

# Studying the Views of Mohammed Abed al-Jabri in his Reading of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina

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## ABSTRACT

Mohammed Abed al-Jabri is a modern thinker who has left a great impact on the field of Islamic thought and philosophy by compiling some works. His claims about the dual nature of Islamic philosophy and his emphasis on the Islamic East and West have raised much attention and criticism. The proposed reading by Moroccan thinker is not completely original and unprecedented, and Ibrāhīm Madkūr, Fakhouri, Fazlur Rahman Malik, and others have had a critical view of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, especially on the issue. However, Mohammed Abed al-Jabri's emphasis on Arabic reason instead of Islamic reason and stating the difference in the view of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina with Ibn Rushd shows a special point of view about Islamic philosophy. Mohammed Abed al-Jabri's view has not been read very accurately in Iran and has not been fundamentally criticized. In this research, we tried to examine and discuss the main claims of Al-Jabri about Islamic philosophy, Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina and oriental philosophy, as well as Ibn Rushd and finally the issue of combining philosophy and Sharia.

**Keywords:** Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Islamic Philosophy, Ibn Rushd, Al-Jabri, Compatibility of Religion and Philosophy

## Introduction

Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, a Moroccan thinker, has critically studied philosophy and mysticism in Islamic world through his works such as "Theology, Argument and Mysticism", "We and Our Philosophical Heritage", "Critique of Arabic Reason" and "Critique of Arabic Ethics and the Impact of Khosravi Philosophy" and has defended 'Ilm al-Kalām. One of the main topics of this reading and Al-Jabri's judgment about these two philosophers is the issue of "philosophy and religion". Al-Jabri, in the main premise of his studies of Al-Farabi and Avicenna, emphasizes that these two philosophers separated intellectually in a wrong way from Aristotle and the Greek tradition. Then,

they put aside Aristotle's reasoning though and tried to form a collectivist approach by combining philosophy and religion. This approach is an abandonment of philosophy and Aristotle and is considered as an ideological approach, while Ibn Rushd, by denying Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina and their approach to philosophy, has returned to Aristotle and adopted a purely philosophical method. Due to this return, Ibn Rushd did not follow the theory of the connection between wisdom and Sharia and based Islamic philosophy on Aristotelian reason. Al-Jabri considers Ibn Rushd's return to Aristotle as the failure of the collectivist efforts of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina and tries to speak in the light of the religion of analysis of two different types of Islamic philosophy (Islamic philosophy of the Islamic East and Islamic philosophy of the Islamic West) <sup>[1]</sup>.

The subject of religion and philosophy from the perspective of philosophers and thinkers who have been researched by other scholars based on the original text will be examined. As the founder of Islamic wisdom, Sheikh Al-Rais devotes all his efforts to harmonizing his philosophical views with the principles of Islam. According to Ibn Rushd, religion seeks rational opinion and rational opinion is the same as philosophy. Finally, Ficino, unlike the scholasticisms, who insisted on the adherence of philosophy to religion, was a preacher of identity and the unity

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of religion and philosophy. Regarding the importance of this research, it seems that Al-Jabri's reading of Islamic philosophy clarifies different views. This analysis is an important way to determine the correctness or incorrectness of views and then to understand Islamic philosophy correctly. What persuaded the researcher to write this treatise is the lack of sufficient attention of past research works to explain the correctness or incorrectness of the separation of Islamic philosophy into two types of Islamic East and Islamic West and explain the relationship between philosophy and religion or wisdom and Sharia in Islamic philosophy. Furthermore, explaining the importance of Al-Jabri and his critiques of Shiite intellectual thought and re-reading of Al-Jabri from Islamic philosophy as a missing link in the mentioned research. Therefore, this treatise is an effort to study Al-Jabri about Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, to clarify the correct foundations of the two philosophers' thinking about philosophy and religion, and to explain the connection between Ibn Rushd and Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina.

## Methodology

The focus of the research is on the thematic analysis of Al-Jabri's reading of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. For this purpose, Al-Jabri's texts have been explored and presented, and his understanding of Oriental Islamic philosophy has been analyzed. Then a comparative analysis of his works and an in-depth analysis of Al-Jabri texts about Farabi and Ibn Sina is presented.

## Al-Jabri analytical texts

Al-Jabri in his book of Reading the History of Philosophy in the Islamic East claims that Al-Farabi's approach to the second part of al-Horuf is the philosophy of history. In his view, Al-Farabi explains the historical process of knowledge and societies and tries to explain the Arab-Islamic civilization through his reading of the Greek tradition. That is, Farabi intends to explain the stages of the evolution of Greek thought from the beginning to the emergence of Christianity on the basis of Islamic reading. In other words, Farabi intends to read and adapt the events and transformations of the Arab society based on the Greek philosophical heritage. Al-Jabri claims that Al-Farabi's reading has a kind of ideological character.

However, he has a different interpretation in his other work. Al-Jabri speaks of the independence of thought in thinking in the book of Genesis of the Arab Wisdom and offers a contradictory analysis to the previous understanding. He emphasizes that although al-Farabi had read Greece, he had his own goals and concerns and those of the Islamic community. Such an understanding offered by al-Jabri causes the foundation of Farabi's theory of religion and philosophy and the way of knowledge evolution to be misunderstood. Al-Farabi's main goal is philosophy. He warns of how objection to reason occurs. According to al-Farabi, if the truth of philosophy and the truth of

religion is not understood, as has happened in the first three hundred years of the Islamic world, conflict is inevitable. Al-Farabi is facing a dilemma called anti-rational movements. Objections to reason and rationality are spreading among the Ash'arites and theologians, and a large part of jurisprudence in the Islamic world, such as Hanbali and Shafi'i jurisprudence. Al-Farabi considers the collapse of the Islamic world as the result of disagreement to reason, and its survival will be through understanding the fundamental and correct philosophy and the status and importance of reason. However, al-Jabri, due to his intellectual affiliation with the Ash'arites and Shafi'i jurisprudence, could not have a proper understanding of al-Farabi's intentions and, contrary to his claims about al-Farabi's approach, found himself in an ideological abyss. Al-Farabi's concern is to try to understand the developments in the Islamic world and to present a picture of its fragile state and to pay attention to the fundamental importance of reason in order to overcome those difficulties. Interestingly, al-Jabri refers to the view of the primacy of philosophy over religion over the Greek and Christian worlds, and the primacy of religion over philosophy over Iran and India. He says that where al-Farabi speaks of the primacy of religion over philosophy, he may be interested in the situation in Iran and India.

It is clear that al-Jabri bases his assumption on the analysis of al-Farabi's view and imposes it on Farabi's text. Al-Jabri neglects the realities of the Islamic world in the fourth century and opposes al-Farabi's philosophical approach due to the dominance of Ash'ari theology over his views. Al-Jabri's opposition is, of course, also ethnocentric. Al-Farabi is opposed to the Ash'arite movement, and his view of reason was formed in a separation from Greece and with regard to esoteric foundations. Al-Farabi is not the only one in al-Horuf or Political Government who emphasizes the importance of the precedence of reason and philosophy.

## Philosophy from Al-Jabri's point of view

By splitting Islamic philosophy into Islamic philosophy of the East and the West, Al-Jabri has obtained a wrong view of the confrontation of Islamic philosophers with the view of the connection between religion and philosophy. Furthermore, by claiming that there is no compatibility in the philosophy of the Islamic West and due to the nature of Eastern Islamic philosophy, it became the most important issue for Farabi and Ibn Sina. Criticizing the foundations of Oriental wisdom, he believes that the tendency of Oriental Islamic philosophers to esotericism and Hermesian thought caused them to break away from Aristotle and turn to the compatibility of religion and philosophy. His critiques of Farabi, Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi in the Formation of Arab Reason should be considered in this regard. In the first chapter of the New Reading of Western philosophy and Andalusia, he emphasizes that the historians of philosophy in Islam mistakenly thought that Western philosophy, Andalusia was an extension of philosophy in the East, and that the

philosophy of Ibn Bajjah; and Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Rushd was an extension of Farabi and Ibn Sina. Al-Jabri emphasizes whether it is not better to go back to Aristotle to understand philosophy.

## The Difference between Al-Jabri and Al-Farabi Philosophy

The al-Farabi era coincided with an era when the conflict between philosophical and theological issues was at its peak <sup>[2]</sup>. However, before Farabi, the discussion of the agreement between religion and philosophy was common among philosophers, and Kennedy addressed this issue to some extent. However, undoubtedly, Farabi was the first thinker who established a new philosophy between philosophy and religion and later it continued by Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd <sup>[3]</sup>.

Al-Jabri, in examining Farabi's political views and his theory of the utopia, honestly states that here al-Farabi expresses in a generalized and abstract way the Shiite and especially the Ismaili belief. It is a common belief that al-Farabi was interested in this idea; if we believe that he was not Ismaili Shiite <sup>[4]</sup>, while Al-Jabri himself considers the system of expression as the only valid foundation among the three types of epistemological systems. The expression system is an ideological system based on the rule of Ash'ari and Shafi'i jurisprudence. Al-Jabri criticizes al-Farabi because of the theory of compatibility, who distances himself from all intellectual movements and defends theology against philosophy and jurisprudence against interpretation, and explicitly says that Islamic civilization is the civilization of jurisprudence <sup>[5]</sup>.

Al-Jabri says: "The process of harmonization which started from the beginning of translation and the era of Akhavan and Al-Kandari has Alexandrian roots and Neoplatonism movement. However, he considered it ideological and returned its beginning to al-Farabi and Ibn Sina and said that Ma'mun's interest in translation was to use Greek reason to stereotype the Arabic "religious-expressive" in order to stand against the movement of Hermes and Manichaean Gnosticism and Shiite mysticism" <sup>[5]</sup>. Al-Jabri makes the following criticisms of Farabi, which he tries to examine and analyze in the present dissertation:

1. Al-Farabi's esotericism and Hermeticism
2. Al-Farabi's ideological approach in the theory of harmonization of philosophy and religion
3. No history of compatibility before Al-Farabi
4. Breaking from the religious-expressive rational and shaping the philosophical irrational movement
5. The superiority of the philosophical movement over religion and the subjugation of religion in the light of the foundations of reasoning and argumentation
6. The accusation of Farabi's philosophy being ideological due to the Shiite esoteric interpretation in al-Farabi

## Al-Jabri and the Philosophy of Ibn Sina

Ibn Sina's section on Oriental philosophy forms half of al-Jabri's book. He first says that "Ibn Sina admits in his biography that he has a connection with Ismaili philosophy, so his philosophy clearly has esoteric, Shiite and Ismaili characteristics" <sup>[6]</sup>. Al-Jabri is dissatisfied with the fact that Ibn Sina in the introduction to the Logic of the Orientalists, criticizes the learners of Greek books and philosophers fascinated by the Peripatetic school, and that Ibn Sina wrote Al-Ansaf in defense of Persian and Eastern wisdom and Greek criticism or that he is not a follower of Aristotle and criticizes him in the Book of Healing <sup>[6]</sup>. Al-Jabri, in the same book of re-reading under the title of Ibn Sina and al-Farabi, tries to show both philosophies with epistemological and ideological content and shows that Ibn Sina is the continuation and expansion of al-Farabi, that is, what al-Farabi has summarized has been presented in detail by Ibn Sina <sup>[6]</sup>.

Al-Jabri considers Ibn Sina to be the most important Islamic thinker in the Islamic East, both in the re-reading of the history of philosophy in the Islamic East, and in the critique of Arabic reason. He considered Ibn Sina as the developer and the most important Islamic thinker in the Islamic East who founded Eastern wisdom and used it to defend his Shiite thought. The title of the third chapter, "Ibn Sina and Oriental Philosophy", is an exploration of the roots of Arab-Islamic philosophy in the East of Islamic world. Al-Jabri says: "It is not easy to re-read Ibn Sina methodology due to his teaching, coding and Akhavan nature of his original writings." He says: "My purpose in this reading of Ibn Sina's texts is to focus on discovering epistemological and ideological foundations" (Al-Jabri, 2015, 167).

## Conclusion

Religion and philosophy are among the most important issues that have led Islamic and Western philosophers and theologians to investigate. Among Islamic philosophers and theologians, Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina have paid the most attention to the relationship between philosophy and religion. Al-Jabri also states that the focus of Oriental Islamic philosophy was to reconcile religion and philosophy, but his fundamental question was whether the adaptation of religion and philosophy was the result or the cause.

Al-Jabri believes that in order to understand and then analyze the theory of integration, one should start with Al-Farabi, because adaptation in the translation period can only be a coincidence <sup>[5]</sup>. However, Al-Farabi read and understood Greek philosophy and was familiar with Arabic and Syriac languages or read them in the original Greek language. Al-Farabi, on the other hand, grew up in an Islamic society and benefited from the spirit of Arab-Islamic civilization. Al-Farabi's insistence on the views of Plato and Aristotle, despite Farabi's knowledge of the differences between these two philosophers, is rooted in Al-Farabi's main project of

harmonizing philosophy and religion <sup>[7]</sup>. Al-Jabri believes that reading Greece to integrate with religion is an ideological approach. He asks whether Al-Farabi wants to deceive himself and his people <sup>[7]</sup>.

It is clear that Al-Jabri read Al-Farabi and Avicenna as he wished and judged them because of his ideological and perhaps racial views. Al-Jabri criticisms of Al-Farabi and Avicenna are much, and these criticisms are a function of his main premise that because they had both Shiite and esoteric thinking, they opposed Aristotle and established Oriental philosophy. Al-Jabri sees Oriental philosophy as opposed to Arab life. He misinterprets the Arabic intellect as pure and rational intellect, and the intellect in Oriental philosophy as rational..

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