

# Ibn Khaldun and The Greek Philosophy: Some notes from the *Muqaddima*

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## Abstract

This essay brings into light the possible Greek elements in Ibn Khaldun's philosophical thoughts. A historian and civilizationist by profession, Ibn Khaldun did not write philosophy book *per se*. Instead, he published *Muqaddima*, a prolegomena of history, where the major part of his philosophical ideas is centered. This study is mainly to carry out textual investigation on the *Muqaddima*, to trace and determine the manner and nature of Greek elements and/or the influence of Greek philosophy in Ibn Khaldun's thoughts and how far can he be linked to the Greeks. Some conclusion will be drawn on whether or not Ibn Khaldun carried any signs of the Greek philosophy and, if any, in what manner and to what extent did he employ Greek methods in his philosophic enquiries and procedure of analysis of human society? This essay will be based on textual analysis of the *Muqaddima*.

**Keywords:** Ibn Khaldun, Greek thoughts, history, philosophy

## 1. Background

Abd Rahman b. Muhammad, more popularly known as Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 CE) can be classified one of the most prominent scholars of medieval Islam. This is based on at least two grounds, namely, i) he was considered the pioneer in philosophy of history<sup>1</sup> and, 2) his *magnum opus* the *Muqaddima* is still studied and widely read until present days. Nevertheless, Ibn Khaldun was not listed within the circle of mediaeval Muslim philosopher (in a strict sense of the word), or at least not in the rank where al-Kindi (801–873 CE), al-Farabi (870–950 CE), Ibn Sina (980–1037 CE) and Ibn Rushd (1126–1198 CE) were identified as such. These philosophers were known and recognized by their profession and literary works. They were well regarded as philosophers in the Muslim philosophical tradition.

Ibn Khaldun did not write a specific philosophy book (as we understand today) like his predecessors did, but he composed a prolegomena in which he advanced his philosophic ideas, particularly on human society

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g., Rosenthal, E. I. J, "Ibn Khaldun: A North African Muslim Thinker of the 14th Century", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library. Manchester*, XXIV 1940, pp. 307-20. See also Prakash, Buddha. Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History, *Islamic Culture*. Hyderabad, XXVIII 1954, 492-508, Muhsin Mahdi (1957), Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History, London: Allen and Unwin, , passim

and civilization. Many scholars considered *Muqaddima* as the actual reflection of Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history, historiography and sociology. Through *Muqaddima*, he made sense of history; bring it down to the world of reality. He furnished historical narratives with rationality and logics. In certain respects, the *Muqaddima* belongs to Islamic historical tradition, like that of al-Tabari (838-923 CE) and al-Mas'udi (896-956 CE). Yet, its dominant intellectual lineage is the rationalist thought that stretches from the Peripatetic philosophers, and especially from Aristotle (384–322 BCE), through such Graeco–Muslim thinkers as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd and of course onward to European philosophical historians and sociologists of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries (Dale, 2006).<sup>2</sup>

Although, from literary point of view, *Muqaddima* was not generally categorized within the genre of philosophy, but the contents and the way it was presented doubtlessly carry premises and arguments of philosophical nature. One will quickly notice the marks of the Greeks by just glancing through the *Muqaddima*.

In the *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldun clearly acknowledged the presence of Greek ideas in the Muslim philosophic tradition. He mentioned particularly Aristotle, known as the First Teacher (*al-mu allim al-awwal*) as well as the teacher of logic (*mu'allim sina'a al-mantiq*) in the Muslim world. His ideas and methods were widely spread among his Muslim followers. Farabi and Ibn Sina were among his famous disciples. Greeks come into contact with the Arabs and Muslims through translation activities. As recorded in history, it was during the Abbasid that the translation activities reached its peak where the works of ancient Greek philosophers were extensively translated into Arabic.<sup>3</sup>

This essay will present the elements of Greek thoughts in the work of Ibn Khaldun, namely the *Muqaddima*. It will trace whether or not there exist elements of Greek thoughts in Ibn Khaldun's work, in what sense and how far these elements affect Ibn Khaldun's views on certain issues. More importantly, this essay will present the attitude he adopted in dealing with Greek ideas, his views and critiques and how far he utilizes Greek methods in his philosophic analysis.

## 2. Ibn Khaldun and Greek philosophy

How do we link Ibn Khaldun with Greek thoughts and in what manner? This is the first question we should put forward. The reason is that, this study cannot be carried out unless we first establish the logics of the linkage between Ibn Khaldun and the Greeks. This is particularly important in order to set the right approach and to guide us in this attempt.

As widely accepted that the Greeks were the champion of philosophic tradition. Any studies on Greek

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Frederic Dale (2006). "Ibn Khaldun: The Last Greek And The First *Annaliste* Historian", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 38 , pp 431-451

<sup>3</sup> See further, Walzer, Richard, (1962), *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Cambridge Massachuset: Harvard University Press, ff

Thoughts cannot be alienated from their philosophic tradition. Conversely, studies about philosophic traditions also cannot be isolated from the Greek thoughts. So far as philosophical studies are concerned, Greeks and philosophical traditions have already been synonymous and become almost identical.

In the same vein, when we delve into this sort of enquiry, namely to trace the elements of Greek thoughts in Ibn Khaldun's ideas, we have no other options but to look at the philosophic elements that can be spotted in his writings. Therefore the right thing to do is to carry out this study by examining the rudiments of philosophic notions, argumentations and approaches employed by Ibn Khaldun in his writing. In other words, to unveil the linkage between Ibn Khaldun and the Greek thoughts is actually to expose and the elements of philosophic notions in Ibn Khaldun ideas. By doing so, we will be able to establish a sound approach to study the link between Ibn Khaldun and the Greek thoughts. In this case we take Ibn Khaldun's masterpiece, the *Muqaddima* as case in point. This is due to the fact that this book is the most important literary work Ibn Khaldun has ever produced. Therefore, this study will be taking *Muqaddima* as the main source.

To begin with, perhaps the most important mark of Greek philosophy in the *Muqaddima* is the basic premise he used to build up the foundation of his science of human society or the science of 'umran as he termed it. He apparently used the phrase "man is political by nature".<sup>4</sup> This is found in the first prefatory discussion of chapter one of the *Muqaddima* where he explained the process of establishment of human social organization. For those who are familiar with Greek philosophy would certainly realize that this very phrase is of Greek origin, or more specifically of Aristotelian. Aristotle in his infamous book *Politics* used the similar expression "man is by nature a political animal".<sup>5</sup> In Arabic, the term "political by nature" is translated as *madaniyyun bi-'l-tab'i*. The meaning is similar except Ibn Khaldun did not use the word "animal" in his work.

On the nature of human society, Ibn Khaldun explains the structure and form of relationship in what he terms as "*ta'awun*" (co-operation). This term is used to explain the social relations between members of the society. Every individual is in need of supports of each other in their lives. In the same manner Aristotle also talked about different kinds of associations that exist are founded on different kinds of relationships. He mentioned the basic unit of association which is the household or family, the next is the village, and the ultimate association is the city, toward which the humans put their efforts and struggles seeking to attain the highest quality of life.<sup>6</sup> Of course, comparatively speaking, what Ibn Khaldun expounds in his theory of "*ta'awun*" is not entirely similar to that of Aristotle. Therefore this does not in any way reduce the originality of Ibn Khaldun's theory. Our purpose is only to portray that the notions he proposed are in one way or another carry some forms of Aristotelian or Greeks elements.

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<sup>4</sup> See Ibn Khaldun, Abd al-Rahman, (1993), *Muqaddima Ibn Khaldun*, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, p.33

<sup>5</sup> See, Aristotle, *Politics*, [1252 b30-1253 a3]

<sup>6</sup> See further, Aristotle, *Politics*, [1252 a1-20]

These are some of the example we trace from the *Muqaddima*. As to whether or not Ibn Khaldun was actually the disciple or adherent of the Greeks is another question. This is due to the fact that in some other occasion, Ibn Khaldun, like his predecessor al-Ghazzali (1058-1111 CE) also launched severe attacks on Greeks philosophy. In this context, Ibn Khaldun is not comparable to al-Farabi who was known as “the second teacher” (*al-mu’alim al-thani*) referring to Aristotle as the first teacher.

### 3. Stance towards philosophy

Ibn Khaldun is aware of the fact that Greeks have great influence on Muslim philosophers. He devoted a special section in the *Muqaddima* namely section 30 of book six entitled “A Refutation of philosophy and the Corruption of its Student” in which he unreservedly put philosophy (particularly Greeks) under trial – claimed to be dangerous to Islamic faith. As pointed out earlier, Ibn Khaldun did make use of Greek methods in his understanding of human society. On the one hand he benefited from philosophic approaches and employs philosophical method in his enquiries, while on the other he criticized refuted and put philosophy under attacks.

It is interesting to question, in regards to this matter, whether Ibn Khaldun is consistent, bearing in mind that philosophy has formed an integral part of his theory of human society and civilization in general. What would be the foundations of his criticism and in what manner philosophy is dangerous to faith? What is the implication of this criticism in our analysis to see the linkage between Ibn Khaldun and the Greek thoughts? If this refutation implies a total invalidation or total rejection of philosophy, what would happen to the foundation of his theory of human social organization and his general theory of civilization?

To investigate more on his issue, it is necessary to do look further to this particular section of the *Muqaddima*. In this section he intentionally unveiled his actual position in so far as philosophy is concerned. He tried to convince his reader that he is familiar with philosophy and the Greek traditions; his knowledge about philosophy is as good as other philosophers, therefore he is aware of the detail aspects and he has the ability to distinguish philosophical elements that are beneficial and useful from the elements that against the basic teachings of Islam.

Ibn Khaldun acknowledged that philosophy as a discipline is very much cultivated in the cities. It become the urbane crafts and subject of the elites. In the same manner it was perceived by the Greeks, Ibn Khaldun described a philosopher as a noble person, an intellectual elite who possessed extraordinary mental ability, well respected in the society. However, he is particularly concerned about the detrimental effects of the philosophic ideas and notions on the purity of religion.<sup>7</sup>

### 4. Ibn Khaldun’s critiques

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<sup>7</sup> See further, Zaid Ahmad, (2003), *The Epistemology of Ibn Khaldun*, London & New York: Routledge Tailor and Francis, pp.90-99

Ibn Khaldun's worries about the effects of philosophic ideas on religion (read: Islam) certainly calls for a closer look. On what basis and in what manner that philosophy is harmful to religion? More importantly, we need to identify what he actually meant when he talked about philosophy? We have to single out the basic argument that he believed as well as the philosophers to whom he directed his discontentment.

For this, we need to go back to the text. From the pen of Ibn Khaldun himself, we were made understood that the philosophers to whom he referred here are those who "believed that the essences (*al-zawat*) of the whole existence (*mawjudat*) (including the existence that are beyond the domain of sensual perception), their reasons and causes can be perceived by human mental speculation and intellectual reasoning". In other words, these philosophers believe that all existence can be perceived or understood and comprehended by merely human reason. And to some extent, they even believe that the very articles of faith can be put under mental judgment and also belong to the domain of intellectual perceptions. The same goes to the determination of true and false. The true and false in this respect can be distinguished entirely based on enquiry or research (*nazar*).<sup>8</sup> Perhaps up to this point we might have some indicator to guide us in understanding this issue.

What do they used to reach this mental judgment? Ibn Khaldun admitted that they used a method called logic (*al-mantiq*). They were recognized as the *falasifa*, meaning "the lovers of wisdom".<sup>9</sup> This certainly gives us valuable indication of what Ibn Khaldun had in mind with regards to philosophy and the philosophers in this particular context.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun continued explaining the philosophical understanding of mental process through which mental speculation could reach the level or state that makes it possible to distinguish between true and false. This process goes as follows

The quintessence of it is that the mental speculation, which makes it possible to distinguish between true and false, concentrates on ideas abstracted from the individual *existential*. From these (individual *existential*) one first abstracts pictures that conform to all the impressions it makes in clay or wax. The abstraction derived from the *sensibilia* are called "primary *intelligiblia*". This universal ideas may be associated with other ideas, from which, however, they are distinguished in the mind. Then other ideas, namely those that are associated (and have ideas in common) with (the primary *intelligiblia*), are abstracted from them. Then, if still other ideas are associated with them, a second and third abstraction is made, until the process of abstraction reaches the simple universal ideas which common to all ideas and individual (manifestations of the *existential*). No further abstraction is possible. They are the highest genera. All abstracts (ideas) that are not sciences. They are called secondary *intelligiblia*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Rosenthal, Franz, (1967), *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (English translation) vol. 3, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.247

<sup>9</sup> See, Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah* 3, p.247

<sup>10</sup> Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah* 3, p.247

This quote demonstrates what Ibn Khaldun understands about philosophical process of knowledge. Again, this explanation apparently carried elements of Aristotelian. The mental process begins with the abstraction of primary *intelligibilia* (*al-ma'qulat al-awa'il*) and ends up at the highest genera (*al-ajnas al-'aliya*). At this point no further abstraction is possible. All the abstractions which are not derived from *sensibilia* (*al-mahsusat*) are called secondary *intelligibilia* (*al-ma'qulat al-thawani*). Through these abstract *intelligibilia*, man's thinking ability will now function, and be able to perceiving the nature of existence. This has to be carried by way of "combining one with another as well as keeping apart, one from another based on sound rational evidence" (*fa-la budda li-'l-dihni min idafati ba'du-ha ila ba'd wa-nafy ba'du-ha 'an ba'd bi-'l-burhan al-'aql al-yaqini*).<sup>11</sup> This method is known as "*tasdiq*" (apperception) in logic.<sup>12</sup>

On the status of *tasawwur* and *tasdiq* (perception and apperception), Ibn Khaldun cited the opinions of the philosophers based on "the books of the logicians". The philosophers, he said, give *tasdiq* precedence over *tasawwur* at the end while at the beginning or during the process of instruction they give *tasawwur* precedence over *tasdiq*. Again he admitted this opinion to be that of Aristotle.

Another philosophical concept Ibn Khaldun highlights is happiness (*al-sa'ada*). To the philosophers, happiness "consists of arriving at perception of all existing things, both the *sensibilia* and the (things) beyond sensual perception, with the help of (rational) speculation and argumentation" (*anna al-sa'ada fi-idrak al-mawjudat kullu-ha ma fi-'l-hissi wa-ma wara' al-hissi bi-hadha al-nazar...*)<sup>13</sup>. The process begins with a conclusion which is based on observation and sensual perception (*bi-'l-hukmi al-mawjud wa-'l-hissi*) that there is a lower substance (*al-jism al-sufla*). This perception is then progressing to the next stage, perceiving the existence of motion and sensual perception of animals. This makes man conscious of the existence of the soul. The powers of the soul then make him aware of the dominant position of the intellect. The perception stops here while drawing the conclusions with regard to the highest celestial body in the same way he drew their conclusions with regard to the human essence.<sup>14</sup> The Philosophers claim that happiness can be attained in this way if it is combined at the same time with the improvement of the soul (*tahdhib al-nafs*) and the acceptance of the virtuous character (*wa-takhalluqu-ha bi-'l-fada'il*).<sup>15</sup>

The philosophers believe, according to Ibn Khaldun, that human being with the help of his intellect is able to distinguish between virtues and vices even if there is no religious law had been revealed. They also

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<sup>11</sup> Quartremere, Etienne Marc, (1858), *Muqaddima Ibn Khaldun*, vol.III, Paris: Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, p.211

<sup>12</sup> For more explanation on the philosophers' theory of intellect, see also, Davidson, H.A, (1992), *al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect*, London: Oxford University Press, especially pp.44-73

<sup>13</sup> Quartremere, *Muqaddima*.III, pp.211-212

<sup>14</sup> Rosenthal, *The Muqaddima* 3, p. 248, Quartremere, *Muqaddima*.III, pp.211-212

<sup>15</sup> For a more clear definition of the philosophers' concept of happiness see e.g., al-Farabi, Abu Nasr, (1987), *Risalat al-Tanbih 'ala Sabil al-Sa'ada*, Amman: al-Jami'a al-Urduniyya, pp.14-16, see also, al-Farabi, Abu Nasr, (1959), *Ara Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila*, Beirut: Matba'a al-Kathulikiya, pp.85-87

believe that human being is by nature inclined toward praiseworthy and not vice versa. The actual happiness in the eyes of the philosophers, is attained when the soul become virtuous where it attains joy and pleasure (*al-bahja wa- 'l-lidhdha*). The eternal pain (*al-shaqa' al-sarmad*) in their view is the result of ignorance of moral qualities. To them this is the meaning of bliss and punishment in the other world.<sup>16</sup>

Up to this point, Ibn Khaldun has provided us a wide range of explanation about the philosophers and their basic philosophical notions. To a certain extent, it seems that this information is provided for the purpose of preparing a more solid ground for his later critiques. The range of issues he touched include, among others, the philosophical process of knowledge, the use of logical norms and procedures, ethics as part of philosophy and the concept of happiness. On our part, this information is particularly important in order to find out the views and attitude Ibn Khaldun adopted towards philosophy and the Greek thoughts in particular. This is also important to determine the targeted group to whom this attack was meant.

Now we will be able to understand that Ibn Khaldun, based on this our reading of this passage, does not speak about philosophy in general. He does not mean to totally invalidate philosophy. Instead, he is concerned about a specific set of philosophical notions pronounced by a specific group of philosophers. He is selective in preparing a ground for his critiques, giving the criteria of such philosophical notions. As Lakhsassi rightly puts it, Ibn Khaldun selects the philosophical ideas we now identify as neo-Platonic thesis according to which there is a hierarchy of being, from the sensible (particulars) to the supra sensible culminating (God) and the aid of revelation. Moreover, to the knower, knowledge produces happiness.<sup>17</sup>

Coming back to our original discussion, remember that the passage is meant to refute philosophy. In the context of this discourse, this is particularly important to find out Ibn Khaldun's real attitude towards Greek thoughts. In this passage Ibn Khaldun enters into a series of attacks, beginning with a strong statement that the opinion of the philosophers is wrong in all its aspects (*wa-i 'lam anna hadha al-ra 'y al-ladhi dhahabu ilai-hi batil bi-jami wujuhi-hi*).<sup>18</sup> This general statement certainly invites some questions. The first and foremost is, what is the basis upon which this statement is made? On what ground that must all aspects of the philosophers opinion be invalidated? To obtain a better picture, we will need to closely examine arguments and points put forward by Ibn Khaldun in his refutation.

First, he turned to the philosopher's theory of the first intellect (*al- 'aqlu al-awwal*). The philosophers refer all the *existential* to the first intellect and are satisfied with this theory in their progress towards the necessary One (*al-Wajib*). This belief implies that they neglect everything beyond it. There are two categories of *existential* i.e. the corporeal *existential* (*al-mawjudat al-jismaniyya*) and the *existential* beyond sensual perception (*al-mawjudat al-lati wara' al-hiss*). The first category of *existential* is known as the science of physics while the second category is known as the science of metaphysics.

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<sup>16</sup> Quartremere, *The Muqaddima* III, p.212, Rosenthal 3, p.249

<sup>17</sup> Lakhsassi, "Ibn Khaldun" in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Nasr and Leaman (eds.), (1996) London: Routledge, p.358

<sup>18</sup> Quartremere, *Muqaddima* III, p.213

With regards to the science of physics, the philosophers used logical norms in making judgement. As to the science of metaphysics, the philosophers acknowledge that they cannot perceive the spiritual essences. These essences are completely unknown to human being. The philosophers also admit that they “cannot perceive the spiritual essences and abstract further quiddities from them, because the senses constitute a veil between us and them”. They also declare that they have “no logical arguments for them” and have “no way whatever of affirming their existence”.<sup>19</sup> Ibn Khaldun quoted a statement by a great philosopher Plato who said that “no certainty can be achieved with regard to the divine, and one can state about the divine only what is most suitable and proper”.<sup>20</sup> For Ibn Khaldun, logics can only be used within the limitation of human capacity of mental ability.

Another point he raised is happiness. The philosophers believe that happiness can be attained by means of logical arguments i.e. when a human being comes to perceive the nature of existence. Ibn Khaldun at the very outset rejected this notion. He occupied a lengthy space explaining the concept of happiness based on the principle of the dual nature of man – corporeal and spiritual. He admitted that anyone who has perceptions will greatly enjoy whatever he perceives, be it corporeal or spiritual. He brought an example of a child having his first corporeal perception, although through an intermediary of the eyes, will greatly enjoy the light he sees. Based on this analogy he argued that there will be no doubt that the soul will find even greater joy and pleasure in perceptions that come from its own essence without an intermediary.<sup>21</sup> This perception by the soul cannot be achieved by intellectual speculation and science. It can be achieved only by the removal of the veil of sensual perception and forgetting all corporeal perceptions (*wa-inna-ma yahsulu bi-kashfi hijab al-hiss wa nisyān al-madarik al-jismaniyya*).<sup>22</sup> He referred here to the *sufis* who are very much concerned with achieving this great joy by having the soul achieved that kind of perception.

Ibn Khaldun also directed his criticism to the Muslim philosophers whom he considered as the disciple of the Greeks. He disagreed with the philosopher’s belief that logical arguments and proofs are belonged to the category of corporeal perception. They are produced by the power of brain which consists of imagination, thinking and memory. It is the first thing, according to Ibn Khaldun, if we want to attain this kind of perception, to kill all the powers of the brain. In this respect, the powers of the brain are considered as obstacles. While those philosophers believe that who have attained the perception of the active intellect and are united with it in their life in this world have attained their share of happiness. The active intellect (*al- aqlu al-fa’al*) to them is the first of the degrees of the *spiritualia* from which the veil of sensual perception is removed. They assume union with the active intellect to be the result of scientific perception (*al-idrak al-’ilmi*), and believe that the joy which is the result of this perception is identical with the actual promised happiness (*ayn al-sa’ada al-maw’ud*).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Rosenthal, *Muqaddima* 3, p.252

<sup>20</sup> Rosenthal, *Muqaddima* 3, p.252

<sup>21</sup> Rosenthal, *Muqaddima* 3, p.253

<sup>22</sup> Quartremere, *Muqaddima* III, p.216, Rosenthal 3, pp.253-254

<sup>23</sup> Quartremere, *Muqaddima* III, p.216, Rosenthal 3, pp.253-254



Another point of dispute is that, the philosophers believe that man is able by himself to refine and improve his soul, by adopting praiseworthy and avoiding blameworthy. This is based on the basic premise, as stated earlier, that man is naturally inclined towards good. For Ibn Khaldun, this appears to be against the basic teaching of Islam. In Islam these matters have to be referred to religious law or *shari'a*.

Towards the end of the passage, Ibn Khaldun gives his general assessment of the science of philosophy particularly the logics. Despite attacking it at many points, he recognized that philosophy is also an important science. He admitted that philosophy could sharpen the mind. Philosophy enables a person's ability in giving orderly presentation of proofs and arguments, so that the habit of excellent and correct arguing can be obtained".<sup>24</sup> However, Ibn Khaldun reminded that, for those who have intention to study this science should be aware of its danger. They must at first be well equipped with the adequate knowledge about religious law (*shariyyat*), *Tafsir* and *Fiqh*.<sup>25</sup>

Having given a sight on the content of the passage, we may now be able to draw some conclusions in relation to the stance, views and attitudes Ibn Khaldun adopted in regards to Greek thoughts. From the very outset, we can see that he was very concerned about the influence of Greek philosophical ideas particularly on the essences and the condition of the existence. The main concern is whether the nature of the existence both corporeal and spiritual can be perceived or grasped by merely the power of mental speculation and intellectual reasoning. The philosophers believe so. Mental speculation and intellectual reasoning has the ability the grasp the nature of the existence. This is including the articles of faith. The method they use in this operation is the procedure of logic. The same concern also goes to happiness. Happiness can also be achieved through the same method or procedure. Human being through his power of intellect has the ability to distinguish virtue and vice and by nature inclines towards praiseworthy and avoid blameworthy, even if without religious guidance.

It is apparent that it was on these issues that Ibn Khaldun unveiled his real attitude. He could not agree with the philosophers opinion. He launched his rebuttals. As he admitted he is more concerned on the negative implication towards religion. For him the danger is clear. These notions will obviously invalidate the role and function of religion; therefore they are fundamentally against the basic religious teaching. Though he did not clearly spell out, he was surely referring to Islam. As a counter attack, he urged that these matters have to be referred to religious law (*shari'a*). This may also be considered as partly his attempt to protect the purity, the establishment and status quo of religion as the true and ultimate guidance for the mankind.

## 5. Conclusions

It is apparent that the Greeks and the Muslim has a very close link particularly with regards to philosophical

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<sup>24</sup> Rosenthal, Muqaddima 3, p.257

<sup>25</sup> See further, Dhaouadi, Mahmoud, (1997), *New Explorations into the Making of Ibn Khaldun's 'Umr al-Mind*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S Noordeen, pp. 47-50

traditions. From civilizational point of view, as part of civilizational continuity, undoubtedly the Muslim civilization have much indebted to the Greeks. In the Muslim intellectual milieu, Greeks philosophy particularly the science of logic, had been one of the subjects of interest. This science had been adopted in various methods and religious subjects such as in *Kalam* and *Usul al-Fiqh*. Ibn Khaldun acknowledged this. The Muslim history had produced such figures as al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (to name a few) as among its great proponents in Muslim philosophical tradition.

Although the publication of *Tahafut al-Falasifa* by al-Ghazzali in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century has created a certain degree of caution among Muslims towards philosophy, it did not at all cease the development of Muslim philosophic tradition. In this respect Ibn Khaldun can be considered as taking the foot step of al-Ghazzali. This particular passage on refutation of philosophy, published in the 14<sup>th</sup> century as part of the larger *Muqaddima*, reminded us of al-Ghazzali's project in the *Tahafut*.<sup>26</sup> As part of the *Muqaddima*, this passage may also be considered as representing the official stance of the Ibn Khaldun towards philosophy.

In fact, the question initially arise from the text of the passage. His remark that "the opinion hold by the philosophers is wrong in all aspects" (*batilun bi-jami' wujuhi-hi*)<sup>27</sup> has implicated his total rejection of philosophy. This statement apparently contradicts his earlier account that all intellectual sciences are categorized under philosophy *al-ulum al-falsafiyya wa al-hikma* (sciences of philosophy and wisdom)<sup>28</sup> and the products of human mental ability. Moreover the intellectual sciences constitute as part and partial of human civilization. Ibn Khaldun told us the sciences of philosophy and wisdom cover all intellectual sciences that are the products of man's thinking ability. These include logic, metaphysics, physics and the four divisions of mathematical sciences. They are neutral by nature and not restricted to any particular culture or religious groups. They have existed since the beginning of human civilization.<sup>29</sup> Taking all these into account, it would not be possible for Ibn Khaldun to totally reject philosophy. However he we must admit that he was selective on Greek philosophy.

As a matter of argument, if Ibn Khaldun totally rejected philosophy, what will happen to his theory of civilization, which he had already established? He could differ with his Greeks predecessors in many respects but to claim his blanket rejection of philosophy is not appropriate. He was selective because he wanted to maintain the purity of Islam. As Dhaouadi rightly puts it that this attitude is profoundly influenced by intellectual Islamic background and his firm belief in the credibility of the Islamic *shari'a*.<sup>30</sup>

Presumably, Ibn Khaldun's refutation of philosophy was pointed towards certain aspects of Greeks philosophy. It is based on several assumptions centered primarily in the issues of the essences and the

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. for example Rosenthal, E.I.J., "Ibn Jaldun's Attitude to the Falasifa" in *al-Andalus*, No.20, 1955, p.77

<sup>27</sup> Quartremere III, p.213, Rosenthal, *Muqaddima* 3, p.250

<sup>28</sup> Quartremere III, p.87, Rosenthal, *Muqaddima* 3 p.111

<sup>29</sup> Rosenthal, *Muqaddima* 3, p.111

<sup>30</sup> Dhaouadi, *New Explorations*, p.51

condition of the existence. Ibn Khaldun's rejection is entirely focused on the philosopher's basic premise that the whole of the existence, including those beyond sensual perception can be perceived by mental speculation. At this point, the philosophers have surpassed the limit of human mental ability. Similarly, the very articles of faith and the notion of happiness (*al-sa'ada*) are all put under mental judgment. All can be achieved through rational speculation. Ibn Khaldun believed that the Greeks philosophers have violated the nature of human mind. It carried an impossible project i.e. knowledge of the beyond – and seeks to achieve it by impossible means i.e. abstraction and discursive reason.<sup>31</sup>

As we can see, The matter that worried Ibn Khaldun is the violation of the nature of human mind. His message is clear – human rational and mental ability must operate within its limitation. It must not go beyond its boundaries. If it does, it has not only trespassed its limit but also harmful to religion and belief.

Up to this point, we would now be able to conclude that Ibn Khaldun did not reject philosophy as a particular principle of sciences and philosophy as crafts produced and practiced in the history of human civilization. He only referred to certain particular philosophic notions that belong certain group of philosophers namely the Greeks and Neo Platonism<sup>32</sup> and not philosophy as crafts practiced in all times.

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<sup>31</sup> See, al-Azmeh, (1981), *Ibn Khaldun in Modern Scholarship: A Study in Orientalism*, London: Third World Centre, p.116f, cf., al-Saghir, Ibn Ammar, (1969), *al-Ta'kir al- ilmi 'inda Ibn Khaldun*, al-Jaza'ir: al-Sharika al-Wataniyah li-'l-Nashr wa-'l-Tawzi', pp.18-19

<sup>32</sup> Cf., Mahdi, Muhsin, (2006), *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History*, Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press p.108-9

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