at a glance. The addition of accounting treatment of different modes has made
the work self-contained. The author should be applauded for writing such a
splendid book and the publishers for its befitting production.

S. M. Hasanuzzaman

N. Peter Joosse. Ed. and tr. A Syriac Encyclopaedia of Aristotelian
Philosophy: Barhebraeos (13th c.): Butyrum Sapientiae, Books of Ethics,
Economy and Politics. A Critical Edition, with Introduction,

This work constitutes vol. 16 of the series “Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus
project” supervised by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
as part of the Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi project of the Union
Académique Internationale. This project envisages the publication of the
Syriac, Arabic and Hebrew translations of Aristotle’s works, of the Latin
translations of those translations, and of the mediaeval paraphrases and
commentaries made in the context of this translation tradition. This volume
presents a critical edition of the part on practical philosophy (the Books of
Ethics, Economy and Politics) in the encyclopedia Butyrum Sapientiae (Cream
of Wisdom) of the 13th century Syriac author Mar Gregory Abū al-Farağ b.
Aaron Barhebraeus. This encyclopedia covers almost all the themes of the
Aristotelean Oeuvre starting with the Organon and ending with the Politics.

Gregory Abū al-Farağ Bar ‘Ebrāyā (Gharīghūryūs Abū ’l-Farağ Ibn al-‘Ibrī
(623–685/1225–1286), known in the West as Barhebraeus is one of the most
eminent scholars of Syriac. He belongs to the period of Syriac Renaissance
of the 12th–13th centuries. He was a Syrian Orthodox Christian. His scholarly
interest covered a large number of fields such as biblical exegesis, dogmatic as
well as moral-mystical theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, historiography
literature, grammar, lexicography, the exact sciences and medicine. He wrote
mainly in Syriac and partially in Arabic. He took Arabic or Persian books as
his model and patterned his own works after them. He used to incorporate in
his works materials taken from Arabic and Syriac sources. He came under the
influence of some Muslim thinkers such as Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-

The Books of Ethics, Economy and Politics are modeled on Aḥlāq-e Nāṣīrī [Akhlāq-i Nāṣīrī] by the Persian author Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (born 1201 CE). The Nāṣīrean Ethics is the best known ethical treatise in medieval Persia, and it is based on Tabdīb al-Aḥlāq [Tadhīb al-Akhlāq] by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) which in its turn is marked by Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and by Platonic and Neo-Platonic teachings. Al-Ṭūsī’s work was known to Barhebraeus and he mentioned it in his Chronography and in his Muḥtaşar Tārīb al-Duwal [Mukhtāsar Taʾrīkh al-Duwal]. Depending on other sources, Barhebraeus was one of the best compilers whose compilations reflect the most sophisticated harmonization and balance. A comparison of the contents of Barhebraeus Syriac text with al-Ṭūsī work was made by the editor which shows the degree of dependence of the first on the second (see, pp. 3, 4, 9).

The part on Economy is indirectly influenced by Ibn Sīnā’s Risālah fī al-Sīyāsah. The influence came through Al-Ṭūsī’s Aḥlāq-e Nāṣīrī which came under the influence of Ibn Sīnā’s Risālah.

The part on Practical Philosophy in this encyclopedia consists of three books. The first deals with Ethics, the second with Economy and the third with Politics. They were written at the end of Barhebraeus’s life (1285–6 CE) and in a period of time which was witnessing the gradual disappearance of Syriac as a living language and its replacement by Arabic as the speaking language of the Syriac speaking peoples. As it is known, the Syriac language continued until the Arab conquest of their countries.

In the 12th and 13th centuries Syriac witnessed an awakening due to the great efforts of Barhebraeus (Ibn al-‘Ibr) and other great Syriac writers such as Ibn al-Ṣalīḥī (flourished in 7/12 century) and Mīkhaʿl (flourished in 7/12 century) the Syriac. Ibn al-‘Ibrī started translating Arabic books into Syriac such as books of Ibn Sinā and al-Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī among others from the Muslim philosophers.

The Books of Ethics (pp. 16–95) contains four chapters. The first chapter bears the title “On Preliminaries” and contains eight sections dealing with the

---


divisions and subdivisions of philosophy defined as “the Knowledge of true things and the practice of good deeds according to the possibility of human power and it has two parts, theory and practice (p. 17).” The theoretical part of Philosophy is divided into three classes. The first class of knowledge (theory) is called natural science, the second is mathematics, and the third is theology. The practical part of knowledge is divided into three. The first is ethics, the second is economy, and the third is politics. To natural science belongs the knowledge of medicine, agriculture and others. To mathematics belongs the science of optics, algebra and haulage of heavy bodies. To theology belongs the knowledge of Judgement and the resurrection of the soul. To ethics belongs the knowledge of prayers, fasts, sacrifices and offerings. To economy belongs just possessions, and to politics belongs the knowledge of the laws of the community (see p. 17).

Among the subjects discussed: man as superior to all being of this world, the human soul can be perfect and defective, perfection of the human soul. Chapter two deals with virtues and vices and it contains three sections. The first deals with the human soul’s virtues. The second deals with the human soul’s vices and their species.

Chapter three deals with conjectural virtues such as conjectural wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice.

Chapter four deals with the acquisition of virtues and removal of vices. It contains seven sections dealing with the order of virtues, the preservation of the health of the soul, healing the illness of the soul, illnesses of the rational faculty, the fear of death, illnesses of the appetitive faculty, and with that ends the Book of Ethics.

The Book of Economy (pp. 96–131) constitutes the second part of the practical philosophy, and it contains three chapters. The first chapter deals with preliminaries and contains two sections. The first deals with the cause of the need for the house and households, the manner of management of wealth and provisions, the manner of dealing with household, the manner of educating sons. Other subjects include the natural signs of human dispositions.

The Book of Politics (pp. 132–171) is the third part of the practical philosophy, and it contains three chapters. The first deals with preliminaries starting with the necessity of politics, the love by which a bond and political communities exist, the divisions of political communities, political administration, on the king’s ruling of his kingdom, the manner of dealing with a king. It deals also with social behaviours such as true friendship, choice of friends, the amity of friends, the manner of dealing with classes of mankind.

A critical apparatus has been given at the end of the text (pp. 172–190) in addition to a detailed commentary (pp. 191–257), a list of bibliography,
glossaries and indices is also given. In his work Barhebraeus made heavy reliance on non-Christian authors. He used to take an Arabic work as his model and framework around which to build his work. He followed the sequence of al-Ghazâlî in *Ihyâ’ ‘Ulum al-Din* in his *Ethicon*, and Ibn Sinâ’s *al-Shifa’* in his *Butyrum Sapientiae*. He relied also on al-Ṭūsî’s *Tadhkirah fi ‘Ilm al-Hay’ah* in his *Ascensus mentis*. The part on civil law in his *Nomocanon* depended on al-Ghazâlî’s *Kitâb al-Wajiz* and in his *Tegrât Tegrâtâ* (*Treatise of the Treatises*) on al-Ghazâlî’s *Maqâṣid al-Falasifah*.

Muhammad Khalifa Hasan Ahmad


‘September 11’ has been a defining event in the world history. It facilitated the modern capitalism in selecting Islam as its next target in the war of absolute power, after displacing international communism. Saudi Arabia enjoys a unique position in the Muslim world, as the custodian of two holiest places in Makkah and Madinah, a key provider of hydrocarbon energy internationally, and the biggest buyer of US military hardware. Its government, people and institutions became especially suspicious after 9/11, as 15 out of 19 hijackers were identified as Saudi Arabians and the whole episode was allegedly planned by a Saudi elite, Osama bin Laden.

A positive aspect of the new game is that it has created a new interest in the Western world, to know more about Islam as a religion and Muslims as a community. The resultant flow of information is no doubt substantially flawed and is being produced to paint Islam and the Muslims as villains of Western civilization, but a good part of it is a serious effort to understand and know the religion of Islam and the Muslim community as they are, to identify their characteristics, their strengths and weaknesses, their potential and their possible role in the new world order.

This book falls in the second category. It is a case study of Saudi Arabia, and provides an in-depth analysis of its government, people and institutions in