

## IS ABŪ BAKR MUHAMMAD IBN ZAKARIYYĀ AL-RĀZĪ PLAGIARIST? (THE HISTORICAL STUDY OF AL-RĀZĪ'S METAPHYSICAL THOUGHT)

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the origins of metaphysical thought of Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī. His metaphysics proposes five eternal principles which include (1) God (*al-Bārī Subhānah*), (2) universal soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyah*), (3) primeval matter (*al-hayūlā al-awrālah*), (4) absolute place (*al-makan al-mutlaq*), and (5) absolute time (*al-zamān al-mutlaq*). Some people argued that al-Rāzī took these ideas from other thinkers, or any teachings which were being developed at the time. Hence, these five principles are not his thought originally. Where does this doctrine come from? This library research utilizes the main data from al-Rāzī book entitled *Rasa'il Falsafiyah*, particularly on the chapter of '*Al-Qudamā al-khamsah*', and '*al-Tīm al-Ilāhī*' and '*sīrah Falsafiyah*'. Other books that related to his thought are also explored to support the data in this research. This study proves that al-Rāzī develops these five concepts himself. He did not plagiarize others when writing his book as well formulating his view of metaphysic.

**Keywords:** al-Rāzī, metaphysics, five eternal principles

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## Introduction

Al-Rāzī is a philosopher and best known as a chemist and a doctor.<sup>1</sup> According to Ibn Maymūn (Maimonades) al-Rāzī does not deserve to be called philosopher because he is a physicist.<sup>2</sup> However, in the field of philosophy, al-Rāzī wrote numerous works,<sup>3</sup> including the idea of metaphysics, but many of them were missing. Perhaps, this is the reason why al-Rāzī is not famous as a philosopher. Some thinkers are even in doubt of the authenticity of al-Rāzī's metaphysic. For example, Paul Kraus<sup>4</sup> said that one of the absurdities of the philosophy of al-Rāzī concerned on his doctrine. According to al-Bīrūnī, in the efforts of constructing his philosophy, al-Rāzī adopted the teachings of al-Īrānshahr. Sā‘id bin al-Andalusi (d. 685H/1286 AD) argued that Greek philosophy as the main source which influenced al-Rāzī's thoughts deeply. Ibn Hazm and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d.751 H/1350 AD) refers to the group called "dualist", while al-Mas'udi and al-Qazwini (d.675 H/1276 AD) mentioned that Ḥabīb al-Ḥabīb as the main source that gives profound influences on al-Rāzī's ideas. These controversies have attracted researcher's attention to exploring the issue. Such allegation has pushed question regarding the originality of al-Rāzī's thought. Does al-Rāzī develop his metaphysical concept himself? Does he plagiarize others in formulating his metaphysical thought? This study is based on the textual sources, mainly derived from al-

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<sup>1</sup>He is the greatest Muslim doctor (*al-‘Aṣṭam al-atibba'*). In Europe, he is still recognized until the nineteenth century. See, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakariyya Al-Rāzī, *Rasā'il Falsafiyah Muḍāfūn Ilayha Qit'ān Kutubihī min al-Maṣqūdah*, ed. Lajnah Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-Arabi (Beirut: Dār al-al-Jadīdah AFAQ, 1973). See also Philip K. Hitti, *History of The Arabs* (London: MacMillan Press, 1974), 365-6; M. Saeed Sheikh, *Studies in Muslim Philosophy* (Delhi: Adam Publishers, 1994), 66.

<sup>2</sup>Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, "Muhammad ibn Zakariyyah al-Rāzī," in *Para Filosof Muslim*, ed. M.M. Syarif (Bandung: Mizan, 1985), 31.

<sup>3</sup>He admitted in his autobiography that he has compiled no less than 200 works on all area of knowledges, such as physics and metaphysics, except mathematics, see *ibid.*, 36. See also Majid Fakhry, *Sejarah Filsafat Islam*, trans. Mulyadi Kertanegara (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1987), 151.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Kraus is a famous orientalist, and scholar who are competent in studying philosophy of al-Rāzī, Sheikh, *Studies in Muslim*, 34.

Rāzī's works. It shows that al-Rāzī is not a plagiarist because his concept of metaphysics is unique and different from those of constructed by others.

### Life of al-Rāzī

Al-Rāzī was born in Rayy, a modern city near Tehran, Iran, approximately on the 1st of Sha'ban in the year 251 AH/865 AD.<sup>5</sup> He is called al-Rāzī because of his birthplace, Rayy. Meanwhile, in the West, he is known as Rhazes.<sup>6</sup> In his early life, he was a jeweler, money-changer, or more likely a lute-player who first left music for alchemy. At the age of thirty or after forty he left alchemy because his experiments gave him some eye diseases, which obliged him to search for doctors and medicine. According to al-Bīrūnī, Bayhaqī, and others, that was the reason why al-Rāzī studied medicine. Al-Qifti and Usaibi'ah said that al-Rāzī studied medicine and perhaps philosophy also with his master 'Alī ibn Rabbān al-Tabarī (d. 240/855). It is possible to trace back al-Rāzī's interest in religious philosophy to his master, whose father was a rabbinist versed in the scriptures. Al-Rāzī became famous in his native city as a doctor<sup>7</sup> rather than as a philosopher. Sometimes he is ranked higher than Ibn Sīnā in medical work. In addition, he is a chemist and a freethinker.<sup>8</sup>

Little else known of his particulars life or his personal traits except the fact that he made an experiment in alchemy and he

<sup>5</sup>The chronology of his birth and death are unknown. See, Al-Rāzī, *Rasā'il Falsafiyah*, 1. See also Sheikh, *Studies in Muslim*, 66.

<sup>6</sup>Harun Nasution, *Falsafah & Mistisisme dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1973), 20. See also Cyrill Glassé, *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam* (London: Stacey International, 1989), 331.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, according to ibn Juljul, al-Qifti, ibn Abi Usaybi'ah he directed the hospital of Rayy in the times of Mansūr ibn Ishāq ibn Ahmad ibn Asad who was the Governor of Rayy. See, 'Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, "Muhammad ibn Zakariyyah al-Rāzī," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy with Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and The Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*, ed. M.M. Sharif (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1995), 434-5.

<sup>8</sup>Lenn E. Goodman, "Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 198. To understand al-Rāzī as freethinker, see, Sarah Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rāwandi, Abu Bakr al-Rāzī and Their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 1999).

was a man of great kindness, generosity, and industry. Possibly as a result of his exceptional studiousness, he developed a cataract shortly before his death but refused to remove it because, as he judiciously observed, he had seen the world too much so that he wanted to see it anymore. Al-Bīrūnī said, al-Rāzī refused to be treated by saying that it would be a useless effort as his hour of death was approaching. In a few days later, he died in Rayy, probably on 5<sup>th</sup> of Sha'bān 313/27<sup>th</sup> of October 925 or 932.<sup>9</sup>

Al-Rāzī had many works. Even, he prepared a catalog of his works, reproduced by ibn Nadīm later. His works include 118 books, 19 epistles, then 4 books, 6 epistles, and 1 *maqālah*, the total being 148 works. Al-Bīrūnī wrote an epistle on the bibliography of al-Rāzī after ibn Nadīm. This epistle is located in a unique manuscript in Leiden and was edited by Paul Kraus and translated into German by J. Ruska. This catalog is preceded by a short note on al-Rāzī's life. The works are classified as follows: (1) medicine (1-56 books), (2) physics (57-89 books), (3) logic (90-96), (4) mathematics and astronomy (97-106), (5) commentaries, abridgments, and epitomes (107-113), (6) philosophy and hypothetical sciences (114-130), (7) metaphysics (131-136), (8) theology (137-150), (9) alchemy (151-172), (10) atheistic (173-174), (11) miscellaneous (175-184). Ibn abi Usaybi'ah mentions 236 works of which some are certainly apocryphal.<sup>10</sup>

The following summarizes al-Rāzī's works;

1. Medicine. (a) *al-Hāwi/Liber Continent (comprehensive book)*, this is the greatest works of al-Rāzī in the field of medicine. It is an encyclopedia composed of more than twenty volumes, and contains the medical sciences from Greece, Syria and Saudi. This work was used in Europe until the seventeenth century AD. (b) *Al-Tibb Mansūrī (the Compendium al-Mansor)*. This work was dedicated by al-Rāzī for governor of Samanid dynasty in Rayy, al-Manṣūr ibn Ishāq (D.3131 H/926 AD).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Badawī, "Muhammad ibn Zakariyyah," 436. See also Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Second ed. (London: Longman, 1983), 97.

<sup>10</sup>Badawī, "Muhammad ibn Zakariyyah," 438.

<sup>11</sup>Hitti, *History of The Arabs*, 458.

(c) *Liber Nonus*, (d) *Muluki (Regius)* dedicated by al-Rāzī for 'Alī ibn Weh Sudzan from Tabaristan.<sup>12</sup>

2. Philosophy. (a) *Rasā'il Falsafiyah*, (b) *Al-Nafs al-Ṣagīr*, (c) *Al-Nafs al-kabīr*, (d) *Al-Shukūk 'alā Abarqalus*, (e) *Al-Shukūk 'alā Jālīnūs*, (f) *Maydān al-‘Aql*.<sup>13</sup>
3. Chemistry. Al-Bīrūnī ascribes some twenty one works on alchemy to him, the greatest of them being the *Kitāb al-Asrār (Secretum Secretorum)*.<sup>14</sup>

## Literature review

There are several studies on al-Rāzī. One excellent study has been carried out by 'Abd al-Laṭīf Muḥammad al-‘Abd. He wrote a dissertation entitled *Uṣūl al-Fikr al-Falsafi 'Inda Abi Bakr al-Rāzī*. His study examined the philosophical thinking of al-Rāzī in general. Another research has been conducted by Faruq Abdullah Nasution entitled *Filsafat Manusia dan Implementasinya dalam Analisis Psikologi, Studi Perbandingan antara Konsep al-Rāzī dan S. Freud*.<sup>15</sup> This study compares the human philosophical thinking of al-Rāzī and psychoanalysis thinking of Sigmund Freud. Irwan Tamwifi wrote *Proyeksi Filsafat Abū Bakar Ibn Zakaria al-Rāzī dalam Pendidikan* in which he analyzed the philosophical thoughts of al-Rāzī related to education.<sup>16</sup>

One of the Muslim thinkers who studied al-Rāzī thoughts was Abdurahman Badawi. He tried to write the main points of al-Rāzī philosophical thinking in general. Besides that, Sarah Stroumsa studied the thought of al-Rāzī. She examined the freethinking of al-Rāzī and how it affects the future generation of people. Saeed Sheikh and Madjid Fakhry explored the

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<sup>12</sup>Goodman, "Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā," 245.

<sup>13</sup>R. N. Frye, *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 4, the Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuq*, ed. R. N. Frye (New York & London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 424.

<sup>14</sup>Goodman, "Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā," 206.

<sup>15</sup>Faruq Abdullah Nasution, "Filsafat Manusia dan Implementasinya dalam Analisis Psikologi, Studi Perbandingan antara Konsep al-Rāzī dan S. Freud" (Dissertation, unpublished, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 1995).

<sup>16</sup>Irfan Tamwifi, "Proyeksi Filsafat Abū Bakar Zakaria al-Rāzī dalam Pendidikan" (Thesis, unpublished, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, n.d.).

philosophical thinking of al-Rāzī too. Their papers are used as reference in this study. While research examining the thought of al-Rāzī, specifically how the origin of his metaphysics comprehensively, has not been conducted.

### Al-Rāzī's Metaphysics

The Metaphysical thought of al-Rāzī poses five eternal principles: (1) God (*al-Bārī Subḥānah*), (2) universal soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyah*), (3) primeval matter (*al-hayūla al-awwālah*), (4) absolute space, (*al-makān al-mutlaq*) (5) and absolute time (*al-zamān al-mutlaq*).<sup>17</sup> This concept can be traced in his works, such as *Kitāb al-Ilāhi*,<sup>18</sup> *Maqālah fī Mā Ba'd al-Tabī'ah*<sup>19</sup> and *al-Qawl fī al-Qudamā' al-Khamsah*.<sup>20</sup> *Kitab al-Ilāhi* contains many thoughts of the ancient Greek philosophers, such as Alexander of Aphrodisiac, Democritus, Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, John Philoponus and Plutarchus. Al-Bīrūnī said that al-Rāzī has reported from the ancient Greeks on the five eternal concepts.<sup>21</sup>

Some of the Muslim thinkers like Fakhr al-Din al-al-Rāzī, al-Syahristānī, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi attributed these five concepts to the Shab'iah teachings. They said that al-Rāzī has cited the opinions of Shab'iah Haranniyah. On the other hand, some people argue that these concepts are not from Shab'iah, but they are from the first generation of Greek philosophers, especially Democritus and Pythagoras. Furthermore, another opinion said that the concepts are a combination of Platonism with the

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<sup>17</sup>See, Al-Rāzī, *Rasā'il Falsafyyah*. See also Nafisah, "Mengenal Metafisika Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī," *Jurnal Al-A'raf Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Filsafat* VIII, no. 1 (July-December) (2011): 113.

<sup>18</sup>Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakariyya al-Rāzī, "Kitāb al-Ilāhi," in *Rasā'il Falsafyyah Muḍāṣun Ilayha Qit'ān Kutubili min al-Maqādīrah*, ed. Lajnah Ihyā' al-Turāth al-Arabi (Beirut: Dār al-al-Jadīdah AFAQ, 1973), 165-90.

<sup>19</sup>Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakariyya Al-Rāzī, "Maqālah fī Mā Ba'd al-Tabī'ah," *ibid.*, ed. Lajnah Ihyā' al-Turāth al-Arabi (Beirut: Dār al-al-Jadīdah AFAQ, 1973), 113-33.

<sup>20</sup>Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakariyya Al-Rāzī, "al-Qawl fī al-Qudamā' al-Khamsah," *ibid.*, ed. Lajnah Ihyā' al-Turāth al-Arabi (Beirut: Dār al-al-Jadīdah AFAQ, 1973), 191-216.

<sup>21</sup>Fakhry, *A History of Islamic*, 441.

teachings of Harran or Mani.<sup>22</sup> More specifically, the five eternal concepts of al-Rāzī are given below;

### *God (al-Bārī Subhānah)*

The eternity of God can be justified through the existence of this world. To prove that statement, al-Rāzī has a different view to Plato. Plato said the world was created and conserved forever, while according to al-Rāzī, the world created by God within a certain time.<sup>23</sup>

Al-Rāzī classified God into a living and a moving thing. Although God is eternal, He has not an absolute power against other eternal beings. However, He is Wise, All-Knowing, Most Gracious, and Most Attention. So, according to al-Rāzī, God has attention against the world that He made, and He did intervene on it. Then, God is not God who has no concern at all; He is also not a God that cannot be recognized by us. God always radiate His gift of a perfect mind that it lit up the life. Thus, it can overcome the ignorance of soul that is always covered by negligence.<sup>24</sup>

### *Universal Soul (al-nafs al-kulliyah)*

According to al-Rāzī, the soul is stupid and full of negligence. God knows things perfectly well, but soul knows only what it experienced. It tends to the matter and asks for material pleasure. After it attached itself to the matter, God arranged the attachment in a perfect way. He poured the intelligence and perception upon the soul. It should consider its real world and as long as it is in the world of matter it will never be free up from the pain.<sup>25</sup>

al-Rāzī thought that God did not create the world through any necessity, but He decided to realize it after having at first no will to create it. The other eternal entities which let Him creating the world are the soul and matter. He made it in the strong

<sup>22</sup>Majid Fakhry, *Sejarah Filsafat Islam: Sebuah Peta Kronologis* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), 37.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 196.

<sup>24</sup>Al-Rāzī, "al-Qawl fī al-Qudamā'," 197.

<sup>25</sup>Fakhry, *A History of Islamic*, 443.

forms as the place of soul in finding its existence. After that, He created human beings and derived the intelligence from the substance of His divinity in order to awaken the soul and to show it this world is not its real world. Human beings cannot attain the real world except by philosophy. Souls remain in this world until they are awakened by philosophy to the mystery and directed towards the real world.<sup>26</sup>

*Primeval matter (al-hayūla al-awwālah)*

In the explanation of the matter, al-Rāzī had a different thought to Aristotle's doctrine. His views were based on the teachings of Plato and the pre-Socratic, such as Democritus. In addition, he said that atoms expanded and mixed in a vacuum which would produce the various elements. Otherwise, the theologian considers that atoms did not have the extension.

Al-Rāzī gave two proofs to establish the eternity of matter; (1) creation is manifest. al-Rāzī believed that the world and all things were created by God from all things (elements), (2) Based on the impossibility of *creatio ex nihilo*. He said that the creation from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) is not possible. All things in this world are produced by composing, not creating. It follows that He is incapable of *creation ex nihilo* and the world was formed by arranging the matter. If no one in the world is created from another thing, it is necessary that natures are made from another thing known as matter, therefore the matter is eternal.<sup>27</sup>

Atom has a certain volume such that it can be formed and organized into the matter. Before the world formed by God, the atom was in a scattering condition, later, when the world destroyed, it will transform back into atoms. These atoms will make the five elements namely earth, air, fire, water, and ether. Moreover, these elements will also make shape different environments but the compositions are different because they are not as dense as Earth's, they are not so thin as water or fire.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 444.

<sup>28</sup>Al-Rāzī, "al-Qawl fī al-Hayūla," 221.

### *Absolute space (al-makān al-mutlaq)*

Al-Rāzī said that matter is eternal, and as matter should occupy space, so there is the eternal space. This argument is nearly same as that given by al-Iransahri, but he says that space is the manifest of God. Al-Rāzī could not follow his definition. According to al-Rāzī, space is the place where matter is.<sup>29</sup>

Al-Rāzī distinguishes space into two kinds: (1) universal space or absolute space (2) particular space or relative space. The absolute space is a space that does not depend on the world or anything that occupies it. This is infinite and does not depend on spatial things. Simply, he likens the absolute space as a place that contains a variety of objects. If these objects are removed from the place then it will not come up. In contrast, relative space is dependent on the presence of an occupying of something.<sup>30</sup>

### *Absolute time (al-żamān al-mutlaq)*

According to al-Rāzī time is something that flows, stretching and eternal, because the motion does not produce but only reveal the time.<sup>31</sup> He is against Aristoteles and his followers who pretend that time is the number of movements of the body because if it were so, it would not have been possible for two moving things to move at one time by two different numbers.<sup>32</sup>

Al-Rāzī also differentiates the time into (1) absolute time and (2) particular time. The absolute time cannot be measured and limited. It is an eternal and movement. On the other hand, particular time can be measured, because it is based on the movement of the solar system, such as the rising and setting the sun. Furthermore, it makes time can be divided into days, weeks, months, and years. If you imagine the movement of duration, you can imagine the absolute time, this is an eternity. If you

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<sup>29</sup>Fakhry, *A History of Islamic*, 444.

<sup>30</sup>al-Rāzī, "al-Qawl fī al-Makān," 253.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 258.

<sup>32</sup>Fakhry, *A History of Islamic*, 445.

imagine the movement of the sphere, you imagine the particular time.<sup>33</sup>

## Tracing the Metaphysics of Plato

Plato was a philosopher who is considered by some people who greatly influenced the thinking of al-Rāzī, especially in metaphysics. In fact, he was not affected by Plato's views only, but some people consider the metaphysics thought of al-Rāzī was from the ideas of Plato.

Plato was a famous philosopher. He was respected by many people compared to other Western philosophers. In fact, he lived in tens centuries ago, around fourth century BC. Throughout history, he had always got many compliments; even now praise on him has been expressed in a variety of materials.

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Plato's thought was much influenced by his teacher named Socrates,<sup>35</sup> indeed he also tried to enhance the thoughts of Socrates. Plato created 'the theory of two worlds' which is the most important theories in Plato's metaphysics. The theory includes three fields; ontology, epistemology, and human philosophy.

### *Ontology*

In the field of ontology, Plato took his idea about 'two worlds' separated; the first world is the world of the senses in which place physical objects which are constantly changing, plural, and false. The second world is the world of ideas, a place where ideas are eternal, single and true.<sup>36</sup>

Plato's theory of two worlds successfully solves enormous problems in the pre-Socratic philosophy, like a conflict between

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<sup>33</sup>Abū Hātim al-Rāzī, "A'lām al-Nubuwwah," in *Rasā'il Falsafyyah Muḍāfun Ilayha Qit'ān Kutubibī min al-Maqūdah*, ed. Lajnah Ihyā' al-Turāth al-Arabi (Beirut: Dār al-al-Jadīdah AFAQ, 1973), 304.

<sup>34</sup>T. Z. Lave, *Plato Kebajikan adalah Pengetahuan*, trans. Andi Iswanto & Dedi Andrian Utama (Yogyakarta: Jendela, 2003), 2.

<sup>35</sup>C. Verhaak, "Plato Menggapai Dunia Ide," in *Para Filsuf Penentu Gerak Zaman*, ed. and F. Budi Hardiman FX. Mudji Sutrisno (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1994), 10.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 11.

Heraklitos and Parmenides. Plato successfully reconciled the teachings of Heraklitos who believes that everything always changing, no one is fixed. Meanwhile, Parmenides emphasized about the unity and the eternity of reality. The opinion of Heraklitos was true, but it only applies to the world of the senses alone. The opinion of Parmenides also was true but it only applies to ideas.<sup>37</sup>

### *Epistemology*

Plato's division of two worlds that is the world of ideas and the physical world, followed by the division of human knowledge which poses real knowledge (episteme) and opinion (doxa). True knowledge (episteme) is also called the introduction of ideas. The introduction of the object has properties that remain, clear and unchanged. Furthermore, this assumption was used by Plato as a basis for rejecting relativism of the sophists.

On the other side, opinion is the object which is not fixed and always changing. This type of knowledge is not worth a lot because it does not produce certainty and it is achieved through the senses. Based on both definitions of knowledge, it can be concluded that Plato preferred true knowledge rather than opinion.<sup>38</sup>

Plato categorized human knowledge into four levels, (1) the knowledge gained through intelligence; (2) the knowledge gained through reasoning, eg mathematical knowledge that is fully based on deductive reasoning; (3) the daily Faith, for example, the concept of morality and the things those are physical. This knowledge is useful for everyday life but never reach the real truth because it deals with a physical world that is always changing; (4) the illusion attained via the indirect impressions and opinions of ordinary people.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>K. Bertens, *Sejarah Filsafat Yunani dari Thales ke Aristoteles* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1981), 109.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>39</sup>Donny Gahral Adian, *Matinya Metafisika Barat* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2011), 14.

### *Human Philosophy*

Additionally to the scientific field, Plato focuses on the human. He thought that human consists of body and soul. Like his teacher, Socrates, Plato considered the soul as the center or the essence of the human personality. In his opinion about the soul, Plato not only influenced by Socrates, but also by the school of the Pythagoreans. In accordance with their opinions, Plato created a doctrine of the soul which is closely linked with the establishment of the ideas.<sup>40</sup>

Plato stated that both soul and body are the reality that should be differentiated. The nature of the body is material, while the nature of the soul is immaterial. The soul is something supernatural, comes from the world of ideas that it is eternal, and cannot die. It has three parts, namely; (1) The rational, it is associated with wisdom, (2) a will (bravery), it is connected with valor, (3) desire (lust), it is linked with self-control.<sup>41</sup>

The theory of dualism (body and soul) described above is closely related to the theory of knowledge. Plato believed in the immortality of the soul, i.e. the existence of the soul after the disappearance of the body. Moreover, he thought that soul exists in the world of ideas before trapped into the body. As a result, it carries out the knowledge from such world when being captured into the body<sup>42</sup>. This situation is known as the pre-existence of the soul.

Based on the theory of pre-existence of the soul, Plato actually explained the theory of knowledge. According to Plato, the process of knowledge is a recollection (anamnesis) of the ideas that have been seen at the pre-existence period. When a human being born on this earth, the knowledge of the ideas has become blurred, nevertheless, such knowledge remains in the human soul and can be reminded.<sup>43</sup>

In accordance with the explanation above it can be understood that metaphysics (theory of two worlds) of Plato

<sup>40</sup>Bertens, *Sejarah Filsafat*, 110.

<sup>41</sup> Harun Hadiwijono, *Sari Sejarah Filsafat Barat I* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2010), 42.

<sup>42</sup>Adian, *Matinya Metafisika*, 14.

<sup>43</sup>Bertens, *Sejarah Filsafat*, 112.

includes a wide range of fields, such as ontology, epistemology, and human philosophy, which are related to each another. In simple terms, Plato's metaphysics can be mapped as follows, (1) dichotomy between the idial world and the physical world into the field of ontology, (2) the dichotomy between episteme and doxa into the field of epistemology, (3) the dichotomy between soul and body into the field of human philosophy.

## Tracing the teachings of *Şâbi'ah* and al-İrânshahr

*Who are Şâbi'ah and al-İrânshahr?*

Şâbi'ah and al-İrânshahr are also often discussed when talking about metaphysics of al-Râzî. Some researchers said that al-Râzî's metaphysics quoted the teachings of Şâbi'ah.<sup>44</sup>

The term of Şâbi'ah is derived from the Arabic *ṣâbi'*, (plural *ṣâbi'ūn*). Şâbi'ah is a group of people who are often mentioned in the Qur'an, for example, 2:62,<sup>45</sup> together with a group of Christians, Jews and Magians (Zoroastrions) as the owners were revealed by the God. In addition, some religious groups, such as the various branches of Christianity and religious groups in India are also often associated with a Şâbi'ah.

Şâbi'ah also associated with the ethnic group in Harran, a region located in northern Mesopotamia (now called Altinbasak, a region of southern Turkey adjacent to Urfa). The group is the paganistic Hellenic rooted in the religions of Babylon, and they worshiped idols. Such a group also has an important role in bridging the science of philosophy and ancient Greek civilization to the Islamic religion. Abû Ishâq ibn Haykal, Jâbir ibn Hayyân, and Thâbit ibn Qurra are some figures of Şâbi'ah.<sup>46</sup>

The citizens of Mandeyan and Nasoreans in Iraq also often referred to Şâbi'ah. The Şâbi'ah is a group that is difficult to understand, especially the ethnic group in Harran. Some modern

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<sup>44</sup>Sarah Stroumsa, *Para Pemikir Bebas Islam, Mengenal Pemikiran Teologi Ibn al-Râwandi dan Abû Bakr al-Râzî*, trans. Khoiron Nahdiyin (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 2006), 218.

<sup>45</sup>See, Anonymous, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya* (Jakarta: Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia, 1979), 514.

<sup>46</sup>Glassé, *The Concise Encyclopaedia*, 125.

scholars said if you want to see the *Šābi’ah*, you could refer to the tradition of Alexandrian philosophical.<sup>47</sup> It is a tradition that was able to influence the Islamic world in the early of Abbasid caliphate.<sup>48</sup>

Besides that, al-Īrānshahr is a philosopher who greatly influenced the thinking of al-Rāzī, but many people do not know him, especially his thoughts. The histories of Islamic philosophy always state that the first philosophers in Islam are al-Kindi (w.873 M), but in the Islamic tradition there is an assumption that the first was a Persian philosopher named al-Īrānshahr. According to al-Bīrūnī, al-Īrānshahr has an attention of the Indian religions too. In fact, he is an author who has achieved the objective of the religious beliefs of Indian people in the second half of the ninth century. So far, the bibliography of al-Īrānshahr is difficult to trace. Some people argued that the figure is just a mere name because no references remain.

### *The Core Teachings of Šabi’ah and al-Īrānshahr*

According to al-Sarakhsī,<sup>49</sup> *Šābi’ah* believes the *Rasul* which offers' people reasoned and guide' and 'who will make their own lives free of defects and other things that destroy the body'. Thus, their ideas of the *Rasul* are not the same with the idea that described in the Bible or the Qur'an. Al-Sarakhsī added that *Šābi’ah* agreed on their religions and is in accordance with human nature. Their traditions and laws do not vary. They all adopted the purpose of worship. They tried to looking for the wisdom, and they rejected what is contrary to the nature of knowledge. Their prophets such as Hermes and Agathodaimon, sometimes referred to as a *Rasul*, but sometimes also referred to as angels. Furthermore, al-Sarakhsī said that *Šābi’ah* believes in some sort of guidance of original revelation or *ilham*, but at the

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<sup>47</sup>Stroumsa, *Para Pemikir*, 243.

<sup>48</sup>W. Montgomery Watt, *Pemikiran Teologi dan Filsafat Islam*, trans. Umar Basalim (Jakarta: Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren & Masyarakat, 1987), 56.

<sup>49</sup>Stroumsa, *Para Pemikir*, 244.

same time, they reject the idea of revelation in its historical sense.<sup>50</sup>

In relation to al-Syahrastāni, Ṣābi'ah's teachings can be described as follows: first, This nature is the One (*Dhāt*) who created, and not God, because God can not be reached through reason. Second, according to the Ṣābi'ah to closer to God they must go through a mediator, which is a good and holy mystic materially, actions and circumstances. Third, the Ṣābi'ah denies the prophethood because their job is only doing of self-purification. They said that the prophet just an ordinary man who has made the purification and anyone can do what the prophets did. Based on these reasons, the Ṣābi'ah does not need prophets anymore.<sup>51</sup>

In addition, to look for the thoughts of Ṣābi'ah, the researcher tried to explore the teachings of al-Īrānshahr. Unfortunately, so far it is difficult to obtain the data on the idea of al-Īrānshahr comprehensively, rather than just a statement that revealed that al-Irahsyahri is al-Rāzī's teacher, and al-Rāzī got a path to free thought from him.

## Methodology

This is a qualitative research that using a library research,<sup>52</sup> a study based on the documentary data. Moreover, this is a philosophical research especially a study on the history of a figure. The primary data is *Rasā'il Falsafīyyah* (Al-Rāzī's work) which contains the thoughts of the philosophy of al-Rāzī, particularly in the chapter of metaphysics - though most of the works are not written directly by him, but solely based (*mudāf*) to him. This research requires supporting data source (secondary) which provides reviews of al-Rāzī's philosophical thinking. Furthermore, the data was analyzed and explained using related theory.

Processing data is using the method of historical continuity. This method is looking at the development of the thoughts of

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 245.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 66.,

<sup>52</sup>Winarno Surahmat, *Pengantar Penelitian Ilmiah* (Bandung: Tarsito, 1994), 251-63.

someone who is being studied, such as his relationship with their environment, what has affected him, and his own life journey. There are two things in historical continuity, examining the external and internal background of somebody who is being studied. External aspect examines special circumstances experienced by individuals or a person who is being investigated, such as in terms of social, economic, political, cultural and philosophy that influencing his thinking. The internal background means that examining a person's life such as education, the influence he received from other thinkers and a wide variety of experiences that have shaped his views. Data analysis using descriptive-analytic.<sup>53</sup>

## Analysis

### *Al-Rāzī and Plato*

The explanations above about the theory of two worlds are most important ideas of Plato's metaphysics. The theory consists of the field of ontology, epistemology, and human philosophy. Based on the three fields proposed by Plato, it seems that the five eternal concepts of al-Rāzī are close to the field of human philosophy, particularly when al-Rāzī explained the concept of the spirit and matter.

In the field of human philosophy, Plato described the relationship between the soul and the body. According to him, the soul and the body are the reality which should be separated. The soul is material while the body is immaterial. In the perspective of dualism theory, Plato believed about the existence of the body and soul after disappeared. Plato believed that soul can be described as a carriage, drawn by two horses with winged, namely, desire horse and truth horse. Riding the truth ran up towards the world of ideas, while the horse desires run down to the world of phenomena.<sup>54</sup>

Al-Rāzī's view about the soul is almost similar to Plato's theory of body and soul which has been described above. As

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<sup>53</sup>Anton Bakker, and Achmad Charris Zubair, *Metodologi Penelitian Filsafat* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1990), 63.

<sup>54</sup>Hadiwijono, *Sari Sjarah*, 42.

same as Plato, al-Rāzī also argued that the soul is essentially separated from the material, but by the pressure of romance, the soul is then turned into a form of material because it will not be possible to achieve its objectives alone. Furthermore, God created the world to help the soul and granted a sense ('aql) that comes from his substance. The sense served as guidance for the soul to keep its track in the material world such that it will return to its home world. To achieve that way, people should learn philosophy.<sup>55</sup>

The liberation of the soul from the material world with reason ('aql) as well philosophy above is very similar to Plato's theory about the imprisoned soul in the world of phenomenon. Plato stated that soul can be released from the world of phenomenon, so the soul must acquire knowledge. After gaining knowledge, the soul will enjoy the happiness of seeing ideas after the death. This opinion confirms that Plato believed in pre-existence of the soul, and he thought that soul never dies (immortal).<sup>56</sup>

The immortality of the soul is also one of doctrine which is believed by al-Rāzī. His thoughts are not much different from that of Plato. He said that the soul will remain eternally after the death. Al-Rāzī believed that the real life can be reached after the death, in which the soul has returned to its original place, and experience lasting happiness. The immortality of the soul in Plato's question is the existing one before the life begins in the earth and before it is captured in the body; the soul has experienced a pre-existence in which it looked at ideas. This theory seems to be adopted by al-Rāzī too. The opinion about the soul that will be returned to its origin indicates that al-Rāzī also believed that the soul was living before it was on this earth.<sup>57</sup>

Al-Rāzī's concept of space and time was same as Plato's teaching. As Plato, al-Rāzī also said that space is eternal and infinite. Its existence does not depend on the material object (body). Plato in *Timaeus* said that space as a vehicle that cannot

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<sup>55</sup>Fakhry, *Sejarah Filsafat*, 36.

<sup>56</sup>Hadiwijono, *Sari Sejarah*, 42.

<sup>57</sup>Bertens, *Sejarah Filsafat*, 111.

be distinguished from the material substratum that occupied it. Next, al-Rāzī classified time into two kinds; particular time and absolute time. Particular time is the time that can be measured and limited in nature while the absolute time is a time that cannot be measured and is not limited. Al-Rāzī's opinion about the absolute time has in common with Plato about the sustainability of the rational world.<sup>58</sup>

In addition, to the similarities of five eternal principles above, there is another evidence that could show a tendency al-Rāzī towards Plato's metaphysics. It can be seen from two works of al-Rāzī specifically addressing to Plato, namely *Metaphysics According to the Teachings of Plato, and comments on Timaeus* (one of the works of Plato were discussing metaphysics). Thus, in Islamic philosophy al-Rāzī often referred to as leaders of Islamic Platonism.<sup>59</sup>

Nowadays, the closeness of both al-Rāzī's and Plato's metaphysics is often discussed by many people. In addition to the evidence that has been described above, there is one key more which showed that al-Rāzī has a tendency towards Plato's metaphysics. It can be seen in the beginning of his works entitle *al-Qudamā' al-khamsah* where al-Rāzī asserted that the five eternal comes from the early Greek philosophers before Aristotle. Al-Rāzī's affirmation that stating before Aristotle here could be a philosopher in the mean by him is Plato, although it does not preclude for another philosopher such as Socrates, Pythagoras etc.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, al-Rāzī did not fully take the ideas of Plato's metaphysics for granted. According to Fakhry, in expressing his views on the creation of nature and liberation of the soul, al-Rāzī looks more rational compared to Plato. However, Fakhry said that the main point of metaphysical thought of al-Rāzī was a typical Platonic conclusion by improvement here and there.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Fakhry, *Sejarah Filsafat*, 158.

<sup>59</sup>Fakhry, *Sejarah Filsafat*, 36.

<sup>60</sup>Al-Rāzī, "al-Qawl fī al-Qudamā'," 192.

<sup>61</sup>Fakhry, *Sejarah Filsafat*, 38. See also al-Rāzī, "Kitāb al-Tibb Rūhānī," 1.

### *Al-Rāzī, Ṣābi’ah and al-Īrānshahr*

From the analysis above, it shows that al-Rāzī's metaphysics has a tendency to Plato's metaphysics. In this part, it is necessary to look at the influence of al-Īrānshahr and Ṣābi’ah towards his metaphysical concept. The search of Ṣābi’ah above may have been less than perfect, but the question is not who is actually Ṣābi’ah?, but who are they connected to al-Rāzī?

The search of the teachings of Ṣābi’ah above gave us a bright spot. Undeniably, some ideas of al-Rāzī are seen closer to the teachings of Ṣābi’ah. It can be used to identify the influence of Ṣābi’ah on al-Rāzī's metaphysics which is written in one of his works against al-Sarakshi and al-Kindi, the two figures Mu’tazilah who are very serious in writing about the teachings of Ṣābi’ah.<sup>62</sup>

The overview of al-Rāzī's book presupposes that he could be well acquainted with the reports of al-Kindi and al-Sarakhsī about Ṣābi’ah followers. If the reports are true, they are certainly useful in shaping his philosophy, which is not only limited to his idea on metaphysics, but also on his philosophical, such as in theology and moral philosophy.

According to Stroumsa, both intellectually and religious, al-Rāzī does not differ much from Ṣābi’ah. For example, al-Rāzī did not mind the idea of Ṣābi’ah about the Divine guidance, as related to the possibility of divine intervention in human history, through a man who was elected. Although at another time, he rejected that view, because it would only lead to strife and war. However, not all ideas of al-Rāzī are similar to the teachings of Ṣābi’ah. According to Nāṣir-i-Khusraw, al-Rāzī's ideas were more precise to associated to Ṣābi’ah teachings are the doctrine of anti-prophet.<sup>63</sup>

Al-Rāzī also did not recognize the prophetic like Ṣābi’ah teachings, because he thought that the reason (*aql*) is able to show the difference between good and bad. By *aql*, according to al-Rāzī, a human can regulate the problems of life, seek knowledge, and find a job, even to know the mysteries of

<sup>62</sup>Stroumsa, *Para Pemikir*, 243.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 246.

divinity, though. So, why do people need prophets? He also added that the presence of the prophet often makes a trouble on earth. Furthermore, al-Rāzī said that a prophet is only human. These ideas expressed by al-Rāzī have in common with the teachings of Ṣābi'ah, especially a statement which said that Ṣābi'ah does not need prophets anymore. In addition, the Ṣābi'ah also stressed that human's reason is adequate, and they are equal in using their reason.<sup>64</sup> Then based on their perspective, acknowledging the prophethood is a something useless.

Furthermore, the assumption which is stated that al-Rāzī plagiarized the ideas of Ṣābi'ah cannot be proved. Actually, it was already stressed by al-Rāzī in his work "*Kitab al-Qudamā al-khamsah*", explaining that the five eternal concepts were not taken from the teachings of eternal Ṣābi'ah. As stated by al-Bīrūnī, these concepts were adopted from the ancient Greeks, that was, before Aristotle. Some other figures such as al-Marzūki, al-Kātibi and al-Tūsī al-Marzūki, also said that al-Rāzī was trying to rewrite the doctrines of the ancient Greek philosophers, especially the early generation such as Democritus, Pythagoras and so on.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, Majid Fakhry claimed that metaphysics of al-Rāzī influenced by Plato's thoughts as well as the teachings of Ṣābi'ah. He said that metaphysics of al-Rāzī is typical of Platonic conclusion with slight modifications derived from the teachings of Harran and Mani, the two ethnic groups that always associated with Ṣābi'ah. Unfortunately, Fakhry was not trying to prove his point in detail; he only said that the doctrine of al-Rāzī about the soul enamored with matter was the teachings of Plato combined with the teachings of Harran and Mani.<sup>66</sup>

Paul Kraus also rejected the five eternal from the teachings of Ṣābi'ah, in particular, the region of Harran. In fact, he also refused the statement about teachings of five principles were derived from dualistic teachings. According to Kraus, al-Rāzī only attributes his ideas to the others because he worried it

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 245.

<sup>65</sup>Al-Rāzī, "al-Qawl fī al-Qudamā'," 192-3.

<sup>66</sup>Fakhry, *Sejarah Filsafat*, 36-7.

would harm him, so Kraus said that al-Rāzī very careful when conveying his ideas. The reasons of Kraus could not become a proof when al-Rāzī mocked the whole religious authorities, ranging from religion to the religious leaders, who he referred to as an old billy goat. Kraus's opinion might be unreasonable, but the statement about the five eternal did not come from the teachings of Šābi'ah can possibly true. If Šābi'ah did not affect the metaphysics of al-Rāzī, and then the question is how about the al-Īrānshahr? As al-Bīrūnī stated, when al-Rāzī described the concept of space, there were indications that he was influenced by al-Īrānshahr. The thought of al-Rāzī which said that space is eternal because the material that occupies the space is eternal can be seen similar to the statement of al-Īrānshahr. Nonetheless, al-Rāzī considered not fully follow al-Īrānshahr statement, because he thought that the room is the real power of God, while space is a material entity.<sup>67</sup> Based on these reasons it can be concluded that al-Rāzī somewhat influenced by al-Īrānshahr in metaphysical ideas.

On the other hand, some people argue that al-Rāzī got an idea of freethinking from al-Īrānshahr. Unfortunately, the works attributed to al-Īrānshahr by the only experts who gave the special attention to him, which is a Persian author Ismaili Nasir-i Khusraw (w.1061), it did not reach us.<sup>68</sup> The presumption about al-Rāzī attained free thought from al-Īrānshahr was true, as expressed by al-Bīrūnī. Al-Īrānshahr regarded as a figure that influenced al-Rāzī and pointed him to free thinking. If so, in addition to the metaphysical thinking, al-Rāzī also influenced al-Īrānshahr in theological thinking.

## Conclusion

Based on the results above, it can be summed up as follows; *first*, al-Rāzī's metaphysical thoughts resemble Plato's ideas, especially the concept of the soul trapped within the material, and the concept of space and time as well. *Second*, al-Rāzī's views also have similarities with the belief of al-Īrānshahr, especially

<sup>67</sup>Badawī, "Muhammad ibn Zakariyyah," 45. See also Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London and New York: Kegan Paul, 1993), 128.

<sup>68</sup>Stroumsa, *Para Pemikir*, 240.

the concept of eternal space. *Third*, al-Rāzī also has the same thought with the teachings of Ṣābi'ah. As Ṣābi'ah, he also believes in the authority of *aql*, so that both al-Rāzī and Ṣābi'ah refused the prophethood.<sup>69</sup> Hence, al-Rāzī is not a plagiarist, but he is only affected by them because he did not take their thinking as a whole.

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<sup>69</sup>To see that the al-Rāzī is a very rationalist, it can be seen in his theology thinking. He refused the issue of revelation and prophecy.

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