

The Major Contributions of of Ibn Khaldun, Al Kindi and Ibn Rushd to the Field of Social Sciences and Humanities

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Abstract: *The role of great Muslim scholars and Muslim Philosophers in the field of social sciences and humanities is very remarkable. Indeed, the history has recorded the excellent contributions of some energetic Muslim scholars to this field, such as Ibn-Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, Al-Farabi, al Bairuni etc.. Hence, the objective of this article is to explore the immense contributions of these scholars with particular reference to the unique contributions of Ibn-Khaldun, Al-Kindi and Ibn Rushd. The article will also assess the impact of these Muslim scholars to modern human sciences. Yet, for the sake of academic writing, this article will apply the descriptive and analytical methods, that is by exploring and analyzing the works of these scholars. Finally, the article will provide a brief conclusion with some recommendations.*

Keywords: Ibn Khaldun, Al Kindi, Ibn Rushd, Social Sciences, Humanities

1. Introduction

Human beings are the most unique social beings on earth, living interdependently on the account of their biosocial necessity for collective and individual survival. Based on this fact, social sciences and humanities study the activities of human beings in society at both individual and collective levels in order to identify the social problems and make attempts to solve these complex problem in societies, Hence some remarkable Muslim Scholars such as Ibn Khaldun, Al- Kindi and Ibn Rushd have played an important role in contributing to various disciplines of social sciences and humanities during the Islamic golden age. They laid the foundation of systematic experiments and observations in the field of social sciences in the mediaeval period, and before the renaissance period of the west, inspired by the teaching of the holy Qur'an and by Islamic values and virtues, insisting that human beings can achieve scientific knowledge not only by experiment or observations, but also by revelation. Thus, this article aims to demonstrate vis-a-vis contributions of Al-Kindi, Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Rushd to the field of social sciences and humanities. And finally, the article will provide some lessons that might be learnt from the contributions of these energetic Muslim scholars.

1.1 Ibn Khaldun

His Biography

His Full name is Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad. Born in Tunisia in 732 A.H (1332 C.E), in an influential and learned family¹. Many of his ancestors had held high posts in the Tunis government. His father, however, avoided politics and devoted his time to study jurisprudence, philosophy and poetry, and excelled in all these branches of knowledge. Unlike his father, Ibn khaldun was engaged in both learning and politics. His close friend and associate, Ibn Khattab, described him as “a virtuous man, good natured, shy, and opposed to oppression, difficult to handle, well-informed on intellectual and traditional science, wise of judgement and knowing a lot of things by heart.”

His Intellectual Contributions

During the 14th centuries, Ibn Khaldun has made a contribution in various aspect of Knowledge known by mankind, during that time he produced a precious book (which is known as *Al-Muqaddimah*)² that has impressed many western intellectuals. He was also the first person to introduce to the world upon the knowledge of sociology³ which was considered as advancement to the Islamic civilization. In the most serious note, most of the contributions of Ibn Khaldun, can be seen in his famous *Muqaddimah* (prolegomena) which is a masterpiece in literature on philosophy of history and sociology. The main theme of *Muqaddimah* was to identify psychological, economic, environmental and social facts that contribute to the advancement of human civilization and the currents of history.

He analyzed the dynamics of group relationships and showed how group feelings, al-‘Asabiyyah, produce the ascent of a new civilization and political power.. He identified an almost rhythmic repetition of the rise and fall in human civilization and analyzed factors contributing to it. His views attracted the attention of Muslim scholars as well as many Western thinkers. He pioneered the critical study of history.

He provided an analytical study of human civilization, its beginning, factors contributing to its development and the causes of decline. Thus, he found a new science: the science of social development or sociology, as it is called today⁴. Thus, by selecting his particular method of analysis, he created two new sciences: Historiography and Sociology simultaneously.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun was also had a great understanding and profound knowledge regarding the economics, indeed, he was well known by the west in this field. One of his

¹ He is considered by some as a father of modern economics, or at least a major forerunner. The Western world recognizes Khaldun as the father of sociology but hesitates in recognizing him as a great economist who laid its very foundations. He was the first to systematically analyze the functioning of an economy, the importance of technology, specialization and foreign trade in economic surplus and the role of government and its stabilization policies to increase output and employment. Moreover, he dealt with the problem of optimum taxation, minimum government services, incentives, institutional framework, law and order, expectations, production, and the theory of value".

² The *Muqaddimah* (Arabic: مقَدِّمة "Introduction"), also known as the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun (Arabic: مقَدِّمة ابن خلدون) or Ibn Khaldun's Prolegomena (Ancient Greek: Προλεγόμενα), is a book written by the Arab historian Ibn Khaldun in 1377 which presents a view of universal history.

³ Sociology is a systematic study of society and individuals. In western civilization, this kind of knowledge is strongly attributed to August Comte, Emil Durkheim and Emanuel Kant etc..

⁴ According to Ibn Khaldun, he wrote,; “I have written on history a book in which I discussed the causes and effects of the development of states and civilizations, and I followed in arranging the material of the book an unfamiliar method, and I followed in writing it’s a strange and innovative way.”

contributions to this field of economics is known as Laffer curve, this curve explains how the increases in tax rates initially increase tax revenues, but eventually the increases in tax rates cause a decrease in tax revenue. Indeed, Lafer (2004) attributed this theory to creativity of Ibn Khaldun by saying that, he was not the one who invented this theory but it was solemnly from the creativity of Ibn Khaldun⁵.

In the field of transmitted knowledge, Ibn Khaldun explored the nature of knowledge in his book of *al- Muqaddimah*. In the chapter six of this book which he gave title of “The book of Knowledge” (Kitab al-Ilm), here, ibn Khaldun provides his general insight about knowledge and science. As far as the transmitted knowledge is concerned, Ibn Khaldun recognizes that the revelation of Al- Qur’an and Prophetic hadith are very important for every Muslim to obtain knowledge and every Muslim must follow the guidance of Almighty Allah (S.W.T), and he holds that the Iman or articles of faith can stand without support of logical proof because revelation by itself is an absolute evidence and unchangeable proof., therefore, all Muslims have to accept the transmitted knowledge through the prophet as a religious obligatory, that no need to seek proof for its authenticity or validity and there’s no need to demand it correctness by logical proof even if it sounds contradicted.. According to the holy Qur’an.

“No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it: It is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise.”⁶

لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ

حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ ﴿٤٢﴾

In another chapter of the Qur’an Allah said:

تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ ﴿٤٤﴾ لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ ﴿٤٥﴾
ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

“(This is) a Message sent down from the Lord of the Worlds. And if the apostle were to invent any sayings in Our name, we should certainly seize him by his right hand, And We should certainly then cut off the artery of his heart: Nor could any of you withhold him from Our wrath”⁷

Concerning the knowledge of Hadith, Ibn Khaldun also contributed in this dimension, he discussed the knowledge of Hadith that are set by leading scholars. This comprises knowledge of the chain of transmitted (sanad), the transmitters and their names, the way that transmission takes place, their grades and ranks and their technical terminology. This knowledge is important in determining whether the hadith is true or not. It can be done by scrutinizing the transmitters of the hadith in terms of probity, adequacy thoroughness and carelessness.

⁵ See. Faridah Hj Hasan, (2008) Ibn Khaldun and Jane Addams: The Real Father of sociology and the mother of Social Work, from <http://www2.uned.es/congreso-ibn-khaldun>

⁶ Al-Qur’an, 41:42

⁷ Al Qur’an, 69: 43-47

Furthermore, in terms of theology⁸,. The book of al- *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun contains Islamic theology, which shows that ibn Khaldun was adherent of *Ash'arite* and *sunni* thought. And ibn Khaldun was also known to be one of the proponents of Al Gazali. Hence the book of al *Muqaddimah* comprises of Historical development of '*Ilm al Kalam* and different school of Islamic thought., such as *Mu'tazilah* and *Ash'arite* creed. But he was so critics of *Mu'tazilite* with particular reference to the opinions of its founding father Abu al Hasan al- As'ari. Again, the book of *al Muqaddimah* also contains some knowledge on logic in the context of theology, and perceived logic as different from Islamic philosophy, therefore, he believed that philosophy should remain separate from theology.

In terms of *Sufism*⁹ (mysticism) , Ibn Khaldun believed that the role and function of *sufism* is very important in Islamic culture and civilization. He sees and recognizes *sufism* as one of the most important manifestations of Islamic culture. To Ibn Khaldun, *sufism* is not only a social phenomenon or an everyday attitude to life, as it was in the early days of Islam, but also a philosophical and intellectual force which later gives rise to its own unique and exclusive literary tradition.

In the field of linguistic Sciences with particular reference to the science of grammar, lexicography and syntax and styles, Ibn Khaldun contributed immensely to this field. For instance, in terms of the science of grammar (*'ilm Nahwu*), Ibn Khaldun stress that grammar is the most important part of the Arabic language. Language in his view is the expression of the intention of a speaker (*Mutakallim*). It includes the act of the tongue, which interprets the intention to convey the meaning of speech. Yet, in the case of lexicography (*'Ilm al-Lughah*), Ibn Kaldun in His *Muqaddimah* defines this science as the science that deals with the meaning of the words of language, he argues that the corruption of the Arabic language emerges as a result of intercultural communication between the Arab native speakers and non- Arab foreign speakers, which in turn affects the meaning of the words, this also leads to disappearance of some Arabic words from their original meaning.

Lastly, in terms of the science of syntax (*'ilm al- bayan*) Ibn Khaldun has widely contributed to this field, he sees this science as one of philological sciences that deals with words and ideas that are to be conveyed and disseminated, because, to Ibn Khaldun, the Arabic language is vast, and the Arabs have a particular type of expression for a particular situation in addition perfect use of vowel endings and clarity. Thus, Ibn Khaldun has contributed immensely to the field of social sciences, Particularly in the history, sociology, politics, religion, theology, and language etc.

1.2 Al Kindi and His Contribution to the Field of Social Sciences

His Biography

His full name is Abu Yusuf Yaqub Ibn Ishaq He was born in Kufah 180 H/801AD; He studied in Kufah before he was transferred to Bagdad to seek knowledge. The nature of education that Al-kindi received was high with regards to language and religious studies due the influence of

⁸ Theology, is combination of two words which is theo= in Greek language means God and logy mean study. So basically, theology means the study of God and religious creeds.

⁹ See wikipedia , the free Encyclopedia; Sufism, or Taṣawwuf (Arabic: التَّصَوُّف), variously defined as "Islamic mysticism", "the inward dimension of Islam" or "the phenomenon of mysticism within Islam", is mysticism in Islam, "characterized by particular values, ritual practices, doctrines and institutions, which began very early in Islamic history and represents the main manifestation and the most important and central crystallization of" mystical practice in Islam. Practitioners of Sufism have been referred to as "Sufis" (from صُوفِيّ ṣūfīyy

the then Islamic golden age. He was a bookish character, mainly interested in reading translated book, letters and al- Tasanif. He died in 252H/866 A.D

His Contribution to the field of Social Sciences and Humanities/Philosophy

Al Kindi defined philosophy as “the establishment of what is true and right” he was the first champion of Greek philosophy¹⁰, which was approach with some suspicion in traditional and popular Arab circles as a foreign and pagan import. Moreover, he translated important Greek works into Arabic and produces a synthesis of the earlier philosophical works of Plato and Aristotle.

Al-Kindi proposes creation of ex-nihilo and emphasizes the importance of the intellectual and contrasts it with matter. He also discuss on One Truth, which is another name of God, and states that it does not have any attributes, predicates or characteristics. The view is consonant with the Mu'tazilite declaration of the unity of God has been strictly without attributes, and consequently Al kindi has sometimes been deemed to be a Mu'tazilite by scholars. Other aspects of his position include emphasis on absolute unity of God, His power which is a Creator and Creation ex-nihilo. The eternal, that is God is not due to another, He has no cause and has neither genus species. There is no before for the Eternal. He always reprises in his ethical treatise the idea that human must choose the world of intellect over the material world.

In short, Al kindi's contribution to the field of social sciences is immense, and his unique contribution in the field of philosophy can be clearly seen in his various publications that summarized by Ibn Nadim as followed¹¹:

1. 22 philosophy books
2. 9 logical books
3. 9 books of physics
4. 11 mathematic books
5. 32 books on Geometry
6. 7 musical Books
7. 19 books of the stars
8. 23 Architecture books
9. 16 Astronomy books
10. 22 medical books
11. 10 books on sinaah al Ahkam
12. 17 books for aljadaliah
13. 5 psychological books
14. 12 political books
15. 14 books al Ahdaath: interest with the causes of the universe and the corruption
16. 8 books in the dimensions: this is about destinations and regions
17. 3 books interest in the secrets in taqdeemah al- Ma'arifah
18. 33 books for the nature of knowledge.

¹⁰ AL Kindi is notable for his work on philosophical terminology and for developing a vocabulary for philosophical thought in Arabic, although Avicenna superseded his ideas in the eleven century

¹¹ According to Ibn al-Nadim, al-Kindi wrote at least two hundred and sixty books, contributing heavily to geometry (thirty-two books), medicine and philosophy (twenty-two books each), logic (nine books), and physics (twelve books). Although most of his books have been lost over the centuries, a few have survived in the form of Latin translations by Gerard of Cremona, and others have been rediscovered in Arabic manuscripts; most importantly, twenty-four of his lost works were located in the mid-twentieth century in a Turkish library.

1.3 Ibn Rushd and his Contribution to the field of social sciences and Humanities

His Name

Averroës, medieval Latin Avernhoës, also called Ibn Rushd¹², Arabic in full Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Rushd, (born 1126, Córdoba [Spain]—died 1198, Marrakech, Almohad empire [now in Morocco]), influential Islamic religious philosopher who integrated Islamic traditions with ancient Greek thought. At the request of the Almohad caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, he produced a series of summaries and commentaries on most of Aristotle’s works (1169–95) and on Plato’s Republic, which exerted considerable influence in both the Islamic world and Europe for centuries. He wrote the Decisive Treatise on the Agreement Between Religious Law and Philosophy (Faṣl al-Maqāl), Examination of the Methods of Proof Concerning the Doctrines of Religion (Kashf al-Manāḥij), and The Incoherence of the Incoherence (Tahāfut al-Tahāfut), all in defense of the philosophical study of religion against the theologians (1179–80).

His Early Life

Averroës was born into a distinguished family of jurists at Córdoba and died at Marrakech, the North African capital of the Almohad dynasty. Thoroughly versed in the traditional Muslim sciences (especially exegesis of the Qur’ān—Islamic scripture—and Ḥadīth, or Traditions, and fiqh, or Law), trained in medicine, and accomplished in philosophy, Averroës rose to be chief qādī (judge) of Córdoba, an office also held by his grandfather (of the same name) under the Almoravids. After the death of the philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl, Averroës succeeded him as personal physician to the caliphs Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf in 1182 and his son Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb in 1184.

At some point between 1153 and 1169, Ibn Ṭufayl had introduced Averroës to Abū Ya‘qūb, who, himself a keen student of philosophy, frightened Averroës with a question concerning whether the heavens were created or not. The caliph answered the question himself, put Averroës at ease, and sent him away with precious gifts after a long conversation that proved decisive for Averroës’ career. Soon afterward Averroës received the ruler’s request to provide a badly needed correct interpretation of the philosophy of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, a task to which he devoted many years of his busy life as judge, beginning at Sevilla (Seville) and continuing at Córdoba. The exact year of his appointment as chief qādī of Córdoba, one of the key posts in the government (and not confined to the administration of justice), is not known.

His Commentaries on Aristotle

Between 1169 and 1195 Averroës wrote a series of commentaries on most of Aristotle’s works (e.g., The Organon, De anima, Physica, Metaphysica, De partibus animalium, Parva naturalia, Meteorologica, Rhetorica, Poetica, and the Nicomachean Ethics). He wrote summaries, and middle and long commentaries—often two or all three kinds on the same work. Aristotle’s Politica was inaccessible to Averroës; therefore, he wrote a commentary on Plato’s Republic (which is both a paraphrase and a middle commentary in form). All of Averroës’ commentaries are incorporated in the Latin version of Aristotle’s complete works. They are extant in the Arabic original or Hebrew translations or both, and some of these translations serve in place of

¹² Ibn Rushd (Arabic: ابن رشد; full name in Arabic: أبو الوليد محمد ابن احمد ابن رشد, romanized: Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn ‘Aḥmad Ibn Rušd; 14 April 1126 – 11 December 1198), often Latinized as Averroes (English: /əˈverroʊiːz/), was an Andalusian polymath and jurist who wrote about many subjects, including philosophy, theology, medicine, astronomy, physics, psychology, mathematics, Islamic jurisprudence, law, and linguistics. The author of more than 100 books and treatises, his philosophical works include numerous commentaries on Aristotle, for which he was known in the Western world as The Commentator and Father of Rationalism.

the paretic presumably lost Arabic originals, e.g., the important commentaries on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and on Plato's.

2. Conclusion

The contribution of early Muslim Scholars in various fields of knowledge is very remarkable. During the Islamic golden age, the early Muslim scholars excelled in the field of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. With the sense of integration of revelation and human acquired knowledge, the remarkable contributions of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Kindi and Ibn Rushd to the field of social sciences and humanities are unforgettable. For instance, the book of *Al-Muqaddimah* that produced by ibn Khaldun was such a splendid contribution to social sciences and humanities. Likewise, Al-Kindi's great contribution to the development of Islamic philosophy is worthy to be remembered, he adopted and developed the integrative scientific/ inductive method which eventually was his efforts to make Greek thoughts both accessible and acceptable to Muslim communities He carried out his mission from Byt al- Hikmah (Research centre) founded by Abassid Khaliphate Harun Al- Rashid, and tried to translate many important texts into Arabic language that becomes a good reference for many Muslim scholars nowadays. Meanwhile Ibn Rushd 's contribution to the field of humanities covers a greater variety of subjects ranging from philosophy, medicine, Jurisprudence, legal theory and linguistics., though most of his works particularly in the field of Philosophy revolves around the commentaries on Aristotle philosophy.

In short, to conclude this segment, it is worthwhile to mention that the energetic contribution of the Muslim Scholars to many aspects of knowledge can be attributed to some factors such as; their love and their strong spirit for seeking knowledge, their deep understanding of the message of the Qur'an and their sincere implementation of the prophetic Sunnah. These factors have seriously contributed to their success and many achievements during the Islamic golden age.

3. Lessons that can be Learned from our early Muslim Scholars

Having explored the contributions of early Muslim scholars (with particular reference to Ibn Khaldun, Al-Kindi and Ibn Rushd) to various branches of knowledge, such as natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, the great lessons for later Muslims can be summarized as followed:

- i. Knowledge is power, it is the root and basis of development and strength of any civilization, notably, the early Muslim scholars realized this fact, and they strived for seeking knowledge of social sciences, natural sciences, religious sciences etc. This in turn contributed to the rise of Islamic civilization.
- ii. The contributions of Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Rushd and Al-Kindi to the field of social sciences and humanities ought to encourage the Muslim *ummah* about the importance of revival of Islamic civilization.
- iii. The contemporary Muslim scholars and Muslim intellectuals need to engage themselves in research and creativity for the sake of new knowledge and for the cause of new information.
- iv. The strong unity and sincere solidarity are required among the Muslim *Ummah*. Because unity always leads to progress and division always results to retrogression.
- v. The contemporary Muslim *Ummah* need to strive and transform the ideals of the Qur'an to daily conduct, such as hard work, Perseverance in seeking knowledge, intellectual freedom, sincerity and honesty in dealing with each other, patience and tolerance.

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