Each of the following chapters tells a different layer of the women’s struggle, layers that reflect the diversity and fluidity of the solidarity they felt and through which they lived. Despite their differences, all the women were seeking the same goal of change, which resonates with the Hafez’s position regarding freedom, self-determination, and access to resources beyond the constraining categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and religious or political affiliations.

Chapters one and two are paramount in the sense that the first launches the study’s approach regarding the centering of gender corporeality at the forefront of the Uprising. This repositioning defies the traditional patriarchal/orientalist coverage of the Uprising in the local and international media, and it undermines the interests of Western feminist scholars. The second chapter historicizes the Egyptian women’s engagement with modernism and their struggle for freedom since the 1920s, dispelling the misperceptions about Egyptian, and Arab, women in general. The rest of the chapters tackle various layers of the gendered embodiment of the Uprising against the effects of neoliberalism, privatization, and the “culture of dis-regulation, instability, and fear” (xlii), enforced by the state. The women’s accounts evidence the impact of the state policies on all aspects of people’s lives, since the 1970s. More specifically, all the women’s accounts tell of police brutality, torture, rape and gang rape, virginity tests, and the killings and injuries of all dissidents.

Women of the Midan sheds new light on what really happened on the streets of Cairo during the Egyptian Uprising, from the women’s perspective. A de-familiarization is at work as the women, who constituted 50 percent of the massive numbers, articulate their struggles against state and patriarchal hegemonies (15). This study would be of much interest to students and scholars of Middle East Studies, the Social Sciences, and Feminist and Cultural Studies.


Originally published in German as *Avicenna und die aristotelische linke*. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1963.

*Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left* is the first English translation of Ernst Bloch’s essay to be published sixty-seven years after it first appeared in the original German in 1952. The essay, a mere forty-five pages long, relates the German philosopher’s reading and acknowledgment of the works of medieval Muslim philosophy. Primarily, it is about the contributions of the philosopher-physician Ibn Sina, known in the West as Avicenna (980–1037), and other major and
minor medieval philosophers who followed in his footsteps. This small book is a resource for philosophy scholars and graduate students with no access to the original German; and it is testimony to the extensive scholarly work done by both translators, Loren Goldman and Peter Thompson. In addition to the text proper, the book includes Goldman’s helpful introduction, very informative notes (35 pages), an impressive bibliography, and Bloch’s original translated excerpts from Avicenna’s work and those of his intellectual descendants.

Bloch proposes that Western and Arabic philosophy are intertwined (xi); his essay revives interest in Arab philosophy and its latent tendencies. Avicenna’s translations/interpretations of Aristotle’s works, transmitted to Europe in Arabic during the Middle Ages, were instrumental in the rediscovery of Hellenistic culture during the European Renaissance. Goldman’s informative introduction sheds light on Bloch’s interest in religion, utopianism, and medieval Islamic philosophy. The book demonstrates how much Bloch was ahead of his contemporaries in his anticipation of the syncretic nature of Western philosophy, something philosophy scholars have only recently come to realize. As Goldman suggests, this “Islamic interpretation of Aristotle” is perceived by Bloch as “emancipatory possibilities” for modern philosophy, which not only confuses the traditional binaries of East/West and Premodern/Modern, but also argues for the import of philosophy to contemporary critical theory (xi–xii). This brief review will focus on one section of the essay, in which Bloch summarizes the Aristotle-Avicenna metaphysics.

In “Aristotle-Avicenna and the Essences of this World” (14–23), Block explains the three major relationships that concerned the Greek and Muslim philosophers. These are: the relationships between the body and soul; individual understanding and universal reason; and the matter and form relationship.

With regards to the body–soul relationship, Bloch says that although Avicenna believes in the soul, he does not hierarchize the relationship between the two entities. He insists that each human possesses an individual active soul, one that is lasting and indestructible (emphasis added), adding that the body and soul co-exist as “unitary, indivisible active form” and share an animalistic drive complimented by understanding (16). As for the nexus of universal–individual reason, the former is prioritized by Avicenna because it is “the active or authentic form, the effective power of the understanding” that embodies the center of all human beings. Aristotle, according to Bloch, says that individual reason is merely receptive and passive for being tied to the body. Avicenna and Averroës, on the other hand, believe that active reason is “the site of the unity of human intellect,” and it “becomes a human universal” (17). Avicenna’s analysis ascribes agency to all human beings, not only to the aristocratic elite.
The third relationship discussed in Avicenna’s interpretation of Aristotle is the form–matter relationship. It is the Muslim philosopher’s most original discussion and in which Bloch perceives a materialism that reaches out to Marx, anticipation not found in Aristotle. Traditionally, form is seen as the superior primordial element; matter is passive and subordinate. Bloch designates this line of thinking as “right-wing” Aristotelianism. By contrast, the “left-wing” Aristotelian strand, proposed by Avicenna’s interpretation, conceives of matter as “an active collaborator without which form has no traction” (xxi). In Aristotle’s metaphysics, matter was completely “indeterminate …, unformed…, and completely separate from the acting form” (20). Avicenna perceives matter as active and predisposed depending on the recipient’s active intellect/rational reason and preparedness. For Bloch, this is a major shift from the absolute fixity of “right-wing” interpretation of Aristotle, embraced by Christian Scholastics and Thomas Aquinas, according to whom God or the supernatural has imposed on the world view.

In the midst of worldwide Islamophobia and the coronavirus pandemic, Ernst Bloch and Avicenna’s interpretation of Aristotle offer a glimpse of hope and perhaps utopia. *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left* sheds light on the Muslim philosopher-doctor’s contribution to a unified discipline of philosophy and science. This book could not have been published at more auspicious times than the 2020s. Perhaps a combination of both science and philosophy might enlighten our approach to our contemporary geopolitics, cultural politics, and the pandemic.


This very short introduction reconsiders international relations from diverse and multidisciplinary perspectives, critically and analytically. Rather than viewing the subject from within external forces that have been the traditional approach to the discipline, *International Relations* looks at the subject from within “the global organization of political authority, and on the human and environmental consequences of such organization” (1). The book examines questions regarding the origin and organization of political authority, which sometimes guaranteed human well-being, but at other times created hierarchies and exclusions. Given the global historical changes that have shaped the twentieth century, Christian Reus-Smit also reassesses the limits of sovereign authority, human rights, and environmental issues. He opens up the discussion of political authority, in light of post-industrial developments, the demise of traditional Empires, and questions of cultural diversity and environmental biodiversity.