

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EASTERN WISDOM IN THE WORKS OF AL-FARABI AND IBN SINA

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Abstract: This paper explores the philosophical core of Eastern wisdom as articulated in the intellectual legacies of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, two of the most influential philosophers of the Islamic Golden Age. Drawing upon metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy, their works represent a unique synthesis of Hellenistic rationalism and Islamic spiritualism. Through critical analysis of their major writings, this article aims to demonstrate how their thought laid the groundwork for a distinctive model of Eastern philosophical tradition and continues to influence modern thought in both Eastern and Western contexts.

Keywords: Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Islamic philosophy, Eastern wisdom, metaphysics, rationalism, ethics

Introduction

The intellectual tradition of the East, particularly within the Islamic world, offers a rich and intricate philosophy that integrates reason, faith, and ethics. Al-Farabi (872–950) and Ibn Sina (980–1037) are regarded as two pillars of this tradition. Their works were instrumental in preserving and enhancing the philosophical knowledge of the ancient Greeks, while simultaneously infusing it with Islamic theological insights. This paper investigates how their thoughts contribute to the foundational framework of Eastern wisdom, especially through their treatment of knowledge, the soul, the divine, and the ideal society.

Methodology

The methodological approach adopted in this study is analytical and comparative. It involves the examination of primary texts—Al-Farabi's "Virtuous City" and "Book of Letters," and Ibn Sina's "The Book of Healing" and "The Book of Salvation"—alongside contemporary interpretations and scholarly critiques. The goal is to extract the philosophical themes that reveal the core principles of Eastern wisdom.

Analysis and Results

Al-Farabi: The Harmonization of Reason and Religion Al-Farabi's philosophy is deeply rooted in the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions, but he reinterprets them within the Islamic context. In his view, the highest form of happiness can only be achieved through knowledge and virtue. He distinguishes between theoretical and practical philosophy, emphasizing that theoretical wisdom must guide political and ethical life. His concept of the "Virtuous City" mirrors Plato's Republic but aligns it with prophetic guidance, making the philosopher-king synonymous with the divinely inspired prophet.

Ibn Sina: The Metaphysics of Being and the Soul Ibn Sina expanded upon Al-Farabi's ideas, especially in metaphysics and psychology. His concept of the "Necessary Existent" (Wajib al-Wujud) became a central tenet in Islamic philosophy. He argued for a layered structure of existence and a hierarchical cosmos emanating from the First Cause. His analysis of the soul, particularly the famous "floating man" thought experiment, underscores the soul's independent reality and capacity for knowledge, thus bridging epistemology and metaphysics.

Integration of Ethics and Cosmology Both philosophers viewed ethics as inherently tied to metaphysical knowledge. The virtuous life is one in which the soul aligns with the divine order. This harmony between ethical behavior and cosmic principles forms a central tenet of Eastern

wisdom: knowledge is not merely intellectual but transformational and spiritual.

Influence on Later Traditions The works of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina profoundly impacted later Islamic thinkers such as Al-Ghazali and Mulla Sadra, and also resonated through medieval European philosophy. Thomas Aquinas, for example, was deeply influenced by Avicennian metaphysics. Their legacy also paved the way for a model of philosophy that does not separate rational inquiry from spiritual insight.

Discussion The philosophical systems of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina exemplify the core values of Eastern wisdom: unity of existence, harmony between intellect and faith, and the ethical purpose of knowledge. Their efforts to reconcile rational philosophy with divine revelation created a paradigm that endures in contemporary debates on the relationship between science and religion. Furthermore, their focus on the cultivation of the self, the role of the community, and the significance of ethical leadership remains highly relevant in today's fragmented and materialistic world.

Conclusion

Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina represent a pinnacle of Eastern philosophical achievement. Their integration of Greek rationalism and Islamic spirituality forged a unique intellectual path that continues to inform ethical, metaphysical, and political thinking. By grounding wisdom in both reason and revelation, they provided a timeless model for the pursuit of truth, justice, and the good life.

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