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Yahya Ibn ‘Adi on Self-Management

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Abstract: Among Christian scholars who especially distinguished themselves in the 10th/11th century Islamic Baghdad were Yahya Ibn ‘Adi (d.974), Ibn Zur‘ah (d.1008), Ibn al-Khammar (d.1017) and Abu ‘Ali al-Samh (d.1027). Some of these Christian translators were no longer relying on the Caliphs or other patrons of learning but often found their own means of living which in turn prolonged their own academic interest. Consequently, some of them were no mere translators any more but genuine scholars, who both kept alive the disciplines they had learnt and taught. The chief architect among them was Yahya Ibn ‘Adi. He was not only the leader of his group but was also dubbed as the best Christian translator, logician and theologian of his times. This is justified in addition by his ample productivity in those fields of enquiry. A considerable number of such works have evidently been used by contemporary and later writers and have also reached us today. Hence, researchers consider that it is in these aspects that his distinctive contributions to scholarship lie and therefore, he deserves more serious study. This study thus, seeks to make an analytical study of Yahya Ibn ‘Adi’s theory of self-management as reflected in his major research on ethics, Tahdhib al-Akhlaq (The Refinement of Character).

Key words: Self-management, soul, ethics, character, Yahya Ibn ‘Adi, refinement, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Yahya’s life: Yahya’s full name as given by his biographers, contemporaries and attested by his own testimony is Abu Zakariyya’ Yahya Ibn ‘Adi Ibn Hamid Ibn Zakariyya' al-Takriti al-Mantiqi (Kraemer, 1986a; Al-Nadim and Dodge, 1970). He received the name Yahya (John) at birth. Later on when he became a father and head of his family, he was given as customary among the Arabs, the surname taken from one of his sons, Abu Zakariyya’ (father of Zakariyya’); the addition of his ancestors' names to his own, Yahya Ibn ‘Adi (father) Ibn Hamid (grandfather) Ibn Zakariyya’ (great grandfather) is also necessary not only for exactness but also for avoiding any possible confusion with those of similar name; his nick-name al-Mantiqi (the logician) is beyond doubt, awarded to him for his skill at dialectic (Al-Nadim and Dodge, 1970) while his ethnic name, al-Takriti (the man from Takrit) indicates his home town.

Yahya was born in Takrit (the northern frontier district of ‘Iraq) in 893 AD of Jacobite or Monophysite Christian parentage. Takrit, the old metropolis of the East was situated on the right bank of the Tigris, about 100 miles North of Baghdad and almost equidistant from Mawsil. Some researchers attribute its foundation to the Sasanian King Sabur, son of Ardashir and it is also said to have been named after a Christian woman, Takrit bint Wa’il. Later, it was the birth place of al-Malik al-Nasir Salah al-Din Yusuf 1, Saladin (d. 1193), the third crusade hero whose father Najm al-Din al-Ayyub (d. 1173) was appointed commander of the fortress Takrit under the Saljuq rulers (1055-1100) (Kraemer, 1986b).

Takrit was one of the important intellectual centres of that time where both theological and philosophical discussions were held among Christians of different sects and also between Christians and Muslims. The contemporary Muslim historian, al-Mas‘udi for example, related about a debate he had with the Syrian philosopher and historian, Abu Zakariyya’ Dinha’ at the Green Church, Takrit in 313 A.H./925 AD and on another occasion al-Masudi likewise affirmed that he had seen a voluminous work on ancient philosophy. These hints show that the birth place of Yahya was among the oldest philosophical centres though very much inferior in comparison to Baghdad.

As to Yahya’s early life and education, biographers leave us ignorant. Nevertheless, we know that probably after completing his early education in Takrit, Yahya went to Baghdad to continue his studies and pursue his interest sometime between 910 and 915 AD when he was aged around 17-21. From the epithet nazil Baghdad (resident of Baghdad) which is often attached to both his life and career, it may be gathered that he had spent most of his academic life in Baghdad and become a distinguished scholar at the important centres of learning. Thus, Yahya seems to have been one of the distinctive scholars at the time as with many other intellectuals who had received the same title.

Most sources mention Abu Bishr Matta Ibn Yunus (d. 328/940) and Abu Nasr al-Farabi (d. 339/950) as Yahya's teachers in philosophy, particularly logic. The first was the Nestorian logician, physician and translator, reputed in his lifetime as a master and chief authority on logic in Baghdad, mainly during the reign of Caliph al-Radi (932-939 AD). The second was the greatest ever of Muslim philosophers, the most excellent among the notables who was well-grounded in philosophy and famous for almost all of his philosophical writings which eventually earned him the nick-name, al-Mu'allim al-Thani (the second teacher), the first being Aristotle. Al-Bayhaqi states that Yahya was the best (afdal) of al-Farabi's pupils who summarises the literary works of his master and possesses a compendium of them. This is also confirmed by al-Mas'udi, one of Yahya's associated friends who reports that he is aware of no one who relies on al-Farabi's philosophy except one man in Baghdad known as Abu Zakariyya' Ibn 'Adi.

Further information supplied by al-Mas'udi that the basis of Yahya's thought was that of his study of the system (tariqa) of Muhammad Ibn Zakariyya' al-Razi (d. 925) that is, the theory of the Pythagorean on the first philosophy (i.e., metaphysics), tells us of another important master of Yahya. However, it appears that Yahya could have been in contact with al-Razi only for a limited time possibly somewhere between 910 and 915 AD, just after his migration to Baghdad which was coincidentally, the period in which al-Razi was reported to have been residing there shortly before returning to his home town al-Rayy (today Teheran) where he spent the last decade of his life and died in 313/925 (Endress and Adzi, 1977; Meyerhof, 1984).

The precise subjects which Yahya could have studied under al-Razi are not known. Nevertheless, since the latter was the greatest physician of the Islamic period and one of the greatest physicians of all time, it was very likely that medicine was their major theme of inquiry, though other disciplines including logic, ethics and metaphysics as mentioned by al-Mas'udi (d. 957) could also be included (Mayerhof, 1984; Arberry, 1950).

Al-Razi (d. 925) also wrote on ethics, al-Tibb al-Ruhani (The Spiritual Medicine) which appeared as an admirable synthesis of science and metaphysics, shaped in the mind of a master physician and given a verbal form by a master of language (Arberry, 1950). This is in perfect agreement with the subject matter of Yahya's ethics namely the correction of the metaphysical side of man, the soul. Further, the fact that he was listed by Ibn Abi Usaybi'a as among the Arabic physicians, may also cause us to believe that al-Razi (d. 925) was a formative influence of Yahya.

HIS CAREER

Most scholars in those days (during the 10th/11th century Baghdad) were no longer dependent on the patronage of the rulers or their viziers as were their immediate predecessors but they made their own living as physicians, teachers, scribes, translators or booksellers (Nicholas, 1964). Yahya too seems to have earned his own livelihood as a professional copyist and bookseller, a livelihood which he may have inherited from his father, 'Adi Ibn Hamid.

The profession could perhaps be the bread and butter job of many of the literate men of his time (Kraemer, 1986c; Walzer, 1962). The anecdote given by Al-Nadim and Dodge (1970) which criticised Yahya for copying too much may substantiate this fact: Why be amazed at my patience? Yahya replied. I have transcribed with my hand two copies of the Tafsir (Qur'anic commentary) of al-Tabari (d. 923) which I have taken to the kings of the frontiers and I have copied innumerable works of the Muslim theologians. In fact, I have forced myself to write a hundred pages each day and night, thought I felt this to be little.

Yahya was a prolific copyist of manuscripts and also a keen lover of books who constantly replenish his book supply for the benefit of his customers as well as for his friends and pupils. Nevertheless, he was not simply a slavish copier but very often he revised and rectified many of the existing versions and more importantly, he prepared numerous translations of Greek works mostly from Syriac into Arabic since he knew no Greek (Nicholas, 1964).

Not surprisingly therefore, his contemporary biographer, Al-Nadim and Dodge (1970) depended on him as a bibliographical source and utilised the catalogue of his books when writing the section on ancient philosophy in his well-known book al-Fihrist. Another piece of information again furnished by Ibn al-Nadim (d. 990) that Yahya was distressed by the discovery that the works he had diligently sought for had already been sold while still others had been burnt. This confirms his position as an avid collector of books. The fact that he was also designated as a translator by Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi is of course justified by his expertise in such a field in addition to his copious productivity in translation. Following the death of his master, Matta b.Yunus in 940 and with the absence of al-Farabi (d. 950) who had left Baghdad long before, specifically to travel to study in Syria and Egypt and set himself up at the court of Sayf al-Dawla (d.967) of Aleppo in 942, Yahya became the new leader of philosophical studies in Baghdad.

He was now in his late 40s and exercised a truly intellectual sovereignty for the next 3 decades at the centre; the intellectuals of the new generation comprising Muslims, Christians, Jews and others alike joined his majlis (school) (Kraemer, 1986a). Among his celebrated Muslims disciples were al-Sijistani (d. 1001), Isa b. Ali (d. 1001), Muhammad al-Badihi (d. 990) and Abu- Hayyan al-Tawhidi (d. 1023). The Christians were, namely, Ibn Zur'a (d. 1008), Ibn al-Khammar (d. 1017) and Abu 'Ali al-Samh (d. 1027). There was also a Jew, Wahab b. Thaqif al-Rumi and a Sabian, Abu Ishaq al-Sabi' (Kraemer, 1986b).

Al-Tawhidi (d. 1023) who was a pupil of Yahya as well as a member of the group tells us that most of his colleagues were prominent in the majlis set up by Yahya who was also the ustadh (master) of the school. This is attested as well by the reminiscences of two contemporary biographers, Al-Nadim and Dodge (1970) who considers Yahya as the leader among his associates and unique in his time and al-Mas'udi who portrays Yahya as the chief authority of philosophy, particularly logic, during the period. Thus, researchers notice the continual use of the Alexandrian title, Head (scholarches/ ra'is) of the school in the 10th/11th century Baghdad and the succession of Abu Bishr Matta b. Yunus (d. 940), al-Farabi (d. 950), Yahya Ibn 'Adi (d. 974) and Abu Salayman al-Sijistani (d. 1001) as head of the school.

It seems that Yahya headed his school of philosophy for almost 35 years from 940-974 AD. He lived to the ripe old age of 81 and died in Baghdad on Thursday 21st of Dhu'l Qa'da 364 AH, corresponding to 13th August, 1285 of the Alexandrian Calender or 974 AD. He was buried in the church of St. Thomas (Mar Tumar) in Qati'at al-Raqiq, North-Western Baghdad. His disciple Ibn Zur'a (d. 1008) carved on his tomb the following epitaph composed by Yahya himself during his lifetime:

> Often enough the dead remains alive via knowledge whereas the living dies via ignorance and malaise. Acquire therefore knowledge to gain immortality give no value whatsoever to an ignorant life.

YAHYA AND PLATO'S TRICHOTOMY OF THE SOUL

Rosenthal (1940) and Walzer (1962) are both probably right in believing that most of the Arab writers on ethics, based their ethical reflections on Plato's trichotomy of the soul: the rational, the spirited and the appetitive (Plato, 1971, 1974). According to Plato, the rational is the faculty in virtue of which we reflect on the good and the bad and with which we make up our minds and take decisions accordingly. The spirited is the source of our moral sentiments such as anger, pugnacity, ambition, love and honour and the appetitive is the faculty that concerns our biological appetites such as the request for food, drink, sexual intercourse and other desires.

In the Timaeus, Plato (1974) assigns these three partitions of the soul to different components of the human body: the rational to the head (brain), the spirited to the breast (heart) and the appetitive to the belly (liver) while in the Republic, Plato (1971) insists that the reason (i.e., the rational) ought to rule having the wisdom and foresight to act for the whole and the spirit ought to obey and support it. When the rational and the spirited souls have been properly trained and well educated, continues Plato, they must be put in charge of the appetitive which forms the greater part of each man's make-up and is naturally insatiable.

Therefore, Plato and indeed his student and successor Aristotle urged that the truly virtuous wise man is he who puts the irrational parts of his soul-the spirited and the appetitive under the command of his reason. So that concludes Plato, he attains self-mastery and order and lives on good terms with himself. Or as Aristotle (1985) has defined him, the truly virtuous wise man, is he who lives with reference to the ruling principle (i.e., the rational) and with reference to the formed habit and the activity of the ruling principle as the slave must live with reference to that of the master. Plato was known to the Arabs as Aflatun while his original writings, for example the Republic, the Laws and the Timaeus were known as Kitab al-Siyasa, al-Nawamis and Timawas, respectively. His biography, often furnished with his literary activities is preserved in many Arabic books that deal particularly with the history of philosophy such as Al-Nadim and Dodge (1970) and many others. Although, not a single Arabic version of Platonic dialogues has reached us today, there is evidence that the Arabs translated probably on rare occasions in full, the Republic, the Laws, the Timaeus and even the Sophist. Besides, they also knew the commentary works on the Platonic corpus such as those of Olympiodorus on the Sophist, Proclus on the Phaedo and possibly Proclus's other commentaries on the Timaeus and the Republic, Plutarch's work on the Timaeus and perhaps Galen's Synopsis of the Platonic Dialogues. Every so often, the Arabs mostly the Christians, also translated these commentary works into Arabic. Hunayn Ibn Ishaq (d. 874), for instance translated Proclus's commentary on the Timaeus; his son, Ishaq (d. 911) translated Olympiodorus's commentary on the Sophist while part of Proclus's commentary on the Phaedo translated by Ibn Zur'a (d. 1008) (Rosenthal, 1940, 1975; Walzer, 1962; Peters, 1968, 1979).

Yet others, mostly the Muslims such men as al-Razi (d. 925), al-Farabi (d. 950) and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) in addition, developed their own independent studies on some of the important Platonic dialogues at their disposal. Al-Razi, for example wrote a commentary on Plato's Timaeus (Arberry, 1957), al-Farabi prepared his own summary of the first 9 books of Plato's Laws but omitted Book X that deals with Religion while Ibn Rushd, in his turn wrote a commentary on the Republic (Rosenthal, 1958).

Through the information supplied by a contemporary biographer and a close friend of Yahya and Al-Nadim and Dodge (1970) researcher know that most of the above mentioned Platonic dialogues were known to Yahya, in spite of his making no reference to either Plato or his research in his Tahdhib al-Akhlaq. In fact, almost all of the Platonic corpus, including Plutarch's work On the Production of the Soul in the Timaeus, the Theaetetus, translated by Olympiodorus, the Sophistes translated by Ishaq Ibn Hunayn (d. 911) a copy of the Crito and perhaps the Cratylus were read by Ibn al-Nadim from the manuscript (khatt) of Yahya. That Yahya also possessed and accordingly corrected an earlier translation of the Timaeus and made another Arabic version of the Laws (al-Nawamis) apart from that of Hunayn Ibn Ishaq (d. 874) is also verified by early Arabic sources including Ibn al-Nadim (d. 990) and al-Qifti (d. 1248).

Now turning back to Yahya's theory of self-management, it is true that Plato's tripartition of the soul was fully acceptable to him. Yet, Plato's and Aristotle's ideas of the perfectly virtuous happy man as he who lives exclusively under the rule of his reason who practises his virtues or that is to say as a moral man in action had again been approved by Yahya. However, being a scholar who was himself physician, Plato's and Aristotle's views were considered basically as no more than the starting point of his own investigations. Naturally therefore, Yahya's main concerns were never resolved with the acceptance of the Platonic trichotomy of the soul, nor with the identification of the so-called self-controlled man but extended to the exploration of the practical ways of how to manage or control such a soul and to associate with society so that ideal man may be realised, a matter wherein Plato and Aristotle are lacking.

It is in this respect that Yahya can be said to have made distinctive contributions to knowledge in general and to moral philosophy in particular. Rosenthal (1940)'s and Walzer (1962)'s studies omitted these aspects while at the same time accepting the significance of Yahya's works.

THE SOUL AND ITS MANAGEMENT

Like his predecessors Galien (1937), al-Kindi, Atiyeh (1966), al-Razi and Yahya also accepts Plato's trichotomy of the soul: the rational, the irascible and the concupiscent as the basis of his ethics. But if Plato (1974), Tusi and Wickens (1964) and others all assign these three souls to the different components of the human body, to the brain, the heart and the liver respectively, Yahya connects none of them to any of these bodily organs nor does he make any attempt to discuss the problem of the immortality of the rational soul after the death of man or of its migration from one body to another as did Plato (1974) and others.

It appears then that Yahya's chief interest was not very much in the identification of the true nature of these souls but more in their relations with people's characters or in how these three souls affect the formation of man's character. For Yahya strongly maintains that every character is based on them. Thus, he writes:

> The soul is the principal cause of people's diversities in character. It has three faculties which are considered also as three souls. They are the concupiscent, the irascible and the rational. All characters proceed from these faculties: some are the product of only one of them, others are of two and still others are of all of these three faculties

This reasoning is evidently a mixture of Plato's idea of the tripartition of the soul with that of Galen on the interaction between character and the Platonic trichotomy of the soul.

At the beginning of his Kitab al-Ahklaq for instance Galien (1937) writes, I have explained this in the book that I wrote on The Views of Hippocrates and Plato and I have shown there that man possesses something that is responsible for thought, something that is responsible for anger and a third thing that is responsible for desire. In this book, Kitab al-Akhlaq, Galien (1947) continues, I shall call that which is responsible for thought the rational soul and the cogitative soul whether it be a separate soul, a part or a faculty; I shall call that which is responsible for anger the irascible soul or the animal soul and that which is responsible for desire the concupiscent soul or the vegetative soul.

Then in the middle of his second chapter, Galien (1937) refers again to that Platonic tripartition of the soul but this time within the context of their connections with men's characters. Here are his words:

> Understanding resides only in the rational soul and is a faculty that perceives agreement and disagreement in all things. This soul inclines towards the beautiful (i.e., virtue). The irascible soul is the seat of anger which is why it is so called, it inclines towards conquest. The concupiscent soul has a faculty by which the body is nourished; it inclines towards pleasures. These make up the fundamentals of character. The difference between the various types of character is causes only by a greater or lesser degree of inclination in each of these souls, according to the extent of its natural strength

A blend of mainly Plato's and Galen's ideas is again obvious when Yahya speaks about the natural inclinations and appetites of the different powers of these souls. The rational, says Yahya is the source of reflection, understanding, memory, discernment and judgement; the irascible is the source of anger, emotion, bravery and love of domination and the concupiscent is the source of all desires and bodily pleasures. Therefore, the self-controlled man is seen by Yahya and indeed by his predecessors, Plato, Aristotle and Galien as he who succeeds in bringing both the irascible and the concupiscent parts of his soul under the command of the rational or as he whose anger and desires are in constant obedience to his reason. It follows, therefore that Yahya's scheme of self-control or self-management must also consist in such ways: one is in the knowledge of the natural inclinations of the different faculties of the soul as well as of their effects on character; the other lies in the process of rectifying the irascible and the concupiscent by strengthening and habituating the eminent activities of the rational, for the latter is the basis and the essential instrument for the process of self-control and the art of character training. Researcher should now expound how Yahya develops his methods of self-control in the light of the above two ways. It is worth noting that even though such courses mostly appear in the form of brief counsels and simple examples and advice, they are yet lively and significant and hence, deserve to be noted for most of them are not to be found in the earlier works on ethics, particularly in those of Plato, Aristotle and Galien.

As in Galen, the concupiscent soul, writes Yahya is common to man and animals. It is as Plato and Galen have said, the basis of all desires and bodily pleasures such as the agitation for food, drink, sexual intercourse and their like. This soul is very imperious. It truly enslaves anyone who fails to control it, reduces him to brute level and makes him very difficult to educate. In this objectionable state, he gradually loses his dignity and develops his madness.

With a kind of disgust, he avoid the society of the learned and virtuous people, preferring the company of degraded men like himself and their licentious company. Such a person will surely end up in crime and other sorts of depravation and immorality having no hesitation to use unlawful means like stealing other people's property so as to satisfy his lustful desires, for most of them are possible only by means of wealth, money, power and other similar things. Such a man should also be discarded, continues Yahya, as the worst of men. The rulers then have the mission of correcting and removing him from his deadly contact with the rest of society, particularly the young. For their souls are easily vulnerable to influence and naturally attracted towards pleasure.

On how to restrain the power of the concupiscent soul, Yahya advises that one should always bear in mind, especially at the very moment of desire that one has intended to subdue one's concupiscent soul. Repetition of such acts soon makes a man master of all his passions; he should seek the association of men of virtue: ascetics, monks, hermits, religious leaders and the learned whose acquaintance will influence him beneficially; he should study the books on ethics, politics and the history of the virtuous, the ascetics and famous people; he should rule out the use of wine and if that is impossible then moderation should be observed yet with people commending respect. An intoxicant strengthens his concupiscent soul, excites his passions leading him to immorality. Man is able to prevent himself from evil deeds by the help of the rational soul, i.e., reason. But when he becomes intoxicated, he loses this controlling power, the rational, acting irrationally like animals, for the irrational powers, the concupiscent and the irascible are shared by both man and animals.

He who intends to conquer the concupiscent soul, Yahya goes on should not attend concerts too frequently, especially if the artists are young and women. Songs and music have tremendous powers to stimulate passions and even more so when expressed by an attractive young woman attracting the listener with numerous impressions which are so impossible to reject. He should uphold moderation in eating and drinking and learn to share his food with others. He should bear in mind that the goal of taking food is not to be excellent in so doing but to avoid pains of hunger as well as to supply the body with its necessities of life and such a person should always be aware of the fact and make it the creed of his heart that immorality, intemperance and greediness are evils and disgraceful while his soul rejects them, yearning for moderateness and frugality and in fact, quite capable of fleeing such defects.

On the relations of the second soul, the irascible, to man's character and on how it affects the development of

the latter, Yahya agrees with Galen that the soul, like the concupiscent is shared by both man and other animals. It is as in the view of both Plato and Galen, the source of anger, arrogance, bravery and love of conquest and domination, more violent than the concupiscent soul. If man allows himself to be overcome by the irascible, he will certainly lose his gentleness and dignity, projecting his anger, fierce hatreds, vengeful wishes and other weakness.

If he continues in this state of shame, there will indeed be no distinction between him and a savage beast who hurls himself on his enemy. Sometimes in his inability to assault his opponent, he turns his rage against his own relatives, friends and even himself; cursing himself, slapping his face and utters foolish words. Further, he who submits himself to the irascible soul will have a strong love of influence, power and domination over others. At times when incapable of achieving such goals through legitimate means, he will have no hesitation in employing dirty tricks such as possessing influential things such as wealth, money and position through illegal means, attacking people and even end up in killing his challenger.

As to how to control the irascible power, Yahya insists that one should take a lesson from the outrageous behaviour of foolish people when they are in anger, assaulting their rivals, relatives, friends, servants and even their own selves. In this way, he will win over his own anger and restrain its rashness towards revenge and punishment; he should know in his heart that anyone who submits to anger descends to the level of savage beasts which act without knowledge and consideration. If he is confronted by such a person, he should abstain promptly from him. Let him suppose that he is facing a common animal and respond only just as he would to a dog barking in the way and when stimulated to vengeance over those who insult him, he should imagine himself in the offender's place and think of what proper punishment he would consider just if he was culpable himself. The other's faults will at once be seen in their true objectivity; a feeling of moderation and forgiveness will arise in his soul and lead him soon to be the master of his anger.

Such a person should avoid drunkenness, for it agitates the irascible soul much more cruelly than it does the concupiscent, throwing him into trouble: abusing and assaulting his associates with whom he sympathised just prior to his drunkenness; he should consult and use his reason in all his actions and activities, reflecting upon it before undertaking any of them and he should seek the company of the virtuous, the men of knowledge, the men who win over their angers and others similar to them.

In contrast to the concupiscent and the irascible souls, the rational is the faculty by which man becomes human distinguishing himself from the animal, for the rational is peculiar only to man while the concupiscent and the irascible are shared by both man and animals. Corresponding again to both Plato and Galen, Yahya also holds that the rational soul is the principle of reflection, understands, memory, discernment and judgement, constituting the proper grandeur of the soul. Thanks to it, beauty is admired, the good approved, the evil blamed and the concupiscent and the irascible powers are brought under control.

The rational soul has both virtues and vices. Examples of the former are the acquisition of the sciences and arts, impelling man to abstain from vices and stimulating him towards kindness, goodwill, tranquillity, temperance and other excellencies. Examples of the latter are deceit, cheating, trickery, envy, hypocrisy and others. Hence, he whose rational soul is strong becomes virtuous; he whose rational soul is weak becomes vicious whereas he whose rational soul is in the intermediate state, becomes neither good nor bad but inclined towards both conditions, for he possesses both good and bad. Most peoples, claim Yahya fall in this last group.

Again like Plato and Galen, Yahya also holds that the rational soul is the basic prerequisite of the art of character training. But he deviates from the former two when he claims that this soul has both virtues and vices whereas in Plato and Galen, the rational soul is rather by nature good and noble and hence, possesses no vice. Consequently, ethics or moral philosophy as seen by Yahya, also lies in the process of strengthening the virtuous aspects of the rational soul, developing and habituating them so that man may be able to use it to restrain the other parts of his soul, namely; the concupiscent and the irascible.

But the question is how this rational power can be developed and strengthened. Yahya's reply is that since the rational soul is naturally inclined towards science and morality and becomes strong by the acquisition of these things he who wishes to make his rational soul strong should therefore fulfil its noble desires by acquiring the rational sciences (al-'ulum al-'aqliyya): perhaps including mathematics, natural science and metaphysics and by studying books on ethics, politics and other subjects of practical science. This will not only consolidate his will, determination and power of thought but also will enable him to repress his passions, refine his character and master his anger and desire and such a one should also associate with the men of knowledge, especially with those who are well-grounded in the rational sciences, i.e.,

mathematicians, theologians, physicians and others, following and habituating their characters and examples. For him who is not able to take up the study of the rational sciences for a legitimate reason, he should still reflect upon his power of thought, i.e., reason using his common sense. Indeed, a little reflection is enough to teach us the great difference between good and evil, right and wrong. Passions, pleasures, anger, envy, deceit and such like, leave only shame and lifelong remorse while virtue is without regret, producing lasting joy. Besides, he who has determined to refine his character should never be content with less than the highest level of virtue for if he is satisfied with only a small portion of it he will stay at a less honourable level than the goal envisaged, never reaching his perfection and complete happiness.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, it is true that Yahya based his theory of self-management on Plato's tripartition of the soul. And it is also true that this is only accepted as a starting point of his own investigation, for he modified and refined such Platonic ideas especially through the ways of Galien and others. That is to say, Yahya's conception of the tripartition of the human soul is not very different from those of Plato and Galen. The only difference is that Yahya has discussed the relation of these three souls with man's character in much greater detail, matters which Plato and Galen have only outlined.

In point of fact, Yahya even goes far beyond Plato, Aristotle and Galien, particularly in giving a lively programme of how man may carry out his plan of self-control, curbing each power of his inner self: the concupiscent, the irascible and the rational. Since most of his generous ideas, wise counsels and colourful examples are not to be found in the ethical thought of either Plato, Aristotle or Galien they should in all probability be regarded as Yahya's own contribution to philosophy, particularly ethics.

The research therefore cannot agree with modern scholars such as Walzer (1962) who claims that Yahya's Tahdhib al-Akhlaq is based entirely on a lost Greek treatise. Leaving aside the fact that neither the author nor the name of such a treatise was mentioned by Walzer, we are convinced nevertheless that if that lost Greek work had reached us, it probably could go no further than of Plato and Aristotle or perhaps appear as no more than a synthesis of both. For they represent the highest advance in morals that we have got from this time. Moreover since, Yahya's reliance on the works of Plato, Aristotle, Galen and others is evident, it is not to be supposed therefore that he could have depended entirely on such an unknown document though the likelihood that he might also use it as one of his sources or perhaps one of his important sources is not entirely ruled out.

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