimately. The old-fashioned doctor was disposed to be satisfied with time-honoured magical formulae, and other empirical expedients; but modern society in the ninth century required philosophical knowledge in the physician. He had to know the "natures" of foods, stimulants or luxuries, and medicaments, the humours of the body, and in every case the influence of the stars. The physician was brother to the astrologer, whose knowledge commanded his respect, because it had a more exalted object than medical practice. He had to

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attend the lectures of the alchemist, and to practise his art in accordance .with the methods of Mathematics and Logic. It was not enough for the fanatics of education in the ninth century that a man had to speak, believe and behave in accordance with *Qiyas*,—that is to say, with logical correctness: he must, over and above, submit to be treated medically in accordance with *Qiyas*. The principles of Medicine were discussed in learned assemblies at the court of Wathik (842-847) like the foundations of Doctrine and Morals. The question, in fact, was asked, prompted by a work of Galen's, whether Medicine relies upon tradition, experience or rational knowledge, or whether on the other hand it derives its support from the principles of Mathematics and Natural Science by means of logical deduction (*Qiyas*).

5. The Natural Philosophy, which has just been rapidly sketched, actually stood for Philosophy with the most of the scholars of the ninth century, as contrasted with theological dialectic, and was styled Pythagorean. It lasted even into the tenth century, when its most important representative was the famous physician Razi († 923 or 932). Born in Rai he received a mathematical education and studied Medicine and Natural Philosophy with great diligence. He was averse to dialectic and was only acquainted with Logic as far as the categorical figures of the First Analytics. After having practised as director of the hospital in his native city and in Bagdad, he entered upon his travels and resided at various princely courts, amongst others at the court of the Samanid Mansur ibn Ishaq, to whom he dedicated a work on Medicine.

Razi has a high opinion of the medical profession and of the study which it demands. The wisdom of a thousand

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years, contained in books, he prizes more than the experiences of the individual man gained in one short life, but he prefers even these to deductions of the "Logicians" which have not been tested by experience.

He thinks that the relation between the body and the soul is determined by the soul. And seeing that in this way the circumstances and sufferings of the soul admit of being discerned by means of the physiognomy, the medical man has to be at the same time a physician of the soul. Therefore he drew up a system of spiritual medicine,—a kind of Dietetic of the Soul. The precepts of Muslim law, like the prohibition of wine, and so on, gave him no concern, but his freethinking seems to have led him into pessimism. In fact he found more evil than good in the world, and described inclination as the absence of disinclination.

High though the value was which Razi put upon Aristotle and Galen, he did not give himself any special trouble to gain a more profound comprehension of their works. He was a devoted student of Alchemy, which in his view was a true art, based on the existence of a primeval matter,—an art indispensable to philosophers, and which, he believed, had been practised by Pythagoras, Democritus, Plato, Aristotle and Galen. In opposition to Peripatetic teaching he assumed that the body contained in itself the principle of movement, a thought which might certainly have proved a fruitful one in Natural Science, if it had been recognized and farther developed.

Razi's Metaphysic starts from old doctrines, which his contemporaries ascribed to Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Mani and others. At the apex of his system stand five co-eternal

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principles,—the Creator, the Universal Soul, the First or Primeval matter, Absolute Space, and Absolute Time or Eternal Duration. In these the necessary conditions of the actually existing world are given. The individual sense-perceptions, generally, presuppose an existing Matter, just as the grouping of different perceived objects postulates Space. Perceptions of change farther constrain us to assume the condition of Time. The existence of living beings leads us to recognize a Soul; and the fact that some of these living beings are endowed with Reason, *i.e.*—have the faculty of bringing the Arts to the highest perfection,—necessitates our belief in a wise Creator, whose Reason has ordered everything for the best.

Notwithstanding the eternity of his five principles, Razi thus speaks of a Creator and even gives a story of Creation. First then a simple, pure, spiritual Light was created, the material of Souls, which are simple, spiritual substances, of the nature of Light. That Light-material or Upper-world, from which souls descended, is also called Reason, or Light of the Light of God. The Light is followed by the Shadow, from which the Animal Soul is created, for the service of the Rational Soul. But simultaneously with the simple, spiritual light, there existed from the first a composite form, which is Body, from the shadow of which now issue the four "natures", Warmth and Cold, Dryness and Moistness. From these four natures at last are formed all heavenly and earthly bodies. The whole process, however, is in operation from all eternity, without beginning in time, for God was never inactive.

That Razi was an astrologer is plain from his own utterances. The heavenly bodies consist indeed, according

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to him, of the same elements as earthly things, and the latter are continually exposed to the influences of the former.

6. Razi had to maintain a polemical attitude in two directions. On the one side he impugned the Muslim Unity of God, which could not bear to be associated with any eternal soul, matter, space or time; and on the other side he attacked the Dahrite system, which does not acknowledge any Creator of the world. This system, which is frequently mentioned by Muslim authors, with due aversion of course, appears to have found numerous representatives, though none of any importance. The adherents of the 'Dahr' (v. I, 2, § 2) are represented to us as Materialists, Sensualists, Atheists, Believers in the transmigration of souls, and so on; but we learn nothing more definite about their doctrines. In any case the Dahrites had no need to trace all that exists to a principle which was of spiritual essence and creative efficiency. Muslim Philosophy, on the other hand, did stand in need of such a principle, if it should only conform in some degree to the teaching of the faith. Natural Philosophy was not suited for the furtherance of this object, as it showed more interest in the manifold and often contrary operations of Nature than in the One Cause of all. Such aim was better attained by Neo-Platonic Aristotelianism, whose logico-metaphysical speculations endeavoured to trace all existence to one highest existence, or to derive all things from one supreme operative principle. But before we attend to this direction of thought, which commenced to appear even in the ninth century, we have still to give some account of an attempt to blend Natural Philosophy and the teachings of the Faith into a Philosophy of Religion.