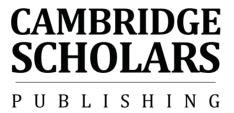# Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions

Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions: Scriptural Hermeneutics and Epistemology

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Agath. *Hist.*	Agathias, *Agathiæ Myrinæi Historiarum libri quinque*, ed. Rudolf Keydell. Berlin, 1967.
Burhān	Avicenna / I. Madkour (gen. ed.), Abū l-ʿAlāʾ ʿAfīfī (ed.), *al-Šifāʾ*, *al-Manṭiq*, Book 5 (*al-Burhān*). Cairo, 1956.
BM Syr.	British Museum, Syriac MSS
CC	Porphyry, *Contra Christianos; Porphyry against the Christians*, ed. Robert M. Berchman, Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition 1. Leiden, 2005.
Chron. Seert	*Chronicle of Seert*, *Histoire nestorienne inédite*, ed. Addai Scher. Turnhout, 1908-1919.
Cod. Add.	Addison MSS, British Library
Cod. Cus.	Codex Cusanus, Sankt Nicholaus Spital/Cusanusstift, Bernkastel-Kues
Cod. Harl.	Harleian MSS, British Library
Confus.	Philo, *de confusione linguarum*
Congr.	Philo, *de congressu quærendæ eruditionis gratia*
Cyr. Scyth.	Cyril of Scythopolis, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, ed. Eduard Schwartz. Leipzig, 1939.
DEA	Thomas Jackson, *A Treatise of the Divine Essence and Attributes.* London, 1628.
De Mal.	Proclus, *De Malorum Subsistentia*
DPF	Nicholas Cusanus, *de pace fidei*
EI²	*The Encyclopædia of Islam*, New Edition, 11 vols. Leiden, 1960-2002.
Enn.	Plotinus / P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer (eds.), G. Lewis (tr. from Arabic), *Plotini Opera*, *Enneads*. Paris and Brussels, 1959.
ESHE	*The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*, transl. Michael Whitby. Liverpool, 2000.
FLE	*Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker,* 1977-1997.
Goichon	A.-M. Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīn (Avicenne).* Paris, 1938.

Guide	Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed,* transl. Shlomo Pines. Chicago, 1963.
Her.	Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres*
Ilāhīyāt	Avicenna / I. Madkour (gen. ed.), G.C. Anawati and Saʿīd Zāyed (eds. of pt. 1), Muhammad Mūsā, Sulaymān Dunyā and Saʿīd Zāyed (eds. of pt. 2), *al-Šifāʾ*, *al-Ilāhīyāt*. Cairo, 1960.
In Alc.	Proclus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem I Commentaria*
In Crat.	Proclus, *In Platonis Cratylum Commentaria*
In Eucl.	Proclus, *In Primum Euclidis Elementorum Librum Comentarii*
In Parm.	Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem Comentaria*
In Remp.	Proclus, *In Platonis Rem Publicam Commentarii*. Amsterdam, 1965.
In Tim.	Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*
Iqtiṣād	Ġazālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fi al-Iʿtiqād*, ed. ʿAbdallah Muḥammad al-Ḫalīlī. Beirut, 2004.
Ishrāq	al-Suhrawardī / John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai, eds. and transl. *The Philosophy of Illumination*. Provo, UT, 1999.
Iḥyāʾ	Ġazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Malik al-Zuġbī. Dār al-Manār, nd.
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JEHE	John of Ephesus, *Historiæ ecclesiasticæ pars tertia*, ed. Edmund Wright Brooks. 2 vols. Turnhout, 1935-1936.
JEVitæ	John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, ed. Edmund Wright Brooks. Turnhout, 1923-1925.
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
Lawes	Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*. London, 1593.
LC	Eusebius of Cæsarea, *Oratio de laudibus Constantini*
Leg. 1-3	Philo, *Legum allegoriæ* I, II, III
MSC	Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, ed. J.-B. Chabot. Paris, 1899-1910.
Mos.	Philo, *De vita Moysis*, I and II
Munqiḏ	*al-Munqiḏ min al-Ḍalāl*, ed. Dr. Samīḥ Daġīm. Beirut, 1993.
Muṯul	*al-Muṯul al-ʿAqlīya al-Aflāṭūnīya,* ed. ʿAbd al-Rahmān Badawī. Cairo, 1947.

OUMM	Thomas Jackson, *A treatise containing the originall unbeliefe, misbeliefe, or misperswasions concerning the veritie, unitie, and attributes of the Deitie.* London, 1673.
Opif.	Philo, *de opificia mundi*
Plat. Th.	Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, transl. Thos. Taylor. Frome, Somerset, 1995.
Plot.	Porphyry, *de vita Plotini*
Proc. *BP*	Procopius, *de bello Persico*
Proc. *Aed.*	Procopius, *de ædificiis*
QG	Philo, *Quæstiones et Solutiones in Genesim*
SGZ	Peter Sloterdijk, *God's Zeal: The Battle of the Three Monotheisms.* Malden, Mass., 2010.
SC	Eusebius of Cæsarea, *de sepulchro Christi*
SEG	*Supplementem Epigraphicum Græcum*
SGE	Peter Sloterdijk, *Gottes Eifer: Vom Kampf der drei Monotheismen.* Frankfurt am Main & Leipzig, 2007.
Soz. *HE*	*Kirchengeschichte Sozomenus*, ed. Joseph Bidez. Berlin, 1995.
Spec.	Philo, *de specialibus legibus* I, II, III, IV
ST	Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York, 1947.
Strom.	Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*
Tahāfut	Ġazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*. Ed. Sulaymān Dunyā. Cairo, 1947.
Theology	Pseudo-Aristotle, *Theology*. In *Aflūṭīn 'ind al-'Arab*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī. Cairo, 1955.
TLG	*Thesaurus Linguæ Græcæ*
VP	Iamblichus, *de vita pythagorica liber*
V. Sym. Styl.	*Das Leben des heiligen Symeon Stylites*, ed. Hans Leitzmann. Leipzig, 1908.
ZRHE	*Historia ecclesiastica Zachariæ Rhetori vulgo adscripta*, ed. Edmund Wright Brooks. 3 vols. Turnhout, 1919-1921.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PROPHETIC LEGISLATION: AVICENNA'S VIEW OF PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY REVISITED

M. CÜNEYT KAYA

Introduction

A major difficulty faced by studies on Avicenna (d. 428/1037) is his relative silence on practical philosophy (*al-ḥikma al-ʿamalīya* or *al-falsafa al-ʿamalīya*).[*] Though he founded what is arguably the most comprehensive and effective philosophical system of the Middle Ages, Avicenna only scarcely dealt with practical philosophy in his philosophical writings. While he provides an in depth analysis of logic and all parts of theoretical philosophy—physics, mathematics, and metaphysics—in his masterpiece, *al-Šifāʾ* (*The Cure*) among his other works, he only briefly touches upon the three components of practical philosophy, namely ethics, household management or economics, and politics, in the last chapter of his *Metaphysics* (*al-Ilāhīyāt*) by way of "indicating some [basic] points there (*mušāran fīhi ilā jumal*)."[1] A quick glance at his career shows that he only wrote a few short treatises on this field,[2] and that either he never discussed practical philosophy in his philosophical *summæ*, beginning with *al-Ḥikma*

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[1] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Šifāʾ, al-Manṭiq, 1: Al-Madḫal*, ed. Al-Ab Qanawātī, M. El-Ḥudayrī, A. F. El-Ahwānī (Cairo: Wizārat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUmūmiyya, Al-Idāra al-ʿĀmma li al-Ṯaqāfa, 1371/1952), 11.12.
[2] According to Mahdawī's bibliography of Avicenna's works, he has four treatises on practical philosophy, including *al-Birr wa al-iṯm, al-Aḫlāq, Kitāb al-siyāsa*, and *Tadbīr manzil al-ʿaskar*; see Yaḥyā Mahdawī, *Fihrist-i nusaḫ-hā-yi muṣannafāt-i Ibn Sīnā* (Tehran: Intišārāt-i Dānišgāh-i Tahrān, 1333/1954).

al-ʿArūḍīya (*Philosophy for al-ʿArūḍī*) and reaching its culmination with
al-Išārāt wa al-tanbīhāt (*Pointers and Reminders*), or he only examined it
briefly and in a very general manner at the end of the section dealing with
metaphysics.

For the last two decades, research has shown that Islamic intellectual
history, and the philosophical tradition in particular, cannot be adequately
examined without reference to Avicenna's philosophical system. However,
because of his above-mentioned relative silence on practical philosophy,
Avicenna's centrality is generally proved by focusing only on his views on
theoretical philosophy, and thus he is usually presented as a devoted and
relatively insignificant successor of al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), and through
him, of Plato.[3] Clearly, this perception on Avicenna in modern studies has
a close affinity with one of the dominant perspectives on Islamic
philosophy during the twentieth century, namely the Straussian approach
that interprets the entire philosophical tradition in Islam on the basis of
politics and thereby seeing al-Fārābī as the key figure within this
tradition.[4] This essay argues that Avicenna's supposed neglect of practical
philosophy is a result of a conscious preference, which can only be
understood through his concept of "prophetic legislation" (*al-ṣināʿa al-
šāriʿa*). To demonstrate this, I will focus on the classifications of practical
philosophy in Avicenna's works in a chronological order, and on his views
of the relationship between practical philosophy and religion.

Avicenna's classifications of practical philosophy

To examine Avicenna's classification of philosophical or intellectual
sciences, the first work to look at is, of course, his *Risāla fī aqsām al-*

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[3] For the most recent example of this approach see Charles E. Butterworth,
"Ethical and Political Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic
Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge, UK; New
York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 266-286. The titles of the sections on al-
Fārābī and Avicenna in E.I.J. Rosenthal's influential *Political Thought in Medieval
Islam* (Reprinted: Cambridge, UK; New York, Cambridge University Press, 1962)
also show the traces of the same attitude. While Rosenthal entitles the section on
al-Fārābī as "The Foundation," he titles section on Avicenna as "Ibn Sīnā:
Synthesis."
[4] The basic tenets of the Straussian approach and the misunderstandings it has
caused are discussed by Dimitri Gutas in detail; see "The Study of Arabic
Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic
Philosophy," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29.1 (May, 2002): 19-25.

'ulūm al-aqlīya (*Treatise on the Divisions of the Intellectual Sciences*), which, according to Gutas, "must be considered a relatively early treatise."[5] Although he reproduces through this treatise the traditional and formal way of classifying philosophy in general, and practical philosophy in particular, his subdivision of politics has some important features to understand his approach(es) to practical philosophy throughout his career. Avicenna's point of departure in classifying practical philosophy is "human governance," which is divided into (a) single individual and (b) association with others. The latter is in turn subdivided into (a) household and (b) city. Each of these three corresponds to a branch of practical philosophy: ethics, household management or economics, and politics, respectively. While one knows through ethics how to reach happiness in this life and hereafter, household management aims to determine the rules of how to conduct the governance of one's household.[6] In his examination, Avicenna begins by defining the first two sciences, and mentions their primary reference books, including Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Bryson's *On the Governance of the Household* respectively; he then discusses the field of politics. For Avicenna, politics deals with the kinds of political regimes, rulerships, and associations, both virtuous and bad ones; politics also makes known the way of preserving each, the reason for its disintegration, and the manner of its transformation.[7] Interestingly, at this point, Avicenna divides politics into two parts: one deals with kingship (*mulk*), which is discussed in the books of Plato (*The Republic*) and Aristotle (*Politics*) on politics; the other concerns prophecy (*nubūwa*)

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[5] See Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 253.

[6] Ibn Sīnā, *Risāla fī aqsām al-'ulūm al-aqliyya*, in *Tis'u rasāil fī al-ḥikma wa al-ṭabī'iyyāt*, 2nd edition (Cairo: Dār al-'Arab, 1989), 107.5-15. For the translation of the section of *Aqsām* concerning the practical philosophy see Muhsin Mahdi, "Avicenna: *On the Divisions of the Rational Sciences*," in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, ed. Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi (New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), 95-97; James W. Morris, "The Philosopher-Prophet in Avicenna's Political Philosophy," in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Butterworth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 152-198. For the paraphrasing the same section see M. Mahdi, "Avicenna: Practical Science," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, vol. III (London&New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1989): 85-86; Charles E. Butterworth, "The Political Teaching of Avicenna," *Topoi* 19 (2000): s. 37-39.

[7] Ibn Sīnā, *Aqsām*, 107.15-108.2.

and *šarī'a*,[8] which are also covered in Plato and Aristotle's two works.[9] His words on the second part of politics are worth quoting:

> Through this part of practical wisdom are known (a) the existence of prophecy, and the human species' need of the *šarī'a* for its existence, survival, and the future life (*munqaleb*). And through it is known (b) the wisdom in the universal commands and prohibitions (*ḥudūd*)[10] that are common to all *šarā'i'* and in the commands and prohibitions pertaining to particular *šarā'i'*, according to each particular people and particular times. And through it is known (c) the difference between divine prophecy and all false claims.[11]

Though Avicenna's reference to this unnamed part connected with prophecy and *šarī'a* as "this part of practical wisdom (*wa hāḏā al-ǧuz' min al-ḥikma al-'amalīya*)" brings into question whether it is an independent part of practical philosophy or a subdivision of politics (since Avicenna clearly says in the introductory part of practical philosophy that it is divided into three parts), it is not easy to claim that this part lacks an independent

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[8] The term *šarī'a* (plural: *šarā'i'*) is usually translated into English as "Islamic law", "Islamic divine law", "divine law", "religious divine law", and "revealed law." I have preferred not to translate *šarī'a* using these terms throughout this study, owing to their strong connotations in the discipline of Islamic law (*fiqh*). However, where Avicenna uses *šarī'a*, he does not only mean the legal aspect of Islam, but all aspects of it, including the principles of faith, morality, and daily life; that is, the totality of the message of the Prophet Muhammad. For discussions on the meanings of *šarī'a* see N. Calder, "Sharī'a," *El²*, vol. IX (Leiden: Brill, 1997): 321-326; Talip Türcan, "Şeriat," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (Turkish Religious Foundation Encyclopaedia of Islam)*, vol. XXXVIII (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2010): 571-574. Al-Fārābī also notices the similarity, even being synonymity, between the concepts of *šarī'a*, *milla*, and *dīn*; see *Kitāb al-Milla*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq), 46.11-14.

[9] Ibn Sīnā, *Aqsām*, 108.2-3. As Mahdi noted, while in the case of Plato the reference is to the *Laws*, in the case of Aristotle, the reference is not certain. Avicenna probably means the work that the bio-bibliographies mention and has the same title with that of Plato; see Mahdi, "*On the Divisions*", 97, n. 2.

[10] In the translations of this passage the term *ḥadd* (plural: *ḥudūd*) is generally translated as "penalty". However, as in the case of *šarī'a*, Avicenna means with *ḥadd* more than "penalty". Although as a technical term it refers to the punishments of certain acts, it primarily denotes God's restrictive ordinances and statutes, and it is always mentioned in the plural form in the Qur'ān; see B. Carra de Vaux-[J. Schacht], "Ḥadd," *El²*, vol. III (Leiden: E. J. Brill & London: Luzac & Co.: 1971): 20-21.

[11] Ibn Sīnā, *Aqsām*, 108.6-10. Reading *al-da'āwī* instead of *al-wa'āwī*.

position among practical sciences in *Aqsām*. His attempt to determine the content of this dimension can be interpreted as an indication of his tendency to make it an independent part of practical philosophy. Unfortunately, Avicenna does not say anything about the subdivisions of politics; instead he follows the traditional tripartite classification of practical philosophy in *'Uyūn al-Ḥikma* (*Sources of Wisdom*), written before 414/1023,[12] and *al-Šifā'*, written ca. 411–418/1020–1027.[13] However, in his *Dānešnāme-i 'Alā'ī* (*Philosophy for 'Alā al-Dawla*), written ca. 418/1027, another work he wrote during the same period as *'Uyūn* and *al-Šifā'*, he clearly divides politics (*ilm-i tadbīr-i 'âmm-i mardom*) into two parts: the first one discusses divine laws (*šarāyi'*), which is the basic part (*aṣl*), and the second one deals with different forms of ruling (*siyāsāt*), which is the derivative (*far'*) of the former.[14] Because his *Dānešnāme* does

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[12] Gutas argues that *'Uyūn* may antedate the *Hidāya*; see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 258.

[13] Gutas, *Avicenna*, 101-106.

[14] Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhiyyāt-i Dānešnāme-i 'Alā'ī*, ed. M. Mu'īn (Tehran: Dānišgāh-i Tehran, 1383), 2.8-11. It is also important to note how al-Ġazālī interpreted Avicenna's division of politics into two parts in his *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* (*Aims of the Philosophers*), because of the strong relationship between the texts of *Maqāṣid* and Avicenna's *Dānešnāme*. In al-Ġazālī's narrative on the classification of philosophical sciences, he also discusses practical sciences, where he first defines the politics, as Avicenna did, after which he says "This is a science whose origin (*aṣluhū*) is the religious sciences (*al-ulūm al-šar'iyya*), and the above-mentioned political sciences (*al-ulūm al-siyāsiyya*), which deal with the governance of cities and the order of their citizens, make it perfect (*tukmiluhū*)". See al-Ġazālī, *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, ed. Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Kurdī, 2nd part (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Maḥmūdiyya al-Tiğāriyya, 1936), 4.3-4. Clearly, al-Ġazālī misinterprets the word *šarāyi'* in *Dānešnāme* as "religious sciences", thereby attempting to justify political sciences with reference to Islam in his *al-Munqiḏ*. See al-Ġazālī, *al-Munqiḏ min al-ḍalāl wa al-mūṣil ilā ḏī al-'izza wa al-ğalāl*, ed. Ğamīl Ṣalībā and Kāmil 'Ayyād (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, n.d.), 109.3-6.

    To discuss further the division of politics into two parts, another figure to be mentioned is Ibn Hindū (d. 423/1032), a contemporary of Avicenna. In his partly survived treatise, titled *al-Risāla al-mušawwiqa ilā 'ilm al-falsafa*, Ibn Hindū also divides politics, which he calls *ilm siyāsa al-madīna*, and *siyāsa al-'āmma*, into two parts: "First is the making of divine laws (*šarā'i'*) and rules (*sunan*), that is prophecy (*nubūwa*), and the second is the realization (*imḍā*) of those rules and their protection in [the form of a] sovereignty, that is the kingship (*mulk*)". See Ibn Hindū, *Muqtaṭafāt min al-Risāla al-mušawwiqa ilā 'ilm al-falsafa*, in Ṣahbān Ḫalifāt, *Ibn Hindū: Sīratuhū ārā'uhū al-falsafiyya mu'allafātuhū*, vol. I ('Ammān: Manšūrāt al-Ğāmi'a al-Urduniyya, 1996), 197.11-13. Although it is not clear

not contain any separate chapter of practical philosophy, nor does it touch upon it at the end of the chapter on metaphysics unlike *al-Šifā'*, it is not possible to follow how Avicenna would have examined these two parts of politics there.

It is safe to argue that Avicenna's different approaches to the classification of practical philosophy throughout his career reach their culminating point in *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya* (*Eastern Philosophy*), written ca. 418–420/1027–1029. Though the entire text has not survived, in the extant introduction Avicenna offers a classification of the philosophical sciences and mentions which of them will be included in the work. An examination of this text supports the idea that his view of the classification of sciences evolved toward a more independent form during his career. As Gutas states, "his classification of the sciences is different from that he has given elsewhere and consistent with the development of his thinking away from traditional Aristotelian models."[15] Apart from the difference in the main divisions of sciences, the most striking feature of Avicenna's new classification is his introduction of one new science comprehensive of both theoretical and practical sciences.[16] As for the theoretical sciences, he divides metaphysics into two separate parts: "theology" (*'ilm ilāhī*), which deals with things totally separate from matter and motion; and "universal science" (*'ilm kullī*), which examines the things that are sometimes associated with matter. By doing so, he increases the number of theoretical sciences from three to four.[17]

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whether Avicenna influenced Ibn Hindū on this or vice versa, we can also relate these two philosophers through al-ʿĀmirī (d. 381/992). While Ibn Hindū studied philosophy under al-ʿĀmirī, Avicenna must have known al-ʿĀmirī and his philosophy when he was in Buḫāra. However, we do not have any clues among al-ʿĀmirī's extant works to trace his view of the division of politics. For Ibn Hindū's life, teachers and works see Ḫalifāt, *Ibn Hindū*, 12-52, 77-95, 97-101. Elsewhere I discuss the possibility of a relationship between Avicenna and al-ʿĀmirī see my *Varlık ve İmkân: Aristoteles'ten İbn Sînâ'ya İmkânın Tarihi* [*Existence and Contingency: History of Contingency from Aristotle to Avicenna*] (Istanbul: Klasik, 2011), 119, n. 120.

[15] Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna's Eastern ("Oriental") Philosophy: Nature, Contents, Transmission," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 10 (2000): 167.

[16] For a detailed discussion of the classification of the sciences in *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya* and the possible contents of this work see Gutas, "Avicenna's Eastern ("Oriental") Philosophy," 167-169.

[17] Ibn Sīnā, *Manṭiq al-Mašriqiyyīn wa al-kaṣīda al-muzdawiǧa fī al-manṭiq* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1328/1910), 6.23-7.7.

More significant for the purposes of this paper is the nature of the new classification of practical philosophy in *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya*, which has not hitherto been taken into consideration in studies on Avicenna's conception of this part of philosophy. First, Avicenna divides practical philosophy into two parts: one is called ethics and deals with "human soul and its conditions pertaining to it to reach happiness in this word and hereafter"; the other examines associations (*al-mušārakāt*) between human beings to establish a virtuous order (*niẓām fāḍil*) both in the particular association, that is "the household", and in the universal one, that is "the city." For a well-functioning association according to Avicenna, there must be both a legitimate law (*qānūn mašrūʿ*) and a ruler (*mutawallī*) who enforces this law and protects it.[18] Although household and city naturally have different rulers and laws, and consequently household management and politics are independent disciplines, Avicenna insists that the laws of these two basic spheres of social life, namely the family and the state, should not be completely separate from each other:

> So, household management must be singled out as an independent discipline in terms of its ruler, and similarly politics must be singled out as an independent discipline in terms of its ruler. However, it is not appropriate to isolate the legislation about the household and the city from each other completely. Instead, the proper approach is that the law-maker (*al-muqannin*) is one single individual who possesses one art/discipline (*ṣināʿa*), in terms of what is necessary to oversee every individual, small association [household] and big association [city], and that is the prophet (*nabī*). As for the ruler and how he must govern, the most appropriate approach is for us not to mix them together. If you make each legislation an independent discipline (*bāb mufrad*), you can do this, it does not matter. But [when you examine], you will see that the most suitable approach for you is to take knowledge on ethics, knowledge on household management and knowledge on politics independent disciplines, and to take the art/discipline of legislation(*al-ṣināʿa al-šāriʿa*) and how it must be conducted as an independent discipline.[19]

Avicenna then goes on to state that the practical science (*ʿilm ʿamalī*), like the theoretical one, has four subdivisions: ethics (*ʿilm al-aḫlāq*), household management or economics (*tadbīr al-manzil*), city management or politics (*tadbīr al-madīna*), and the discipline of legislation or—in a more explanatory translation—the "discipline of prophetic legislation" (*al-*

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[18] Ibn Sīnā, *Manṭiq al-Mašriqiyyīn*, 7.8-16.
[19] Ibn Sīnā, *Manṭiq al-Mašriqiyyīn*, 7.16-8.1.

ṣinā'a al-šāri'a).[20] Furthermore, he ends his introduction to *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya* by emphasizing that he will not examine all parts of philosophy, but only logic, theology, universal science, physics, and "that part of practical philosophy as is needed by the person who seeks salvation."[21] For Avicenna the reason for his disinterest in mathematics is that it does not contain any disagreements, and he directs the readers interested in them to *al-Šifā'*'s parts of mathematics. Moreover, he says that "it is the same for the divisions of practical philosophy which we do not mention here (*wa kazālik al-ḥāl fī aṣnāf min al-'ilm al-'amalī lam nūridhu hā-hunā*)."[22] It is possible to interpret this statement as a sign of the fact that Avicenna considers practical philosophy as one of those branches of philosophy on which there is no significant disagreement among philosophers, like the case of mathematics, and sees what he wrote in *al-Šifā'* about practical philosophy as sufficient, thereby confining his discussion on practical philosophy with the "part which is needed by the person who seeks salvation." Since the only surviving parts of *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya* are the chapters on logic and physics, and since Avicenna did not engage in the subject again in *al-Išārāt*, it is difficult to see precisely what he intended by including this new subdivision of practical philosophy, that is prophetic legislation; nor is it clear what he meant by the "part which is needed by the person who seeks salvation."

The claim that he would examine the discipline of prophetic legislation among the practical sciences in *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya* is further supported by Avicenna's emphasis on "salvation (*al-nağāt*)" and its close relationship with the life to come.[23] Although one may argue that because

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[20] Ibn Sīnā, *Manṭiq al-Mašriqiyyīn,* Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's statements in his *Šarḥ 'Uyūn al-Ḥikma* (*Commentary on Avicenna's Sources of Wisdom*) show that he is aware of what Avicenna did in *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya* about the classification of philosophical sciences. According to al-Rāzī, Avicenna added to the practical sciences a fourth one calling it *'ilm tadbīr al-madīna*. However, al-Rāzī does not say anything about the difference between *'ilm tadbīr al-madīna* and *ḥikma madaniyya*, which is the third practical science in *'Uyūn*, and to which al-Rāzī refers as al-*'ilm al-siyāsī*. See Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Šarḥ 'Uyūn al-Ḥikma,* ed. A. H. A. al-Saqqā vol. II (Tehran: Mu'assasa al-Ṣādiq li al-Ṭibā'a wa al-Našr, 1415), 13.1-7.

[21] Ibn Sīnā, *Manṭiq al-Mašriqiyyīn*, 8.8-11.

[22] Ibn Sīnā, *Manṭiq al-Mašriqiyyīn*, 8.12-13.

[23] The list that Gutas prepared to show the contents of *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya* also supports this argument; see Gutas, "Avicenna's Eastern ("Oriental") Philosophy," 169.

of Avicenna's general disinterest in matters of practical philosophy, he had little intention to offer an elaborate treatment beyond this theoretical re-classification,[24] it is nonetheless plausible to argue that what Avicenna says about the content of the second part of politics that deals with prophecy and *šarī'a* in *Aqsām* can be considered as the content of the discipline of prophetic legislation. If that is indeed the case, then it consists of three main topics: (a) the existence of prophecy, and the human species' need for the *sharī'a* for their existence, survival, and future life; (b) the wisdom in universal commands and prohibitions (i.e. those that are common to all *šarā'i'*), and in commands and prohibitions pertaining to particular *šarā'i'*, particular groups of people and particular times; and finally (c) the difference between divine prophecy and all false claims.

For the time being, the only source that gives clues about the content of the discipline of prophetic legislation is the tenth and the last book (*maqāla*) of Avicenna's *Metaphysics (al-Ilāhiyyāt)* of *al-Šifā'*. In this book, which consists of five chapters, he focuses on the concept of prophecy from the perspective of his metaphysical and psychological doctrines; this way he tries to show the peculiarities of the prophet and his role in the life of individuals and society, both for this world and the next. The last chapter of the ninth book, which is about the destination of soul, and the opening chapter of the tenth book, which discusses celestial effects on the world, including inspiration, dreams, prayer, celestial punishment, prophecy and astrology, can be linked to what Avicenna calls in *Aqsām* the "derivative branches" of metaphysics, namely the doctrine of prophecy and the hereafter. The second chapter bears the title "On the proof of prophecy; the manner of the prophet's call to God, exalted be He; and the return to Him". Here, Avicenna discusses the necessity of prophecy for social life and the preservation of human species. Besides, he summarizes the basic metaphysical principles of the prophet's call to God. The third chapter, titled "On acts of worship; their benefits in this world and the next," which follows the former in terms of its content and logic, examines the wisdom of these forms of worship, which are determined by the prophet to facilitate people's adherence to metaphysical principles, and to transmit them to subsequent generations. Although the last two chapters of the book are usually described as chapters specifically devoted to practical philosophy, including ethics, household management and politics, Avicenna is not interested in ethical theories, or in the details of household management or economics, or even in political regimes. At the centre of his discussion on matters of practical philosophy lie the idea of the prophet

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[24] Gutas, *Avicenna*, 260.

as law-giver (*al-sānn*) and the nature of his legislation. While in the fourth chapter, titled "On establishing the city, the household—that is marriage— and the universal laws pertaining to [these matters]", he touches upon the general laws that are legislated by the prophet about marriage and its preservation, Avicenna scrutinizes the prophetic legislation about politics and ethics more particularly in the fifth chapter, titled "Concerning the caliph and the *imām*: The necessity of obeying them; remarks on politics, transaction, and morals".

In any case, although he gives the most central role to the prophet in the last two chapters, since they are directly, albeit in a general manner, related to traditional parts of practical philosophy, one might consider these chapters as a summary of the three branches of practical philosophy. This conclusion is further supported by his statements at the end of his introductions to *al-Šifā'*, and *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya* on the place of practical philosophy in these works. Then, the question remains "Where is the prophetic legislation?" An examination of Avicenna's discussions of the contents of the discipline of prophetic legislation in *Aqsām* indirectly, and in *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya* directly, shows that among the five chapters of the last book of *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifā'*, those that correspond to this discipline best are chapters X.2 and X.3. These deal respectively with the necessity of prophecy for human life at both individual and in societal levels, and with the framework of the prophet's legislative role in leading people who seek happiness and salvation in this life and in the hereafter. It is important to note that although Avicenna's last philosophical *summa*, *al-Išārāt*, written sometime between 421-425/1030-1034, does not contain any reference to the traditional tripartite division of practical philosophy, he summarizes *al-Šifā'*'s chapters X.2 and X.3 in one paragraph, which is titled *išāra* ("pointer"), at the very beginning of its ninth chapter (*namaṭ*), titled "The Stages of the Knowers (*maqāmāt al-'ārifīn*)". Here he focuses on the prophet's role as a law-giver and an *'ārif* in individual and social life.[25] The table below shows Avicenna's evaluation of practical philosophy in general, and of prophetic legislation in particular, through their relationships with the content of metaphysics, as evolved from *Aqsām* to *al-Išārāt*:

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[25] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Išārāt wa al-tanbīhāt ma'a šarh Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā, vol. IV (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'ārif, 1968), IX.4 (60-67).

Aqsām	*al-Šifā': Metaphysics*, **IX.7, X.1-5**	*al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya*	*al-Išārāt*
Derivative divisions (*furū'*) of Metaphysics: 1. Prophecy (revelation, angels, miracles, inspiration) 2. Eschatology (survival of the human soul, bodily resurrection, happiness and misery in hereafter)	IX.7 Destination of soul	Parts of Theology (*'ilm ilāhī*)	Chapter (*namaṭ*) VII-X
	X.1 Celestial effects on the world (inspiration, dreams, prayer, celestial punishment, prophecy, astrology)		
Part of practical wisdom or politics related to prophecy (*nubūwa*) and *šarī'a*	X.2 Proof of prophecy on the basis of his role in the life of individuals and society	Prophetic legislation (*al-ṣinā'a al-šāri'a*)	Chapter(*namaṭ*) IX.4 (*išāra*)
	X.3 Prophet's legislation [1]: acts of worship		
Household management or economics	X.4 Prophet's legislation [2]: Marriage and family	-	-
Politics and ethics	X.5 Prophet's legislation [3]: City/state, social life, and ethics	-	-

Why is prophetic legislation necessary?

At this point, two related questions should be asked: first, why did Avicenna introduce a new science, "discipline of legislation" or "prophetic legislation", in the classification of practical sciences; and secondly, what is its function and peculiarity as a new discipline among the other practical sciences? To compare the role of the discipline of prophetic legislation with other practical sciences, we must reconsider Avicenna's classification of philosophical sciences in *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya*. As mentioned above, Avicenna's novelty in abandoning the traditional tripartite classification of practical sciences is not limited to this field. He also re-classifies the two primary parts of metaphysics, universal science and theology, as two independent divisions of theoretical sciences, thereby raising their number from three to four. While theology deals with things totally separate from matter and motion—that is to say God and His attributes, celestial beings, divine providence and governance over all—universal science (*'ilm kullī*) includes the study of being-as-such, i.e. the universal concepts, and provides the first principles of the other sciences.[26] It is thus possible to argue that the role of the discipline of prophetic legislation among the practical sciences is similar to the position of universal science vis-à-vis theoretical sciences. It follows that the discipline of prophetic legislation can be said to function as a mediator between practical sciences (ethics, household management, and politics) and Avicenna's metaphysical doctrine, including his view of *šarī'a*. The discipline of prophetic legislation thus provides the first principles of other practical sciences. Although he articulates those principles more comprehensively in *al-Šifā'*, X.2-5, it seems that Avicenna prefers to restrict his discussion on the existence of the prophet on the basis of his role in social life as a law-giver.

As for the first question, a discussion of how Avicenna sees the relationship between the *šarī'a* and practical philosophy might offer certain clues as to the reasons for his introduction of a new discipline into practical philosophy. He clearly refers in his *al-Aḍḥawiyya fī al-ma'ād* to the strong relationship between the purposes of the *šarī'a* and the scope of the practical philosophy: "(…) the most important (*afḍal*) aim of the *šarī'a* is the practical actions of human beings. So, everyone does the best action for himself, for his associates in the species, and for his associates in the

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[26] See above note 17.

genius".[27] Avicenna emphasizes this close relationship between *šarī'a* and the scope of practical philosophy in the introduction of *'Uyūn al-Ḥikma*'s chapter on physics and in the introduction of *al-Šifā*'s book of *Isagoge*. In this part of *'Uyūn*, Avicenna first defines philosophy by giving a conventional list of theoretical and practical sciences; he then discusses the relationship between the divine *šarī'a* and the parts of philosophy, both theoretical and practical:

> The principles of these three [parts of practical philosophy] are acquired from the divine *šarī'a* (*al-šarī'a al-ilāhiyya*) and the perfections of their definitions or borders (*wa kamālāt ḥudūdihā*) become evident through the divine *šarī'a*. After this [determination made by the divine *šarī'a*], human theoretical faculty [namely, the rational soul] acts on them by knowing their practical laws (*al-qawānīn al-'amaliyya*) and applying these laws to particular issues [by using the practical faculty]. (…) The principles of all branches of theoretical philosophy are acquired from the masters (*arbāb*) of divine *milla* by way of remark (*'alā sabīl al-tanbīh*). The human rational faculty (*al-quwwa al-'aqliyya*) [namely, the theoretical faculty] acts to get them perfectly through argumentation[28] (*'alā sabīl al-ḥuǧǧa*).[29]

As for his discussion in *al-Šifā'*, after dividing the philosophical sciences as theoretical and practical and their conventional tripartite subdivisions, he states:

> The truth of all this [i.e., the branches of practical philosophy] is established by theoretical demonstration (*bi al-burhān al-naẓarī*) and the testimony of the *šarī'a* (*bi al-šahāda al-šar'iyya*) in general, and its details (*tafṣīl*) and measure of [application] (*taqdīr*)[30] being ascertained by the divine *šarī'a* (*al-šharī'a al-ilāhiyya*).[31]

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[27] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Aḍḥawiyya fī al-ma'ād*, ed. Ḥasan al-'Āṣī (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-Ǧāmi'iyya, 1987), 110.8-10.

[28] According to Avicenna, the term *ḥuǧǧa*, as a generic term, indicates the methods that lead to an assent, and consists of deduction (*qiyās*), induction (*istiqrā*), analogy (*tamsīl*), and other types of argumentation. See e.g. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Šifā', Al-Madḫal*, 18.6-9.

[29] Ibn Sīnā, *'Uyūn al-Ḥikma*, ed. 'A. Badawī, 2nd edition (al-Kuwayt & Beirut: Wakālat al-Matbū'āt & Dār al-Qalam, 1980), 16.9-12, 17.7-8.

[30] J. Janssens interprets this paragraph in *al-Šifā'* as referring to all parts of philosophy, both theoretical and practical. Therefore, for him, while the validity of philosophical sciences are determined by theoretical demonstration, and by the testimony of the *šarī'a* in general, the details of theoretical sciences and measure

In spite of Avicenna's caginess on this issue throughout these two works, fortunately, we have a commentary on *'Uyūn* by Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), a famous critic of Avicenna and, ironically, a hidden successor of his. al-Rāzī starts to comment on Avicenna's words in *'Uyūn* by referring to the concepts of "principle" (*mabādi'*) and "perfection" (*kamāl*). For him, every discipline has something which acts as a principle and a perfection for it. Concerning the three parts of practical philosophy, each of them also has a principle and a perfection, and their principles and perfections are acquired from the divine *šarī'a*. For, the goal of sending prophets to this world is to guide people to the right path (*al-namaṭ*), and show them appropriate way of acting during their lifetime. Since the three branches of practical philosophy include all ways of acting, the prophets were sent only to define the principles and perfections of these sciences. However, the prophets cannot express these principles and perfections in detail:

> Then, prophets—peace be upon them—cannot but define the principles and perfections of these three sciences only in a universal way (*'alā waǧh al-kullī*). For example, they say 'One who wants [to get] such and such a virtue, he must do such and such action, and one who wishes to remove such and such a vice, he must do such and such an action'. As for determining (*al-tanṣīṣ*) the situations of Zayd and 'Amr, this is an impossible [task]; for particular situations of individuals are not detected precisely. Rather, the law-giver (*al-šāri'*) must determine those laws, and this is reached by the theoretical faculty. Then, [as for] using these laws in

of practical sciences are determined only by the divine *šarī'a*. So, he separates *tafṣīl* from *taqdīr*, and attributes the first one to the theoretical sciences, and the second one to the practical ones. See Jules Janssens, "Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna): un projet „religieux″ de philosophie?," *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?*, ed. J. A. Aertsen and A. Speer (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 868. Leaving aside whether or not this sentence can be understood the way Janssens suggests from the point of view of Arabic grammar, Avicenna's statements in *'Uyūn* clearly establish the function of the *šarī'a* as determining the details and measure of application in the practical sciences, not the theoretical ones, and as pointing out the principles of the theoretical sciences by way of remark without dealing with the details.

[31] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Šifā', Al-Madḫal*, 14.15-16. For the translation of this passage see Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna on the Divisions of the Sciences in the *Isagoge* of His *Shifā*," in *Probing in Islamic Philosophy: Studies in the Philosophies of Ibn Sīnā, al-Ġazālī, and Other Major Muslim Thinkers* (Binghamton, NY: Global Academic Publishing, 2005), 9 (translation is slightly revised).

respect of the individual forms and particular events, it is reached by the practical faculty.[32]

Then, al-Rāzī comments on the meaning of *ḥudūd*, and explains it with the word *maqādīr*, which means measures and quantities. For him, measures and quantities in modes of worship, transactions, and punishments can be known only through the divine *šarā'i'*.[33] On the other hand, according to al-Rāzī, while the principles of theoretical sciences are acquired, unlike the branches of practical philosophy, from the masters of the *šarā'i'*, their perfections or ultimate goals are made clear by the rational faculty through argumentation. Al-Rāzī explains this with reference to Avicenna's *al-Aḍḥawiyya*. According to al-Rāzī's narration, for Avicenna, "the law-giver is under the obligation to invite people to confess the existence of God, His being exempted from deficiencies and vices, and His being qualified by the epithets of perfection and the marks of majesty".[34] Since a more detailed knowledge about God cannot be understood by the majority of people and this damages his missionary call, the law-giver should, or rather must, be content with a general call. As for the details, he has to refrain from stating them openly, but to entrust them to the intellects of intelligent people. That is what Avicenna means when he says that "the principles of all branches of theoretical philosophy are acquired from the masters (*arbāb*) of divine *milla* by way of remark (*'alā sabīl al-tanbīh*)".[35]

Avicenna's approach to the relationship between philosophy and the divine *šarī'a* in *'Uyūn* and *al-Šifā'* still needs to be interpreted and connected with his views on practical philosophy. Avicenna's views quoted above may be paraphrased as follows: While the divine *šarī'a* provides the principles of all parts of practical philosophy, it only refers to the principles of the branches of theoretical philosophy through remarks and allusions. This is implies that the principles of practical philosophy are taken from the divine *šarī'a* explicitly and without any allusions and remarks. Moreover, the divine *šarī'a* does not only provide the principles of practical philosophy, but also entails the perfections of all these principles, which means, according to al-Rāzī's commentary, the measures

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[32] Al-Rāzī, *Šarḥ*, 14.12-19.

[33] Al-Rāzī, *Šarḥ*, 14.20-22.

[34] Al-Rāzī, *Šarḥ*, 19.21-21.1. For the translation of al-Rāzī's commentary on Avicenna's view of theoretical philosophy in *'Uyūn* see Yahya J. Michot, "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's *Risāla al-Aḍḥawiyya*," *Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies* 14:2 (2003): 154-155.

[35] Al-Rāzī, *Šarḥ*, 21.7-13.

and quantities of divine rules. One of the conclusions to be drawn from this argument is that practical philosophy cannot articulate the principles acquired from the divine *šarī'a* as perfect and complete as the divine *šarī'a* itself does. The latter determines the general principles of practical philosophy on the one hand, and shows that how and in what measure these principles can be applied to particular events, on the other. The intensive relationship between the divine *šarī'a* and practical philosophy makes the divine *šarī'a* a criterion that determines the validity and truth of views reached within the framework of practical philosophy. Therefore, to ascertain the validity and truth of an argument posited in ethics, household management, and politics, it is an important criterion whether it fits into the framework of the divine *šarī'a* or not, in addition to being demonstrated by the human theoretical faculty.

Why is practical philosophy necessary?

At this point, one may ask this question: If the principles of practical philosophy are acquired from the divine *šarī'a* and the divine *šarī'a* determines its details and measure of application, what is the role of practical philosophy, and why does it exist? Following al-Rāzī's explanation, Avicenna's indirect answer to this question might be found on the basis of the characteristics of the prophetic message and the undeterminable features of particular and future events and situations. Accordingly, although the prophet's message consists of the rules concerning the practical philosophy in detail, it is impossible to cover all possible future situations in it. The human theoretical faculty comes in at this stage. Firstly, it determines the principles acquired from the divine *šarī'a*, then theoretically demonstrates the validity and truth of these principles; and finally, on the basis of those demonstrated principles, it produces solutions for particular events, and situations. It is in this stage that it uses the practical faculty of human being.[36]

When one considers these functions from the perspective of the discipline of prophetic legislation, one can see that the first two roles correspond to the latter's content. It is already evident that what Avicenna does in the chapters X.2-5 of *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifā'* is to determine the

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[36] Elsewhere I discuss in detail Avicenna's view of the role of the practical intellect in epistemological processes: "Peygamberin Yasa Koyuculuğu: İbn Sînâ'nın Amelî Felsefe Tasavvuruna Bir Giriş Denemesi [Prophetic Legislation: An Examination of Avicenna's View of Practical Philosophy]," *Dîvân: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 27 (2009): 60-70.

principles legislated by the prophet about ethics, household management and politics, and to demonstrate their validity and truth theoretically on the basis of his theory of prophecy. As for the theoretical faculty's third role, that is producing solutions for new particular events by using the practical faculty, it consists of the subject-matter of every branches of practical philosophy, including ethics, household management, and politics. However, it seems that Avicenna's approach to the prophetic legislation in those chapters of *al-Šifā'*, which has a tendency to cover determining the principles of the branches of practical philosophy, shifts in his later works, like *al-Ḥikma al-Mašriqiyya* and *al-Išārāt*, where he seems more interested in the role of the prophet in the life of individuals and societies only.

As for the relationship between practical philosophy and the divine *šarī'a*, an important question to be posed is the following: How can we reconcile the practical aspects of the *šarī'a*, which are strictly related to a particular time and society, and the philosopher's claim for the universality of his theories? In other words, how is it possible for the *šarī'a* that is advocated by the prophet in a certain social-historical context to provide for philosophy in general, and the practical philosophy in particular, their principles strictly and in a detailed manner, while philosophy claims to be above and beyond particular times and societies? To answer these questions, we should take a short glance at Avicenna's theory of prophecy. Following al-Fārābī, Avicenna argues that the prophet with a "powerful soul" acquires the knowledge of all intelligibles from the active intellect through his fully developed power of intuition almost at once, and because of which his intellect is called the "sacred intellect" (*'aql qudsī*). Moreover, the prophet's highly developed imaginative faculty both provides the knowledge about particular events taking place in the past, present, and future, and reproduces the intelligible knowledge, which is received from the supernal world as abstract and universal, in terms of perceptible and audible messages which are recited to the prophet's society, and which then constitute the text of the revelation. Besides, through his motive faculty that is also developed beyond the average level of ordinary people, he can set into motion and influence not only different parts of his own body, but also the bodies other than his own.[37] It is not easy to claim, however, that this kind of conception of prophecy leads to a

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[37] Avicenna's theory of prophecy has been discussed many scholars. But, for our context, Morris' account of three characteristics of prophecy in Avicenna should be pointed out. See Morris, "The Philosopher-Prophet," 177-196.

conclusion that every *šarī'a* is completely different from another, and that they do not share any common ground. As Avicenna elaborates in his *Aqsām*, while there are particular commands and prohibitions pertaining to a particular *šarī'a* in accordance with the social-historical context, there are also universal commands and prohibitions that are common to all *šarā'i'*. Therefore, when Avicenna said that "the principles of these three [parts of practical philosophy] are acquired from the divine *šarī'a*," he must have meant those universal commands and prohibitions for the life of individuals and societies that are common to all *šarā'i'*. It seems that the role of the discipline of prophetic legislation at this stage is to determine these principles and present them to the three branches of practical philosophy. Determining these principles also provides the knowledge about the difference between the divine prophecy and all false claims, which is one of the subject-matters of the discipline of prophetic legislation. For, the perfection of these principles in terms of their effective role in preserving the life of the individuals and societies indicates that the one who has legislated these principles has the "divine prophecy", and all other claims of prophecy are false and invalid.[38]

Now, the question asked at the beginning of this essay should be revisited: Why did Avicenna neglect practical philosophy in his works? What are the reasons for his relative silence about practical philosophy? The discipline of legislation or prophetic legislation is a key concept to answer these questions. Since Avicenna realized the close relationship between the divine *šarī'a* and practical philosophy and the dominant and indisputable role of the divine *šarī'a* on this field, he must have chosen to introduce a new discipline within practical philosophy and dealt with, in terms of practical philosophy, only this new discipline through his career intensely and consciously. Thus it is not easy to argue that because Avicenna was a devoted disciple of al-Fārābī,[39] he was not interested in practical philosophy and followed his master's detailed thoughts on this field instead. Future comparative studies on al-Fārābī's and Avicenna's approaches to practical philosophy may reveal the differences between their views, and to what extent the concept of "prophetic legislation" is

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[38] In his *al-Aḍḥawiyya*, Avicenna explains the prophecy of Muhammad and his being the last prophet on the basis of the perfection of his *šarī'a*. See *al-Aḍḥawiyya*, 109.15-110.4.

[39] In her pioneering study, M. Galston compares al-Fārābī and Avicenna's political philosophies discussing the fundamental differences between them on this issue. See "Realism and Idealism in Avicenna's Political Philosophy," *The Review of Politics* 41.4 (Oct., 1979): 561-577.

important to understand Avicenna's conscious preference not to deal with the details of practical philosophy.

One of the most important reasons for Avicenna's centrality in Islamic philosophy is that he included the intellectual interests of Islamic society of his age (especially prophecy and the hereafter) into his philosophical system and discussed them in detail.[40] His conception of practical philosophy on the basis of the discipline of prophetic legislation can be related with this aspect of his philosophy. His views of the relationship between philosophy and the *šarī'a*, and the position of practical philosophy specifically, are important examples of how the divine *šarī'a* can be discussed philosophically.[41] Moreover, in doing so, he sacrifices neither the *šarī'a* for philosophy, nor the philosophy for *šarī'a*, but shows their essential roles for the human being in the attempt to apprehend the reality of existence and to attain to happiness in this world and the hereafter. The impact of Avicenna's "prophetic legislation" on the conception and appropriation of practical philosophy in later Islamic intellectual tradition shows his success on the one hand, and calls into question the validity of the present understanding of Islamic political philosophy based on the centrality of al-Fārābī on the other hand.

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[40] For the centrality of Avicenna's philosophy in Islamic intellectual tradition in general, and the role of the above-mentioned characteristic of his philosophy in this centrality see Dimitri Gutas, "The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000 – ca. 1350," in *Avicenna and His Heritage: Acts of the International Colloquium, Leuven, September 8-11 1999*, ed. J. Janssens and D. De Smet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 85-86.

[41] For a brief critique of Janssens, who evaluates Avicenna's views on the relationship between practical philosophy and *šarī'a* as a "religious project," see Gutas, "The Heritage of Avicenna," 86, n. 14.