VICTORIA ROWE HOLBROOK
ORCID: 0000-0002-3423-8645
Istanbul Bilgi University

Plato, fetters round the neck, and the Quran

Abstract: I analyze figures and themes of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" evident in chapter thirty-six of the Quran. I argue that the two texts share (1) a neck fetter fixing the head; (2) a spatial organization of barriers before and behind and covering above; (3) a theme of failure to see the truth and assault upon those who tell the truth, and (4) a theme of transcendent reality as a context of meaning. I argue that the Quran displays an inheritance of some Platonic thought in Arabic at least two centuries prior to any known translation of Plato.

Keywords: Plato, Quran, hadith, allegory of cave, truth, fetters

Introduction

It is known that "from about the middle of the eighth century to the end of the tenth, almost all non-literary and non-historical secular Greek books that were available throughout the Eastern Byzantine Empire and the Near East were translated into Arabic."[1] This included almost all of Aristotle's works, yet exactly when and how Plato first entered Islamic culture remains a mystery.[2] The earliest Islamic texts

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[1] D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)* (London: Routledge 1998), p. 1. "2nd–4th centuries" here refers to *hijri* dating, roughly equivalent to 8th–10th centuries CE. The Homeric epics and Greek lyric poetry are examples of "literary" texts not translated; Herodotus an example of "historical" texts.

[2] While the modern scholarship on Arabic reception of ancient philosophy inaugurated by Franz Rosenthal and Richard Walzer is vast, the reception of Plato was complex and scholarly progress has been slow. The first monograph devoted to it, a 2017 dissertation by Geoffrey James Moseley, contains a review of modern scholarship: "Plato Arabus: On the Arabic Transmission of Plato's Dialogues. Texts and Studies," Yale University dissertation 2017, ProQuest Number: 10767268. Moseley assem-

exhibit remarkable familiarity with Plato's characteristic themes. The ninth-century "Arabic Plotinus," three related texts based primarily on Porphyry's edition of the *Enneads*, [3] has long been assumed to be an early source. Al-Kindi (c. 800–870), first of "Islamic philosophers," is famed for the work done by himself and his circle during the Translation Movement centered in Baghdad, including what has long been considered the earliest known textual treatment of the *Republic* in the Near East, the lost Galenic epitome of Plato's works, translated into Syriac and Arabic by Hunayn ibn Ishaq, whose translations of the epitome are also lost, known by attestation.[4] Al-Kindi may not have had at his disposal any complete dialogue of Plato's,[5] but rather material such as the epitome, yet in al-Kindi's work "God seems to function like a Platonic form."[6] It is well known that the second most renowned of Muslim philosophers, al-Farabi (c. 872–951), treated Plato's thought at length. The towering figure Ibn Sina (c. 980–1037), who referred to Plato as a prophet,[7] wrote, in addition to his voluminous philosophical and medical works, brief narratives[8] having the quality of Plato's "myths," as did Suhrawardi Maqtul (1154–1191).[9]

All of this is well-documented and only the beginning of a many centuries-long Islamic philosophical Platonism[10] surviving until modern times. As late as 1783, uncounted narratives of varied genres in Persian and Turkish may be said to have culminated in Şeyh Galip's philosophical romance *Beauty and Love*,[11] in which the skeleton of the "Staircase of Love" of Plato's *Symposium* is visible in the hero's journey.[12] No evidence of Plato being translated into any language prior to the ninth

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bled, translated, and annotated "the most comprehensive, reliable collection to date of Arabic Plato fragments" (p. 20). He paid tribute to Rosenthal's pioneering 1940 study, "On the Knowledge of Plato in the Islamic World" (*Islamic Culture* 14 [1940] 387–422 and 15 [1941] 396–398 [addenda]). Rosenthal described "four main types of Platonic reception: (1) the doxographic, (2) the gnomological, (3) the pseudepigraphic, and (4) the authentic" (p. 9). Moseley argued that "(a) late antique Christian antipathy to Plato, (b) an Alexandrian conception of the history of philosophy," and "(c) a related reinterpretation of the agreement or compatibility (συμφωνία) between Plato and Aristotle, jointly account for the sparse transmission of authentic *Platonica* in Arabic" (p. 1).

[3] And long mistakenly attributed to Aristotle. P. Adamson, "The Arabic Plotinus: A Study of the 'Theology of Aristotle' and related texts," University of Notre Dame doctoral dissertation 2000, UMI Co. Dissertation #9971880.

[4] Quotations from his Arabic translation in later works are extensive; see Moseley 2017.

[5] P. Adamson, *Al-Kindi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), p. 25.

[6] Emphasis added. P. Adamson, "al-Kindi", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), E.N. Zalta (ed.), p. 10; https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/al-kindi/.

[7] Ch. E. Butterworth, "Socrates' Islamic Conversion," *Arab Studies Journal* Spring 1996, pp. 4–11.

[8] Henry Corbin called these narratives "visionary recitals." *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1960).

[9] W.M. Thackston, *Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi: The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers 1999).

[10] Continued by among many others the Persian philosopher Mulla Sadra (1571–1636), who wrote of "Platonic Forms" (*al-muthul al-aflatuniyya*); E.S. al-Kutubi, *Mulla Sadra and Eschatology: Evolution of Being* (Oxford: Routledge 2015), p. 63.

[11] Şeyh Galip, *Beauty and Love/Hüsn-ü Aşk*, transl. V.R. Holbrook (ed.), (New York: Modern Language Association Texts and Translations Series 2005, 2 vols.).

[12] V.R. Holbrook, "Hüsn ü Aşk'ın Arkeolojisi I," *Amasya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 1:1 (2017), pp. 49–58.

century has been attested, but I will argue that Platonic material is evident in the Gracious Quran revealed to Muhammed at Mecca and Medina from 610 to 632.

Here I will focus on the issue of a neck fetter that figures in the "Allegory of the Cave" in Plato's *Republic* (514a5–b1) and in Quran (36:8). I want to be clear from the start that I am not saying the Late Antique Arabic Quran, revealed to Muhammed when he was an illiterate caravan leader, was "influenced" by Plato. What I do say is that the Quran shows us that the Arabic language had already absorbed certain Platonic themes, concepts, tropes, and images by Muhammed's lifetime, more than two hundred years before the earliest translations of Greek philosophy into Arabic. The "incomparability" of the Quran is a foundational Islamic doctrine; but if the Quran be the eternal word of God, inimitable and incomparable, the Arabic language in which it was revealed had a worldly history. Arabic had traffic with other languages as all languages do, adopting words, phrases, images, and metaphors that acquire new connotations and associations in the new contexts, as they inevitably must. "Influence" is a very widely-used but undertheorized concept, and I will return to that problem. I will also explain why I refer to "Platonic" and not "Neoplatonic" material.

The late Antique Arab peninsula was long treated in modern scholarly literature as a location culturally beyond the Hellenized Near East, backwater to the main action of conflict between the Byzantine and Persian empires. Newer work, notably Georges Tamer's pioneering study of Greek notions of time in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and the Quran, has begun to reconstruct Antique Arabian Hellenism.[13] Here I have space to analyze in detail only one example, but I observe that there is a great deal more Platonic and other Greek philosophical material in the Arabic language of the Quran, and suggest that rather than assume "Islamic philosophy" was an attempt to reconcile Greek philosophy with Islam, as non-specialists widely assume it was, we may learn how such material in the Quran prepared the way for distinctively Islamic understandings of it.

A significant issue in comparing the two texts is the radical difference of literary genre; the Greek prose in which Plato wrote had no counterpart in the Arabic

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[13] G. Tamer, "Hellenistic Ideas of Time in the Koran," [in:] *Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Course of History: Exchange and Conflicts* L. Gall and D. Willoweit (eds.), (München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag 2011) is a brief summary of Tamer's *Zeit und Gott. Hellenistische Zeitvorstellungen in der altarabischen Dichtung und im Koran.* Studien Zur Geschichteund Kültür des islamischen Orients N.F. 20 (Berlin: 2008). Tamer pointed out in his review of scholarship that Peter Brown considered Late Antiquity to include the first two centuries of Islam, that Glen Bowerstock went on to assume that at least some of the roots of Islam were embedded in the local Hellenism of Arabia, and Barbara Finster and Garth Fowden concurred in viewing Islam as rooted in and consummating Antiquity; Tamer mentioned Aziz al-Azmeh in particular among Islamic Studies scholars for his confirmation of Carl Heinrich Becker's famous statement, "Without Alexander the Great, no Islamic civilization" (pp. 21–23). Al-Azmeh took his own work further with *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and his People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014), and Fowden with *Before and After Muhammed: The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2014). More recently Saer El-Jaichi has investigated Neoplatonic concepts in the work of al-Hallaj (858–922): *Early Philosophical Ṣūfism: The Neoplatonic Thought of Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāǧ* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press 2018).

of Muhammed's time. Indeed, the Quran is the first Arabic book. The main vehicle of Arabic composition was oral poetry in a sophisticated system of rhymed meters called '*arûḍ*. The Arabic of the Quran is famously entrancing, and its verses are rhythmic, often poetic statements, but not poetry in the '*arûḍ* sense. What we call in English its "verses" are termed "signs" ('*ayât*). There is a vast literature analyzing the genre of Quranic statement, but the point I wish to make is that compared with Greek prose, Quranic statement is, like poetry, highly condensed. In this way it more resembles the mode of Buddhist *suttas* than expository prose, and we should not expect the more extensive, explicit statement characteristic of prose.

To return to the very widely used but undertheorized concept of "influence," the most precise analysis of literary influence is still Harold Bloom's series of studies begun in 1973. He did not define it but rather analyzed its effects, quoting Oscar Wilde, who referred to it as "transference of personality."[14] Relying upon an established tradition of secular hermeneutics, Bloom applied Freudian theory to the study of Romantic poetry within the context of a "Western canon" of texts from Homer and the Bible to postmodernist North American fiction. If we may quote Bloom (and Wilde) in this context, we may also quote Julia Kristeva, who coined the term "transposition" to mean "a passage from one sign system to another." Although Kristeva made clear she avoided the term "intertextuality" because it is taken in the "banal sense of 'study of sources,'"[15] it is precisely this sense that has spawned so many studies of intertexuality written after she abandoned the term. This is as near as modern literary criticism has come to defining "influence."

I would like to suggest that the relationship between the fetter in Plato's *Republic* and the fetter in the Quran is one of family resemblance rather than influence. Let me give an everyday example of what I mean. If I, born in the United States of America in the twentieth century, remark that I feel like I am in seventh heaven, you will not conclude that I have been influenced by Ptolemy (c.100–c.170 CE) to believe in his geocentric model of the cosmos. The proximate cause in my case is likely the song made famous by Al Jolson,[16] and certainly not Ptolemy's *Almagest*,

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[14] Wilde: "Influence is simply a transference of personality, a mode of giving away what is most precious to one's self, and its exercise produces a sense, and, it may be, a reality of loss." H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press 1997; 1st ed. 1973), p. 6.

[15] Kristeva coined the term "transposition" to name a third of fundamental processes in the work of the unconscious, after "displacement" and "condensation," designated by Freud and introduced into structural linguistics by Kruszewski and Jacobson through the concepts of metonymy and metaphor. The passage from one sign system to another "comes about by way of condensation and displacement, but this does not account for its total operation. It also involves an altering of the thetic *position*—the destruction of the old position and the formation of a new one. [...] The term *inter-textuality* denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of 'study of sources," we prefer the term *transposition* because it specifies that the passage from one sign system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic—of enunciative and denotative positionality." J. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, transl. M. Waller (New York: Columbia University Press 1984; original French pub. 1974), pp. 59–60.

[16] "I'm in Seventh Heaven" was a popular song recorded by Al Jolson in 1929.

translated from Greek to Arabic (9th century) to Latin (12th), then from newly found Greek exemplar into Latin (15th), discussed on the basis of Arabic debate literature on the work brought from the Ottoman Empire to Europe (16th), and from Latin to English in 1952, twenty-three years after Jolson recorded the song. Influence implies a choice to be influenced, even if the choice be an unconscious one—as Wilde put it, a "giving away what is most precious to oneself"—but I have *inherited* some of the contents of my mind from Ptolemy by way of transpositions of all kinds, linguistic, visual, musical, imaginative, that, taken together, form a cultural family whose genealogy is so long and circuitous that it cannot be precisely traced.

Family resemblance is not a choice. We do not call the eye color we inherit from our parents "influence." We "come by it honestly" because we had no choice in the matter. Metaphors and figures of speech that have moved from language to language to become part of our own also become our property without our choosing them. I believe that this is the case with the Arabic fetter. As Tamer has shown, the newer Arabic language inherited concepts and images from the older Greek, with which it was geographically and culturally contiguous.

Now I will briefly summarize my argument, then address questions of context, including why I say "Platonic" rather than "Neoplatonic," and finally develop my argument in detail. Let us recall the Allegory of the Cave that opens the seventh book of Plato's *Republic*. Socrates likens the condition of uneducated humankind to that of captives who have been fettered at the legs and neck in a cave since childhood; the fetters fix their heads so that they cannot turn around to look behind them. All they have ever seen are shadows cast on the cave wall in front of them by the light of a fire, located higher up behind them and beyond a low, built wall like the screen used in a puppet show. Behind the built wall there are people who hold objects above it, and the captives think the shadows of these objects thrown onto the cave wall in front of them are the only reality (514a–b). If one were taken out of the cave to see the truth of reality outside, and then return to tell the others, they would respond with incredulity, ridicule, and likely kill him (517a).

In the opening verses of Ya-Sin, thirty-sixth chapter of the Quran, God reassures Muhammed that although people do not believe him, he truly is God's messenger, and the Quran is a revelation from God. Most of those to whom he brings God's message are heedless. God has put fetters on their necks that fix their heads in place and put barriers before and behind them and covered them; they do not see (36: 3–9). The narrative goes on to relate the parable of a people who rejected two of God's messengers and threatened to stone a third (13–15, 18).

In both texts what the captives fail to see is the truth. They are prevented from doing so by fetters that fix their heads in place, and by a spatial arrangement that keeps them positioned between barriers before and behind and covered—in the Allegory, the cave wall in front, the built wall behind, and the ceiling of the cave above; in Ya-Sin, the barriers before and behind and the covering over them. In both cases the captives will mock and assault anyone who tries to guide them. In both texts "seeing" is a trope for "knowing." The captives can see, but they do not *see*. Both

are representations of how people fail to know reality—which in the Allegory is the form of the good/beautiful,[17] and in Ya-Sin, God as the truth.[18] Both narratives demonstrate that humankind requires guidance to know what is real.

True, there is no cave in the Quranic passage. In fact, there is a cave in the Quran, in chapter eighteen, titled "The Cave." It contains the famous tale of the Seven Sleepers (18:9–26), also known as the Companions of the Cave,[19] but there the direction of the action is reversed. The Sleepers know the truth and are persecuted for it, so they flee to take refuge in a cave; Plato's captives have been confined in a cave since childhood. That they will likely kill anyone who tells them the truth was demonstrated to Plato by the execution of his teacher Socrates.

The association of Plato's Allegory with the context of the cave is so long-established in scholarship and popular culture that it may be difficult to agree that its essential situation occurs in Ya-Sin without need for a cave. But it is inevitable that in the transfer of an image from one language to another, elements alien to the new context may be dropped, and new associations acquired. In the open desert in Muhammed's Arabia, caves were places of refuge and meditation; there are reports of Christian renunciants known to Muhammed having retired to live in caves, and a prominent feature of his traditional biography is that it was his habit to meditate in a cave outside Mecca, where he received his first revelation of the Quran.[20] These associations would have made the cave element unsuitable as a site of ignorance.

In what follows I will focus on four aspects that Plato's Allegory and Ya-Sin share: (1) the neck fetter fixing the head; (2) the spatial organization of barriers before and behind and covering above; (3) the theme of failure to see the truth and assault upon those who tell the truth, and (4) the theme of transcendent reality as a context of meaning. It is *the combination of all four aspects together* that constitutes the essential situation in both texts and makes them alike.

Now to matters of context. Firstly, much of my argument rests on the peculiarity of the neck fetter worn by the captives in both Plato's Allegory and those in Ya-Sin. A neck fetter that prevents turning the head to see was Plato's invention and does not appear in Greek again through Late Antiquity.[21] My Diogenes application

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[17] A famous hadith states that "God is beautiful, and He loves beauty." The meanings of the terms *agathon* and *kalon* have been much discussed, and various translations have been used to distinguish between them, but their interchangeability in *Republic* is generally agreed. English translation has established a tradition of naming *to kalon* in *Symposium* "beauty in itself," and in *Republic*, identifying it with *agathon* as "the good," but I am allowing for both meanings here as Plato's ultimate form. For our purposes what is significant is that as is the case with *kalon* and its cognates in Plato's works, in Quran and hadith Arabic *ḥusn* and its cognates, as well as *jamâl* and *jamîl* in the above hadith, mean both moral and physical beauty/beautiful and goodness/good, and their antonyms denote both moral and physical repulsiveness. See K. Murata, *Beauty in Sufism: The Teachings of Ruzbihan Baqli* (Albany: State University of New York Press 2017), pp. 29, 33–34.

[18] Arabic *al-ḥaqq*, "the Truth" or "the Real," is often used interchangeably with the name "Allah." See W.C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press 1989), p. 132.

[19] G.S. Reynolds, *The Emergence of Islam* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2012), pp. 154–156.

[20] Ibidem, pp. 28, 60, 62, 150, 11–13, 18.

[21] I thank Anthony Kaldellis for suggesting this to me, and for critiquing an early draft of this article.

searches turned up no reference to such a fetter in Ancient to Late Antique Greek texts other than *Republic*. The corpora Diogenes searches include the Neoplatonic texts; given that no such fetter is mentioned in them, such texts could not have served as a vehicle for the fetter's journey into the Quran. That is why I say the material is Platonic rather than Neoplatonic. This absence also tells us that Plato's Allegory was not a focus for Ancient to Late Antique Greek texts; if it had been, they would surely have mentioned the fetter. It is crucial to the Allegory; without it, there is nothing preventing the captives from turning to see that they are in a cave watching shadows on a wall. This also tells us that our modern interest in Plato's Allegory of the Cave must be a later phenomenon.

There is nothing like it in the Bible, which is easily searched. In the swiftly growing field of Quranic Studies, the closest thing I have found to an allusion to Platonic material in the Quran, by way of St. Augustine, is by Angelika Neuwirth: "There is a vivid imagination in the Qurꜣan of the ideal city, the City of God, long before al-Farabi's famous reworking of Plato's *Politeia*."[22] No reference to captives fettered by the neck so that they cannot see is found in the Altarabische Dichtung digital corpus of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, nor in the Glossarium Graeco-Arabicum, which covers texts of the Translation Movement. In sum, as far as I have been able to determine, a neck fetter that prevents one from seeing the truth is a trope that in the seventh century existed only in Plato's *Republic* and the Quran.

This unique reoccurrence also makes derivation from an unknown common source unlikely. It could be argued that *Republic* may have preserved elements of a source or sources that came separately into Arabic oral culture and found their way into the Quran. But the postulated existence of a shared source predating Plato—Egyptian, Near Eastern—does not prove that the route such material travelled to the Quran was not by way of Plato. If such a source existed, it would have to be one upon which only Plato and the millennium-later Arabic of the Quran drew, which is very unlikely.

There is also the related question of Jewish or Christian antecedents that could have been transmitted orally. While the Arabic literary culture of Western Arabia was highly developed, it was oral.[23] The literary culture of the polytheistic Meccan Arabs Muhammed addressed was sophisticated, but not literate.[24] The Quran ("recital"), unlike the tablets of Moses, arrived in oral form, and announced itself as a "book" (2:1). There was no written Arabic book culture at the time, and very little Antique writing in Arabic survives, but the lack of writing in Arabic does not

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[22] A. Neuwirth, "Locating the Qurꜣan in the Epistemic Space of Late Antiquity," [in:] *Christsein in der islamischen Welt: Festschrift für Martin Tamcke zum 60. Geburtstag*, S.H. Griffith and S. Grebenstein (ed.) (Harrassowitz Verlag 2015), p. 76.

[23] P. Stein, "Literacy in Pre-Islamic Arabia: An Analysis of the Epigraphic Evidence," [in:] *The Qu'ran in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'anic Milieu* A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai, M. Marx (eds.), (Leiden: Brill 2010), pp. 255–280.

[24] "Though some form of Arabic is likely to have been in existence as early as the mid-first millennium BCE, Arabic (or rather Old Arabic, the name scholars give to pre-Islamic Arabic) seems to have been seldom written down until a century or so before the advent of Islam." R. Hoyland, "Epigraphy and the Linguistic Background to the Qur'an," [in:] *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*, G.S. Reynolds (ed.), (New York: Routledge 2008), p. 53.

mean that no Arab-speakers were writing, or that they had no experience of books. Rather, it means that Arabic was not a language of written literature, and if Arabs were writing, they were writing in other languages. Ethnicity in the Near East in the sixth and seventh century is difficult to determine; Arabic may or may not have been among the languages spoken by Jews or Christians of whatever ethnicity who wrote in Syriac, which from the fourth century to the sixth took over from Greek to become "the preferred language of literacy among the Christians" of Northern Syria and Mesopotamia.[25] Muhammed was famously illiterate, but if he had been able to read, he could not have read any Greek philosophy because there is no evidence of a text of Plato or any Greek author translated into Arabic or Syriac by the seventh century.[26] Even had he been able to read Greek, there is no evidence that Greek exemplars of any of Plato's works existed in Mecca or Medina then.

Muhammed's interactions with Jews and Christians are frequently mentioned in Quran and hadith,[27] and have long been well-established in scholarship. We know that Abu Nawfal, cousin of Muhammed's first wife, was a Christian, and that there were Christian communities in Mecca and Medina as well as in Persia, North Syria and Mesopotamia (Edessa). Could Platonic material in the Quran have reached Muhammed orally through contacts with Christians who read Greek and were familiar with *Republic*? Possibly. But although we are accustomed to find items of Jewish, Christian, and Near Eastern tradition shared in the Quran,[28] our institutional organization of knowledge, assigning "religious" and "secular" literature to separate tracks of scholarship, has not encouraged investigation of Greek philosophy on the part of Quranic Studies scholars, and no such connection has been pointed out. We do know that there were Arabic legends about Socrates,[29] and that sixth-century Syriac literature contained paraphrase of Middle Platonic interpreters and Plato himself[30] (based on earlier paraphrase rather than Plato's texts[31]), but we have no evidence of oral transmission of the Allegory through a Jewish, Christian and/or Neoplatonic intermediary.

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[25] Ibidem, p. 52.

[26] Syriac became an intermediary language for Greek to Arabic transmission, and translation of Greek to Syriac to Arabic a familiar pattern. See Gutas 1998, pp. 21–22.

[27] A hadith is an account of something Muhammad said or did. The accounts are often eyewitness and passed down through a chain of narrators evaluated in the science of hadith.

[28] A classic study is F.E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2018 new ed.). The Quran provides accounts not only of Abraham, Joseph, Mary and Jesus, but also of mythical and legendary figures, and Alexander the Great; see K. van Bladel, "The *Alexander legend* in the Qur'an 18:83–102," Reynolds 2008, pp. 175–203. A great deal of Quranic material, such as reference to God as "the Truth" (*al-ḥaqq*), is clearly unrelated to Jewish and Christian scripture.

[29] I. Alon, *Socrates in Mediaeval Arabic Literature* (Leiden-Jerusalem: E. J. Brill, The Magnes Press 1991).

[30] Y. Arzhanov, "Plato in Syriac Literature," *Le Muséon* 132 (1–2, 2019), pp. 1–36.

[31] "No literary or non-literary data permit the assumption that full translations of the genuine works of Plato ever existed in Syriac. [...] The 'Christianization' of Plato in the first centuries of Church history created a new image of the philosopher that did not necessarily presuppose any acquaintance with his works. [...] Passages introduced by the gnomic formula 'Plato said...' do not necessarily presuppose any direct knowledge of the philosopher's texts," Arzhanov 2019, p. 6.

We do know that the Arabic language, as it was spoken by travelers, traders, and diplomatic missions, circulated with them throughout the Near East. Patricia Crone took pains to debunk the longstanding myth of the great antiquity of the Meccan spice trade, but allowed there was regular trade with Syria in Muhammed's lifetime, and "by the sixth century, Greek merchants had long frequented both Arabian and East African ports" and "the Byzantine sphere of influence was felt throughout western Arabia from Syria... to Yemen."[32] There were Hellenistic settlements on the African shores of the Red Sea,[33] and Arabs from Mecca travelled to Abyssinia, Egypt and Palestine as well as Yemen, Iraq, and Fars, at the very least. Muhammed would have had contact with such travelers; he journeyed to Syria as a youth,[34] and became a caravan leader as an adult. In pre-modern times even rulers with their retinues joined caravans; people did not travel alone. In the inns where they stayed or sites where they camped, they no doubt picked up expressions and narratives they paraphrased, transforming the material according to the special qualities of their own languages and the meaning they sought to express. An Arabic speaker, of whatever faith, who accessed now lost texts or gnomic statement containing the Allegory, could have used the neck fetter as an idiom to answer that exasperated question every person who has lived long enough asks: "Why do people not see the truth?" by saying, "Because they are fettered at the neck!" Such idiom could carry associations of transcendence and the fate of those who tell the truth. Now to develop my argument.

The Fetters and Spatial Organization

The fetter is the most obvious aspect for my purpose, simply because both texts make the same peculiar association between a neck fetter and incapacity to see truth. It is obvious that the primary purpose of a neck fetter is not to prevent seeing. Neck fetters have been used throughout history either to detain or to identify the wearer as a captive or slave. In both *Republic* and Quran, the fetter is clearly a trope. This is a fetter that exists only in language, not in the world. My perusal of the history of instruments of confinement, punishment, and torture did not reveal the existence of any neck fetter in Ancient Greece or Late Antique Arabia that prevented turning the head to see, and it is not the case that the spectacle of captives wearing a neck fetter fixing the head was common in Arabia, so that when a seventh-century Arabic speaker thought of a neck fetter, the image of one that fixes the head sprang to mind because he or she had seen it, and idiom or proverbial expression about it could arise from life experience and make its way into the Quran without help from Plato. There is no evidence in any Arabian milieu of the pillory

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[32] P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987), pp. 256, 246.

[33] G.M. Cohen, *Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Aftrica* (Berkeley: University of California 2006).

[34] Al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari* vol. VI, *Muhammad at Mecca*, transl. W.M. Watt and M.V. McDonald (New York: State University of New York Press 1988), pp. 9, 16–18, 44–48.

favored in the European Middle Ages, a large wooden board cut with holes for neck and hands, in which offenders were put on public display and could not turn their heads to look behind them because their line of sight was blocked by the board.

Plato needed an instrument that would prevent turning of the head to see because his metaphor of sight for knowledge required that the captives both *see* the shadows on the wall and not *see/know* the reality behind them. No such fetter is needed in the Quran; there are no shadows to watch, yet the fetter is there. This incongruity indicates the survival of a trope; it does not quite make sense, and therefore indicates a habitual expression that does not quite fit the context. The captives in Ya-Sin are being *told* the truth, yet they are prevented from *knowing* the reality of which revelation informs them not by an instrument that stops up their ears, but by a neck fetter, barriers before and behind, and a covering above them. If the object is to block vision, the hood fitted over the head of a falcon hawk, to prevent it from being distracted and flying away, was a common trope in Arabic for lack of understanding and thus a more likely image to be used than a fetter round the neck. Awkward as the image of a neck fetter that prevents sight is, the association between sight and knowledge may have been strong enough to overcome the realistic requirement for an image that depicts a situation in which people cannot *hear* the truth. The survival in the Quran of the unlikely trope *neck fetter as incapacity to know truth* decisively connects the two texts.

Now let us take a closer look at the terms used. Socrates begins, "Next, then, compare the effect of education and that of the lack of it on our nature to an experience like this:"

> Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling, with an entrance a long way up that is open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They have been there since childhood, with their necks and legs fettered, *so that they are fixed in the same place, able to see only in front of them, because their fetter prevents them from turning their heads around.* Light is provided by a fire burning far above and behind them. Between the prisoners and the fire, there is an elevated road stretching. Imagine that along this road *a low wall has been built*—like the screen in front of people that is provided by puppeteers, and above which they show their puppets (514a.1–b.6, italics added).[35]

The word that the translator Reeve renders as "fetter" is *desmós*, a generic term for "binding" (Liddell & Scott) that did not carry specific associations of use, shape, or material from which it was made, let alone specify prevention of head movement. The impression that the *desmós* is a chain has been established by less scrupulous translations. The term in the Quranic passage is likewise generic, and I use the word "fetter" for both to avoid associations of material, shape and use implied by translations of Ya-Sin that render it as "chain," "ring," "collar," "shackle," or "yoke." The Arabic word used in the Quran is the plural *'aghlâl*, for which Badawi & Haleem give "fetters, collars, shackles."[36] There is obviously no etymological connection between *desmós* and *'aghlâl*. We are not dealing with a Greek loan word in Arabic that may have carried associations from Plato's Allegory along with it. Now, from Ya-Sin:

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[35] Plato, *Republic*, C.D.C. Reeve, transl. (Indianapolis: Hackett 2004), p. 208.
[36] El-Said M. Badawi and M.A. Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (Leiden: Brill 2008), p. 674.

2. By the wise Koran. 3. You are indeed among the messengers. 4. On a straight path. 5. It is a revelation sent down by the Exalted, the Compassionate. 6. That you may warn a people whose fathers were not warned, so they are heedless. 7. Indeed the word is proven true on most of them, for they do not believe. 8. We put *fetters on their necks that are up to their chins, so that their heads remain raised in a gesture of refusal. 9. And We put a barrier in front of them and a barrier behind them and We covered them; they do not see.*[37]

The Quranic account is relatively stark, but one remembers that its mode of statement is highly condensed and much of its effect comes from the quality of the Arabic. Yet how is it not inscrutably cruel that God would constrain disbelievers so that they cannot see the truth? The Arabic perfect tense used here can function as a "past tense of futurity," indicating actions that are finished *from the point of view of the speaker.*[38] Although the actions have yet to occur, in the speaker's experience they have already happened. Given that God is the speaker in the Quran, it may be that from God's point of view everything that will happen has already happened—God refers to the Day of Judgment, for example, in the perfect tense. That would seem to imply predestination, given that what will happen on that day is already known to God, but we shall see shortly that commentators on the Quran viewed the fetters as the result of personal choices.

There is no significant disagreement among translators of *Republic* from Shorey to Griffith over the literal meaning of "they are fixed in the same place, able to see only in front of them, because their fetter prevents them from turning their heads around." It is clear, however, that translators of Ya-Sin verses 8-9 struggled both with the term 'aghlâl (fetters) and the phrase *fahum muqmaḥ*ûn (so that their heads remain raised in a gesture of refusal).[39] Here are four other English translations:

Sale (1734): "We have put *yokes* on their necks, which come up to their chins; *and they are forced to hold up their heads.*" Pickthall (1930): "Lo! We have put on their necks *carcans*[40] reaching unto the chins, *so that they are made stiff-necked.*[41] Yusuf Ali (1934–1938; rev. 1939–1940): "We have put *yokes* round their necks right up to their chins, *so that their heads are forced up (and they cannot see).* Shabbir Ahmed (2003): "Behold, around their necks We (Our Laws) have put *shackles*, reaching their chins**. *Their heads are forced up in arrogance (like the agitated camel who keeps his head high refusing to drink the life-giving water).*" (Italics added).

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[37] Translations of the Arabic are mine; italics added.

[38] Z. Abdelaziz Zakaria Mahmoud, "Past Tense Verbs of Futurity in the Holy Quran: A New Text-World Theory Approach," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 7 [7], pp. 110–116.

[39] Literally: ...so that they (*fahum*) are those whose heads remain raised in a gesture of refusal (*muqmaḥūn*).

[40] "Carcans" are stocks, but as I mentioned before, I found no evidence of stocks used on the neck in the region in that era. Stocks are mentioned eight times in the Bible, but in the three cases where use is specified, applied to the feet (Job 13:27, 33:11, Acts 16:24).

[41] "Stiff-necked" is a translation choice apparently taken from the Torah, where it occurs several times. For Deuteronomy 9:6 *The King James Study Bible* notes: "Stiffnecked people: Literally the word is 'hard of neck'; the figure may be taken from a stubborn ox that refuses to submit to the yoke" (Liberty University 2013), p. 308.

So, we have yokes, carcans, and shackles for ’*aghlâl*, and *fahum muqmaḥûn* as their being made to hold up their heads, or made to be stiff-necked, or their heads are forced up so they cannot see, or their heads are forced up in arrogance like a camel that refuses to drink. However, all agree that *muqmaḥûn* (which occurs only once in the Quran, so there can be no comparison within the text) indicates a fixed position of the head, or a stiffened neck resulting in a fixed position of the head. Shabbir Ahmed seems to have had in mind the camel-like gesture of raising the chin with eyelids lowered to express, "No," still ubiquitous in the Near East today. It is not stated explicitly that the fetter prevents turning of the head, but anyone who tries it will see that if a fetter is pressed against a person's chin so that it is kept painfully raised, it requires the flexibility of a contortionist to twist the torso fully around to see behind. Badawi & Haleem, whose 2008 Quran dictionary relies upon a broad range of traditional lexicography and commentary, give among their *muqmaḥûn* definitions *not being able to see*: "those who raise the head in refusal of what is being offered, shun assistance, shun guidance; ones who cannot see."[42] Thus it is also possible to translate: "We put fetters on their necks up to their chins so that they cannot see." Perhaps the gesture of raising the chin was so habitually associated with refusal to know that it acquired the connotation of not being able to (literally) see.

The question of whether the fetter is metaphorical was taken up by Elmalılı M. Hamdi Yazır (1878–1942), the scholar, judge, and Member of Parliament who wrote the fetwa terminating the rule of the last Ottoman Sultan and authored a widely used 1935 Quran paraphrase-translation (*meal*) and commentary. In the traditional manner, he provided several interpretations, briefly citing al-Raghib al-Isfahani (d. 1108) and al-Firuzabadi (d. 1415).[43] He also quoted Abu Hayyan al-Gharnati (1256–1344), who asserted that the fetter is literal.[44] Elmalılı then

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[42] Badawi and Haleem 2008, p. 674.

[43] Al-Isfahani wrote a lexicon of Quranic terms, and al-Firuzabadi, a renowned Arabic dictionary.

[44] Elmalılı cited Abu Hayyan for the strand of commentary also cited by the recent *The Study Quran*, which translates the verse, "Truly We have put *shackles* upon their necks, and they are up to their chins, *so that they are forced up*," and references the commentaries of al-Tabrisi (d. 1153–54) and al-Qurtubi (d. 1272) for an interpretation of ’*aghlâl* based on usage elsewhere in the Quran: "The disbelievers' hands are bound to their necks with *shackles*, which translates ’*aghlâl*, specifically indicating iron shackles that bind the hands in cuffs that are attached to an iron ring around the neck. *They* is thus taken by most to indicate the hands that are bound to their necks and is seen as related to 17:29, *And let not thine hand be shackled to thy neck*, which is a warning against miserliness"; S.H. Nasr et al., *The Study Quran* (San Francisco: Harper One 2015), p. 1071. In this view, it is the captives' hands, not their fetters, that are up their chins; we know this because there is an instance elsewhere in the Quran of captives whose hands are fettered to their necks. The pronoun "they" in verse 8 is thus taken to refer to "hands," although "hands" are not mentioned in verse 8. "They" occurs twice in verse 8, and these commentators refer to the first, the feminine pronoun *hiya*, a singular understood as plural when it refers to a plural feminine noun. Although the feminine plural ’*aghlâl*/shackles is explicit in the verse, and "hands" are not mentioned, these commentators found the feminine plural "hands" (’*ayd*) to be implied. The second "they" in the verse is the masculine plural *hum*. *Hum* can refer only to a masculine plural. The masculine plurals in verse 8 are "necks" (’*a‘nâq*) and "chins" (*adhqân*); the masculine plural "heads" (*ru’ûs*) is implied in *muqmaḥûn*, which all agree refers to a position of the head, or a condition of the neck that affects the position of the head. In verse 9 "hands" occurs in the expression

summarized at length the figurative interpretation offered by "most of the learned," with which he clearly agreed, stressing that the fetter represents an acquired, not a pre-determined state:

> Most of the learned have said it is metaphorical, describing nature as a punishment earned by not abandoning social habits and conditions that prevent them from being guided... [...] For fetters, as instruments of punishment and torture, represent not created natures that are necessary, but punitive coercion required by deservingness that is earned. The fetters represent the condition of souls brought into a state that will not change by empty doctrines, ugly habits, bad tempers, imitation, fanaticism and desires of the soul which cause them to refuse faith. Yes, according to the verse, "God has sealed their hearts" (2:7), those shackles are placed on their necks in such a way that they will not come off.[45]

This strand of commentary reasons that because fetters are "instruments of punishment and torture," they must represent "punitive coercion required by deservingness that is earned." Those detained in this way must deserve it. Gökhan Duman has argued that the "puppet show" in Plato's Allegory represents the reigning ideology, which keeps the captives transfixed and must be transcended if truth is to be known.[46] This is what Elmalılı Hamdi tells us the fetters represent: "spiritual and social habits and conditions that prevent them from being guided";[47] the captives are held responsible for not abandoning these habits and conditions.

In any case, the varied interpretations of verse 8 demonstrate that there are no self-evident literal equivalents for the items 'aghlâl and fahum muqmaḥûn. This may in itself demonstrate foreign provenance of trope—if the arrangement were familiar, interpretation would not have been required.

Coming now to spatial organization, the barriers described in verse 9 ("And We put a barrier in front of them and a barrier behind them and We covered them; they do not see"), might be taken to evoke an image of animals corralled in open country, which would be in line with habits of the Arabic language at the time, many of whose speakers engaged in animal husbandry. Brief as the Quranic description is, it does provide for a barrier in front corresponding to Plato's cave wall, a barrier behind for the low "built wall," and a covering corresponding to the ceiling of the

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bayni 'aydîhim, literally "between their hands," meaning "in front." The great nineteenth-century British lexicographer Edward Lane, who drew upon these and other commentators, showed just how tricky it is to describe in words a neck fetter that hinders movement of the head. With regard to verse 8 he referenced the idiom *'uqmaḥuhu al-ghullu*: "'the ring, or collar, of iron, for the neck, or the shackle for the neck and hands, consisting of two rings, one for the neck and the other for the hands, connected by a bar of iron, caused his head to be raised,' meaning that the bar of the fetter, which [by projecting above the ring around the neck] pricked his chin, did not let him lower his head." Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librarie du Liban 1968; 1st ed. 1863), book 1, p. 2561.

[45] Both E. Hamdi's Quran paraphrase and commentary are available online: translation: http://www.kuranikerim.com/melmalili/yasin.htm (accessed: 15.07.2018); commentary: http://www.kuranikerim.com/telmalili/yasin.htm (accessed: 15.07.2018). I have condensed as well as translated his verbose commentary.

[46] G. Duman, "The Concept of *Eudaimonia* in Plato's *Republic*," manuscript 2019.

[47] In recent transpositions of the Allegory, Alain Badiou did not bother with a fetter but had people in a movie theater entranced by the screen, and Ella Barton, in a cartoon, had them transfixed by the screens of computers and cell phones as they sit in a cave. A. Badiou, *Plato's Republic*, S. Spitzer, transl. (Cambridge: Polity Press 2012). E. Barton, *The Times Literary Supplement* 25.05.2028, https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/platos-cave-cartoon.

cave. One may object that the vertical, *anabasis-catabasis* aspect is indispensable to the Allegory and lost here. Plato's captives must go "up" to see the truth. But in the context of the Quran, the truth is "up," where God is. As we shall see, the commentator al-Kashani emphasized that the fetters prevent the captives from looking up to see God's face. Revelation is a "sending down" (*tanzîl*). *Anabasis-catabasis* is the primary aspect of Muhammed's *miʿrâj* ("ladder") ascension to meet God, referred to in the Quran (17: 1, 53:6–11), elaborated in hadith, and thematically repeated countless times in later Islamic literature. What we find in Ya-Sin is a transposition of pieces of the Allegory, not a reiteration of the whole; a survival of an ancient motif organized in a new context. In the open landscape of the desert, the human world is under the "dome of the heavens."[48] The Quran's captives are trapped below and cannot look "up."

Plato's Allegory has three metaphorical locations, related to preceding discussions in *Republic* of the tripartite soul and Divided Line, and reminiscent of the steps in *Symposium*'s "Staircase of Love": (1) the level of shadows on the cave wall, (2) the level of people carrying objects throwing shadows on the wall, and (3) the transcendent level of the intelligible beyond the cave. Three degrees of knowing which may correspond to these levels are mentioned elsewhere in the Quran: *ʿilm al-yaqīn* (102:5), "knowledge of certainty" (knowledge learned from someone else) *ʿayn al-yaqīn* (102:7), "eye of certainty" (seen for oneself) and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (56:95, 69:51), "reality of certainty" (experience of the truth of what one sees). These are steps demonstrating the transformative power of knowledge, described as a progress from hearing about fire, to seeing fire, to being consumed by fire.[49]

Transcendent reality and assault upon truth-tellers

In both *Republic* and Ya-Sin captives are prevented from seeing the truth, but they also *do not want to* see it. They are accustomed to their ignorant condition and refuse to consider the possibility that a reality not visible to them exists. Theme and context in both texts make clear that it is not a material reality they fail to see, and that there is nothing wrong with their eyes; the problem is that they are not "looking" in the right direction, and must turn their whole bodies around. *Seeing* and *looking* are loaded with allegorical depth, furnishing the meanings of desiring to know, understanding, and willingness to change in light of new knowledge.

Plato's text goes on to have Socrates describe what would happen if one man were dragged out of the cave and finally be able to know reality as it is in itself. If he then returned to free his fellow captives, they would make him an object of ridicule, and if he persisted, they would kill him. "As for anyone who tried to free the

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[48] A trope of pre-Islamic oral poetry; https://corpuscoranicum.de/aap/search.html (accessed: 21.02.2020).

[49] W.C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-Arabi's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press 1998), p. 404 n. 5.

prisoners and lead them upward, if they could somehow get their hands on him, wouldn't they kill him?" (517a.4–6)[50]

In the Quran, it is those who reject God's messengers who are killed. The fetter episode in Ya-Sin ends with the parable of the people of the city to which the messengers came and the destruction of that people:

13. Set forth to them the parable of the people of the city to which the messengers came. 14. We sent them two messengers, but they rejected them. We exalted them with a third. They said, "Indeed we have been sent to you as messengers." 15. They said, "You are nothing but mortal creatures like ourselves and the Merciful sent no such revelation; you do nothing but lie."

18. "Indeed, we find in you an evil omen, and if you do not desist, we will certainly stone you, and we will surely inflict grievous harm upon you."

20. Then there came running from the farthest part of the city a man saying, "O my People, obey the messengers. 21. Obey those who ask no reward of you, indeed they have been guided."

28. We did not send down upon his people after him any army from the skies, nor were We going to. 29. It was but a single blast, and they were extinguished.

While the immediate context of the Allegory is the need for education, that of Ya-Sin is the drama of revelation. Those who abuse God's messengers do not get away with it. He punishes them with death in this life and Hellfire in the Hereafter, while those who live a life of truth will be rewarded with Paradise. No act is wasted, each has its recompense. The final judgment is described many times in the Quran, and briefly in later verses of Ya-Sin:

The trumpet will be blown and then, behold, they will rush from the graves to their Lord (51). On that day no soul will be wronged in the least, and you will suffer only the recompense for what you have done (54). Those rewarded with Paradise will rejoice, reclining on couches in the shade, having whatever they ask for (55–57). As for those who disbelieve:

O you sinners, depart today! (59). This is the Hell that you were promised. Burn there today, since you disbelieved. (63–64)

Sinners are deprived of the sight of God: "Depart today!" The beauty of God, of His names, and of the "form" of the human being, are reiterated throughout Quran and hadith.[51] Transcendent reality, beautiful for those who live in accord with it, is a horrifying shock for those who have not.

In his Quranic commentary *Ta'wilat al-Qurān*, Abd al-Razzaq Kemal al-Din al-Kashani (d. 1329) interprets the fetters as instruments that deprive people of the sight of God. The work was much read by Ottomans, and although Elmalılı Hamdi did not mention it in connection with Ya-Sin, he was certainly familiar with *Ta'wilat* and knew that "most of the learned" who judged the neck fetter to be metaphorical included al-Kashani, who wrote on verses 8 and 9:

On their necks We have put the fetters of bodily nature and chains of love for servile work. [...] And before them We have set a barrier [...] produced from the covering of the soul's manifestation and

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[50] Reeve, p. 210.

[51] Murata, *passim*.

attributes that occupy and capture the heart. That barrier forbids them to look up at the time when the bright and illuminated beauty of God is visible, so that they may long for God the Truth's face.[52]

The fetters and barriers are metaphors for corporeality ("bodily nature" and "the soul's manifestation" in the body), and mundane concerns and qualities, which enthrall people's hearts, preventing them from looking up at the right moment to have the vision of the beauty of God the Truth. Al-Kashani encapsulates an entire ascent journey in a mere gesture of the head, or rather, the lack of it, reinterpreting the Platonic equation of truth with beauty/goodness and justice in monotheistic form.

The captives in *Republic*, too, deprive themselves of the great felicity of knowing truth. While a last judgment is not mentioned in the Allegory itself, it is certainly described in detail in the "Myth of Er" that ends *Republic* (10.614b.1-end). There we are told that judges will order good souls to follow a path to the sky, while those who have committed injustice are sent underground. Eventually all but the worst offenders are lined up in rows, and each is directed to choose a new life in accord with the life already lived. In *Crito* Plato portrays Socrates accepting the death sentence rather than fleeing, as he could have done, because to flee would be to break the commitments and agreements he made with "the Laws," and thereby commit injustice (54c.1–7). Plato has Socrates recognize the reality of transcendent justice, and the immortality of the soul, argued most famously in *Phaedo*.

In the earlier passages of *Republic* that we have been considering, after saying that the captives would likely kill anyone who tried to set them free, Socrates interprets the Allegory:

> This image, my dear Glaucon, must be fitted together as a whole with what we said before. The realm revealed through sight should be likened to the prison dwelling, and the light of the fire inside it to the sun's power. And if you think of the upward journey and the seeing of things above as the upward journey of the soul to the intelligible realm, you won't mistake my intention—since it is what you wanted to hear about. Only the god knows whether it is true. But this is how these phenomena seem to me: in the knowable realm, the last thing to be seen is the form of the good, and it is seen only with toil and trouble. Once one has seen it, however, one must infer that it is the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything, that in the visible realm it produces both light and its source, and that in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding; and that anyone who is to act sensibly in private or public must see it (517a.8–c.5).[53]

The captives are prisoners of the sense of sight, which under normal circumstances is illuminated by the light of the (literal) sun. The metaphorical sun that gives light outside the cave, in the transcendent realm of the intelligible, is the form of the good/beautiful. Socrates goes on to say that those he has educated must go down again into the cave to be "leaders and kings in the hive, so to speak." They "will see infinitely better than the people there and know precisely what each image is," because they "have seen the truth" of beautiful, "just, and good things" (520b.5, c.4–5).[54]

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[52] Kemâlüddin Abdürrezzak Kâşâniyyüs Semerkandî, *Te'vilât-ı Kâşâniyye*, trans. Ali Rıza Doksanyedi, M. Vehbi Güloğlu (ed.), (Ankara Kadıoğlu Matbaası 1988), vol. 3, p. 11, quoted in Sargut 2007, p. 86. My translation from the Turkish.

[53] Reeve, p. 211.

[54] Ibidem, p. 214.

There is no such explicit allegoresis in Ya-Sin, but just as those who have seen the truth of what is beautiful, just, and good must go back into the cave to guide and rule, God sends His messengers. I have mentioned Muhammed's *miʿrâj*, ascension; after his ascent to meet God, he came back down to guide and rule. The *miʿrâj* has also been understood as the enactment of a paradigm illustrating the cycle of life, the *anabasis-catabasis* that must be completed in every human life. All experience their own *miʿrâj* according to their capacity and descend back down to take the place in society that capacity affords them.

Conclusion

I have argued that the Quran's monotheistic restatement of four aspects of Plato's Allegory is evidence of an inheritance of Greek thought in Arabic more than two centuries prior to the 750-1000 CE Translation Movement. I have alluded to a few of the other instances of Platonic material in Quran (and hadith): the equation of truth with beauty, goodness, and justice; the *anabasis-catabasis* of the *miʿraj*, and the last judgment. Other possibilities are the treatment of poets and poetry, and the themes of *methexis*, microcosm-macrocosm, and *daimon* as primordial share.[55] I suggest that such elements served as a kind of anchor for the later, easily recognizable Platonist elaborations in philosophical and imaginative texts written by Muslims. My intention here is to open a field of research, not to wrap it up. Further inquiry may help to solve the mystery of how Platonic thought entered Islamic history—why very early Islamic texts exhibit such remarkable familiarity with Plato's characteristic themes; how it is, as Adamson remarked, that al-Kindi's "God seems to function like a Platonic form." The broader implication is that we might think of the West as a culture of *three* monotheisms interacting with Ancient Greek philosophy. One might argue that all of this is spontaneous re-invention, or universal. But there is that fetter. And one may consider the East Asian religions, in which most of humankind has believed. When we reflect that in the dharma, not only is there no one God, there is *no self*, the familial relations between Platonic and Islamic thought emerge more clearly.

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[55] The last suggested to me by Gökhan Duman.

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