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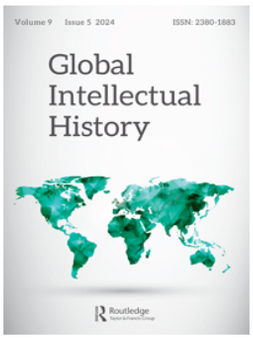

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Worshipping the Sun at the End of Time: Neoplatonic Solar Cults in Mughal India and Barberini Rome

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into two notable instances of imperial solar cults during the long sixteenth century. One concerns the Mughal emperor Akbar in India, while the other revolves around the Barberini pope Urban VIII in Rome. Both cases will be examined through the lens of the longue-durée Great Tradition of Neoplatonism, taking-off from the earliest Neoplatonic sun cult as designed by Roman emperor Julian in the fourth century. Despite being centuries and worlds apart, the emergence of the Mughal and Barberini sun cults coincided with a period of rapidly expanding horizons amidst intense millenarian anxiety. Moreover, both cults were crafted by a team of avant-garde Neoplatonic intellectuals – mostly cosmologists and antiquarians – striving to bolster the imperial claims of their patrons. By exploring the intriguing Neoplatonic parallels between these two coinciding solar cults, this article advocates a truly global approach to intellectual history that transcends conventional temporal and spatial boundaries.

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Same continuities, or survivals in the immense cultural domain.

Fernand Braudel[1]

A special grace proceeds from the sublime sun to kings; hence they pray to it and consider it worshipping the Almighty, the shortsighted make this suspicious.

Akbar[2]

But when on the first day, the Sun returns; the light arises from the pure Ganges; when it diffuses itself and sparkles; he keeps staring at its rays.

Urban VIII[3]

1. Introduction

Across the globe, the sublime power of the sky drives religious experience. Hence, many early societies venerated the sky, celestial bodies becoming their gods.[4]

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Add kingship and it was the Sun that became the centre of such celestial worship in a jealous sky. The earliest royal title in the first big state of human history, ancient Egypt, was Horus, 'the far one'. In the earliest representation, Horus is the Sun, shown as a falcon and sailing over the sky represented by a pair of wings. It hovers above another falcon sitting in palace: the king, 'the son of Re'. For the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann this is the remarkable visualisation of the Egyptian idea of kingship as the terrestrial representation of solar power and cosmogenic energy. Hence kingship was a divine office, and its main task was to establish harmony, on earth by enforcing justice, in the cosmos by integrating society into nature. The king had to translate the harmony emanating from the Sun in the form of light into this-worldly justice. In doing so, the king, as mediator between cosmos and society, remains responsible to a higher authority. The position of the king between God and humankind was undermined by the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam which instead highlighted scripture as a covenant between God and the people. Thus, the mediating role of the king was dropped although it was kept alive as an exciting millenarian promise.[5]

Since the early centuries of the Common Era, Neoplatonist intellectuals in East and West have tried to reframe the Egyptian model of cosmic kingship in such a way that it could either resist or simply incorporate the criticism of monotheistic religions. They did so by highlighting the Sun as the prime celestial being acknowledged by their great master Plato. In his *Republic*,

> the Sun is the child of the Good … and the counterpart of its father, the Good. As the Good stands in the Intelligible Realm to the Intellect and the things we know, so in the Visible Realm the Sun stands to sight and the things we see.

So, it is due to Sun that we can see material things but, more importantly, it is 'the source of their generation, growth, and nourishment.' Moreover, for Plato, the ideal ruler is the philosopher-king who contemplates the Sun.[6]

As we will see, these passages became fundamental to the later Neoplatonic theories of solar kingship in both the Christian and Islamic worlds. The first one to have them implemented, though, was the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate (r. 361–363). Hence, in this study, his solar cult will serve as a model for two millenarian manifestations during the long sixteenth century: one in India under Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1602), one in Rome under the Barberini pope Urban VIII (r. 1623–1644). As I will argue, these three cases should be seen as avatars of one single longue-durée Great Tradition of Neoplatonism that spanned the Christian and Islamic worlds and made the two surprisingly commensurable.

1.1. Longue-durée Neoplatonism

To demonstrate the longue-durée significance of Neoplatonism as a meaningful category for global intellectual history is quite a challenge. Neoplatonism has suffered from a rather bad reputation among scholars primarily because it is such a nebulous category, hard to pinpoint in time and space. It also must deal with the post-colonial criticism that is raised more generally against all big philosophical ideas as being mere orientalist constructions, especially when their birth goes back to nineteenth-century Europe, as in the

case of Neoplatonism.[7] At a loss to really make sense of it, historians hardly use the term at all. It surely does not help that even students of philosophy are not fond of it as many consider Neoplatonism a degenerated version of a purer Greek Platonism stained by a variety of mostly Oriental(ist) ideas and religious practices such as divination or magic.[8]

So, what is Neoplatonism and why do I think it is a useful category for global intellectual history? Although the term Neoplatonism is a modern invention, it makes analytical sense to use the term because it highlights the widespread philosophical movement during the late Roman Empire in which Platonic thought was revived, reconstructed, and systemised, primarily but certainly not exclusively, through the thoughts of its so-called founding fathers Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, and Iamblichus, all of whom saw themselves as true followers of the great Plato. Far from being sectarian, their philosophical-religious worldview became *the* mainstream intellectual worldview of Late Antiquity in the eastern parts of the empire and as such it had a huge impact on both early Christianity and Islam. Of course, Neoplatonism changed tremendously by interacting with these world religions, overlapping with them, creating at least two main geographical-*cum*-religious branches within one Great Tradition of Neoplatonism.[9]

Comparing the two branches, the impact of Neoplatonism in the Islamic world was the strongest, mainly due to political circumstances. Thanks to the Arabic translation movement of the long ninth century, Neoplatonic ideas had an enormous impact on philosophy (*falsafa*) and theology (*kalām*), primarily but far from exclusively through Arabic translations and adaptations of the works of Plotinus (*Enneads* becoming *Theology of Aristotle*) and Proclus (*Elements of Theology* becoming *Book of Aristotle's Exposition of the Pure Good*). Islamic Neoplatonism climaxed in the eclectic Epistles (*Rasa'il*) of the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*) which material also deeply affected Ibn Arabi's Sufism. After circa 1100 Al-Ghazali's famous condemnation of Hellenic philosophy in his *Tahafut al-Falasifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*) caused a double shift: on the one hand *falsafa* became absorbed into *kalām,* on the other hand, in particular in the Persianate East, it embraced both mysticism and the so-called occult sciences. As *falsafa* became *ḥikma* (wisdom), the result was not the closure of the gates of *ijtihād* – the free interpretation of the law – but the opening of the gates of *taḥqīq* – an open episteme based on reasoning, (inner) intuition and (cosmic) observation, ever sceptical of received opinion.[10] It was this revived Neoplatonism represented by the likes of Nasir al-Din Tusi, Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, and Fakhr al-Din Razi that received a political boost in the long thirteenth century due to the patronage of Persianate Turco-Mongolian rulers and the increasing interaction with the Indian subcontinent, achieving its highpoint, as we will see, under Mughal emperor Akbar.[11] In fact, far from being bookish, Neoplatonism developed into a high-tech applied science employed in the service of empire.[12]

The Neoplatonism that was incorporated in the Islamic world combined fields that we would nowadays consider philosophy, science, and religion. The Neoplatonists of the early centuries CE had concocted a systematic comprehensive worldview that had conveniently assimilated the thoughts of other sages such as Pythagoras and Aristotle. For example, it was Iamblichus who played a crucial role in Pythagorizing Plato as much as Proclus made a point of Platonizing Pythagoras. As a result, finding salvation was not only possible through the abilities of the Intellect but also through the practice of religious rites. Anyway, the main objective of Neoplatonists was to create authoritative

universal wisdom based on a chain of sages with Plato at its core, while integrating Pythagoras, Aristotle as well as other sages into its framework.[13] Applied to the history of philosophy in the Islamic world, one could say that even when someone like Avicenna preferred Aristotle over Plato, his Aristotelianism could only but be a heavily Neoplatonizing version of it.[14] In a way, the shift that philosophy made after him can be seen as one of Pythagoreanizing Neoplatonism since it restored the assimilation of philosophical reasoning and mystical experience that we have seen in Late Antiquity due to the impulse of Iamblichus.[15]

Looking at its western branch, although Neoplatonism deeply influenced the thinking of the early Church Fathers, it gradually gave way to Aristotelian scholasticism, before the European Renaissance ushered a short Neoplatonic revival; itself the result of another translation movement of Neoplatonic texts in Greek and Arabic, this time primarily in Italy and Spain. After the European Reformation, primarily Protestant thinkers began to 'purify' Christianity by discarding its many Neoplatonic misinterpretations, ultimately leading to the idea that Neoplatonism itself was a sad, pagan misinterpretation of the real Plato.[16]

What makes a Great Tradition like Neoplatonism so exciting for global intellectual history is that it does overlap with the three Great Traditions of monotheism and as such facilitates long-term cross-cultural comparison and entanglement without the need of a Western teleology. As we will see, Neoplatonism provided rulers with an ideal intellectual toolset to defend themselves against the criticism of monotheist religions. In the following pages, I will endeavour to further demonstrate the longue-durée significance of Neoplatonism by examining two instances of Neoplatonic solar worship. Although worlds apart, they are both influenced by the same Great Tradition of Neoplatonism. Before delving into these two cases, let us briefly explore the fundamental components of Neoplatonic sun worship by revisiting the moment of its inception and first implementation during Late Antiquity.

1.2. Neoplatonic Sun Worship: The Julian Model

Although the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and his successors emerged in the eastern Mediterranean during the third century, it obviously built on already existing religious and philosophical ideas in that region. The same goes for Neoplatonic cosmology in which the Sun claimed a central, divine position.

Building on Pythagoras, Plato considered the movements of the planets as uniform and orderly neatly following mathematical laws. According to Aristotle, Pythagoras had conceived a cosmological system involving a central fire around which the celestial bodies, including the Earth and the visible sun, move in circles. Plato said in his *Timaeus* that the universe was created by the Demiurge and that, like the stars, the sun was a visible god in which the Good had put life.[17] Opposing Plato's idea of the Demiurge, Aristotle conceived a unique, nongenerated and eternal celestial realm (where motion was circular) that was in sharp contrast with the sublunary realm of change and decay (where motion was up or down). At the outermost part of the universe as the source of all (circular) movement was the idea of the unmoved mover (*primum mobile*). It was primarily Aristotle who influenced Ptolemy (c. 100–170 CE) who in his widely translated *Almagest* confirmed Aristotle's view of the divine Prime Mover as the first cause of

celestial motion. In the Ptolemaic cosmos the planets move in circles around the Earth in the following sequence: Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn.[18] This basically remained the cosmology of both the Christian and Islamic world before the breakthrough of heliocentrism. Nonetheless, Neoplatonists remained heliocentrists *avant la lettre*. They seem to agree that it is the light of the Sun that not only creates order and harmony in the universe but also elevates all things back to its origin: the Demiurgic *Nous* or Intellect.[19]

It was the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate who used the heliocentric ingredients of Neoplatonism to construct a new sun cult of his own with which he hoped to revive the old religion of the Greeks against the existential threats posed by Christianity. In this Julian was primarily inspired by the philosophical ideas and the theurgic practices of the Neoplatonic philosopher Iamblichus (c. 250 – c. 330). Julian considered Iamblichus to be superior to all philosophers of his time, the third after Pythagoras and Plato. The 'divine' Iamblichus hailed from a very influential Syrian family, the Sampsigeramids of Emesa, which one century earlier had gained access to the imperial throne with Elagabalus (r. 218–222) who had already introduced the sun-cult of his Syrian home to Rome.[20] As a true Neoplatonic assimilator, Iamblichus had brought Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras under one Platonic umbrella that not only accommodated Hellenic gods such as Orpheus and Zeus but also the Egyptian and Chaldaic traditions as represented in respectively the Hermetic books and the *Chaldean Oracles*. The latter became a kind of Neoplatonic New Testament that facilitated Neoplatonism's shift towards religion and theology, a process that proved critical for its later development in both the Latin West and in the Islamic East.[21]

Indeed, the Julian solar cult is another illustration of the religious turn that Neoplatonism had taken under the influence of Iamblichus. We should not forget, though, that even the more sober Neoplatonist Plotinus had recommended a form of contemplative praying to the Sun. For him too, the Sun was the visible manifestation of spiritual reality as well as the deepest self of the one who prays. Sun worship springs from a longing for union with the divine: a combination of aesthetic perception, reverential feeling, visualisation, and inwardisation of attention.[22] As for the divine, Plotinus writes in *The Enneads*:

> One must not chase after it, but wait quietly till it appears, preparing oneself to contemplate it, as the eye awaits the rising of the Sun; and the Sun rising over the horizon (from 'Ocean', the poets say) gives itself to the eyes to see. But from where will he of whom this sun is an image rise? What is the horizon which he will mount above when he appears.[23]

Plotinus makes the striking statement that the Sun is the image of the One: it is the One's own image, manifesting something of its power: goodness and unity, thus making it a fit object for reverential contemplation. Indeed, Plotinus refers to the visible sun as God or rather the visual, natural statue (*agalma*) of God: it has a divine soul, a divine Intellect, and it is itself ever in contemplation of the One.[24] In another passage of *The Enneads*, Plotinus asked us to imagine soul pouring life and light into the cosmos in the same way as the Sun illumes and tinges with gold a dark cloud. In the words of Michael Wakoff, Plotinus asks us to visualise a cosmic sunrise, a contemplation of dawn, indeed, the cosmic dawn, when the universe is born, the archetype of all our terrestrial dawns.[25]

One of Iamblichus' most important theological contributions was that he lessened the ontological divide between the Spiritual and the Material world by dividing the divine Intellect (*Nous*) itself into three parts: the highest part of the Intellect identical with the One; the middle part the same as Helios or Sun, and the lowest part of the Intellect identical with the visible sun: representing Helios' presence in the Material World.[26] Julian's solar cult further elaborated on this tripartite division.

Julian had recognised in himself a hidden spark of divination, which in his case had shown him the beauty of philosophy. Hence, Julian as philosopher could use certain theurgic rites to achieve enlightenment, elevation of the soul and a mystical union with the One/the Good. As king, though, he knew that he should use his new wisdom altruistically for those below, very much like the wise man in Plato's *Timaeus* who desired to do good after his vision of the Good in the form of the Demiurge.[27]

Through myths, Julian presented himself as a descendent of Zeus-Helios and thus had received the hidden spark, very much like the mythical founder of the dynasty Claudius Gothicus, himself a devotee of the Sun god Helios. The myth revealed Julian's true nature as divinely generated philosopher entrusted with the mandate to lead the *oikumenē* back to its divine creator.[28]

In his *Hymn to King Helios*, Julian stressed his own special relationship with his spiritual father Zeus-Helios. Here Julian underscores that there are three principles: the Good, Helios the Sun and the solar disk. Helios is the mediator – the Mean, the Nexus, 'the Middle of the Middle' – between transcendent realities and visible ones. Helios is the Demiurge of the universe and the father of all men. In analogy with this triadic model, Julian presented a downward extension of (1) the king of all at the centre of *kosmos noetos*, to (2) king Helios at the centre of *kosmos noeros* to (3) the visible sun in the *kosmos aisthetos* to the emperor surrounded by his officials.[29] All mankind is born from Helios and is nourished by Helios. He frees man's soul from the body and guides it toward the divine.[30] Crucially Neoplatonic, though, the Good is above all and the cause of all, thus Helios and the Sun remain subordinate to the Good.

By creatively using Plato and Iamblichus, Julian was able to construct a universal political theory of kingship in which also the prime Roman imperial traditions, including that of the *Sol Invictus* of his pagan predecessors, were seen as Greek in origin and constitution, and as such were incorporated under the umbrella of Helios who was the origin and destination of all creation. As brilliantly formulated by Susanna Elm: 'the Sun, eternal, victorious, invincible, guaranteed the security of the *res publica*; endowed with providence, it was beneficent, bestowing felicitous times on all, illuminating everything with its light and wisdom, and uniting all into one'.[31]

Although inspired by Iamblichus, we should be aware that the latter himself wrote about a similar solar cult in his treatise on the *Egyptian Mysteries*, also referred to by Julian. This Egyptian cult was a simplified solar cult which focuses on the energies and activities of the Sun. It defines three levels of the divine, as manifestations of the Sun, but does not engage with other deities. Since Neoplatonist were enthralled by Egyptian political theology at that time, it is very well possible that through Iamblichus, Julian constructed his *Hymn to King Helios* as a Neoplatonic palimpsest of a much older and well-studied Egyptian solar cult.[32] Whether Egyptian in origin or not, it is evident that Julian's solar cult drew upon Neoplatonic cosmology and antiquarianism to blend together a diverse array of preexisting concepts into a cohesive and unified new tradition.[33]

Astonishingly, the same Neoplatonic amalgamation exercise would repeat itself twelve centuries later as demonstrated in the sun cults of Mughal Emperor Akbar and Barberini Pope Urban VIII.

2. Solar Cult in Mughal India

During the first week of the spring equinox, Nauruz 988/1580, the Mughal emperor Akbar publicly prostrated before the Sun. Every day of that week, Akbar dressed in the colours in accordance with the regent-planet of the day and recited the prayers related to the possession of the Sun. He held his ears with his hands, turned around and hit his temples with his fists. After finishing this ritual, Akbar went to the window and showed himself to the crowds that tried to get an auspicious glimpse of him. Many of them prostrated before him, recited prayers, broke their fasting, and asked the king to fulfil their wishes and heal the sick. Indeed, Akbar's sun worship went hand in hand with the revival of Nauruz. Although Nauruz was celebrated by most Persianate rulers, now it also became the official start of the imperial year which would lead in 1584 to the official introduction of the solar year, the *Tārīkh-i Ilāhī* (9 Rabi I, 992) to start at the Nauruz that was nearest to the accession of Akbar, that was 21 March 1556 (9 Jumada I, 963). According to the *Nauruz Nama* attributed to the eleventh-century Persian philosopher ʿUmar Khayyam, God had created the Sun and nurtured the earth and the sky by it. People look at the Sun with respect and veneration because it is a light from the lights of God and He favoured the Sun more than anything else. So, anyone who respects the Sun, respects God.

If we follow the courtly imam and scholar ʿAbd al-Qadir Badaʾuni (1540–1615) in a report related to the Nauruz of 991/1583, he mentions that Akbar prayed to the Sun four times a day – at sunrise, noontime, evening, and midnight – and recited 1001 Sanskrit names of the Sun in devotion. Badaʾuni stresses once and again that Akbar's interest in sun worship was the consequence of the emperor's contact with Hindu scholars, and that it had been his advisor Raja Birbar, in particular, who had convinced Akbar to start this pagan madness. Before Akbar bestowed the title 'Raja Birbar' on him, Brahma Das was a scholar associated with the Vaishnava School of Vallabhacharya who lived in Kalpi, a district near the Yamuna River. He joined Akbar at the beginning of his reign and soon became one of Akbar's main companions. According to Badaʾuni, Birbar had a great influence on Akbar and argued that the Sun is the perfect manifestation (*muẓhir-i tāmm*) and the life of all beings depends on its light, and thus it has the merit (*lāyiq*) of devotion. To the abhorrence of the conservative Muslim Badaʾuni, Birbar even advocated some further Indianisation by suggesting that in prayer, 'the face should be turned towards the rising and not towards the setting sun (i.e. Mecca)'; that man should venerate all natural objects, even down to cows and their dung, and by doing this, Akbar should adopt the sectarian mark and Brahmanical thread.[34]

This idea that Akbar's sun project was the adoption of a Brahmanical idea is also suggested by two Indic sources. One is the so-called *Parasiprakasha*, a bilingual lexicon in Sanskrit and Persian, written by Krishnadasa and dedicated to Akbar. Krishnadasa was a member of the caste of Maga Brahmans or 'Magician' Brahmans, one of the few remaining Hindu groups that were specifically devoted to the Sun god Surya. Hence, not surprisingly, that work starts with a salutation to the Sun (*srisuryaya namo*), to be

followed in the first chapter with an account of the Persian names for the Sun.[35] The second Indic reference is to the Jain thinker Siddhicandra who narrates the story of Akbar reciting a thousand Sanskrit names of the Sun in his *Bhanucandraganicarita* (Acts of Bhanucandra), a history of Jain encounters with the Mughals. However, as pointed out by Audrey Truschke, despite such sources there seems to have been no living practice of solar veneration among Hindu kings at that time.[36] Following that observation, it would be difficult to argue that Akbar embraced the Sun cult as a compromise with his numerous Hindu vassals. At the same time, there may have been a great deal of Persianate-Indic commensurability regarding kings being seen as descendants of the Sun. But as also argued by Truschke, in the case of Akbar's Persian translation of the *Mahabharata*, it was actually the Persianate-Illuminationist idea of divine light that was imposed on Hindu notions of the *suryavamsa*, and not the other way round.[37]

Like Badaʾuni, Akbar's main historian and advisor Abul Fazl (1551–1602) also links Hindu religious practice with the Sun when he writes that: 'In all their ceremonial observances and usage they even implore the favour of the world-illuminating Sun and regard the pure essence of the Supreme Being as transcending the idea of power in operation.' In describing the Hindu conception of creation, he takes the Surya-Siddhanta as the most authentic tradition, in which the origin of creation derives from the Sun; the latter sending His son to the great demon Maya, to illuminate the world.[38] Quite different from Badaʾuni, though, it seems that Abul Fazl is less concerned with Hinduism affecting the emperor than with helping the emperor universalising Hinduism.

On his part, Badaʾuni not only blamed the Brahmans for taking Akbar away from Islam. He also mentions the Zoroastrians for pushing their fire worship by linking it to the cult of the Kayanians, the ancient Persian kings. Indeed, it seems that Akbar gave in to them and integrated the fire ritual into his sun project since fire 'was one of the signs of God, and one light from His lights.' Later, Abul Fazl rationalised it by sharing the story of the fourteenth-century Shaykh Sharaf al-Din who had said: 'What can be done with a man who is not satisfied with a lamp when the Sun is down. Every flame is derived from the fountain of divine light and bears the impression of its holy essence.'[39]

We should keep in mind that at this very time (1578) Akbar invited the Jesuits to join the religious discussions at his court. In his conversations with them Akbar realised that the Pope was their highest religious authority (*mujtahid-i kāmil*) and as such could change any religious law if needed and even kings could not object him. Akbar seems to have adopted this papal model when announcing the famous decree or Mahzar of 1579 which made him the final authority in the interpretation of the law. Although he still had to operate within the constraints of Islam, it shows that Akbar attempted to emancipate himself from the jurists and as such it cracked open the door for innovations such as his sun project in the year after. Of course, for Badaʾuni all this was going in the wrong direction: 'Every precept which was enjoined by the doctors of other religions he treated as manifest and decisive, in contradiction to this religion of ours.'[40] In his *Najat al-Rashid* (Salvation of the Rightly Guided), Badaʾuni further criticised sun worship more generally but remaining silent about Akbar or the Brahmins. He now used Qurʾanic verses (41:37) to reject both fire and sun worship. Having fixed movements, sun and moon are created, and hence it would be damaging and a disgrace to worship them. Better to worship the God who had created them.[41] Anyway, what seems very

clear is that in Badaʾuni's private view, Akbar had definitely crossed a line and had turned, like Julian more than a millennium before, into an apostate.

2.1. Mughal Cosmology

In understanding Akbar's sun project, it is important to measure the degree to which Akbar really introduced something new. First of all, it is important to stress that since at least the eighth century there has been substantial interaction between Arabic/Persian and Sanskrit cosmological works. By the sixteenth century in northern India, Indic cosmologists began to emphasise the origin of their various schools of transmission. The main rivals in the resulting wars of revelation were Brahma, the creator and recreator of the universe, and Surya, the Sun god, to which belonged the Surya Siddhanta, whom, as we have seen already, Abul Fazl considered the most authentic. If we follow David Pingree, all of the Siddhanta tradition of cosmology, geography, and mathematical astronomy should be seen as adaptions of Greek models and parameters, altered to fit existing Indian theories expressed in the *Puranas*, including the idea of the nine spheres and a Neoplatonic focus on the Sun. Basically, there had always been pressure to make science acceptable to the classical doctrines found in the *Puranas* and other religious literature. As internal consistency was not necessarily expected in any Indic cosmological system, by turning outside authorities into incarnations of the Sun, even contradictory new ideas could be conveniently incorporated. Something similar happened during the early seventeenth century when new cosmological insights became incorporated through the myth of 'the cursed sun' who was turned into one Romaka, i.e. a Muslim rishi.[42]

This highly flexible accounting through layered truth came very close to the common procedure of the Neoplatonists at Akbar's court. Although Mughal cosmology must have been influenced by various Indic traditions, for them it was first and foremost a universal cosmology that was traced to Plato as well as many other sages. More so than in the Aristotelian West, cosmology in the Islamic world stayed close to solar-centric Neoplatonic tradition. In the eighth and ninth centuries, intellectuals in Baghdad had begun the process of collecting and translating Greek, Persian, Syrian and Indian astrological materials. Beyond Baghdad, the Brethren of Purity of Basra as well as the so-called Sabians of Harran played a crucial role in translating, assimilating, and disseminating Neoplatonic cosmological knowledge.[43] Harran was one of the last outposts of Late Antiquity in northern Mesopotamia. The star-worshippers at that place not only made an important contribution in translating Greek books on astronomy in Arabic but also in spreading theurgical practices of invoking the planets (*daʿwat al-kawākib*) and other forms of astral magic. The main cosmological authority who incorporated the Neoplatonic tradition in his work was Abu Maʿshar (787–886) from Balkh. In Baghdad, it was the Neoplatonist philosopher al-Kindi (801–873) who had persuaded him to study mathematics in order to understand philosophy and astrology. Abu Maʿshar followed a historical approach in which human institutions rise and fall in accordance with a timetable that was set by certain types of conjunction of the planets Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars. Going beyond its Greek authorities, Abu Maʿshar considered astrology as the teaching of the Persians. But whether Greek, Persian or Indic origins, for Neoplatonists like Abu Maʿshar, it was all part of a universal wisdom tradition in which we can now recognise

a blend of Persian (Chaldean and Zoroastrian), Greek, Indic, and Arab traditions. A case in point is the so-called *Zij al-Shah* (translated in Arabic around 790): a table of star-positions, used extensively across the Islamic world, more particularly by the eleventh-century al-Biruni.

After Abu Maʿshar, by far the most influential Islamic cosmologist was Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi (903–986) and his *Kitab Suwar al-Kawakib al-Thabitah* (*Book of the Fixed Stars*) completed around 964 in Shiraz. Written in Arabic, it was translated later in Persian, Latin, and Castilian. He made it his mission to integrate Ptolemy's star catalogue with the Arab star tradition and terminology and set about defining boundaries for the 48 constellations of stars, also adding images of them. In the thirteenth century, the work was translated in Persian by Nasir al-Din Tusi who considered himself the heir to Greek science and philosophy. He persuaded the Ilkhanid-Mongol ruler Hulegu (r. 1256–1265) to begin the construction of an observatory in Maragha: the first research institute on a large scale with a recognisable modern administrative structure. Tusi's translation was also used as the basis of the star catalogue of the Timurid ruler Ulugh Beg (r. 1447–1449), the *Zij-i Jadid-i Sultani*.[44] This was disseminated further eastward to India through the famous encyclopaedic cosmology *Aja'ib al-Makhluqat* (*The Wonder of Creatures*) of al-Qazwini and the *Sirr al-Maktum* (*The Hidden Secret*) by Fakhr al-Din Razi (1149–1210).[45] The latter was primarily a work on astral magic (*hīmiyā*), the science of harnessing (*taskhīr*) the power of the planets. Although this science was part and parcel of a longue-durée theurgic legacy going back to Iamblichus, it seems obvious that it was also, at least partly, the result of an intimate dialogue with similar Indic practices of planetary divination.[46]

On a more abstract level, Neoplatonists who venerating the Sun also venerated light which fitted even better their monist longings to square the existence of a single divine principle with a multiplicity of divine forces spread throughout the world. Here they appear to follow the idea of Iamblichus who argued that because it ultimately emerged from a single source of illumination, divine light remained unified, even as it seemed to be dispersed infinitely throughout the cosmos. In this way one could defend a metaphysics in which divinity was simultaneously transcendent and yet omnipresent, remotely pure, and yet intimately involved with the Material World.[47] Just before the Mongol conquest of Iran, this Neoplatonic theory of light was elaborated upon by the Persian philosopher Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (d. 1191) and his philosophy of Illumination (Ishraq). For our present purpose, it is important to point out that he developed a political science of light in which he proposed a new political order to be ruled by an enlightened philosopher-king, whose sign of authority was described in terms of a manifest, radiating divine light named *farrah-yi īzadī*, that recalled the divine aura of the ancient kings of Persian mythology.[48]

At the eve of the Mongol conquest, Suhrawardi's ideas appear to have become prominent under the rulers of Saljuk successor states in Anatolia.[49] Not surprisingly, the Islamic Neoplatonic tradition remained strongest along the Islamic frontier with the Byzantine Empire, as Anatolia continued to maintain a Hellenised population.[50] It appears that these frontier rulers were particularly eager to adopt Suhrawardi's Neoplatonism as it fulfilled their antiquarian desire to unite the ancient wisdom of Greece and Persia. Apart from attracting intellectuals such as Suhrawardi, they also hosted Baha al-Din Walad, the father of the great poet Rumi, as well as the great Sufi master Ibn Arabi, whose thought was already deeply

influenced by Neoplatonism.[51] Interestingly, as part of this Persianate renaissance, some of the Anatolian rulers began to associate themselves with the Sun.[52]

During the second half of the thirteenth century, the flourishing of this Neoplatonic culture not only continued but underwent a massive stimulus under the patronage of the Ilkhanid and Timurid rulers of the eastern Islamic world.[53] Intellectuals such as Baba Afzaladdin Kashani, Nasir al-Din Tusi, Fakhr al-Din ʿIraqi, and Mahmud Shabistari managed to further translate and popularise Neoplatonic ideas into the wider Persianate world. One of these ideas was that studying cosmology held important ethical benefits. Following Plato's *Timaeus*, attaining the good life means to assimilate one soul to the ordered motions of the heavens. And since Nature is ordered, there must be a source of the ethical order beyond revelation. Hence, geometry and mathematics became key as to a better understanding of that universal order, both externally as internally, the latter very much in a Neoplatonic sense, in Arabic expressed as 'in the fact of the matter' (*fī nafs al-amr*). As brilliantly explained by Robert Morrison, Neoplatonic geometry thrived since it was the 'stairway by which to ascend to the celestial sphere'. The same goes for mathematics. According to Tusi, 'the ethical benefits of the study of the heavens which Plato had mentioned, would not accrue if one did not appreciate the mathematical demonstrations of the order and equanimity of the celestial orbs found in astronomy'.[54] As we have suggested already, it comes very close to the idea of *taḥqīq*: the dominant epistemology at the post-Mongol courts of the Islamic world, rooted in independent reasoning, empirical observation, openness to allegorical interpretation, as well as scepticism towards received tradition.[55]

If Neoplatonists generally were of the opinion that the Sun held the first rank among the celestial beings, it still remained subordinate to God. As the Sun's light emanates from God's own throne, God placed the Sun at the centre of the universe in order to transmit the influx of the divine spirit to men. From this Neoplatonic perspective, the Sun animates and redistributes the influx because, among the planets, the Sun embodies the astrological active intelligence. Thus, according to the theory of correspondences between the celestial and terrestrial worlds, the Sun patronises kings and symbolises good government and legitimate power.[56] There was even a Safavid tradition in which Alexander had become a world-conqueror because Plato had taught him how to harness the sun.[57] To be sure, these ideas gained another warm welcome at the early Mughal court.[58] No other dynasty made such extensive use of astrological advice and predictions as the Mughal rulers; the 'planetary king' Humayun (r. 1530–1540; 1555–1556) leading the way for his son Akbar.[59] However, it seems that due to his sun-prayers and adoption of *farrah-yi īzadī*, Akbar came much closer to the Neoplatonic-Ishraqi ideal-type.[60]

2.2. Mughal Millennium

The moment Akbar started to conceive his sun project was an ominous one. In November 1577 a comet was seen at the sky: what would it mean to the fate of emperors? Whereas in the Ottoman Empire the comet was considered an auspicious sign for the reign of Murad III (r. 1574–1595), in Iran the same event was linked to the death of Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–1576).[61] Although Akbar continued his rule, he became increasingly mesmerised by the cosmological calculations that could also impact his reign.

Millenarian fervour was around for some time already, in particular following the activities of two fifteenth-century magi, Sayyid Muhammad Jawnpuri (1443–1505) and ʿAbdallah Shattar (d. 1485). The first, possessed with considerable charismatic and thaumaturgical powers, actually claimed to be the Mahdi who had come to revive the Muslim community and to establish social justice. His followers lived in encampments outside the cities, giving up their position, property, and family. Taking their master as the living exemplar of the Mahdi, Jawnpuri's followers consequently rejected the routinised sources of religious authority. As formulated by Scott Kugle, the Mahdawi movement advocated total rejection of Islamic society as it had historically evolved as well as a total withdrawal from routine forms of social life in favour of building a radically new and just society. [62] Mahdawis received spiritual guidance directly from God through immanent vision and experience. After Jawnpuri's death, the movement continued to attract followers, becoming especially strong in the Deccan sultanate of Ahmadnagar under the reign of Ismail Nizam Shah (1589–1591).[63] Mahdawi ideas also infiltrated the Mughal court through Shaykh Mubarak Nagori (d. 1592), the father-*cum*-teacher of Akbar's main advisors Abul Fazl and Faizi.

Like Jawnpuri, ʿAbdallah Shattar also offered his followers a relatively quick immanent method to achieve union with God. This could be achieved by invoking God's names in concord with astrological movements – i.e. *daʿwat-i asmaʾ wa taskhīr*: invoking the divine names and subjecting the world to their influence – as well as through heavenly ascension. More generally, Shattaris advocated dogmatic relativism through the famous Sufi idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd* or Unity of Being. Or as one of their representatives has it: 'every Moses should come to some sort of peaceful reconciliation with his Pharao'.[64] One of the most important representatives of the Shattari movement was Muhammad Ghawth Gwaliyari (1502–1563). He was so close to Mughal emperor Humayun and even attempted to enrol the young Akbar as his disciple.[65]

The already existing millenarian tendencies at Akbar's court were further stimulated by the arrival of a group of Iranian immigrants called Nuqtawis. These were members of an originally Hurufi sect that combined witticism and broad-mindedness with a deep knowledge of the occult meaning behind letters, numbers, and other cosmic signs. Increasingly persecuted in Safavid Iran, some of them moved to India, many of them finding asylum at Akbar's court. The subsequent prominence of the Nuqtawis at the Mughal court in the 1580s is illustrated by the official Safavid chronicle of Iskandar Beg Munshi who even labels Abul Fazl a Nuqtawi whose 'absurd words made the king a drinker from many sources of truth leading him astray from the right path of the Islamic law'.[66] Although we should be wary of taking the Iranian munshi's judgement for granted, it does raise the intriguing question of the extent to which Abul Fazl was indeed influenced by Nuqtawi ideas and to what degree the Nuqtawis themselves were behind the millennial craze that suddenly surrounded the Mughal court. One figure who became very influential during these days was the Iranian immigrant Hakim Abul Fath Gilani with close Nuqtawi connections who after his arrival in 1575 became an intimate advisor of the emperor and very good friends with both Abul Fazl and his brother Faizi (1547–1595), the poet laureate, who seems to have been one of the prime agents behind Akbar's solar cult.[67]

Indeed, the one and only contemporary source that deals specifically with Akbar's sun worship is Faizi's *Kitab-i Rubaʿiyat*. Abul Fazl and Faizi were raised by their Mahdawi

father Shaykh Mubarak in a wide array of fields, including traditional theology, philosophy, astronomy, music, and medicine. Like his brother, Faizi had been a major force behind the 1579 Mahzar and the revolutionary ideological developments at Akbar's court that followed.

Probably composed in the late 1580s or early 1590s, Faizi's *Rubaʿiyat* offers 393 quatrains which quite systematically discuss Akbar's sun project. In between a description of the Sun's blessed rise and its sinister setting, we find a variety of appraisals of the Sun, its wisdom, its devotion, and its devotees. The whole ends with an appraisal of the emperor and a note on the book itself. Interestingly, the preface promises the reader thousand-and-one poems about the Sun, which probably points towards the thousand Sanskrit names for the Sun that Akbar had supposedly learned from Bhanucandra (see above) but could also refer to the so-called *Hazar Shuʿaʿ*, (*Thousand Rays*) mentioned by Badaʾuni: a work of 1000 short poems on the veneration of the Sun, written by one Mulla Shiri and offered to Akbar in 1583.[68]

Although clearly building on earlier Neoplatonic philosophies of light, Faizi's work on sun-worship seems quite unique in the Persian literary tradition. The work starts with the *Allahu Akbar* formula which from 1584 spread as an alternative to the traditional Islamic *basmala*. It expressed the Neoplatonic idea that, following Faizi's own words, God is unattainably, hidden in eternity, beyond all Being, that His light is too high for viewing. But as Allah is unseeable, the Sun and lower down the hierarchy, Akbar himself, provides an intermediate window to Him. Building on the Neoplatonist ideas of Suhrawardi and others, Faizi makes it very clear that sun worship is not worshipping the Sun *as* God but worshipping God *through* the Sun. Hence, *Allahu Akbar* should not be read, as often assumed, as Akbar *is* God but as God *through* Akbar. Indeed, it was Akbar's firm cosmotheistic belief in natural universality through the Sun which utterly demolished the boundaries of untranslatability erected by monotheism through revelation.[69]

For Faizi, the Sun is represented as mirroring God's beauty and God's light.[70] Even more so than the Sun, it is the light that should determine the direction of our prayers as a new Kaʿba. What is more, for Faizi the Sun is the first emanation, becoming intellect which generates all that is on earth: the eye, the heart, the body, and the spirit; fire, air, water, and earth; its tiniest part being a mote in a sunbeam that shares in the Sun's emanation. Devotion means opening up for this emanation, in particular during sunrise and what can be considered the year's sunrise: Nauruz. The role of king was that of the one and only trailblazer (*rāhnumūn*) to God: there is just one sun, one God, one king, indeed, knowing Akbar is knowing God.[71] Reading the text one can share in Faizi's thrill when he detected the identical numeric *abjad* value of *āftāb* (the Sun) and Akbar.[72] Clearly, what is suggested in all these poems is that, since Akbar was directly linked to God via the Sun, he could claim an autonomous and universal position above all other prophets, conveniently leaving open the issue whether that latter category would also include *the* Prophet.

2.3. Mughal Antiquarianism

Like his brother Abul Fazl, Faizi was part of a circle of avant garde Neoplatonic intellectuals, many of them immigrants from Iran and the Deccan, including the already

mentioned Nuqtavis. They became involved in a very ambitious antiquarian project which involved the writing of two chronicles: a brand-new world-history, the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, and a history of Akbar, the *Akbar Nama*. This was supported by a massive Persian translation movement of classical Sanskrit works aimed at finding universal wisdom beyond the regular Islamic sources in Arabic and Persian.[73] Based on an episode of the *Mahabharata* Faizi himself wrote the poem *Nal-Daman* in 1594. Earlier in 1587, on the request of Akbar, he had already translated a Sanskrit treatise on geometry and mathematics (*Lilavati*). But much more than just translation, the latter was combined with typical Neoplatonic hermeneutics in which the 'translator' could impose his one's own intuitive hypertext to the Indic original. By showing its deeper, inner truth, the text became universal.

Coming to the core of the antiquarian venture, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* was quite tellingly launched in 990 (1582), the year the Nuqtawi sage Sharif Amuli had predicted that a king would come to eradicate falsehood. Using his Hurufi skills, it was indeed Akbar whose name represented that ominous year, and all this just at a moment that cosmologists also announced the occurrence of the so-called *qirān*, the auspicious conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn.[74] The prime investigator of the project was Abul Fazl, writing the second chronicle himself, coordinating the first one. The millennial world history covers the history of the first Islamic millennium based on a vast range of Arabic and Persian sources and attempts to understand the reasons behind the rise and fall of kings. Unlike any other Mughal history, the *Alfi* includes extensive philosophical discussions, including one on sun worship.

The authors that were assigned to write the chronicle had a diverse intellectual background. Except Bada'uni, whom we met already as Akbar's conservative critic, most of the authors, one way or another can be associated with the Neoplatonic Great Tradition. Indeed, at least three of them can be linked to the Ishraqi or Illuminationist school through the important figure of the already mentioned Shaykh Mubarak, who happened to be not only Abul Fazl's and Faizi's father but also the teacher of at least two other authors, Naqib Khan and Bada'uni. Crucially though, Shaykh Mubarak himself studied Ishraqi philosophy in Ahmadabad (Gujarat) under Kazeruni, the latter even adopting him as his son. Later on, in Agra, the Shaykh married into the family of Rafi al-Din Safavi, further strengthening the bond between the Mubarak family and the Ishraqi school. Probably the greatest Ishraqi scholar amongst them was another Iranian immigrant, Shah Fath Allah Shirazi, also the master mind behind the introduction of Akbar's solar era.[75]

Interestingly, the *Alfi* is the only imperial Mughal chronicle that offers an extensive discussion on sun-worship. Earlier at the court, the teenager Akbar commissioned the *Hamza Nama*, a richly illustrated work about the adventures of Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet, in which sun worship is still associated with the villain, the heathen king Malik Iraj.[76] The *Akbar Nama* is full of light and illumination metaphors, but references to Akbar's sun worship are few. It discusses the Egyptian Enoch, also known as Idris and Hermes Trismegistus, as one of the fifty-two wise men who anticipated the wisdom of Akbar. Indeed, Enoch shows up as an avid sun-worshipper who renewed the law and introduced astronomy, writing, spinning, weaving, and sewing.[77] Apart from this one reference in the text, there is only one illustration that unequivocally depicts Akbar standing to worship the Sun after an important military victory (Figure 1).[78]

Figure 1. Sanwalah, Akbar prays to the Sun to give thanks for his victory over the rebels ʿAli Quli Khan and Bahadur Khan on the banks of the Ganges, from the *Akbar Nama*, 1603–1605. Source: Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Indian MS 3, f. 122b, object no In 03.122/2 © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library Dublin.

In Akbar's copy of Rashid al-Din's thirteenth-century world history, we find an illustration from circa 1595 in which Moses seems to lead his people towards the venerated sun at the moment the Egyptian army is drown into the Red Sea.[79] Abul Fazl's *Ain-i Akbari* – the second part of the *Akbar Nama* – refers only once to Akbar's sun cult:

> A special grace proceeds from the sublime sun to kings; hence they pray to it and consider it worshipping the Almighty, the shortsighted make this suspicious. How can the common people possessed only with the desire of gain, look with respect upon sordid men of wealth. From ignorance these fail in reverence to this fountain of light, and reproach him who prays to it. If their understanding were not at fault, how could they forget the Surah beginning 'By the Sun'.[80]

The silence in the *Akbar Nama* is intriguing. It suggests that Akbar lost interest in the Sun project, or perhaps somehow found it embarrassing, when the *Akbar Nama* was undergoing its final editing somewhere during the last years of the sixteenth century. Indeed, the citation above suggests that there was increasing criticism from conservative jurists, to be countered by reference to the Qurʾan itself. Nevertheless, Akbar's son and successor Jahangir appears to have taken up his father's cult again, most conspicuously in his zodiacal coins and his dream paintings showing Jahangir with an enormous sun and crescent moon surrounding his head.[81] It seems that it was only under Shah Jahan, that sun worship as such was no longer acceptable, even for the more lenient Sufi Muslims.[82] Nevertheless, sun symbolism and *taskhīr* continued to be important on India until and even after the end of the Mughal Empire.

Coming back to the *Alfi*, it too gives only a few examples of rulers who venerated the Sun. The only Mongol ruler who is mentioned is Qaidu (c. 1230–1301), the grandson of the Mongol khagan Ögedei, who is mentioned as one who kneeled three time before the Sun. Interestingly, both the *Alfi* and Rashid al-Din fail to reproduce the story in the Mongol *Secret History* in which Chinggis Khan climbs mount Burqan Qaldun to worship the Sun, although at another place he does climb a mountain to face the Sun. More important than individual cases, though, the *Alfi* provides a lengthy philosophical elaboration of sun worship and discusses the topic in connection with the transmigration of the soul or *tanāsukh*. The *Alfi* first explains the reasons behind *tanāsukh* and its necessity for the soul's perfection. It combines various arguments from Greek, Indic, Persian, Islamic and Ishraqi perspectives on the broad acceptance of *tanāsukh*. It then connects Indic to Greek philosophy and concludes that believers of *tanāsukh* in India also venerated the Sun. Hence, the discussion of sun worship does not deal with Akbar's own ideas and practices that had started at that time, but instead offers a historical overview of previous cults.

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* sets the discussion about sun-worship in the narrative related to the death of the third caliph Uthman (r. 644–655). After explaining the caliph's tragic death, it suddenly opens the discussion on sun-worship by referring to the *Maqsad-i Aqsa* (*Far Destination*) of the thirteenth-century Sufi author ʿAziz al-Din b. Muhammad al-Nasafi. According to that source, Uthman sent his forces to Yemen to destroy *Qaṣar Ghumdān*, a temple built by the sixth-century Himyarite king Sayf b. Dhi Yazan. The temple had 180 windows to observe the Sunlight and pilgrims visited the place to make a circumambulation. The *Alfi* provides further detail about the temple from the *Akhbar al-Umam* (*Stories concerning Communities*) attributed to the ninth-century Jewish cosmologist Mashallah

Misri. It mentions that this temple was called *Haykal al-Shams* (the Sun-temple). It was built by Sayf because he followed some prophets who prayed towards the Sun. Every day, Sayf stood in front of a window, prostrated before the Sun, reciting an appraisal. In true Neoplatonic mode, the text suggests that one should first develop a state of world-renouncing self-awareness before being able to give praise, to receive, and to share in, the divine light that, via the Sun, originates from the First Light.

In a further elaboration on non-Islamic sun worship, the *Alfi* connects it to old Indic practice. This time it builds on the *Milal wa al-Nihal* (*The Books of Sects and Systems of Thoughts*) of the twelfth-century scholar of religions Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Karim al-Sharistani. It not only accounts of Indians praying to the Sun but also observes that both Aristotle and Suhrawardi knew about such prayers. The Greek connection receives further detail when the text refers to Qalanus (Flavius), a pupil of Pythagoras, who brought wisdom (*ḥikmat*) to India. Apart from Qalanus, there is his student Barjamis who learned Pythagorean philosophy and spread it further among his Indian fellows. Remarkably, it was thanks to these Pythagorean teachings that Indians started to believe that God is pure light but appeared in human form and that only those who are worthy and have merit can really see Him. They also believed that human beings are enslaved by worldly temptations. Mortals cannot liberate themselves unless they fight these temptations consisting of pleasures, ego, greed, and immorality. The way the *Alfi* narrates these early examples of sun worship, suggests the imposition of a Neoplatonic metaphysical idiom on an already existing solar cult, either at the time of the conception of the *Alfi* or earlier.

After this story, the *Alfi* turns to the ninth-century *Taskhir al-Kawakib* of the already mentioned Abu Maʿshar, to discuss ritual. Thus, it mentions that the worshipper should wear royal dress like the cloths embroidered with gold to stand before the Sun in the morning. He should use a golden burner to burn incense made of saffron, pomegranate-flower, gum of quince, frankincense, lac, sandalwood, and berry. All these materials should be grinded and mixed with cow milk. Then, it should be burnt on tamarisk's coal placed in the golden incense burner, reciting an appraisal to the Sun. The latter again underscores the point that although the Sun deserves to be worshipped, it derives its divinity from an even higher source.

Although the *Alfi* does not directly refer to Akbar's sun project, it does implicitly relate to it by studying its historical antecedents and thereby giving it both further theoretical clarification as well as legitimation. As such, the antiquarianism of the *Alfi* is just one of many attempts of Renaissance 'worldmakers' to build new senses of the world's coherence; certainly not the only one that tried to achieve this by imposing a Neoplatonic *philosophia perennis* on it that goes back to the Greeks and even the Egyptians.[83] Instigated by millenarian fervour, it merged nicely with the heliocentric cosmology of Neoplatonism to create and legitimize a solar cult that although unique had some remarkable similarities with a solar cult happening at a great distance at the capital of the Christian Church.

3. Solar Cult in Barberini Rome

Moving to Rome, three decades later in the late 1620s, Pope Urban VIII was developing a sun cult of his own. As in the case of Julian and Akbar, his cult too was designed together with a bunch of Neoplatonist thinkers who melded a fascination for cosmological and

antiquarian matters that could only but upset the Christian and Aristotelian establishments of their days. Their Neoplatonism was a revival of the earlier Platonic Renaissance in Florence when Cosimo de 'Medici (r. 1434–1464), inspired by the lectures of the Byzantine Neoplatonist Gemistos Plethon, commissioned the translation movement under Marsilio Ficino which made much of the Greek Neoplatonic canon available in Latin. For Europe, Ficino opened a world that was as new and intellectually challenging as the one discovered by Columbus. How to make sense of this explosion of new information? How to understand God's unity amongst the world's increasing diversity? Intellectuals had to look for models to understand a foreign world that was undeniably part of their own. Partly caused by the confrontation with these new worlds, there was a renewed interest in what was above them, the cosmos, where there must be a divine system behind all the movement of the planets and the stars. What made Neoplatonism so attractive at this time, was its proven capacity to create unity in diversity at all levels of existence. Indeed, both the earthly and celestial spheres where part of a beautifully, layered whole that emanated from the One. For universal rulers like emperors and popes, to maintain unity in this intellectual chaos was particularly urgent. The unveiling of more and more secrets of nature (*arcana naturae*) could only but have immediate repercussions for the secrets of God (*arcana Dei*) and, most directly relevant for them, the secrets of power (*arcana imperii*).[84] As much as for Julian and Akbar before him, for Pope Urban VIII and his circle of Neoplatonic advisors, the prime challenge was to maintain the interrelated unity of cosmic, religious, and political knowledge. Their method was by both looking back (*antiquarianism*) and above (*cosmology*) for clues to unveil a unity that so far had been hidden.

Urban VIII's real name was Maffeo Vincenzo Barberini. He was the son of a Florentine nobleman. After the early death of his father, his mother took him to Rome where he was put in the charge of his uncle Francesco Barberini who was able to promote his nephew's career and whose enormous wealth he inherited. Referring to their family symbol, the bee, critics like Gregorio Leti, compared the Barberini to 'bees from Florence who came to Rome to indulge in the honey of the Church'. After he was chosen as pope in 1623, he started to build a dynasty by amassing wealth and making cardinals of his brother Antonio Marcello as well as his nephews Francesco and Antonio Barberini. Especially Francesco Barberini became an important patron of literature and the arts, also taking care of the Vatican library, building on an extensive European network of mostly Neoplatonic intellectuals. Together with his uncle Maffeo, Francesco commissioned the building of a new extravagant Roman palace, the Palazzo Barberini, which contained rich collections of books and natural objects. Through its sheer wealth and impressive pictorial programme, the Palazzo Barberini became the visual hallmark of Barberini universal power.[85] As such it shows the Barberini attempted to seek a fusion of mind and heart to effectuate the ultimate goal, man's union with God.[86]

The solar cult of Urban VIII and his family can be best described on the basis of the visual programme as depicted in the fresco cycles in the north wing of their palace. The central idea was to demonstrate the God-given nature of their good fortune and the divine election of their main representative Pope Urban VIII. Looking up to the sky, the signs of such divine providence were visible in the movement of the heavenly spheres, revealing God's intentions in all matters mundane. Hence, cosmological knowledge was a matter of high office, political power, and wealth. The close relationship of

cosmology and power is expressed in Sachi's unique *Allegory on Divine Wisdom* on the vault of the salotto of Donna Anna's apartment. Since the Barberini family was born and elected by Divine Wisdom to rule the Church in the place of God, it was able to govern with that same Divine Wisdom (Figure 2).

The programme of the fresco was inspired by biblical and cosmological reasoning. As for the Bible, the fresco depicts the biblical Book of Wisdom, traditionally ascribed to Solomon as the archetype of the wise king advising all rulers to 'love the light of wisdom, all ye that bear rule over peoples' (6: 22–23). Hence, we see a number of Wisdom's personified virtues: Divinity, Eternity, Holiness, Purity, Perspicacity, Beauty, Suavity, Strength, Beneficence, Justice, and Nobility. In addition, Love rides the heavenly Lion and hurls a golden arrow, while Fear throws a silver one and is seated on a hare.[87]

As for cosmology, the pope himself held a profound belief in the efficacy of astrology, hence his obsessive fear regarding solar eclipses, such as happened in December 1628 and

Figure 2. Andrea Sacchi, *Allegory of Divine Wisdom*, 1629–1633 in Palazzo Barberini, Rome. Source: National Galleries of Ancient Art, Rome (MiC) – Bibliotheca Hertziana, Max Planck Institute for Art History/Enrico Fontolan.

June 1630, that could be seen as announcing his demise. For Urban the Sun embodied the most beneficial astral influence, both ordained by divine providence and planned by careful calculation. Moreover, the horoscope of Urban's birth gave extraordinary prominence to the Sun. The same for the horoscope of the date of his remarkable election as pope.[88] The election conclave on 19 July 1623 started during the Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Moreover, Urban's election happened after the Sun had moved into Leo, with Jupiter separated from it by a mere two degrees. Thus, the ceiling offers a figurative representation of Urban's horoscopic chart with the three essential astrological influences at the time of Urban's election: the Sun and Jupiter in conjunction in the sign of Leo. They also provide the most powerful compositional line in the painting: Love's downturned arrow leads the viewer eye from the lion of Leo through the Sun of Wisdom to Aquila, the eagle of Jupiter.[89] Therefore, the association between Divine Wisdom, the Sun and Urban VIII constitutes the fresco's primary cosmological reality.[90] As incisively analysed by John Beldon Scott, the most remarkable aspect of this ceiling fresco is the heliocentrism suggested by the central placement of the Sun (Wisdom) and the eccentric location of the earth – an implicit validation of the Copernican system in the family palace of the pope who permitted the condemnation of Galileo on that point just two years before its completion.[91]

3.1. Barberini Cosmology

Indeed, it is important to stress that the Barberini sun cult happened in a European intellectual context that was very different from the one in Mughal India. That difference was Aristotelianism which from the twelfth-thirteenth century, thanks to newly translated Aristotelian texts, had found a rock-solid and permanent institutional base in the newly created universities.[92] The Neoplatonic translation movement in Italy made possible what never existed before: a bipolar philosophical world dominated by a sharp controversy between Plato and Aristotle. Although for centuries, Aristotle had been the authority par excellence in the West, during the fifteenth century, his authority was undermined by the rise of Platonism. In fact, new thinkers, exploited the now increasingly Neoplatonic Plato as an anti-Aristotelian battering ram to undermine Peripatetic supremacy. In due course, the sharp polemic undermined the authority of both Aristotle and Plato. Interestingly, we can see how Neoplatonists created an unholy alliance with the gradually emerging new sciences to find a space beyond the Aristotelian-scholastic paradigm. At the same time, Neoplatonist were keen to demonstrate that, as exemplified by the early Church Fathers, Plato offered teachings that were potentially more harmonious with religious dogma, in particular regarding soul and creation.[93] As we will see, Neoplatonic scholarship increased the focus on the antagonism between Aristotle and Christianity, stressing that the latter was part of an ancient wisdom tradition as exemplified in the hidden secrets of both the cosmos and the past.

During the Italian Renaissance there was a booming interest in the working of the cosmos. Interestingly, both Mughal and Italian cosmology shared a common Greek legacy as they build on Arabic sources that, due to translations in Persian and Latin, became more widely available after the thirteenth century. In fact, some of the main cosmological insights of the Renaissance derived from the scientific activities of the Mongol-Ilkhanid observatory at Maragha in northwestern Iran.[94] These new insights merged with

an already existing but more implicit influence of Arabic sources that had criticised Ptolemy. The critique of Ptolemy generated new mathematical models, including those of the thirteenth-century Nasir al-Din Tusi and Qutb al-Din Shirazi which, via the Italian universities, most probably facilitated the new heliocentric thinking of Nicholas Copernicus.[95]

Copernicus himself was very much immersed in Neoplatonic thought about the cosmic centrality of the Sun as revealed in the interesting citation provided by Valerie Shrimplin-Evangelidis:

> In the midst of all assuredly dwells the Sun. For in this most beautiful temple who would place this luminary in any other or better position from which he can illuminate the whole at once? Indeed, some rightly call Him the Light of the World, others, the Mind, or the ruler of the Universe: Trismegistus names him the visible God, Sophocles' Electra calls him the all-seeing. So indeed, the Sun remains, as if in his kingly dominion, governing the family of Heavenly bodies which circles around him.[96]

One of the classical authors he had read was Plutarch, who recorded the Pythagorean opinion that the earth revolves around a central fire and spins like a wheel.[97] In fact, as we have seen earlier when discussing Julian, Neoplatonists had been heliocentric from the very beginning and now new scientists like Copernicus suddenly proved them right. Together they supported a Catholic revival of Christian concepts which analogised Christ with the Sun.

The Neoplatonic revival during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century conditioned the initial Catholic acceptance of heliocentrism. This is illustrated by the way the great Michelangelo dramatically altered the depiction of the Last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. Instead of the traditional layers of Christ at the top, Heaven above, Earth in the middle, and Hell beneath, we are faced with a beardless Christ, in the guise of a Sun-Apollo, at the centre of the circular composition. As aptly described by Shrimplin-Evangelidis, the hierarchical compartmentalised layers of the old tradition are overruled as Christ appears in the centre of the main design with a mêlée of saints and angels, saved and damned, twisting and turning all around. The moving, circular composition of the fresco is evident; the intention of the artist, to base the design on a circular, not hierarchical, scheme becomes absolutely clear.[98]

The commissioner of the fresco Clement VII (1523–1534) and also his successor Paul III Farnese (1534–1549) and Michelangelo were grown up in the Neoplatonic atmosphere of the court of Lorenzo de Magnificent. In the early sixteenth century: the heliocentric theory of the universe was quite simply not regarded as conflicting with Catholic Church doctrine. Like Copernicus, Michelangelo too was very much inspired by Neoplatonism, in particular through Ficino.[99] Perhaps Ficino's most important work, and one which Michelangelo is known to have read, is his *Commentary* on Plato's *Symposium* which discusses the cosmological ordering and takes the Sun as a symbol of God, which goes back to Plato who sees the Sun as a metaphor of the Good. In other works of Ficino too, there is an analogy between God and Sun, especially in his *Platonic Theology* (1482) and *Liber de Sole* (1493).[100]

Plethon and Ficino are renowned for their dedication to the Sun. Plethon is credited with composing prayers and hymns venerating the Sun as the creator of all things. Although only fragments of his works remain, it is evident that he likely expanded

on Proclus' *Hymn to the Sun*, emphasising the Sun's role as the ruler of other planets and, in conjunction with them, the governor of all terrestrial matters.[101] In his commentary on Plotinus, Ficino conveys that ancient people worshipped the planets for the benefits accessible through exposure of one's soul and spirit to their influence. However, he also notes that the majority of Platonic philosophers exclusively worshipped the Sun.

Julian and Iamblichus composed orations to the Sun. Plato called the Sun the visible off-spring and image of the supreme God; Socrates, while greeting the rising sun, often fell into ecstasy. The Pythagoreans sang to the lyre hymns to the rising sun. Concerning the cult of the Sun, let them look to that; but undoubtedly: 'God has placed the tabernacle in the Sun'.[102]

In the *De Triplici Vita*, Ficino imagines himself playing the lute, decorated with a picture of Orpheus charming animals, trees and rocks, singing the Orphic Hymn of the Sun – a theme that even reached the Mughal court as can be gleaned from the Delhi throne of emperor Shah Jahan. For Neoplatonists in the tradition of Iamblichus, it was a theurgical rite to attract the cosmic spirit that flows through the whole of the sensible universe, and which provided a channel of influence between the heavenly bodies and the sublunar world.[103]

Of course, as stressed already, for Neoplatonists and the likes of Ficino, the Sun was not God but a very crucial and central emanation of God. For them, this was very much in line with Christian revelation and even with the Aristotelian worldview about God as the Unmoved Mover. Now, though, with the proven centrality of the Sun, the equation of the Sun with God suddenly became a proposition that was as obvious as it was dangerous, especially for popes.[104]

3.2. Barberini Millenarianism

Under the papal rule of Urban VIII, the Barberini family's Neoplatonic-Florentine lineage became further entwined with a natural philosophy that became increasingly mixed with a great deal of millennial fire; a fire that was fanned by a southern wind from Calabria created by a group of philosophers influenced by Bernardino Telesio (1509–1588). Just like many of their contemporaries, this circle too used the Platonic revival to dare think beyond the restrictions of the Aristotelian-scholastic establishment. Telesio – whom Bacon famously called the first of the moderns – designed a new natural philosophy that, he claimed, was entirely based on empiricism. It built on the idea that every occurrence, both mental and material, can be explained as a conflict between two principles, hot and cold, both endowed with sense and a desire for self-preservation. These principles were meant to replace the Aristotelian metaphysical principles of matter and form. Telesio presumed that in the beginning God had created two primary globes, the Sun and the Earth, the Sun being the seat of heat, the earth that of coldness, and that God had separated them with such a distance in space that they could not extinguish each other.[105] Perhaps not as gripping and spectacular as the debate about heliocentrism, the relationship between light and heat was one of the key problems of science at that time. Both debates were part of a movement, strongly influenced by Neoplatonism, that aimed to liberate science from Aristotelian shackles. Both made the Sun at the focus of political, religious, and scientific attention.[106]

The deep entanglements of religion and science in the cosmological speculations on the Sun clearly shows in the work of Antonio Persio (1542–1612), one of Telesio's followers who became active in Rome. The magical-religious work of this friend of Galileo is clearly written in the spirit of Ficino and includes a long, lyrical prayer to the Sun in which God illuminates the soul, and the Sun illuminates the spirit. It is through the latter that man's *ingegno* acquires true wisdom, an acquisition that is perfected by God; those who acquire wisdom shall shine like the firmament, and those who teach it like the stars. Hence, Persio wants to demonstrate that sun worship is not at all in conflict with Christianity but strengthens it. His prayer ends by asking that, as the eagle fixes the Sun with its eyes, so may we, with our *ingegno*, always look to the true Sun, which is God, who will illuminate us as He once did His Light in the pure and beautiful Virgin, whose garment is the Sun and whose crown is the stars.[107]

Adding a political and millenarian urgency to these speculations about the Sun was another supporter of Telesian natural thought, the enigmatic Dominican friar Tomasso Campanella (1568–1639).[108] In his ideas, we find the earlier tendencies of an anti-Aristotelian approach that was all about reading the divine signs that God had written in the Book of Nature. Quite different from his comrade Galileo who believed that it was written in the language of mathematics, Campanella lived in an Telesian world full of likenesses, correspondences, and resemblances and written in the hieroglyphic symbols of magic.[109] Campanella himself knew how to read this as he had lived for a couple of years (1589–1592) in Naples under the spell of Giambattista della Porta, the great magus of natural magic.[110]

As suggested by Giancarlo Casale and Stefano Pello, Campanella's hermeneutics may not have been that far removed from the earlier mentioned *taḥqīq* prevalent at the post-Mongol courts. We know, for example, that some of Campanella's writings were circulating in the Safavid Empire and that one of his direct disciples, the Dominican father Paolo Piromalli, even authored a Persian treatise on Christology and the doctrine of Trinity at the court of Shah Abbas II (r. 1642–1666), of which a Latin version also exists. In this we find a relatively long discussion on natural philosophy. Here, following Campanella's teachings, he methodologically criticises the Aristotelian approach to nature, advocating for the necessity of direct observation and praising new discoveries.[111]

Far from undermining Catholicism, Campanella too stressed that his new scientific insights fully aligned with Scriptures. For him, Galileo's theory of the motion of the earth, of a central sun, and of the systems of the stars with waters and earthly elements was indeed an ancient conception and as such part of a *philosophia perennis*. It came from the mouth of Moses himself and then Pythagoras who had promulgated it to the gentiles. All this would soon be revealed in a lost Chaldean Ur-text of the Book of Job.[112] Elaborating on Telesio, Campanella believed in the primacy of solar heat that connects all beings and confers life on them. He used Ficino's commentary on Plotinus's *Enneads* to assimilate that with the hot breath of the World Soul that penetrates and is infused in the whole world.[113] What is more, as the Sun was now gradually approaching the earth, Campanella believed that its end was imminent.[114]

It was mainly for his millennialist-political agenda, that Campanella was for much of his life persecuted, imprisoned and tortured by the Inquisition on suspicion of heresy. As we have seen already in the case of the Mughals, due to a sequence of heavenly occurrences: the nova of 1572, the comet of 1577, and the great conjunction of Jupiter and

Saturn of 1583, millenarian speculation was already on the rise. In 1599, Campanella became the main inspiration behind a revolt against the Spanish who ruled the Kingdom of Naples at that time. According to Campanella, astrological tables had predicted an unusual succession of eclipses in the first years of the new century. The year 1600 appeared to be a crucial moment in time as it was composed of a hundred times seven and nine, both of which according to Pythagoras and Plato were fatal numbers.

After the revolt failed, Campanella found himself in prison again; he only escaped the death sentence by simulating madness. Campanella took his long imprisonments as an opportunity to write; he wrote more than one hundred books, including the utopian text *La città del Sole* (*The City of the Sun*) clearly inspired by Plato's *Republic*. In it he describes an ideal society, neither Christian nor Islamic, that follows a kind syncretistic naturalism embodying the best practices of all peoples. The society is surrounded by seven circles of wall, at the centre of which there is a temple on which the stars are depicted together with their influence on earthly affairs. It contains an altar in the form of a sun on which are placed a celestial and terrestrial globe. Prayers are directed towards the heavens. The task of the twenty-four priests, who live in cells located in the highest part of the temple, is to observe the stars and, using astrological instruments, to take account of all their movements. It is their job to indicate the times most favourable for generation and for agricultural labours, acting in this way as intermediaries between God and humanity.[115]

One may speculate about the model for the *City of the Sun*. In his *Monarchia Messiae* (1605) Campanella makes an appeal to return to the original unity of king and priest and to a single priestly law under which the entire human race can come together as was the case under Adam and Hermes Trismegistus who were simultaneously king, priest, and philosopher. After initially looking towards the Ottomans and Spain, in the late 1620s, Campanella shifted his eschatological hopes to the Vatican.[116] Freed from prison in Naples in 1626, he moved to Rome where he lived until 1634, gaining substantial influence on the papal court already immersed in speculations about the Sun and its implications for the claims of universal rule of Urban VIII. According to Beldon Scott, Campanella was most probably the principal intellect behind the *Divine Wisdom* programme at the Palazzo Barberini since its metaphysical speculations and especially the quasi-messianic vision of astrological predestined glory of the papal family bears the mark of his thinking.[117]

As ever that Magus with a Mission, Campanella was more than keen to embrace the Barberini agenda.[118] Campanella saw the Sun as a visible sign of the God and had written poetry to the Sun evoking Telesian heat themes. He now not only connected Urban's rule to the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn but in his tract *Gl'immortali splendori di Urbano* he also depicted Urban as the Sun, the centre of the universe who rules the world.[119] At the same time, Campanella tried to convince the pope of the Sun's slow approach and the events this portended. Thus, Campanella suggested he could train missionaries to go forth from Rome to convert the whole world to a reformed 'natural' Catholicism, which would introduce the new millennium, the universal City of the Sun.[120]

At this point of time, Campanella made himself indispensable by providing the pope with an astrological palliative for fears of impending doom.[121] In 1628 Urban became scared to death because of insistent astrological predictions of his imminent death, linked that year to a solar *and* lunar eclipse.[122] He invited Campanella to his palace to

put his natural magic into effect against the evil influences of Mars and Saturn. The scene is famously described by D.P. Walker. We see an exasperated pope in a sealed room decorated with foliage and fabric of white silk, the air purified by burning aromatic woods. There were two lamps, five torches and other lights to represent the planets of the zodiac. While music was played to connect to Jupiter and Venus, they drank astrologically distilled liquors to attract useful cosmic influences.[123]

There is no doubt at all that Campanella's magical practices derived directly from Ficino's rendering of Neoplatonic theurgy. Campanella himself gave a full exposition of those Neoplatonic astrological and magical writings which were also Ficino's main source: Iamblichus, Proclus, Porphyry and the *Hermetica*. For him, all this magic was all very natural and non-demonic, and even in accordance with the two great theologians of his own Dominican order: Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus.[124]

Meanwhile, in the early 1630s the situation for the Pope dramatically changed as the result of Gustavus Adolph's push into Germany, now supported by that close Catholic ally of the Barberini, France. This increased the pressure of the Spanish and Jesuit parties at the Vatican to close the Catholic ranks and to take a firm stand against all kinds of heresy. In order to survive, Urban could only but comply and withdrew his support of the *novatori* and *virtuosi* at this court.[125] In 1633, this fuelling spirit of the Contra Reformation ultimately led to the condemnation of Campanella's friend Galileo. Due to changing winds, Campanella too, supporting Galileo in his *Apologia per Galileo* (Defence of Galileo), had become a dangerous liability for the pope. As a consequence, Campanella left Rome in 1634 to find asylum in France which in his eyes, would soon emerge as the new global superpower. Hence, from the Ottoman Empire to Spain to the Vatican, Campanella's apocalyptic dream finally shifted towards France. It was there that he was to write his last messianic eulogy, this time on the birth of the Dauphin, the future Sun-King Louis XIV.[126]

3.3. Barberini Antiquarianism

During the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the Italian breeding ground for Neoplatonists had not been the rather pedantic universities which often remained based on Aristotelian scholastics, but the Renaissance Academies. These were loosely organised centres for the interdisciplinary fields of Neoplatonist practitioners in the sciences and the humanities, including the arts. From a Neoplatonic view, science and humanities could and should be combined in a natural philosophy that was inclined towards the orphic and the occult, very much along the lines of Ficino, Persio, and Campanella. The latter two came from Calabria, the region with the earliest academies devoted to the study of the natural world as exemplified by the approach of Giambattista Della Porta. As much as his Academia dei Segreti, his European bestseller *Natural Magic* aimed to delight and astonish his audience in a theatre-like setting.[127]

But despite the academies, as incisively observed by Ian McNeely, Neoplatonism and its related currents remained 'tacit knowledge', pervasive yet weakly institutionalised.[128] Especially when the storms of the Inquisition were raging, they could only survive with the support of the courts. As a result of such patronage, the rulers of these courts themselves were threatened, as we have seen in the case of Campanella and Urban VIII.[129] Nonetheless, as early as the mid-fifteenth century, several generations of humanist

scholars had already provided the pope with numerous antiquarian studies to strengthen his authority. One of them was the Neoplatonic antiquarian Agostino Steuco, patronised by Pope Paul III (r. 1534–1549), whose studies included the supposedly pre-Classical sources, made available through the Florentine translation movement, to develop the idea of a long-durée *philosophia perennis* going back to the sages Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus.[130]

Somewhat later, a true old-style Neoplatonist polymath, Francesco Patrizi of Cherso patronised by Pope Clement VIII (r. 1592–1605), used these same sources to build a philosophical scheme that combined, in classic Neoplatonic ways, the sciences with the humanities. Inspired by the Neoplatonic use of the Sun as the physical counterpart of the Good, he construed a full-fledged metaphysics of light; the latter serving as the intermediary between the corporeal and incorporeal realms. Without providing all the detail here, Patrizi believed that the existence of light in the corporeal real implies the existence of a purely incorporeal light which ultimately springs from God as the *Lux Prima* or First Light.[131] It was on the shoulders of such giants of Neoplatonic *philosophia perennis*, that the Barberini antiquarian scholars felt confident enough to look for historical antecedents of the Barbarini sun cult. Although they too, were very much aware of the latest scientific insights of Telesio and Galileo, less so than most of their Neoplatonic precursors, the following two Barberini scholars are primarily known for their antiquarian interests.

The first antiquarian scholar that played a central role in the Barberini milieu was Girolamo Aleandro (1574–1629), a prominent member of the Accademia degli Umoristi and from 1624 until his death in 1629 Urban's personal secretary. In his antiquarian interests Aleandro was drawn to a study of pre-Christian idolatry. Aleandro was particularly interested to unveil threads of a universal wisdom in it. Far from stressing the differences between pagan religions and Christianity or playing down the former as mere fables, he used ancient models of Neoplatonic allegory to emphasise the similarities with Christian monotheism. Hence, in search for a *philosophia perennis*, Aleandro focused on the study of pagan sun worship. This became all the more urgent due to a recently excavated relief in Rome which showed the four representations of the elements and the seasons, but all determined by the Sun. Although increasingly critical of too easy present-day interpretations of these allegories, Aleandro, inspired by the Neoplatonic legacy, remained fascinated by the philosophical perspectives on the discoveries of the relief and must have been convinced that he was dealing with the most relevant thing in the world: the worship of the one and only God, in the guise of the Sun, now represented by the dazzling universal authority of Urban VIII whose rule was the realisation of Plato's political project.[132] Following in this Neoplatonic vein, Aleandro claimed that the sun constituted only an image for the intellectuals and sculptors he studied. In reality, it referred to God; the Sun being a mere simulacrum.[133] One important advantage of that position too: it was still in agreement with Catholic dogma. Nonetheless, to see Christian monotheism as part of a universal wisdom tradition of sun worship must have raised eyebrows amongst the more conservative Catholic theologians.[134]

Aleandro was just one of many antiquarian scholars in the sixteenth – and seventeenth-century European Republic of Letters who had turned to the study of pagan religions, partly instigated by the European discoveries of other religions in other parts of the world. One of them was Lucas Holstenius (1596–1661) from Hamburg who studied in Leiden, Oxford, and Paris. In that latter place he met Aleandro as well as the French

savant Claude-Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc who introduced him to the Vatican ambassador there, Cardinal Francesco Barberini. Meanwhile, Holstenius had learned Greek and had extensively read the classical authors when in Leiden and Oxford. Through Bessarion, Steuco and the Church Fathers he heavily leaned towards Neoplatonism. In 1627, after converting to Catholicism, Holstenius moved to Rome to become the Cardinal's librarian and one of the prime intellectuals to support the Barberini claim to rule, and their sun cult more in particular.

Holstenius was very much working along the lines of his colleague Aleandro, as he was also dazzled by new Roman excavations which he tried to bring home through Neoplatonic interpretations.[135] Much earlier, though, when still studying at Leiden, he became inspired by the Neoplatonic interests of his Leiden teachers, the historian Daniel Heinsius and the geographer and historian Phillip Clüver. With the latter, Holstenius had spent nine months (1618) travelling across Italy and Sicily. Clüver's interest in pagan religions was primarily based on the work of the late-Roman philosopher Macrobius who considered the Sun as the unifying element of polytheistic diversity. For Clüver, almost all traditional gods of the Roman pantheon should be understood as personified attributes or effects of the Sun. To understand the true nature of the divine, the scholar must be able to decipher its hidden clues. In other words, all gods are deciphered as bearers of attributes of the one god, and thus polytheism should be understood as an expression of a 'general theology of peoples.' Going beyond the knowledge of his late-antique informant Macrobius and reflecting more in particular on the history of the Celts, Clüver aimed to demonstrate that all their names of goddesses refer to the moon, while the names of their gods refer to the Sun. Despite all the variety in the names for the Sun and the moon, they ultimately signify the one, true God.[136]

In Rome Holstenius found himself soon in a position to elaborate on the ideas of his Leiden teacher. In the midst of the Aristotelian-Jesuit attacks on Galileo, Holstenius was commissioned by his patron to save heliocentrism. Indeed, if Aristotle was right about God as the unmoving mover, heliocentrism could lead to idolatry, leaving the pope and his sun cult in a particularly dangerous position. Hence, Holstenius wrote the *De systemate mundi Copernici & Lanspergij* in which he defended Christian Platonism by claiming that Aristotle's teacher, Plato – who was so Christianised at that time that he could not be accused of being idolatrous – had already believed in the Sun's central position as the product and instrument of the Good. Holstenius tried to find further evidence of this Platonic heliocentrism in other classical sources such as Plutarch and Proclus. Holstenius mentioned how the latter had named the centre of the universe the Guardian of Zeus through which all celestial bodies are led in circular motion.[137] Indeed, Holstenius avidly studied Proclus' *Hymns* and also translated his *Hymn to the Sun*. Following Proclus and customary Neoplatonic hermeneutics, Holstenius was aware that understanding ancient fables depended on seeing their inner, divine, and hidden signs. Hence, for the esoteric, Neoplatonic reader heathendom still contained elements of divine wisdom, or as the pope had formulated it himself:

> There is no need for us to be surprised that such a sublime and equally pure sense of light has cloaked itself in the darkness of heathenism, since heavenly truth is so abundant and diffuses itself into the communication of every creature, that even a small beam of it can shine into this darkness.[138]

Despite the intellectual endeavours of natural philosophers like Campanella and antiquarian scholars like Aleandro and Holstenius, with the trial of Galileo, the Neoplatonic momentum in Rome had passed. Or to use Peter Rietbergen's fitting interpretation:

> the innocent, by and large poetic Neoplatonism of many of Urban's contemporaries fell victim of the Jesuits' abhorrence of the more materialistic aspects of the cosmology of Campanella and Galileo … Playing with Platonism was acceptable till a more literal-minded, Aristotelian view, began once more, to prevail.[139]

In the long run, and more generally for the West as a whole, the antiquarian studies that were mobilised in the intellectual trench wars between Aristotelianism and Platonism could only but destroy both, creating space for the gradual predominance of a fully empirical worldview.

4. Conclusion

At the end of the last millennium, the Indian historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam published an essay that is now widely considered the foundation stone of connective global history.[140] It started with a critical discussion of some grand syntheses of global ambition like those of Victor Lieberman, André Wink, Kirthi Chaudhuri and Christopher Bayly. Since then, their macro approach to global problems has lost quite some steam, partly due to Subrahmanyam's own insistence on studying the micro-level, an advice that many scholars in the field of global history and area studies have taken to heart in the decades that followed.[141] But since Subrahmanyam also warned against the parochialism of area studies, the result could only be the study of globally-connected micro-histories. Or to use the words of Subrahmanyam himself, 'we cannot attempt a "macro-history" of the problem without muddying our boot in the bogs of "micro-history"'. The connective ingredient in that seminal 1997 article was sixteenth-century commensurability in millenarianism, which Subrahmanyam linked with the notion of the 'early modern', the result of 'a changed domain of global interaction that has to do with such diverse matters as the legacy of Chinggis Khan and Timur, the Counter-Reformation and its overseas drive to proselytize, as well as the so-called Voyages of Discovery'. In the previous pages, we have directly or indirectly revisited these themes from the point of view of Neoplatonism, a Great Tradition that grosso modo covered the same territories as Subrahmanyam's. Which new insights did we gain from this exercise of longue-durée global intellectual history?

To answer that question, let me start with another anecdote of astonishing commensurability. In 1621 the papist Discalced Carmelites settled in Shiraz and were asked by their hosts to furnish the local madrasa with the works of Aristotle and Plato in either Latin or Greek.[142] This intriguing instance of a direct encounter between the two branches of Neoplatonism once again affirms the often-overlooked reality that the Latinate and Persianate worlds were both heirs to a common Hellenic legacy. Moving beyond this more obvious observation, by examining two specific cases on opposite sides of Eurasia, we have noted how expansive imperial and empirical realms fostered a shared millenarian fervour. For someone like Mircea Eliade, looking for more general patterns in comparative religion, it could be said that there was a connection between sun religions and historic destinies: 'where history is on the march, thanks to kings, heroes, or

empires, the sun is supreme.'[143] In our two cases, historic destiny combined with millenarian fervour to motivate universal rulers to pursue hegemony beyond the confines of monotheistic doctrine. In both instances, we have seen how Neoplatonic cosmologists and antiquarians adeptly equipped such rulers with the tools to establish and validate an all-encompassing solar cult.

The key objective of this exercise was *not* to study connective global history by focusing on the circulation of ideas or by highlighting the intellectual interaction during early modern times. Instead, I hope to have demonstrated the existence of a longue-durée Neoplatonic Great Tradition of sun worship stretching back to Julian and the early Neoplatonists, encompassing both the Latinate and Persianate spheres, interacting intensively with the solar traditions of the Indic sphere. Indeed, it is the existence of a Neoplatonic continuum that elucidates much of the intellectual and cultural interaction as already existing Neoplatonic commensurabilities between the various cultural zones within the region as a whole.

Another crucial aspect of this continuum is a shared hermeneutic approach based on the inner understanding of unseen essences behind observable phenomena, a worldview with roots dating back to Late Antiquity and quite distinct from the 'early modern' individualism and empiricism that gradually supplanted it after the long sixteenth century. If there is in this a Western *Sonderweg* at all, it lies in the ongoing dominance of Aristotelianism and the increasing confessionalization that countered the resurgence of Neoplatonism during the Renaissance. In the East, thanks to the influence of the Mongols and their Persianate successor empires, the Neoplatonic perspective remained prevalent at least until the nineteenth century, and in some regions, even longer, as demonstrated by the fact that the late Ayatollah Khomeini placed such great value on Plotinus; another case in point of the amazing intellectual flexibility of Neoplatonism.[144] It also suggests that the very different longue-durée trajectories of the Neoplatonic Great Tradition in the Persianate East and the Latin West must have contributed significantly, not only to the different outcomes of their solar cults, but also to their different political trajectories more generally.

Notes

1. Braudel, "Histoire et Sciences sociales," 732: *Mêmes permanences, ou survivances dans l'immense domaine culturel.*
2. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, 2, 235: *Mīfarmūdand khurshīd-i wālā rā bi farmānrawāyān ʿināyat ast khāṣ wa azīn rū niyāyishgarī ba-dar namāyand; wa ilahī parastish bar-shumurand wa kotāhbīn bi bad-gumānī dar-uftad.*
3. Urban's poem dedicated to Galileo. "Adulatio perniciosa," in Urban VIII, *Illustrissimi et reverendissimi Maffaei*, 46–49: *At prima Solis cum referat diem, Lux orta, puro Gangis ab aquore; Se sola diffundit micánsque, Intuitus radijs moratur.*
4. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 38–41.
5. Assmann, "Pharaonic Kingship," 94–110.
6. Plato, *Republic*, 509b, and 516b–c.
7. Gommans, "The Neoplatonic Renaissance," 171–175.
8. However, see the stimulating recent edited volume by Stefan Sperl and Yorgos Dedes that looks more widely at the interface of Neoplatonism and poetry across Africa, Asia, and Europe. Its aim is not detecting influence but rather to

> show how themes, images and concepts that can be associated with the Neoplatonic heritage have left comparable marks on poetic language used to achieve expressive ends that are so different as to defy any common label. By bringing their underlying kinship to awareness, this volume hopes to generate a new way of reading these works which sees them as mutually enlightening and in dialogue with each other, notwithstanding the profound cultural differences which separate them. This may in turn pave the way towards enhanced cross-cultural understanding and the discovery of a joint sense of purpose. (Sperl, "Introduction," 3)

9. The term Great Tradition derives from Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture*. Here I follow the interpretation of Frankfurter, "The Great, the Little."
10. For this reformulation of this well-known metaphor, see El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, although I am aware that in this instance, I have made this happening much earlier and due to political circumstances.
11. For the latest study on this important post-Ghazalian shift from *falsafa* to *ḥikma*, see Griffel, *The Formation*. The literature on philosophy in the Islamic world (the same goes for philosophy anywhere in the world) is vast but also a massive labyrinth for the uninitiated, especially for historians who look for historical context. Although Neoplatonism is mentioned all over the place, its influence has never been subjected to a comprehensive study which means that until today it is only implicitly acknowledged except perhaps for its later Iranian branches.
12. This formulation is mine, but very much inspired by the many works of Matthew Melvin-Koushki on the topic. See e.g. his "How to Rule the World."
13. See in particular Brisson, "The Making of Pythagoreanism" and Centrone, "Platonism and Pythagoreanism," and also the comments of Stephen Gersh in his "Review." For more general surveys on the topic, see O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived* and Horky, *Plato and Pythagoreanism*. For its afterlife in Islamic Neoplatonism, see Izdebska, "The Pythagorean Metaphysics" and Cottrell, "Pythagoras."
14. See Ziai, "Recent Trends in Arabic and Persian Philosophy."
15. Rizvi, "Mysticism and Philosophy: Ibn ʿArabī and Mullā Ṣadrā."
16. For an overview of the destruction of Christian Neoplatonism, see Mulsow, *Enlightenment Underground*, 175–307 and also still useful: Tigerstedt, *The Decline and Fall*.
17. The first Greek astronomer to have clearly put forward a Sun-centered theory was Aristarchus of Samos (c. 310–230 BCE); his hypothesis was that the fixed stars and the Sun are stationary and that the Earth is carried in a circular orbit around the Sun which lies in the middle of its orbit.
18. North, *Cosmos* and Savage-Smith, "Celestial Mapping."
19. Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns*, 145–189.
20. For a recent study that argues for a sharp distinction between Syrian and Neoplatonic sun worship on the one hand, and the long-established Roman cult of Sol (Invictus) on the other, see Hijmans, *Sol*, II, 1007–1058.
21. Chiaradonna and Lecerf, "Iamblichus." For the Neoplatonic continuities between Late Antiquity and the Islamic world, see O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 185–198; Swain, *Themistius, Julian*; Fowden, "Pseudo-Aristotelian Politics."
22. Wakoff, "Awaiting the Sun," 76–77. At the same time, Plotinus also symbolised the One with the Sun: 'It is a surrounding radiation from It, while It remains unchanged, just like the bright light of the Sun, which, so to speak, revolves around it and emanates perpetually from it, while it remains unchanged' (*The Enneads* V.1.6: 28–35).
23. Wakoff, "Awaiting the Sun," 79. Referring to Plotinus *The Enneads* V.5.8: 3–9. Although this specific fragment was not translated into the Arabic Plotinus, comprising the (a) *Theology of Aristotle*, (b) *Sayings of the Greek Sage*, and (c) *Epistles on the Divine Science*. Nonetheless, the Arabic Plotinus has numerous references to light (mostly rays/radiance that radiates from higher to lower layers of existence including specific enlightened human beings) and, albeit to a lesser extent, also to the Sun. Apart from the previous references, an

important passage regarding light and sun, is in the *Sayings* which gives an Arabic rendering of Plotinus *The Enneads* V.6.4: 14–22 (see Badawi, *Al-Aflatuniyya*, 186: 2–9):

> The Pure One resembles the light. The second one which is referred to some other thing resembles the Sun. The third thing resembles the moon which receives its light from the Sun. In the soul there is an acquired intellect which illuminates it through its light and causes it to become intellectual. (translated by Lewis in *Plotini Opera*, Vol. 2, 367)

24. Wakoff, "Awaiting the Sun," 83–85.
25. Ibid., 81; based on Plotinus, *The Enneads* V 1 [10] 2.17–23 (Translated in Arabic in the *Sayings*, Badawi, *Al-Aflatuniyya*, 108: 5–17).
26. Dillon, "The Theology"; Nesselrath, "Julian's Philosophical Writings." For other studies on Iamblichus' influence on Julian, see Bouffartigue, *L'empereur Julien* and Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late-Antiquity*.
27. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism*, 104.
28. Ibid., 116; Greenwood, "Crafting Divine Personae."
29. Nesselrath, "Julian's Philosophical Writings," 60–61.
30. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism*, 298. See also Liebeschuetz, *East and West*, 340.
31. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism*, 292.
32. Lauritzen, "Constantine the Great"; palimpsest is my term.
33. Although this article focuses on Renaissance antiquarianism, it comes strikingly close to what Niccolai has recently described as 'the politics of interpretation' that became so dominant during Late Antiquity and of which Julian was a product: 'an all-encompassing discourse that mobilised literature and history as mutually validating fields and constructed leaders as 'intelligent readers' to signify their capacity to organise cultural and socio-political change.' It led to new ways of understanding 'classical authors in a fast-changing world.' This 'interpretation provided a key heuristic practice for philosophers … seeking to link old texts and new ideas through increasingly ambitious theories of signification.' Especially philosopher-kings were keen

    > to engage in exegetical performances … [ranging] from efforts to demonstrate their intellectual capacity to attempts to demonstrate their assimilation to ideals of philosophical leadership and suggest their superior grasp of history shaped by a divinity coinciding with reason (Logos). (Niccolai, *Christianity*, 23–26)

    In this period, Neoplatonism in particular, considers philosopher-kings to have this inner capacity (*ratio* or *prudentia*) of comprehension (Burgersdijk, "Neoplatonic Philosophy," 177).
34. Badaʾuni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, 2, 181–227; the last citation on page 181.
35. Grobbel, *Der Dichter Faiḍī*, 62; Truschke, "Translating the Solar Cosmology," 137–138.
36. This is contradicted, however, by Franke, who refers to the Sun cult of the Sisodia Rajputs of Mewar (Franke, *Akbar*, 231). Although Abul Fazl seems impressed by the thirteenth-century sun temple in Konarak in Orissa (see Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, 1, 392–393), it is not clear from his description to what extent it still was a popular cult at that time. McKim Malville is also stressing its decline from the thirteenth century onward (McKim Malville, "The Rise and Fall of the Sun Temple").
37. Truschke, "Translating the Solar Cosmology," 139–140.
38. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, 2, 4–8.
39. Ibid., 1, 50–51. This nicely corresponds with the Neoplatonic idea of Proclus that fire is seen as a constituent of the Sun (Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns*, 153).
40. Bada'uni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, 2, 180–181.
41. Badaʾuni, *Najat al-Rashid*, 45–48. For further interpretation, see Moin, "Challenging the Mughal Emperor."
42. Pingree, "Indian Reception." See also Minkowski, "Competing Cosmologies."
43. Karamustafa, "Cosmographical Diagrams."

44. Kunitzsch, "The Astronomer."
45. Vesel, "Une curiosité"; idem, "Réminiscences" and most recently on Razi: Noble, *Philosophising the Occult*.
46. See also Subtelny, "Kāshifī's *Asrar-i qāsimī*."
47. Johnston, "Fiat Lux, Fiat Ritus," 10.
48. Ziai, "Suhrawardi on Knowledge"; idem, "The Source and Nature." The term also appears in the eleventh-century mirrors-for-princes of Nizam al-Mulk and Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (Franke, *Akbar*, 213).
49. Primarily, the Artuqids in the Jazira, the Zengids of Mosul, and the Seljuks of Rum in Konya.
50. For an overview, see Peacock and Yıldız (eds), *The Seljuks of Anatolia* and Hillenbrand, *The Medieval Turks*.
51. Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*; De Callatay, "Brethren of Purity."
52. Yalman, "ʿAla al-Din Kayqubad." See also Allen, *Islamic Metalwork*, 24–27 and Baer, "The Ruler in Cosmic Setting," 13–19. At Konya we even find a Plato cult, see Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 363–378.
53. Peacock, *Islam, Literature and Society*.
54. Morrison, "Cosmology and Cosmic Order" and idem, "Cosmic Order in the Microcosm." For Tusi this included, very much as in the same Neoplatonic spirit of Ficino, the study of the mathematical science of music.
55. Casale, "Cultures of *Taḥqīq*"; Pellò, "Looking through *Taḥqīq* Glasses"; Pye, "The Sufi Method."
56. Caiozzo, "The Horoscope of Iskandar Sultān," 129–130. Next to Neoplatonism, Caiozzo also mentions Hermetic elements, which in our view is better seen as part of the Neoplatonic tradition but that is indeed a matter of definition.
57. Melvin-Koushki, "How to Rule the World," 150. Interestingly, when coming to the throne, Shah Abbas performed a talismanic operation towards the sun (*ʿamal-i shams*) to ensure the success of his rule (Subtelny, "Kāshifī's *Asrar-i qāsimī*," 299).
58. Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 219–232.
59. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*; Koch, *The Planetary King*; Orthmann, "Circular Motions"; idem, "Court Culture." See also Blake, *Time in Early Modern Islam.*
60. This also appears from the use of the term *nayyir-i aʿẓam*, the Great Luminous Being, by both Abul Fazl and his brother, the court poet Faizi, which goes back to the earlier Timurids and further back to Ishraqi philosophy (Grobbel, *Der Dichter Faiḍī*, 53). In *Parasiprakasha*, the term is also mentioned as one of the three Persian terms for Shri Surya. Suhrawardi refers to it in his discussion on light of lights (*nūr al-anwār*). He mentions that the Great Luminous Being is the source of visible radiation (*al-shuʿāʿ al-maḥsūs*), and as long as it exists, the radiation continues (Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, 104).
61. Flemming, "Het einde," 98. Also more generally for the Ottomans, Flemming, "Sāḥib-ḳirān." For millenarian fervour under the Safavids, see in particularly Babayan, Mystics and Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*.
62. Kugle, *Hajj to the Heart*, 25.
63. Bazmee Ansari, "Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī."
64. For the Shattaris, see the works of Kugle: "Heaven's Witness"; "ʿAbdallāh Shaṭṭār"; ʿAlawī, Wajīh al-Dīn." Kugle also offers a valuable comparison between the two movements in his *Hajj of the Heart*, 164–165.
65. Ernst, "Baḥr al-ḥayāt." Muhammad Gwaliyari's most influential work is the *Jawahir-i Khamsa*, (*The Five Jewels*) a compilation of Sufi practices which includes a section on sun divination. His involvement with the Indic traditions shows clearly in his *Bahr al-Hayat* (*Ocean of Life*), a greatly expanded translation of the *Amrtakunda* (*Pool of Nectar*) in which yoga practices become clothed in a sophisticated Neoplatonic Sufi theory. Perhaps more important as a political figure under the Mughals, is Muhammad Ghawth's brother, Shaykh Bahlul who gave Sufi initiation to Humayun.
66. For the details, see Gommans and Huseini, "Neoplatonism and the Pax Mongolica," 873.
67. Bada'uni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, 3, p. 115.

68. Badaʾuni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, 2, pp. 225, 234. Unfortunately, the work seems not extant.
69. Wording inspired by Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 54–55.
70. Grobbel, *Der Dichter Faiḍī*, 137 (no. 181), 154 (no. 260).
71. Ibid., 166–167 (resp. nos 311 and 313).
72. Ibid., 103–104.
73. Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*; Nair, *Translating Wisdom.*
74. Qadi Ahmad Thattavi and Asaf Khan Qazvini, *Tarikh-i Alfi.* For further details regarding the *Alfi*, see Gommans and Huseini, "Neoplatonic Kingship in the Islamic World" and idem, "Neoplatonism and the Pax Mongolica."
75. The Neoplatonic turn of 1582 was also stimulated by the flight of Shirazi scholars from Bijapur – amongst them Shah Fath Allah himself – after the death of ʿAli ʿAdil Shah. Indeed, the remarkable parallels between the latter and Akbar's courtly cult require further investigation (see Anooshahr, "Shirazi Scholars" and also Flatt, *The Courts*). Asher claims that Akbar's political ideology was entirely inspired by Suhrawardi's Illuminationism ("A Ray from the Sun").
76. Franke, *Akbar*, pp. 199–200, 206. The illustration for the *Hamza Nama* (1557–72) is in the Österreichishes Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna.
77. Abul Fazl, *The History of Akbar*, 1, 185–187.
78. This illustration is in the *Akbar Nama* is in the Chester Beatty Library, produced in 1603–1605 by Sanwlah, depicting Akbar on the banks of the Ganges giving thanks for the defeat of ʿAli Quli Khan in 1567. Although the text informs us that Akbar 'dismounted and placed his forehead on the ground in thanksgiving' (Abul Fazl, *The History of Akbar*, 4, 280–281) the illustration has him praying towards the Sun. For another rare illustration of Akbar worshipping the Sun, see the Singapore Asian Civilisation Museum: Accession Number: 2012-00166: https://www.roots.gov.sg/Collection-Landing/listing/1263871 (accessed 11 July 2023).
79. Franke, *Akbar*, 199–200, 206. Although not clear, it is possible that this illustration comes from the manuscript produced at Akbar's court in 1595–1596, sometimes also called the *Chingiz Nama* as it covers parts 1 and 2 of Rashid al-Din's first volume, and is now in the Gulistan Library, Tehran. Anyway, sun worship of Moses is neither mentioned in Rashid al-Din's original text nor in this later Mughal version. For a discussion of the prominent role of Moses in Rashid al-Din, see Robert Hillenbrand, "Holy Figures." It will be interesting to compare the Mughal illustrations of Rashid al-Din's work with the earlier Ilkhanid versions (see Rice, "Mughal Interventions").
80. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, 2, 235.
81. Jahangir also continued to refer to the Sun as *nayyir-i aʿẓam*. For Jahangir coins, see Whitehead, "The Portrait Medals." For the dream paintings, see Rice, "Moonlight Empire" and now also her monograph *The Brush of Insight*.
82. Alam, "The Debate," 149. For Jahangir, more generally, see Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 170–210.
83. Ramachandran, *The Worldmakers*.
84. Ginzburg, "High and Low."
85. Beldon Scott, *Images of Despotism*.
86. Rietbergen, *Power and Religion*, 14, 138.
87. Beldon Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 43–44; 56–58.
88. Urban VIII was the first pope to be elected through a system of secret balloting. Having no chance to win the election, malaria broke out which affected many of the cardinals, creating a stalemate in which nothing less than divine intervention would be effective. In the face of utter confusion and bickering, Urban triumphed indicating God's providence. In contemporary accounts the event becomes associated with the bee, that other emblem of the Barberini family. On 4 August 1623, during the most desperate moments of the conclave, a swarm of bees descended from the direction of Tuscany and, according to some accounts, took the form of papal tiara, then settled on the wall outside the room that contained

Barberini's cell. This story became part of Barberini family mythology (Beldon Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 180–186). As expressed in one of Urban's own poems of Urban, the bee was also associated with the Sun as it emulated the solar globe as like great Sol 'thou pour forth gold in measure' and 'of thee, too, luminosity is born'. Indeed, 'When wax, the candle's substance, thou dost form. Why envy thou proud Phoebus, little bee? For God who made the Sun made also thee' (Muecke, "Review").

89. Beldon Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 75–87.
90. Solar symbols are all over the place in Urban's cultural patronage. Also, Urban's devotion to St. Michael is an expression of his Sun-dominated astrological destiny. In post-classical astrology each of the seven planets is guided by a special regent angel: St Michael is the angel of the Sun (Beldon Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 98).
91. This analysis of the *Divine Wisdom* fresco at the Palazzo Barbarini builds entirely on Beldon Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 3–68.
92. Monfasani, "Marsilio Ficino," 183.
93. Del Soldato, *Early Modern Aristotle*, 3, 51–2. For a recent overview of the relevant literature on this, see also Corrias and Del Soldato (eds), *Harmony and Contrast.* This in turn, created an anti-Platonic reaction in both the Reformation and Contra-Reformation. For a recent overview of the later stages of this deplatonizing process, see Mulsow, *Enlightenment Underground*, 175–205.
94. Hasse, *Success and Suppression*.
95. The extent of this facilitation remains part of ongoing scholarly discussions (Ragep, "Copernicus and his Islamic Predecessors"; Rybka, "The Influence."
96. Shrimplin-Evangelidis, "Sun-Symbolism," 607. For the original Latin, see Copernicus, *De Revolutionibus*, Book 1, Chapter 10. For Neoplatonic influences on Copernicus, see also Koyré, *The Astronomical Revolution*, 115.
97. Heilbron, *The Sun in the Church*, 7.
98. Shrimplin-Evangelidis, "Sun-Symbolism", 618–621. The equation of Christ with Sun-Apollo builds on De Tolnay, "Le Jugement."
99. Panofsky, "The Neoplatonic Movement."
100. Shrimplin-Evangelidis, "Sun-Symbolism", 629–630.
101. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 61.
102. Ibid., 18.
103. Ibid., 12–25.
104. Häfner, "Lucas Holstenius," 193. For the difficult relationship between Neoplatonic speculation and Roman censorship, see Rotondò, "Cultura Umanistica."
105. Boenke, "Bernardino Telesio."
106. Mulsow, "A Conversation by Telesio."
107. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 198.
108. He also quoted passages from Ficino's commentaries on Plato and on the Enneads of Plotinus.
109. Headley, *Tomasso Campanella*, 163.
110. See also Eamon, *Science and the Secrets* and Ashworth, "Natural History."
111. Pellò, "Looking through *Taḥqīq* Glasses." The Persian text is *Risāla dar bayān-i iʿtiqādāt wa mazhab-i kalimatullāh-i īsawī* (Treatise on the Christian Beliefs and Schools), Ms Rome Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Pers. 49. See also Giancarlo Casale's introduction to the theme issue on the topic: "Cultures of *Taḥqīq*."
112. Inspired by Campanella, the Roman Pietro della Valle travelled across Asia to find this Urtext. For this purpose, Della Valle translated the astronomical text of the Jesuit Borrus into Persian for the astronomer Zayn al-Din Lari (Avner Ben-Zaken, "From Naples to Goa").
113. Ernst and De Lucca, "Tommaso Campanella."
114. Campanella accepted Aristotle's cosmology for the past but thought that now all was in motion, as was announced already in the Bible (Mark 13:25): the heavenly powers will move from their places, and the stars will fall from the sky (Häfner, "Lucas Holstenius," 192).
115. Ernst and De Lucca, "Tommaso Campanella."

116. According to Malcolm, it is very probable that the focus of Campanella's millenarian expectations were concentrated on the Ottoman sultan Mehmed III, whose empire he admired and whose support he needed for his revolt to succeed. Anyway, Campanella was sure that to beat the Turks, the Christian should emulate them. He advised the latter to ban the study of Greek and Hebrew as this had led only to the proliferation of heresies and disputes. In their place, they should introduce the study of Arabic. On the other side, if the Turks were to introduce printing, philosophical and theological disputations would surely increase and thus weaken them. In his *Monarchia di Spagna* (1600) Campanella unequivocally turned his millennial expectations on the Spanish king. Appealing to Isaiah (45.1), Campanella maintains that the Spanish king can aspire to the monarchy of the world if he takes inspiration from the model of Cyrus, invested by God, with the mission of liberating the Church from infidels and of bringing together all peoples under a single faith through a firm accord with the Church and following the example of Constantine and Charlemagne (Malcolm, *Useful Enemies*, 184–200; Ernst and De Lucca, "Tommaso Campanella").
117. Beldon Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 88–94.
118. That apt term comes from Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, 394.
119. Rietbergen, *Power and Religion*, 365. Häfner, *Götter im Exil*, 94.
120. Somewhat earlier, Pope Gregory X founded the Propaganda Fide in 1622 to liberate himself from Spanish and Jesuit domination. Interestingly, this was expanded with a training centre (Collegium Urbanum) by Urban VIII in 1627, also promoting the mission of Discalced Carmelites. For a more overview of the developments at the Vatican, see Prodi, *The Papal Prince* and for the missionary context more specifically Windler, *Missionare in Persien*.
121. Beldon Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 92.
122. In 1632 he issued a Bull (*Inscrutabilis iudiciorum Dei)*) against astrology that particularly focused on death predictions of princes and the Popes and their families. It confirmed an earlier Bull of Sixtus V's Coeli et Terrae of 1586.
123. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 206–207 – based on Campanella's own description in *De siderali fato vitando* (How to avoid the fate dictated by the stars) published in 1629.
124. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 211.
125. Redondi, *Galileo Heretic*, 227–271. According to Redondi, it was not so much heliocentrism but Galileo's atomic theory of matter that conflicted with the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist (central to the Counter-Reformation in the Council of Trente). The doctrine of the Eucharist asserts that the consecration of bread and wine (which occurs during mass) involves the miracle of transubstantiation.
126. Much of the previous information derives from Headley's very incisive biography on Campanella, *Tomasso Campanella*. Headley sees Campanella as a terminal figure of the Renaissance whereas one could also stress his intermediate, bridging role between Renaissance and so-called Modern science.
127. It was only during the end of the sixteenth century, that some kind of division between the sciences and the humanities emerged. In Rome, from 1603, there was the Accademia dei Lincei for a natural philosophy that was increasingly stripped of Ficinian metaphysics to move towards a more proto-scientific empiricism. At the same time, the Accademia degli Umoristi was founded which focused on poetry, music and painting but also became the academic home of antiquarian scholars like Girolamo Aleandro and Pietro della Valle. Very close to the papal court, was the Accademia dei Desiosi, also Accademia di Savoia, named after its patron Cardinal Maurizio of Savoye, son and representative of Charles Emmanuel, the Duke of Savoye. Maurizio had been crucial in making Maffeo Barberini pope. All these academies were havens of anti-Aristotelian scholastics, alternatives to the bulwarks of the Contra Reformation like the Jesuit Collegio Romano and the Sapienza University (McNeely, "The Renaissance Academies").
128. For this, McNeely, "The Renaissance Academies,"233.
129. Biagioli, *Galileo, Broker*.
130. Delph, "*Renovatio*, *Reformatio*."
131. Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers*, 110–126; Purnell, "Francesco Patrizi." Patrizi was one of the very few Platonic professors at the university, first at Ferrara (1578–1592) and then even

at the Sapienza in Rome (1592–1597). His *Nova de universis philosophia* (1593) has a chapter that discusses the sun based on the oriental wisdom of the Chaldeans and Egyptians that had inspired Plato and even Julian's solar cult (Jeck, *Platonica Orientalia*, 326–330). Although Patrizi based himself primarily on ancient oriental sources, the parallels between the light metaphysics of Patrizi and Suhrawardi are worth examining further.

132. Häfner, *Götter im Exil*, 143.
133. A point of view also adopted by the English soldier-philosopher Herbert of Cherbury (1582–1648) who wrote his own hymn to the Sun and viewed sun worship as an attempt to refer to the one God by means of some visible form or manifestation along the lines of Vossius' *cultus symbolicus* against *cultus proprius*.
134. Previous paragraph based on Mulsow, "Antiquarianism and Idolatry." The relevant work here is *Antiquae tabulae marmoraea solis effigie symbolisque exculpate accurate explication* (Roma: Zannetti, 1616).
135. Holstenius associated one of the excavations under the Palazzo Barberini with Homer's cave as described by Porphyry (Häfner, *Götter im Exil*, 102–115).
136. Fugger, *Gods, Pagans, Hieroglyphics*, 171–173.
137. Häfner, "Lucas Holstenius," 200–203; Häfner, *Götter im Exil*, 168–9.
138. Häfner, *Götter im Exil*, 116–173. The citation comes from Häfner (page 139) who provides the Latin original and a German translation of a letter from Maffeo Barberini to his brother Antonio on 12 April 1614.
139. Rietbergen, *Power and Religion*, 422.
140. Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories."
141. See Ghobrial. "Introduction."
142. Windler, *Missionare in Persien*, 233. For Neoplatonic commensurabilities in the appreciation of visual art, see Gommans, *Unseen World*.
143. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 124.
144. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, 32.

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