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# Some of non-Aristotelian elements in philosophy of Avicenna

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### ABSTRACT

Aristotle is the founder of Peripatetic Philosophy. And Avicenna is the inheritor of Peripatetic Philosophy. However, Avicenna has developed Peripatetic Philosophy strongly and achieved to philosophy that nowadays we call 'Peripatetic Islamic philosophy'. In his Peripatetic Islamic philosophy, Avicenna was affected four factors: (1) Greek philosophy, (2) religion of Islam, (3) mysterious aptitude, and (4) intellectual genius. On these factors, Avicenna set aside some Aristotelian elements and yielded some non - Aristotelian elements. He set aside (1) God the non-creator, (2) active intellect surrounded in body, (3) unity of body and soul in one substance, and (4) generating one thing from only matter and form. He yielded (1) God the creator, (2) active intellect in body and out of body, (3) two substances of body and soul, and (4) generating one thing, first, from Being and, second, from matter and form.

In this article, in proper order and brief manner, I will present a description and explanation of the three elements that are non-Aristotelian and have a great impression on Avicenna's philosophy, and finally detect same agreement of opinions in their works. The elements that we will speak of them are as follows: (1) on the doctrine of emanation and proceeding world from First Principle. (2) on the reason and soul and body. (3) on the matter and form.

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## Introduction

Avicenna (Ibn Sinā) is the inheritor of Peripatetic Philosophy. Peripatetic Philosophy is the same as Philosophy of Aristotle, and Avicenna always praised Aristotle for that he reformed and reorganized philosophy in a logical and intellectual framework so that One can deliberate its truth and false according to reason.

However, Avicenna in his Philosophizes was extending new approaches, and under several decisive elements he produced a new collection and presented his special philosophy.

Four decisive elements in presentation of special philosophy of Avicenna are (1) Greek philosophy, (2) religion of Islam, (3) mysterious aptitude, and (4) intellectual genius.

1. Greek philosophy is the inheritor of human thought about world. Avicenna completely dominated the philosophical thoughts of Aristotle. On his own philosophy, Aristotle thought that the world is eternal (Aristotle, 1984, 278 a 26; 1069 b 35-1070 a 1); He thought that the First Principle is the immovable mover of the first sphere and believed that the movement of the first sphere is caused by the desire that the first sphere indicates to the first principle (Aristotle, 1984, *Metaphysics*, 12, 8); the existence of matter world was a compound of its Matter and Form (Aristotle, 1984, 1043 a 26-29) and didn't believe that the Being (*Wojod*) is a thing different from them; imperishability of individual souls and the immortality of potential intellect were ambiguous; soul was a form of body and, together, were one thing and not different substances (Aristotle, 1984, 412 b 6); ...

2. The religion of Islam was the religious doctrine of Avicenna, and, under Shi'ism, and probably Ismailism, He was intended to conciliate between religion and philosophy. On the principles of Islam, Avicenna had accepted that God has all perfections (See, for example, Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhiyāt*, 9, 1) and the same is eternal as is the creator of the world (Avicenna, 1331, 9); assumed the world is advent (essential) and tried to establish an intellectual connection of temporal to eternal

(Avicenna, 1402, manner 5, problem 5); the world of sensibles was full of Being (*Wojod*) of Matter and Form (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhiyāt*, pp. 342 and 347); believed in spiritual, and even, bodily resurrection (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhiyāt*, article 2, chapter 34) and convinced to eternality of rational souls and reasons (Avicenna, 1402, manner 7, problem 1); believed that soul should be properly form of body and perfection to body and supposed it to be a substance other than body (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Tabiyāt*, art 6, pp. 11-16). Avicenna tried to keep a patriotism to the principles of his Religion and, as a result, made an effort to accommodate philosophical principles of Peripatetic with them.

3. Mysterial aptitude of Avicenna had grew up under religious teachings, but the philosophy of Peripatetic left a special impression on that. In this article, it will relatively be evident that constitution of his mysterious aptitude is spread in the whole of his philosophy. Even when he speaks of reason and its impression on the mode of attaining one's cognition, reveals mysterious nature of his philosophy; in his opinion, One gets cognation when it is in close connection with active intellect and this emanation is intelligibly reflected in his soul (Avicenna, 1402, vol. 2, pp. 367-8). In Avicenna's opinion, attaining Truth [God] and divine knowledge is possible through stability in the same line of the connection with active intellect and as a result of this stability this intelligible world becomes equal to the world of the whole Being (*Wojod*) and sees goodness and beauty and absolute gracefulness and unites co-substance with them (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhiyāt*, 9, 8).

4. Intellectual genius of Avicenna, undoubtedly, had cast a shadow on the whole of his philosophy. With his critic and creature mind, Avicenna neither perfectly gave up Aristotle's philosophy nor accepted the whole of that.

The variety that existed in Aristotle's discourses which appeared in his numerous books during his life, and the different viewpoints of commentators in commenting of his opinion brought about Avicenna

relying on his powerful genius to comment on them and calls together or criticizes and renders them and produces a new composition; a composition that is compatible with religious doctrines of Avicenna.

These factors drove Avicenna to a conclusion that by avoiding some Aristotelian elements and approaching to some non - Aristotelian elements, attain his special philosophy, a philosophy that, in spite of being Peripatetic, is in accordance with Religion and compatible with spirit and principles of Islamic culture.

In order to firm his philosophy up, Avicenna turned to elements that weren't Aristotelian or erroneously had ascribed to Aristotle. An important instance that erroneously has been ascribed to Aristotle is the doctrine of Emanation; For, it erroneously has been thought that it is Aristotle who has composed the books *Uthulujiyā* and *Al-Kheir-o-Al-Mahz* some thought that the doctrine of emanation is an Aristotelian doctrine. Perhaps Avicenna is the first person that recognized *Uthulujiyā* isn't of the works of Aristotle and he has mentioned this subject in his different works, nonetheless, he was greatly influenced by that work (Badavi, p. 121; also *content of Avicenna's work*, margin the book of *Al-Insāf*, specially margin Dr. Yahya Mahdawy).

The book *Uthulujiyā* is neither the work of Aristotle nor Porphyry and isn't the direct work of Plotinus, but all its ten procedures is a liberal translation and quotation from some sections of Plotinus's *Enneads* (4, 5, 6), and probably it is collected by one of Plotinus's student called Amelius. This work has translated apparently by a christian translator in the name of Abd-Al Masih- ben- Abd-Allah-ben-Nāemah- Al-hemsey from Syriac to Arabic language. The Book *Al-kheir-o-Al-Mahz* is the same *liber de causis* and is a liberal translation and summary of Proclus's *Elements of Theology*.

In this article, in proper order and brief manner, I will present a description and explanation of the three elements that are non-Aristotelian and have a great impression on Avicenna's philosophy, and finally detect same agreement of opinions in their works. The

elements that we will speak of them are as follows:

- (1) on the doctrine of emanation and proceeding world from First Principle.
- (2) on the reason, soul, and body.
- (3) on the matter and form.

### **1. The doctrine of emanation and proceeding world from the first Principle**

**1-1.** In presenting an outlook of the overall world, Aristotle accepts motion as one of the most important elements. In his opinion, the motion exists only in the space of a world which has a spherical shape. In any sphere there can be only three kinds of motions: direct motion from centre to environs, direct motion from environs to centre, circular motion to the round of centre. Any motion is depending on a certain body and, then, those three kinds of motions belong to the three bodies and any of this bodies intrinsically and naturally possess that motion. Therefore, the motion a flight of centre is being allocated to fire and the motion towards centre to earth and circular motion belongs to the body which is found only in the realm of stars and he calls this body Ether (*αιθηρ*).

Ether (and, in Islamic philosophy, *Asir*) means a body which always is rotating and since its circulation is everlasting, then, it is eternal. For its natural place is not in any point of its circle of revolution, but it rotates through the whole of that and is always in motion. The existing world has three classifications. the under - moon and the sphere of fixed stars and the space between this two that is full of ether (*αιθηρ*) and is eternally in motion.

In this way, Aristotle describes a world which neither has come into existence nor disappear, but it is eternal, everlasting, unbeginning and unending. Such a description of the world indicates that Aristotle regards the whole world eternal. The world has been steered in to motion by immovable mover from eternity and is in motion eternally (Aristotle, 1984, *On the heavens*, 2-3)

**1-2.** Aristotle was regarding the world uncreated and eternal, since in the Greek thought there are no room for the creation out of nothing, and for this reason he thought that the matter of world is uncreated. If a thing was created it should be potency of creation in the former matter, and we have to come to a matter which is uncreated, otherwise, there also must be a potency in the former matter and this chain continues infinitely (Aristotle, 1984, I 033 b 1-5). In order to elucidate the "creation *ex nihilo*", which is a doctrine of Qur'an, and bring it into an agreement with his religious doctrines and explain transmission from First principle to world, Avicenna planned to deny this saying that there are two eternal. He believed, eternal Being (*Wojod*) is not the Being (*Mojud*) which have a temporal duration but "the Eternal is a thing that in its existing doesn't need an agent but its existence is intrinsicall" (Avicenna, 1331, p. 9) and such a Being can't be a thing but the essence of First Principle. Therefore, in his eyes, the Being (*Wojod*) of First Principle is prior essence and other Beings (*Mojudāt*), whether they are prior to time or they are posterior to time or they are connected to time, are noneternal and created and originated (Ibid, pp. 10-11)

**1-3.** On the creation of Beings (*Mojudāt*) and the connection of temporal to eternal Avicenna, with avoidance of Aristotle's and even Motakallemin's theory, in this case, develops a special theory. He presents his theory, like Al-Farabi (Al-Fārābi, 1361, chapters 7 and 8) and under the influence of Plotinus, on the theory of emanation (see, for example, Avicenna, 1402, manner 6). This theory fills the necessary and important distance between creator and created. However, it should not be concluded that this theory results to theory of Pantheism. Distinguishing between Being and Essence, Avicenna placed realm of First Principle higher than creatures and regarded His essence the very His Being (*Wojod*); He is the Simple Being (*Wojod*) and it is the creatures that are a combination of being (*Wojod*) and essence (Avicenna, 1402, manner 4, problem 5).

**1-4.** Avicenna explains proceeding of the creatures by means of emanation (Avicenna, 1331, pp. 14-15). Emanation is the same as self-revelation of First Principle, the Creator that the world is resulted by his reasoning of his essence and of his being principle for order of goodness. In Avicenna's opinion, the emanation is a necessary act that results from the essence of the First Principle and his sacred reasoning; considering that God either knows his essence or reasons his essence, the world emanates from this knowledge and reasoning. Therefore, God's knowledge is a producing potency and his reasoning is the cause of an infinity act, and emanation also is the same eternal knowledge and essential reasoning of God, the knowledge and reasoning which always is happening and is the origin of bringing to existence and manifestation of creatures.

Avicenna, in strengthening his principles, has grounded his theory of emanation on the origins and foundations that are compatible with his own philosophy. In his philosophy, he has founded the theory of emanation on the following principles:

1. division of beings (*Mojodāt*) to necessary and contingent, and temporal and eternal.
2. innovated creation of world that the result of his generosity and foreknowledge.
3. reasoning of God which is the source of bringing into existence.
4. being God's agent - by - foreknowledge.
5. non-procession from one save one.

**1-5-1.** What we see in the world of Being (*Wojod*) is the demand of things to one another. The order of the world has a causal and effectual relation and any caused needs an effect. If this chain will not end to an uncaused cause, it would found necessary to impossible endless regress (Avicenna, 1402, vol. 3, p. 20). There must inevitable be a being (*Mojod*) which hasn't taken its being (*Wojod*) from another, but has necessity being by itself. In this endless regress of beings (*Mojodāt*), save the necessity Being, the whole beings are caused by preceding and cause of the subsequent (Ibid, p. 17) Here, it must be questioned that what is the

criterion of neediness of caused to cause? Like Motakallemin, if we consider the criterion of neediness as a temporal accident, the whole intelligences wouldn't need any cause and, like the First Cause, becomes eternal in essence and results to plurality of eternals. The criterion of neediness must be a thing that contains the whole other than the First Principle and this is not a thing save it be contingent. other than the First Principle are involved in the difficulty of essential possibility and their essence demand neither the Being (*Wojod*) nor the non-Being and the same is the reason of their neediness to cause (Ibid, pp. 75-6).

Therefore, First Principle is Necessarily Existent by itself and other beings (*Mojudāt*) are possibly existent by themselves (Ibid, p.18). Their self-possibility doesn't conflict with their being pre-eternal by virtue of time; temporally, other than First Principle are eternal, but they need the cause; these are possible by themselves and the same is the criterion of their neediness to the cause.

We have said that, in Avicenna's opinion, God is everlasting and eternal and creatures are essential advent (Ibid, p. 113). He meant by eternal to a thing which is self-subsistent and free from want of a cause.

Avicenna, in order to explain the "creation out of nothing" and account the plurality of possibilities, resorts to the theory of emanation and their inventively creation. Divine emanation instantly invents the world and always connects that with him, in the frame of a motion that emanated to them from eternal. The same emotion, also, is a fixed and eternal emanation and is derived from the Most High God.

1-5-2. The procession of immaterial beings (*Mojudāt*) from the perfect cause is the same as their invention. In Avicenna eyes, the inventive creation of the non-materials world results from Divine generosity and providence. In the definition of innovation, he says: "the innovation is the same as generosity granting of a thing that is worthy of granting"(Ibid, p.145) and he believes His innovation "granting a thing whose granting is desirable for the creatures". On the



true innovated, he says: "then the true innovated is one whose emanation of efficacy doesn't result from his desire and intention of demand to a thing which comes back to him" (Ibid).

The Divine creation results neither from the nature of aspiration nor the intention of utility that comes back to himself, but it results from emanation of his innovation and providence. He defines the providence with numerous phrases. once, he says "this order with its arrangement and detail is an emanation of imitating the whole order in the former knowledge together with its necessary and proper time and the emanation of that is reasonable for the Great God and this is the same as the meaning of the providence" (Ibid, p. 151). And, in another place, he says "it should be noticed that providence means that First Principle, in his own essence, knows that what an order should the Being (*Wojod*) have to bring for the goodness, and He is in His own essence, in terms of possibility, the cause of goodness and perfection of beings (*Mojudāt*), and in the same manner He is satisfied to the good order, and therefore, as much as possible, reasons the good order, and therefore emanates from Him the order and good that He reasons, in terms of the most perfect manner that He reasons, an emanation that, as far as possible, results to the most perfect order, and this actually is the meaning of providence" (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhyāt*, p. 415).

Divine providence is the same as his domination to the whole world; he is knowing the good order and he is its cause and he is satisfied of it; his reasoning of the good order is the source of emanation of this order, and this means providence. In Avicenna's opinion, this divine innovation and providence causes to the innovational creation of the world. In the definition of innovation, he says "the word innovation is a name that is used in two senses: first is creation of thing not from a thing and not by means of a thing, and the other is that the thing, absolutely, receives its being (*Wojod*) from a direct and immediate cause, whereas its exitance, essentially, is this that it doesn't exist and because of innovation loses perfectly what it has intrinsically" (Avicenna, 1366,

pp. 42-3).

Avicenna attends, in the first definition, to the innovator and, in the second definition, to the innovated. Also, about innovation of innovator, he says "the innovation means that Being (*Wojod*). was granted from one thing to the other thing, without any interference of matter or means or time" (Avicenna, 1402, vol. 3, p. 120). "Therefore, First Principle innovates an intellectual substance which in fact is the innovator, and because of this he produces another intellectual substance and celestial bodies" (Ibid, p. 254).

Therefore, in Avicenna's opinion, innovational creation belongs to intelligence and this intelligence leads to the creation of soul other beings (*Mojodāt*).

We said that Avicenna believed, contrary to many, that *Uthulujiyā* and *Al-kheir-o-Al-Mahz* are of the works of Aristotle and he was greatly influenced by the doctrine of emanation and innovational creation discussed in those books. These books abstracted from works of Plotinus and Proclus and this doctrine is a neo-platonic theory. In *Uthulujiyā* it is said that "indeed goodness comes down by the Supreme Principle to the two worlds, for He is the originator of things; and life and souls are issued by Him to this world" (Plotinus, 1356, p. 12) "And that the first agent is previous to all things and He is both originator and finisher, and there is not at all any difference and separation between origination of one thing and Finish of this thing". (Ibid, p.75). The same contents are declared In *Al-kheir-o-Al-Mahz*, as well: "First Cause is higher than any name which is called to that name... First Cause neither is imperfect nor is only completeness but is super-completeness, for He is originator of things and emanates goodness perfectly on things" ( Proclus, 1955, pp. 22-23). "And First Cause neither is intelligence nor is soul or nature, but He is higher than intelligence and soul and nature, for He is originator of all things, but He originates the intelligence immediately and the soul and the nature and other things by means of intelligence" (Ibid, p.12). "Prime Ipseity while he is the cause of causes is, unmoved,

and if he bestows his ipseity to anything he will bestow that with a kind of origination" (Ibid, p.19).

In this way, it is evident that the cause of causes is the first originator, the first thing that is originated, is intelligence and the intelligence is highly resembling to God, God originates soul and other creatures by intelligence. Therefore, like First Principle, the ten intellects have the potency of production and origination and this origination results from their own reasoning and knowledge, regarding the difference that God is the cause of causes and the agent of the whole world and intelligences are His creatures and effects.

**1-5-3.** The act of First Principle and His first essential work is nothing but reasoning. He reasons his essence, an essence that is the pure reason and pure goodness. This reasoning of His essence is the origin of being (*Wojod*) and things that he reasons and, in terms of Avicenna, his reasoning is the same as "the First epiphany of the Truth" (Avicenna, solar 1331, p. 7) by which beings (*Mojudāt*) are being created. In this regard, Avicenna's words are as follows: "but the First work and the essential work of First Principle is that He reasons that His own essence spontaneously is the principle of good order in the being (*Hasty*) and therefore He reasons the good order in the being (*Hasty*), ... His reasoning of good order in being (*Hasty*) requires that He reasons the manner for the possibility of it and He reasons the best way that external being (*Wojod*) of the whole order to be in accordance with the knowledge that is in His essence, ... therefore His reasoning is the cause of being (*Wojod*) a thing that he reasons" (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhyāt*, p. 403).

Following this subject, Avicenna believes creation of God is requisite to His being (*Wojod*) and dependance to His being (*Wojod*) and he introduces his creation by means of a rational necessity. But, as will be evident in the fallow, it doesn't mean that He has been compelled to the creation of world and He is agent-by-being forced.

**1-5-4.** Divine Act is neither from intention nor from nature. In

Avicenna's opinion ( Ibid, pp. 402-3) the act from intention requires defect and plurality in the Essence of the Creator, and the act from nature requires non-knowledge of the Maker to His Maked and non-consent to that. In his opinion, God's reasoning of the world requires to bring into existence the whole world from Him and there is not in His Essence any hindrance or prevention from procession of the whole world, His Essence discerns that His Perfection and Elevation is in a manner that the good emanates from Him, then any essence that discerns the procession of a thing from himself and there is no hindrance to prevent; he will be consent to that procession; so, First Principle is consent to emanation of the whole world from Himself. Therefore, In Avicenna's opinion, God is agent-by-foreknowledge and His Act is as a result of His consent.

**1-5-5.** The principle of "*ex uno non fit nisi unum*" (the One doesn't proceed from him but one) means that since the First Principle is one and simple Firstly proceeds nothing but the one and simple caused which is the first intellect. But, since the first intellect itself is caused and non- eternal and in relation to its cause is imperfect and limited and poisoned to non-being, is composed of being (*Wojod*) and essence. Therefore, this intellect has two things, the one is its being (*Wojod*) which is proceeded from First Principle, and the other is its essence that isn't proceeded from First Principle but results from its imperfection and limitation. Therefore, second intellect proceeds from the existing aspect of first intellect and the body and soul of first sphere proceeds from the essential aspect of the first intellect (Ibid, pp. 403-6).

**1-6.** In Avicenna's view, the whole world is the emanation of Divine being (*Wojod*) and in this case he says "and He is the agent of all things, that is, He is a being (*Mojod*) that the whole being (*Wojod*) emanates from Him, the emanation which is other than His essence".( Ibid, p. 403) But, in his opinion, the first intellect is the mediator of the emanation of other creatures and he says "therefore the soul stimulations are

emanating continually from the Intellectual Separate Principle to the soul of celestial bodies and the same emanation on soul figures is on ardor by which, in the manner that has been said, celestial bodies are brought into motion" ( Avicenna, 1402, vol. 3, p. 207). "But, forms also are emanated from this intellect, and nevertheless this forms are different in their matters, according to the merit of that matters to this forms from different aspect of their readiness" (Ibid, p. 257) "And at this time vegetable and animals and rational souls emanate from the intellectual substance that is adjacent to the world of elements" (Ibid, p. 259).

As it was mentioned before, procession of this creatures from First Principle is not immediately. Since First Principle is one and simple. He doesn't create but only one being (*Mojod*) that is the first intellect. In fact, in Avicenna's view, first intellect, considering its existence, is similar to First Principle and is also capable of innovational creation and emanation of creatures; except for that since first intellect is mixed of essence and imperfect, as against to First Principle, has different aspects that are the origin of procession of more than one thing. In this regard, he says "since there is, under any intellect, a sphere with its matter and form- that is the same soul- and a lower intellect, therefore in the outside under any intellect there are three things; therefore it must be for the sake of these triple aspects that the existence of these three things have been contingent in the original manner from first reason; and any one of these three realities, in the order of their existential superiority, results from the higher aspect that exists in intellect and there are many reasons to prove it... .".( Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhyāt*, p. 406)

The plurality that has been found necessary in the first intellect is for it is being non-eternal. Therefore, the first intellect, reasoning the essence of the First Principle emanates the second intellect, reasoning its essence, as necessary-existence-by-the other, emanates the soul of the first sphere, and reasoning its essence, as contingent-existence-by-

essence, emanates the body of the first sphere. This chain, in this manner, continues to the tenth reasons which is the active intellect. The chain of emanation comes to an end in the tenth intellect; active intellect emanates the souls of the world of under - moon and deliberates the world of generation and corruption.( Ibid, pp. 405-9)

**1-7.** As we mentioned, Avicenna in the case of emanation theory is under the influence of Aristotle. In *Uthuliyyā* there are many phrases about the hierarchy of the world which are derived from this doctrine: "it is the First Being and the Truth that emanates life first on intellect, then on soul, and then on natural things, and He is God that is the pure goodness" (Plotinus, 1356, p. 42). "and although intellect has an actual ipseity, is caused by the First Cause, for intellect emanates form on soul by means of a potency that has been given by the First Cause".( Ibid, p. 74) "and the intellectual world benefits and emanates the sensory world, and the sensory world profits and accepts the potency given by the intellectual world" ( Ibid, p. 79).

Plotinus himself more clearly, emphasizes on this doctrine in Ennead the fifth, second tract, number 1: "Seeking nothing, possessing nothing, lacking nothing, the One is perfect and, metaphorically, has overflowed, and its exuberance has produced new creature; this product ... has become ... an Intellectual-Principle. That station towards the one [the fact that something exists in presence of the One] establishes the Intellectual-Principle ... attaining resemblance in virtue of this vision, it repeats the act of the One ... . This active power sprung from essence [from the Intellectual-Principle considered as Being] is the same soul" (Plotinus, 1952, p. 214).

Also, in the *Al-Kheir-o-Al-mahz*, it has been mentioned that "and He manages all the originated things and emanates on them potency and life and good to the extent of their ability and power" (Proclus, 1955, p. 20) "and His Person is pure good and emanates all goods on intellect and by means of intellect on other things" (Ibid, p. 12) "and as God -blessed and exalted- emanates good on things, hence the

intellect emanates knowledge on the things that are lower than intellect" (Ibid, p. 23).

In the *Elements of Theology* there are some episodes that clearly implies this doctrine: "For all things are dependent on the gods, some being irradiated by one god, some by another (Proclus, 1992, p. 129). "For some divine principles in virtue of their substance and the especial character of their station are completely exalted in their simplicity above the beings which they irradiate".( Ibid, p. 125) "For through the mediation of Intelligence and Soul such henads irradiate certain parts of the world - order" ( Ibid, p. 143). " ...if soul proceeds from intelligence and has intelligence as its originative principle, and intelligence being unmoved produces all things by its mere existence, then it will give to the soul which arises from it, as part of that soul's being, rational nations of all that is contains" (Ibid, pp. 169 -171). Therefore, it is evident that, regarding the doctrine of emanation, Avicenna is not under the influence of Aristotle but under the influence of Plotinus and Proclus.

**1-8.** When Avicenna talks about the processions of the first intellect estimates them three things: second intellect, soul of the first sphere, and body of the first sphere. Aristotle never believes it to be so. Al-Fārābī (Al-Fārābī, 1361, p. 127) doesn't reject this idea, but he is also, under the influence of Plotinus, says that two things emanate from first intellect: being (*Wojod*) of the third being (*Mojod*), and being (*Wojod*) of the first heaven. nevertheless, in spite of the fact that Plotinus (Plotinus, 1952, 5, 2, 1) considers the first intellect both intellect and being says that only one thing, that is, spirit (soul), proceeds from intellect. Therefore, it is evident that saying that three things proceed from first intellect is advanced by Avicenna himself on doctrine of procession of Neo-platonic of Al-Fārābī.

**1-9.** Up to now, it would be obvious that according to whreliminary basis Avicenna has attained the doctrine of emanation. Actually all of these preliminaries are not of the inventive genius of Avicenna; in

division of being (*Mojod*) to necessary and contingent and to non-eternal and eternal he is completely in agreement with Aristotle;<sup>1</sup> in inventive creation and emanation of the world and in that God reasoning is the origin of creation he agrees with Plotinus and Proclus; and in the case of principle of "*ex uno non fit nisi unum*" he accepts Al-Fārābī.<sup>2</sup> Among these preliminary, being God's agent-by-foreknowledge is of the inventive genius of Avicenna himself.

## 2. intellect, soul, and body

**2-1.** The term of "active intellect" is not from Aristotle himself. Aristotle in *on the soul* applies the term of "passive intellect" only one time, (Aristotle, 1984, 430 a 24) but when he distinct it from intellect that is essentially act, (Ibid, 430 a 18) commentators call this second intellect "active intellect". When Aristotle talks about active intellect, he, intends to solve the problem of reasoning. In his mind, without active intellect, nothing would think (Ibid, 430 a 24 -5). Despite his master, Plato, he doesn't believe that intellectual forms have independent and actual being (*Wojod*) and so he doesn't think that they are directly capable of perception and reasoning. In his opinion, these intellectual forms have potential beings (*Wojod*) in sensible things and he propounded active intellect to bring out these intellectual forms from sensible things and turn them into actual. Active intellect has a being (*Wojod*) in the soul of human beings, and it is the only thing that can separate itself from the soul, and, in its separation, it will gain an imperishable and eternal being (*Wojod*) (Ibid, 430 a 23-4). Aristotle assimilated active intellect to the light that is the means of perception of colours (Ibid, 430 a 15).

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1. Of Course, Aristotle speaks, in *metaphysics*, 5, 5, of necessary and, in *ibid*, 9, 4, of contingent and, in *ibid*, 1069 and 1070. For example, it has been mentioned that matter and form are eternal, but the one who has made clear the discussion of necessary and contingent is Al-Fārābī (for example, in the beginning of his book *Eun-Al-Masāel*) and the origin of discussion of non-eternal and eternal turns back to the discussion of non-eternity and eternity by Muslim Motakallemin (Islamic theologians).

2. Al-Fārābī himself also says that this principle is from initiatives of Aristotle. See Al-Fārābī, dateless, p. 7.



In Avicenna's opinion, active intellect is a thing higher than what is thought by Aristotle. In his mind, active intellect:

(1) has a substantial and separate being (*Wojod*) and is situated out of the individual human beings (Avicenna, 1402, vol. 2, p. 361; Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhyāt*, p. 142).

(2) is the last intellect of the tenth separate intellects and is the administrator the world of under-moon (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhyāt*, p. 401).

(3) is the dispenser of form and the emanator of forms to anything and intellectual forms to the reasons of human (Ibid, pp. 401 and 410).

(4) in its connection to souls of human, by means of its emanation, arises intellectual forms in them; However, it isn't human's intellect that have achieves this intellectual forms by means of sensation and imagination, yet this sensation and imagination paves the way for the soul of human to connect to active intellect and receive the forms (Avicenna, 1402, art 6, p. 208-9).

Avicenna assimilates active intellect to the sun. He says the relation of active intellect to our souls is similar to the relation of sun to our eyes, and as the sun is essentially luminous and with its shine's lights other things, active intellect emanates the light of intellect on our souls (Ibid, p. 208).

**2-2.** I said that Aristotle maintained only to two intellects, that is active intellect and passive intellect and even though the phrase active intellect doesn't belong to him. Avicenna, mainly under the influence of Al-Fārābī (Al-Fārābī, 1361, p. 218-224) maintains that the kinds of intellects are more than two. In addition to these two intellects, he maintains three other intellects: actual intellect, habitual intellect, and acquired intellect. Active intellect is higher than human reason, and other four intellects are degrees of human reason (Avicenna, 1402, vol. 2, pp. 353-4).

**2-3.** On the passive intellect or the same material intellect, Aristotle, on one hand, maintained that this intellect when gaining intellectual

forms must be devoid of any form and, on the other hand, maintained that this intellect is not mixed of matter and was assimilating that intellect to a *tabula rasa* ( Aristotle, 1984, 429 a 20-21 and 430 a 1). Al-Fārābī accepted the second view of Aristotle and concluded that passive intellect doesn't have any appointment and attainment and is pure capacity and acceptance (Al-Fārābī, 1361, pp. 218-221). Contrary to Al-Fārābī who believed in the subsistence of perfect human intellect and therefore regards passive intellect as a pure capacity, Avicenna believed that the souls of all humans are subsistent; and since he contends that rational soul of human, while still hasn't attained the comprehension of ineligibles, is the same as material intellect and accepts the first view of Aristotle, and as result he maintains that material intellect in addition to having appointment and attainment has substantial being (*Wojod*) (Avicenna, marginal notes on Aristotle's *On the soul*, in Badavi, 1947, vol. 1, pp.100-101).

**2-4.** In Aristotle's mind, forms and intellectual universals haven't a being (*Wojod*) other than sensible things. But Avicenna assumes two class of intellectual forms; the first class hasn't a being (*Wojod*) separate from sensible things, but the second class is essentially immaterial and separate from matter.

Therefore, as is said, Aristotle believes in the abstraction of intellectual forms from sensible and imaginal pictures and thinks that this isn't practicable without the help of sensation and imagination. This idea of Aristotle is in accordance with his own view about potency and act. On the potency and act, Aristotle declares that act is prior to potency and one can't actualize any potential unless by means of a thing that is essentially actual (Aristotle, 1984, *Metaphysics*, book 9, 1049). In gaining intellectual forms, he says that actual forms are gained from sensible beings (*Mojodāt*).

As opposed to Aristotle, Avicenna believes that universal and intellectual forms proceed not from sensible beings (*Mojodāt*) but from an actual thing. Although paying attention to sensible and

imaginational pictures paves the way for the rational soul in acceptance of the universal and intellectual forms, this isn't the forms that are transferred from the imagination to the intellect, but it is the rational soul that after gaining a potency from sensation and imagination receives intellectual and separate forms from active intellect (Avicenna, 1402, vol. 2, pp. 365-7).

**2-5.** When Aristotle talks about soul, he intends that "substance in the sense of form". In his opinion, the soul is a substance which is a form to the organic and natural body (Aristotle, 1984, 412 a 20).

Avicenna, in contrary to Aristotle and in order to confirm the independent permanence of the soul, says that if it is due to the soul to be a particular part of a thing which is compound of soul and the subject matter of soul it can't be substance; if soul is to be "substance in the sense of form", it becomes a necessary for the soul to be impressed in body, whereas body itself is dependent to soul and unless the soul hasn't been connected to the body it won't have positivity and specificity. Therefore, in Avicenna's mind, soul is a separate substance; and in his view, in spite of the fact that soul has a being (*Wojod*) other than the body, its interest and relation to body is an interest of administering, applying, dominating and controlling on it (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Tabiyāt*, art 6, pp.12-4).

**2-6.** Aristotle contends that soul and body, in other words, the body which possess a soul are the same. In his mind, the matter and form of everything are separable and distinctionable from each other only in the realm of logic, but they consist one truth in the real world. In the case of soul and body he also believes to the same unity and says "That is why we can dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and body are one" (Aristotle, 1984, 412 b 6).

Avicenna says when Aristotle declares that soul is the first entelechy for potential, organic and natural body (Ibid, 412 a 28), he just intends to indicate the relation of soul and body and reveals the essence of the soul. In concurrence with his religious beliefs, he really plans to

separate between soul and body, and consequently he takes soul as a substance that essentially is stripped of body. In his mind, substantiality of soul is due to the its dependence to body. The body is dependent on the control, dominance and occupation of soul (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Tabiyāt*, art 6, pp. 9-14).

**2-7.** Where Aristotle proposes the five substances he distinguishes between substantial form and substantial matter (Aristotle 1984, 1070 a 10-12). In discussing the soul, he agrees that human soul is the form for his body. In his mind, the realization of the first substance, that is, the living body, depends on belonging of the soul to it (Aristotle, 1984, 412 a 20). Moreover, when Aristotle assumes soul as a perfection to organic and natural body, his intention of perfection is the same actuality and form. In the *on the souls*, he writes: "Hence the soul must be a substance in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within it" (Ibid, 412 a 19-21).

Although Avicenna, approved that matter can't live without form and body can't exist without soul, he couldn't accept Aristotle's opinion. Aristotle (Aristotle, 1984, *On the souls*, 3, 5) maintained that the whole efficiencies of the human soul except what he called the agent intellect -in terms of Islamic Philosophy "active intellect"- would be destroyed at death time along with perishing of body. But Avicenna maintained that the status of active intellect is in the outside of human being, hence in case of human being he believed to the resurrection of rational souls. Therefore, Avicenna came to this point that although soul is the perfection of the body it isn't the form of it. In Avicenna's mind, perfection has a meaning more than form. Perfection means something which determinate and realize an undetermined and unrealize thing, whether or not this perfection is the form of it. For the condition of form is that it isn't impressed in matter, whereas perfection is the whole of impression in matter and separation of matter (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Tabiyāt*, art 6, pp. 11-16).

**2-8.** Since Aristotle maintained that passive intellect, namely material

intellect, is pure potency and receptivity, in case of knowledge of soul to itself he maintained that passive intellect in order to make itself reasonable, in contrary to other reasonables, doesn't change from potency to act immediately under the influence of active intellect; that is when the other reasonables became actual and united with the passive intellect, and while the required knowledge is obtained for these reasonables, at the same time the self- knowledge is created immediately by their union with intellect. Therefore, in Aristotle's mind, knowledge of soul to itself is dependent on comprehension of things that are outside of the soul itself and unless they are been obtained by the passive intellect the very passive intellect doesn't take place reasonable and the soul hasn't any knowledge to itself (Aristotle, 1984, 429 b 28 and 430 a 1-9)

Avicenna, on the contrary, maintained that rational soul of human being would perpetual be remaining and eternal even in the period of material intellect. In his opinion, in the period of material intellect, in spite of the fact that intellect hasn't any comprehension of the outside world, is conscious of its essence in any condition so that even with being free and unconscious from the comprehension of everything also it has knowledge to its essence and is aware of himself. (Avicenna, 1402, vol. 2, p. 292) In his defense of the substantiality, immortality and eternity of the soul, he comes to this point that any individual rational soul is responsible for their thoughts and acts and believes them to be present in the Resurrection and answer for their own behavior and conduct.

**2-9.** As is said previously in 2-7, Aristotle maintained that active intellect can be separated from the body of human being, and so he believed it to be immortal and eternal (Aristotle, 1984, 430 a 23-4).

Avicenna, being loyal to his religious belief, explicitly, introduces soul not the form of body but the perfection of body. He maintains that the soul of any individual person, keeping his individuation, is eternal and perpetual. In his mind, not only the active intellect has a transcendental position, but also the actual intellect and even material intellect that are the substance of rational soul of human being, after their separation of the

body, will continue to their life and endurance in the other world.

### 3. Matter and Form

**3-1.** Aristotle maintains that, in the hierarchy of the world, the first mover is necessary and simple being and the inferior of the first mover is a possible being which is composed of matter (υλη) and form (εἶδος). In his mind, matter and form of the world of superior to moon and even matter of the world of under the moon are eternal.

When Aristotle was talking about things maintained that their components are matter and form and, in their cognition and definition, he assigned genus to matter and the difference to form.

**3-2.** Owing to his domination to the philosophy of Aristotle, Avicenna discerned that we recognize a thing in accordance with its genus and difference and also this genus and difference manifest the matter and form. If we recognize something by means of universal concepts and while we ignore all its universal concepts, there remains nothing of it except pure matter then how we can say that this thing has come into existence from a pure matter which is a pure potency and even non-being and from a form that is universal and non-being. Consequently, if the constituting particulars of a thing is only matter and form, we can never realize the objective being of a thing.

Therefore, Avicenna propounds a third affair. Matter and form are non-requirement of being and non-being and it is due to the occurrence of "being" (*Wojod*) that they obtain objective beings.<sup>1</sup> When he says that being (*Wojod*) is occurring on them his intention is that being (*Wojod*) has been granted to them in relation to God (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhyāt*, p. 347). In his mind, except Necessary Being are possible-by-themselves

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1. Averroes and, subject to him, Aquinas and even Gilson have made a mistake in understanding Avicenna's intention of occurrence of being (*Wojod*) on essence. They have thought that his intention of "occurrence" is categorical accident and have been surprised that how being (*Wojod*) surpasses the accident of the essence. This affair has impelled Aquinas to set forth "action of being (*esse*)" and this become his noble an initiative theory, neglecting that Avicenna's intention wasn't the occurrence of being (*Wojod*) on essence but is contradiction of being (*Wojod*) and essence and Avicenna himself long before than Aquinas knew "action of being(*esse*)" which was granted by the Supreme Deity. In this case, for example, see Gilson, Etienne, 1989, P. 179.

and their being (*Wojod*) have originated from Necessary Being; they intrinsically have the merit of non-existence absolute, not that they are non-existence in only matter or in only form but they ,were non-existence in their totality and Necessary Being has generated and proceeded the whole of their matter and form (Ibid, p. 342).

**3-3.** We see that, in Avicenna opinion, the existence of possibilities depends, not only on matter and form, but also on a third affair, that is, occurrence of being (*Wojod*) or the same generation and proceeding from Necessary Being. In propounding of this third affair, Avicenna, as opposed to our expectation, isn't under the influence of Neo-Platonists. For Plotinus himself be lived that things are composed of matter and form; (Plotinus, 1952, 2, 4, 4, and 2, 4, 6), but, despite of Aristotle, he not only accepts the origination of form (Ibid, 2, 4, 8 and 3, 8, 1) but also the origination of matter, (Ibid, 2, 4, 5) and maintains that forms are higher status and they are existing in the Divine Knowledge.(Ibid, 5, 9, 5) In Plotinus mind, what is proceeded (not come into existence) from one is universal intellect and the universal intellect has two aspects of intellect and being and the universal soul proceeds from universal intellect and the soul of Plants and Animals proceeds from universal soul (Ibid, 5, 2, 1) and the world of matter, namely matter and form, proceeds from the inferior aspect of soul that is the same nature (the world of matter in comparison with nature is similar to the fishnet in to the water of sea (Ibid, 4, 3, 9)) (Ibid, 3, 8, 1 and 2, 4, 5) Why Avicenna propounds a third affair in addition to matter and form?<sup>1</sup>

In propounding of this third affair, he intends to account for the existence of the possible beings. In Avicenna mind, things can't exist unless being (*Wojod*) occur on the essence (matter and form) of them, that is, things can't come into existence unless they are in relation to God. The existence (*Wojod*) or possible beings depends on the existence (*Wojod*) of

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1. Of Course, the intention isn't that. in the outside, one thing has been composed of three things, that is, matter and form and being (*Wojod*). It is in rational analysis that we analyze one thing into matter and form and being (even the rational beings doesn't have matter at all).

God (Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhyāt*, p. 404).

**3-4.** In Aristotle view, a being (*Mojod*) is composed of matter and form but he doesn't determine the causality of matter on form or form on matter. But Avicenna, after a detailed discussion, comes to this point that form is somehow the cause of matter. The main cause for emanation of the under-moon beings (*Mojodāt*) is the active intellect; but active intellect is the dispenser of forms and emanates form to matter. Form, in other word, is the partner of cause in coining into existence of beings (*Mojodāt*) (See Avicenna, 1404, *Al-Ilāhyāt*, pp. 83-85)

### Conclusion

Avicenna, in his philosophy, where he is influence of Aristotle, has followed from Aristotle, and where he has mentioned new points of view, has transcended from Aristotle. Religion of Islam, mysterious aptitude, and intellectual genius are three factors that are origin of his transcend from Aristotle. Avicenna, with believing that world is God's creature and innovation and is God's emanating of emanation and emanate from God's innovation and providence, active intellect is means of God's emanation and creation of creature and the emanator of intellectual forms to the reasons of human, soul and body are two separate substances that soul's interest and relation to body is an interest of administering, applying, dominating and controlling on it, and Being's things is stopped, in addition to matter and form, on Being's emanation from God to them and through active intellect, has transcended from Aristotle and has penetrated to his special philosophy that is Peripatetic Islamic Philosophy.



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