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ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY AND THE ISLAMIC TRADITION: THE ORIGINS OF SOCIAL LIFE, DIVERSITY, AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY

The interplay between a naturalistic understanding of social origins and the vision of the ruler as God's representative on earth is a major aspect of medieval and early modern Islamic political discourse. The ancient Greek tradition had a formative influence on Islamic meditation regarding the origins of human society, the role of government, justice, and the qualities of the good ruler. The aim of this article is to revisit the impact of the Greek legacy on various theories about the emergence of human society and political authority that were propounded medieval Islamic authors. In the first section of this article, I review the reception of ancient Greek sources in the Islamic world and reconsider their influence on subsequent debates about the nature and foundation of human society, especially during the 'Abbāsid era. I will focus on Plato, Bryson, Themistius, and Nemesius, who depict human society as the corollary of human frailty and the need to procure the necessities of life. These authors articulate a naturalistic explanation of the origins of organized human society which reverberates in the philosophical and administrative literature of the 'Abbāsid period. In addition, I will show how Qudāma B. Ja'far and al-Fārābī facilitated the dissemination of Greek political ideas in the Islamic world and coupled Themistius' rationale about communal association with the notion that rulership is related to a divine mandate for the sake of upholding social harmony. I will also demonstrate how these ideas reached their culmination in al-Ghazālī, who embraces a naturalistic approach to the creation of human society while proclaiming the ruler to be God's shadow on earth in charge of maintaining order and implementing the ordinances of the sharī'a.

Key words: political philosophy, Islamic thought, ancient Greek philosophy, political authority, al-Fārābī.

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Ежелгі грек философиясы және ислам дәстүрі: әлеуметтік өмір, алуантүрлілік және саяси биліктің көздері

Әлеуметтік бастаулар туралы натуралистік түсінік пен билеушінің Құдайдың жердегі өкілі ретіндегі көзқарасы арасындағы өзара байланыс ортағасырлық және қазіргі заманғы исламдық саяси дискурстың негізгі аспектілерінің бірі болып табылады. Ежелгі грек дәстүрі адамзат қоғамының пайда болуына, үкіметтің рөліне, әділеттілікке және жақсы билеушінің қасиеттеріне қатысты исламдық медитацияға қалыптастырушы әсер етті. Бұл мақаланың мақсаты грек мұраларының ортағасырлық ислам авторлары алға тартқан адамзат қоғамының пайда болуы және саяси билік туралы әртүрлі теорияларға әсерін қайта қарау болып табылады. Мақаланың бірінші бөлімінде ежелгі грек дереккөздерін ислам әлемінде қабылдауды қарастырамын және олардың адамзат қоғамының табиғаты мен негіздері туралы, әсіресе, Аббасидтер дәуіріндегі кейінгі пікірталастарға ықпалын талдаймын. Мен Платонның, Брайсонның, Фемистийдің және Немезийдің ілімдеріне тоқталамын, олар адамзат қоғамын адамның әлсіздігі және өзін өмірге қажетті барлық нәрселермен қамтамасыз етудің салдары ретінде сипаттайды. Бұл авторлар Аббасидтер кезеңіндегі философиялық және әкімшілік әдебиеттерде көрініс тапқан ұйымдасқан адамзат қоғамының пайда болуы туралы натуралистік түсініктеме тұжырымдайды. Сонымен қатар, мақалада Құдама Б. Джафар мен әл-Фарабидің ислам әлемінде грек саяси идеяларының таралуына үлес қосқаны және Фемистийдің қауымдық бірігу туралы дискурсын үкіметтің қоғамдық келісімді сақтау үшін құдайдың мандатына байланғандығы туралы идеясымен үйлестіруі туралы айтылады. Мен бұл идеялардың адамзат қоғамын құруға натуралистік көзқараспен қарайтын, әміршіні жердегі Құдайдың көлеңкесі деп жариялайтын, тәртіпті сақтауға және шариғат заңдарының орындалуына жауап беретін әл-Ғазалидың ілімдерімен қалай сабақтасқандығын тұжырымдаймын.

Түйін сөздер: саяси философия, исламдық ой, ежелгі грек философиясы, саяси билік, әл-Фараби.

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Древнегреческая философия и исламская традиция: истоки социальной жизни, многообразия и политической власти

Взаимодействие между натуралистическим пониманием социальных истоков и видением правителя как представителя Бога на Земле является одним из основных аспектов средневекового и раннего современного исламского политического дискурса. Древнегреческая традиция оказала формирующее влияние на исламскую медитацию относительно происхождения человеческого общества, роли правительства, справедливости и качеств хорошего правителя. Целью данной статьи является пересмотр влияния греческого наследия на различные теории о возникновении человеческого общества и политической власти, которые были выдвинуты средневековыми исламскими авторами. В первом разделе этой статьи рассматривается восприятие древнегреческих источников в исламском мире и пересматривается их влияние на последующие дебаты о природе и основах человеческого общества, особенно в эпоху Аббасидов. Автор сосредоточен на учениях Платона, Брайсона, Фемистия и Немезий, которые описывают человеческое общество как следствие человеческой слабости и необходимости обеспечивать себя всем необходимым для жизни. Эти философы формулируют натуралистическое объяснение происхождения организованного человеческого общества, которое находит отражение в философской и административной литературе периода Аббасидов. Кроме того, в статье раскрывается как Кудама Б. Джафар и Аль-Фараби способствовали распространению греческих политических идей в исламском мире и соединили рассуждения Фемистия об общинном объединении с представлением о том, что правление связано с божественным мандатом ради поддержания социальной гармонии. Я также продемонстрирую, как эти идеи достигли своей кульминации в учениях Аль-Газали, который придерживается натуралистического подхода к созданию человеческого общества, провозглашая правителя тенью Бога на земле, ответственного за поддержание порядка и выполнение предписаний шариата.

Ключевые слова: политическая философия, исламская мысль, древнегреческая философия, политическая власть, аль-Фараби.

Introduction

The interplay between a naturalistic understanding of social origins and the vision of the ruler as God's representative on earth is a dominant aspect of medieval and early modern Islamic political discourse. Ancient Greek philosophy had a formative influence on Islamic meditation regarding these issues and was a source of insights into the creation of human society, the role of government, justice, and the qualities of the good ruler. On the one hand, human survival is contingent upon mutual aid that can be realized only within a human association. On the other hand, the very differences in natural abilities that are critical for the perpetuation of social life engender friction. Social peace requires the existence of rules of conduct and of a ruler endowed with the skills and resources to render justice. Islamic thinkers sought to harmonize ancient philosophical ideas with the teachings of Islam and proposed different solutions about the effective ordering of communal living and the ways in which a ruler fulfils his role as God's deputy.

It is the purpose of the present study to revisit the impact of the Greek legacy on various theories about human society and political authority that were propounded by medieval Islamic authors. In the first part of this article, I will review the reception of ancient Greek sources in the Islamic world and reconsider their influence on subsequent debates about the nature and foundation of human society, especially during the ʻAbbāsid era. I will focus on Plato, Bryson, Themistius, and Nemesius, who depict human society as the corollary of human frailty and the need to procure the necessities of life. These writers articulate a naturalistic explanation of the development of organized human society which reverberates in the philosophical and administrative literature of the ʻAbbāsid period. In addition, I will show how Qudāma b. Jaʻfar and Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī contributed to the dissemination of Greek political ideas in the Islamic world and combined Themistius' rationale about communal association with the notion that rulership derives from a divine mandate for the sake of upholding social harmony. I will also demonstrate how these ideas reached their culmination in al-Ghazālī, who embraces a naturalistic approach to the creation of human society while proclaiming the ruler to be God's shadow on earth in charge of maintaining order and implementing the ordinances of the *sharīʻa*.

Ancient Greek Philosophy and the Origins of Social Life

The idea that humans need a society to meet their material needs recurs frequently in ancient Greek political philosophy and the Platonic corpus in particular (For further discussion, consult Cole 1967; Blundell 1986; Guthrie 1957; de Romilly 1977; Barnes 1924: 15–62; Uxkull-Gyllenband 1924. On theories of social genesis in cross-cultural perspective, see the essays collected in *Genesis and Regeneration: Essays on Conceptions of Origins*, ed. Shaked 2005). In Plato's *Protagoras* (321b–322d) the Sophist Protagoras suggests that, unlike all other living creatures, man is born naked and unarmed. In the pre-social phase, humans had to obtain knowledge of arts for their survival. They also instituted a religion, generated a language, built houses, produced clothing, shoes, and food from the earth. They lived scattered and isolated from one another and perished because they were unable to defend themselves against wild animals. They furthermore lacked knowledge of the political art and of the art of war, which is part of it. At some point they decided to join together and form communities in order to protect themselves against natural perils. But as soon as they settled together in cities, they began to inflict injuries upon one another, reverted to their original condition, and started to perish. Zeus, in order to avert the destruction of humankind, intervened and sent Hermes to instill mutual respect and justice among humans and, thereby, ensure social unity (Plato 1952: 130–35). The political doctrines of the Sophists, as mediated through Plato's dialogues, addressed not only the origins of organized society but also the promulgation of the laws on the basis of a covenant. In the *Republic* (358e–359b), Glaucon expresses the conviction that justice translates into an agreement between the members of society to refrain from perpetrating or suffering injustice (Plato 1930: 112–15). At the same time, Plato's *Laws* (713b–d) enunciates the divine provenance of political authority: in the era of Cronos, there existed a flourishing government and society, which would provide the model for subsequent communities. Cronos was cognizant of the fact that no human being is able to manage human affairs without succumbing to haughtiness and committing injustice. Therefore, he installed demons, i.e., beings that wee nobler and more divine than humans, as kings and rulers in human communities. As a result, there was enduring growth, prosperity, and material abundance. Whenever a community is governed by humans and not by god, it is susceptible to strife and all kinds of political and social ills. The best remedy is to aspire to the social organization, as configured in the time of Cronos, and to abide by the immortal element in human beings, specifically reason enshrined in laws (Plato 1926: 282–87).

The notion that humans are compelled to band together for mutual preservation and that peaceful coexistence requires a set of rules reverberates in various works produced during the Hellenistic period as well as the *Oikonomikos*, a treatise on household management written by the Neopythagorean Bryson (first century AD), which is extant only in an Arabic epitome (Swain, *Economy, Family, and Society from Rome to Islam* 2013; German trans. *Der Oikonomikoc des Neupythagoreers 'Bryson' und sein Einfluß auf die islamische Wissenschaft* 1928/1975; Italian trans. by Mauro Zonta in *Aristotele. L'amministrazione della casa*, 1995: 140–71; French trans. Bryson – Ibn Sinâ, *Penser l'économique* 1995. A detailed exploration of the political ideas of the commentators remains a desideratum. Some interesting insights are included in the studies by O'Meara 2008 and O'Meara 2002. Bryson's reception in Islamic economic thought is traced in Essid 1995: 182–87. For the history of medieval Islamic economic thought and the tranmission of Greek economic ideas in medieval Islam, see Desomogyi 1965; Essid 1992: 39–44; Essid 1988; Lowry 1987. Consider also *Medieval Islamic Economic Thought*, 2003; Baeck 1994: 95–124; Natali 1995. Islamic views on trade, as set out in medieval political literature, are surveyed in Amoretti 1993, and Lambton 1962). Bryson contends that the subsistence of the human organism depends on two factors, namely heat and humidity. Heat causes the destruction and dissipation of humidity, and, as a result, humans are in the constant process of dissolution. As such, they need to make up for what is dissolved and need food for their nourishment. If the human body were homogeneous, one kind of food would suffice to satisfy this need. But the human organism consists of dissimilar elements and needs a variety of foods. Human nourishment derives from plants and animals, which, in turn, necessitate different skills, which gradually become more sophisticated. These skills, such as sowing plants and rearing cattle are necessary for the collection and processing of food supplies (Swain, *Economy, Family, and Society from Rome to Islam* 2013: 5–6, 430–35).

Each person, according to Bryson, is endowed with distinct aptitudes that are conducive to discovering and practicing a specific craft. All crafts are necessary for human survival and are interrelated. For example, the constructor needs the carpenter; the

carpenter the blacksmith; the blacksmith the miner; and the miner the constructor. Every craft, whatever stage of perfection it has reached, needs another, just as the parts of a chain are interconnected, and if one of the crafts is missing, the rest of them will also perish. Given that a single person cannot master all possible crafts, people depend on one another and had to create cities and live together in order to aid one another by developing different crafts. In addition, they introduced currency and coined gold, silver, and copper, in order to determine the value of all products and facilitate the exchange of goods (Swain, *Economy, Family, and Society from Rome to Islam* 2013: 6–7, 435–37, 440–41).

The distinguished orator and commentator Themistius (fourth century AD), in an oration to the Byzantine emperor Julian (331/32–363, r. 361–363), sets forth a similar rationale for the beginnings of social life and the existence of rules and laws which exerted an important influence on a number of medieval Islamic political writers. For Themistius, men are inferior to the members of any other species in terms of corporeal strength, speed, and the effectiveness of the senses. Reason sets humans apart from other creatures. Solon, Lycurgus, and other sages were perceived to be exceptional not because they were able to generate syllogisms, engage in dialectic discussions about ideas, articulate sophisms, and speculate on the size of the sun or the motion of the moon. Their merit was that they instituted laws, and that they edified and instructed people what they should or should not do and what to choose or avoid. For they realized that humans cannot meet their needs by living in isolation and that they instead are social and political beings. Their laws and teachings of those sages, therefore, prompted men to be solicitous of their fatherland, its laws, and its polity (*Die 34. Rede des Themistios*, 1966, 56–59; *Themistii Orationes ex codice mediolanensi* 1832, 445–46. Themistius' political ideas are discussed in Vanderspoel 1995; Heather 1998; Dagron 1968; and Valdenberg 1924). In his *De natura hominis* (*On the Nature of Man*), Nemesius of Emesa (late fourth century AD) goes beyond Themistius and lays an even stronger emphasis on human insufficiency. Like Bryson, he offers a biological explanation for the emergence of social life and asserts that the human body is composed of the four elements (earth, fire, water, and air) and is thus susceptible to all the changes that these elements go through (*Nemesii Emeseni De natura hominis* 1987: 7–8; Nemesius, *On the Nature of Man* 2008: 42. The Galenic background of this idea is explored in Skard 1937: 9–18). Therefore, man needs food, drink, clothing, and shelter for protection from climatic conditions and wild animals, as well as medical treatment because of the constant alteration of the qualities of the human body and the sensitivity with which it has been endowed. Nemesius also refers to the Aristotelian proposition that man is naturally a sociable being and explains that, since no one is in all ways self-sufficient, a number of men came together for the sake of mutual benefit and founded cities in order to join into bonds of social cooperation by practicing diverse crafts and with the purpose of learning from one another and sharing what is necessary for life (*Nemesii Emeseni De natura hominis* 1987: 9; Nemesius, *On the Nature of Man* 2008: 44).

According to previous research on the translations and transmission of Plato's dialogues, Plato's *Republic* was received in the medieval Islamic world in a fragmentary and disarranged form—as summaries, abridgements, dicta, or short references in doxographies and commentaries. Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq (808–873), who translated a number of ancient Greek works on philosophy and science, had access to only four of the eight books of Galen's *Synopsis of Plato's Dialogues*: Book 1 covered the *Cratylus*, *Sophist*, *Politics*, *Parmenides*, and *Euthydemus*; Book 2 covered the first four books of the *Republic*; Book 3 covered the remaining six books of the *Republic* and *Timaios*; and Book 4 covered the *Laws*. Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq notes that he translated the first three books, including a summation of the *Republic* (Reisman 2004: 264–65; and, in general, Syros 2010: 2000–06. On Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq's life and works, see the collection of previously published essays in *Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq (d.260/873): Texts and Studies* 1999; as well as the older studies by Meyerhoff 1926; Gabrielli 1924; and Bergsträsser 1913). The most detailed exposition of Plato's political philosophy ever produced in the medieval Islamic context can be found in Ibn Rushd's (Averroes, 1126–98) *Commentary on Plato's Republic*. Ibn Rushd's *Commentary*, which is extant only in a Hebrew translation, most probably derives from an epitome composed by Galen (*Averroes' Commentary on Plato's Republic* 1956/1966). Ibn Rushd describes the simplest form of human society as one which provides only for basic subsistence through husbandry, hunting, or robbery (*Averroes' Commentary on Plato's Republic* 1956/1966: 217–18 and 113–14). But he does not mention that justice emanates from a pact between the members of the political community. This may indicate either that he simply chose to pass over Glaucon's statement or that the portion of the *Republic* which included Glaucon's speech was not extant in Arabic translation.

The Arabic Tradition

Ancient Greek theories of social evolution passed into the medieval Arab world through a letter supposedly written by Themistius for Emperor Julian, the *Epistle on Government and the Management of the Kingdom* (*risāla fī siyāsa wa-tadbīr al-mamlaka*) (Swain, *Themistius, Julian, and Greek Political Theory under Rome* 2013: 22–52) as well as the Arabic versions of Nemesius' *De natura hominis* (Morani 1981. The Arabic reception of Nemesius' *De natura hominis* is examined in Samir 1986. Nemesius' fate in the Syriac environment is traced in Zonta 1991. For a reconstruction of Nemesius' views about human nature, see Motta 2004). Although the authenticity of the *risāla* is questionable, its contents show close affinities with Themistius' ideas on the origins of social life, as set out in the 34th oration in particular, and other of his writings, which makes his authorship quite probable (For further discussion, see Swain, *Themistius, Julian, and Greek Political Theory under Rome* 2013: 126–29; Watt 2012; Dvornik 1966: 2: 666–69; Dvornik 1955). As with the 34th oration, the *Epistle on Government* is informed by the idea that human society is the result of basic human necessities, and it subtly plays down the importance of human gregariousness: man has been created by God (*Allāh*) to live within a society, but when people gathered together into cities and had dealings with one another, their attitudes toward good and wicked conduct differed. God then instituted laws and precepts to which they could have recourse and look up to as the ultimate authority. Moreover, he designated rulers who would act as the custodians of the laws, uphold order, justice, and unity and suppress strife (Swain, *Themistius, Julian, and Greek Political Theory under Rome* 2013: 132–43; Heck 2002: 217). For a summary of the content of the *risāla*, see Bouyges 1924: 15–23. Themistius' reception in the East is traced in Schamp, Todd, and Watt 2016). The *Epistle on Government* has survived in two Arabic versions, which have been attributed to the prominent physician and courtier Abū ʻUthmān al-Dimashqī (fl. late ninth/early tenth century) and Ibn Zurʻa (943–1008), a Christian physician and philosopher in Baghdad, respectively. With respect to the second version of the *risāla*, Ibn Zurʻa notes that he relied on a Syriac text, and it is safe to assume that he amended al-Dimashqī's translation (Watt 2004: 128. On Ibn Zurʻa's life and works, see Kraemer 1992: 116–23; Haddad 1952). In an epistle which is addressed to a Jewish friend and discusses why Christians refuse to follow the Mosaic law, Ibn Zurʻa presents an account of the formation of human society reminiscent of Themistius' ideas on social genesis. He also proposes a classification of the various types of law: natural, rational, and positive. Natural law induces men to seek what is beneficial and pleasant: it is the law of brute force and self-assertion and prevailed in a primordial condition, when humans roamed the earth just like animals and their actions were driven by the passionate and appetitive faculties. Rational law induces men to procure what is necessary for sufficiency of life; it allows them to cope with hardships, to take advantage of the things they acquire and to administer them properly; and it restrains them from things dictated by nature. Positive law is the revealed law, which shows men the way to attain pleasant and useful things (Watt 2004: 146; and Pines 1961).

The ʻAbbāsid era saw a proliferation of theories on the origins of social life and the role of government and legislation, as evidenced by an extensive body of administrative and philosophical writings. The Themistian paradigm of social genesis found one of its most ardent apologists in Qudāma b. Jaʻfar (d. 948), a government official and author of the *Kitāb al-kharāj wa-ṣinā'at al-kitāba* (*The Book of the Land-Tax and the Craft of Writing*). (On Qudāma's life, career, and political ideas, see Heck 2002: 92–98; Hiyari 1983; Makki 1955; as well as the articles reprinted in *Studies on Qudama B. Ga'far (d. after 932) and Al-Mas'udi (d. 956)*. Qudāma's narrative of social development encapsulates a set of ideas that became the standard components of medieval Islamic accounts of the foundation of human association: the innate sociability of human beings, a doctrine that occurs in a number of Greek works that had been translated into Arabic such as Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. See *The Arabic Version of the "Nicomachean Ethics"* 2005: 130–33. Aristotle discusses human sociability in Book 1 of the *Politics* as well. Although the *Politics* was never translated into Arabic in its entirety, it seems that portions of the work circulated in Arabic or Persian translations and that Aristotle's political ideas passed into the Islamic world through Arabic, Syriac, and Persian sources. For further discussion and evidence, see the various contributions in *Well Begun is Only Half Done* 2011; as well as Syros 2008. At the same time, Aristotle points out that strife and discord are the flip side of the human inclination to live in a society. For further discussion, consult Yack 1993) the need for the exchange of goods and services with the purpose of obtaining the means requisite for physical survival; and the diversity of capacities and the opposing interests of the members of the society, which necessitate the existence of laws and of a ruler responsible for applying justice.

Drawing upon Themistius, Qudāma reckons that human associations grow out of man's need to secure the basic necessities of life, especially food and clothing, and are conducive to the perpetuation of humankind. He then goes on to enumerate various kinds of crafts, such as agriculture, the art of making and mending clothes, carpentry, and medicine (Qudāma ibn Ja'far 1986: 378–81; Heck 2002: 56–57, 248–49). Differences in men's personality traits and aptitudes generate disparate desires, aspirations, and actions: when the members of the human associations began having dealings and trading with one another while holding differing views about justice and injustice, *Allāh* laid down laws. Then there arose a need for a person to lead the members of society in accordance with these laws and to enforce divine sanctions and to restrain and punish malefactors and wrongdoers. Along these lines, Qudāma envisions the ruler as the defender of faith and guarantor of internal unity who conducts the community's affairs according to equity and justice and averts oppression and injustice (Qudāma ibn Ja'far 1986: 386; Heck 2002: 216).

Al-Fārābī (ca. 878–ca. 950), Qudāma's contemporary and one of the founding figures of Islamic philosophy, concurs with Qudāma and Themistius that man is destined by nature to live in a community because no one is able to obtain all the necessaries of life unless he engages in mutual cooperation with others *(Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādiʾ ārāʾ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* 1985: Arabic text 228/Eng. trans. 229. Consider also Alfarabi, *The Political Writings* 2001: 23–26, 46. For further discussion, see Crone 2004: 177, 260–61, 343; Pines 1971. For the status of Arabic philosophy in al-Fārābī's time, see the collection of essays in *In the Age of al-Fārābī* 2008; as well as Ferrari 2005). Al-Fārābī affirms, as does Qudāma, the necessity of legislation: in his *Summary of Plato's Laws*, he elaborates on the rationale behind the existence of laws, basing his argument on Plato. He points out that Plato assigned a higher status to laws than to wise dicta (*Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* 1963: 85). Men in general, and those who refuse to comply with the laws in particular, are by nature disposed to perpetual conflict; hence, association and friendship are crucial to the preservation of any type of social organization. Still drawing on Plato, al-Fārābī discusses the advantages of law: it enables the individual to restrain himself, to repress evil, and to pursue what is just. The exemplary ruler, in his capacity as law-enforcer, ought thus to keep malefactors in check and defend the society against external threats (*Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* 1963, 86. On al-Fārābī's *Summary of the Laws*, see Druart 1998. Consider also Tamer 2008; Harvey, "Did AlFārābī Read Plato's *Laws*?" 2003; Harvey, "Can a Tenth-Century Islamic Aristotelian Help Us Understand Plato's *Laws*?" 2003; Gutas 1997; and Gutas 1998. Al-Fārābī's views of the founding of human communities are discussed in greater detail in Colmo 1998).

Although Qudāma's and al-Farabī's views about the genesis of human society rest on similar premises, the implications they draw differ in three some crucial respects: both thinkers trace the birth of the political community back to human frailty, but al-Farabī is committed to the vision of the ideal community as a replica of a metaphysical hierarchy, which forms the core of his *Mabādi' ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fādila* (*Principles of the Opinions of the People of the Perfect City*). Qudāma, in contrast, postulates a dissociation of the social and metaphysical order (Heck 2002: 211–12). Unlike al-Farabī, Qudāma offers a more detailed analysis of the process through which the first communities came into existence, and engages with the dynamics of social life and the introduction of currency. Finally, for al-Farabī, the perfect ruler should fulfill four main functions, i.e., those of the lawgiver, prophet, philosopher, and *imām*. Qudāma, on the other hand, looks upon the ruler merely as the guardian and executor of the laws (See also Heck 2004: 103–04. A survey of medieval Islamic views on the legislative aspects of rulership appears in Gaurier 2007: esp. 227–33).

The theory about the divine origin of royal rule had a strong resonance in a number of treatises produced in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In commenting on the Qur'ān, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (ca. 930–1023), a prominent literatus, articulates the notion of rulers being divinely sent (*mab'ūth*) pretty much like prophets (Heck 2004: 125–51, 130). Later, the exposition of the genesis and growth of human society produced by the great theologian and jurist al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) closely paralleled Qudāma's: human activities arise in response to man's three basic necessities: food for nourishment and survival; clothing for protection against heat and cold; and shelter from heat and cold and against threats to the security of the family and its possessions. Unlike animals that feed on raw plants, are immune to cold and heat, and do need buildings, human beings, driven by the aforementioned needs, had to invent five crafts from which all other arts and professions originated: farming, herding, hunting, weaving, and masonry. These occupations required tools, which led to the emergence of specialized craftsmen, notably carpenters, smiths, and

tanners (Othman 1960: 201–02. On al-Ghazālī's political ideas, see Janssens 2004; Hillenbrand 2004; Hillenbrand 1988; Binder 1955: 229–41; Lambton 1954: 47–55; and Laoust 1970. Consider, in general, Mikhail 1995).

In line with Greek and previous Islamic political theorists, al-Ghazālī highlights the need for mutual aid among humans who engage in various crafts and professions and notes that a loaf of bread can only become round and ready to eat after a thousand laborers have worked on its production. If the opinions of all those working together to prepare food and procure for other needs were divergent, and if their temperaments were in conflict with one another like the temperaments of wild animals, each one would live in isolation, no one would benefit from the labor of the others, and they would be incapable of settling in one place and pursuing the same end. God has implanted in humans the inclination for comradeship and love. Hence, people congregated together for the sake of fellowship and exchange of knowledge, founded cities and countries, and built houses close to one another, marketplaces, inns, and many other things (Othman 1960: 192–93).

Al-Ghazālī acknowledges that in human nature there is not only love but also malice and envy. These feelings and passions engender social friction. Al-Ghazālī addresses how human society can resolve social tensions. God, he argues, has endowed some men with the ability to rule over others and endowed them with the skills and resources that are necessary for the exercise of political authority. Subsequently, rulers selected and appointed government officials, judges, and chiefs and inspectors of marketplaces; they built prisons; and they demanded from all members of society respect for justice. As such, al-Ghazālī defines one of the sovereign's prime functions as upholding social order and suppressing dissension: one of the chief duties of rulership is to obligate people to assist one other so that they all benefit from one another through mutual support under the supervision of the ruler and his aides in the same way that the organs of the human body cooperate and help one another (Othman 1960: 194–95). In the *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* (*Counsel for Kings*), al-Ghazālī elaborates on these themes and projects the notion of the Sultan as God's shadow on earth. The ruler is installed by God and receives divine effulgence and as God's delegate over his creatures, he is entitled to the obedience, love, and goodwill of his constituency (*Ghazālīs Book of Counsel for Kings (Naṣīḥat al-mulūk)* 1964: 45). The authorship of the work has been the subject of a long-standing scholarly debate, though it appears that only the first part was composed by al-Ghazālī and that the second part was written by an anonymous writer – Crone 1987. Al-Ghazālī's use of the ruler-as-the-shadow-of-God motif and its reception in Sufi literature are discussed in Lambton 1995. Consider, in general, Arjomand 1984: ch. "The Shadow of God on Earth: The Ethos of Persian Patrimonialism" (85–100); Hanne 2007: 25–54; Crone and Hinds 1986; as well as Yücesoy 2011).

Conclusion

This article offered a detailed examination of medieval Islamic theories about the emergence of social life and the establishment of political authority. In particular, I explored the reception of ancient Greek theories on social genesis in the ʻAbbāsid era. I showed that Greek sources, and Themistius in particular, prefigured a naturalistic approach to the creation of human society that was destined to have an enduring impact on philosophical and administrative writings during the ʻAbbāsid era. Qudāma b. Jaʻfar elaborated on earlier theories, focused on the challenges associated with social interaction and explicated the divine provenance of political authority: men need to associate and band together in organized society in order to satisfy their basic needs and exchange the products of their labor; but the diversity of the aptitudes and interests of the members of society breeds friction and internecine conflict; as such, the preservation of social organization is contingent on the existence of a code of laws and a divinely anointed and guided ruler in charge of realizing justice and settling disputes. These ideas resurface in al-Ghazālī's work, who crafted the image of the ruler as God's "shadow on earth."

The investigation of linkages between ancient Greek and Islamic ideas on social genesis points to a broad spectrum of solutions proposed by Islamic political theorists in response to diversity and with regard to the strategies for ensuring the tranquility and cohesion of human society. The Greek legacy, filtered through the works of the authors of late Antiquity, exerted a strong impact on medieval and early modern Islamic meditation on the political arrangements conducive to social harmony. It is perhaps debatable to what extent residual influences of Greek philosophy are operative in current debates and developments in the Islamic world. Nevertheless, the entire process of assimilation of ideas derived from the ancient world was related to a set of concerns that prompted Islamic thinkers to accommodate, rework, and adjust an extraneous

body of thought and achieve a synthesis of Greek philosophical doctrines and religious teachings. Some of these challenges are very similar to those confronting Islam in today's world.

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