

Comparison of Farabi and Ibn Tufayl's views on the world of intellect and imagination and the theory of conjunction and explaining their common and different features

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ABSTRACT

Undoubtedly, the belief in prophecy and revelation, which is one of the principles of religion, and familiarity with the verses and traditions about the worlds of existence, especially the visible realm and the spiritual realm and the representation of angels as divine messengers to the people, as well as the verses about the material and imaginal blessings and vengeance of heaven and hell, they have not been ineffective in explaining the world of intellect and imagination by Farabi and Ibn Tufayl. Moreover, the history testifies that both of them had strong religious beliefs. It seems that, in expressing his views on the world of intellect and imagination, which is done in the story of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan with the aim of linking philosophy and religion, Ibn Tufayl has been influenced by Farabi's views in this regard. Farabi has for the first time expressed the imitation of the imaginary world from the intellect in explaining the revelation and the representation of immaterial intellects. This has no precedent in the world of philosophy. Therefore, the main purpose of the present study is to compare the views of Farabi and Ibn Tufayl on the world of intellect and imagination and the theory of union and explanation of their common and different features.

Keywords: Farabi, Ibn Tufayl, Islamic philosophy, intellect and imagination

Introduction

Imagination and its function have been and are the two important and influential topics in philosophy in the general sense. Plato did not attach much importance to the imaginary world and placed it at the last level in the hierarchy of knowledge; that is why he expelled from his utopia the poets and artists who benefit mostly from the imaginary world. Unlike his teacher, Aristotle attached great importance to the imaginary world. In his book *On the Soul*, he considers

imagination to be a power capable of recording and preserving singular forms. Although, at the beginning of the translation of the philosophical works of ancient Greece, while getting acquainted with the views of the Greek philosophers in various philosophical fields, including the imaginary world, the Islamic philosophers accepted some of their views; but in the meantime, Farabi's views, known as the second teacher, and Ibn Tufayl's as one of the great philosophers of the Islamic West shine in the starry sky of philosophers' views. Farabi's innovations and its expansion by Ibn Tufayl in the form of the story of Hayy ibn Yaqzan were the beginning of extensive developments in the field of imagination among Islamic philosophers, so that they led to the revision and correction of the views of Greek philosophy. In addition to accepting Aristotle's views on the imaginary world, that is, recording and preserving images, they, according to their own creative minds and inspired by the teachings of Islam, went far beyond and

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linked the discussion of the nature of imagination and its function to the philosophy of prophecy and the prophets' revelation [1]. Considering the importance of this subject and due to its connection with our religious beliefs, in this research we consider the importance of the world of intellect and imagination from the point of view of these two great Islamic philosophers and their role in linking philosophy and religion and explaining prophecy and revelation. Therefore, according to what has been said, in this research we are trying to answer the question whether Farabi and Ibn Tufayl have presented similar opinions about the world of intellect and imagination and have pursued a similar goal, or whether each of them has taken a different path and have a distinct goal.

Research Background in Iran and the world

Farabi and Ibn Tufayl's innovative ideas about the world of imagination and its role in explaining revelation, without comparing these two philosophers with each other, have been discussed to some extent in the historical books of Islamic philosophy, for example in "History of philosophy in the Islamic world" by Hana Alfakhouri and Khalil Jar-Sir and History of Philosophy in the Islamic world by Majid Fakhri. Regarding the only philosophical book of Ibn Tufayl, namely Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, separately and without comparison with Farabi's views, some books and articles have been written traditionally, such as "The Story of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan" by Abd al-Rahim Hairi - Alive Awake from Badi-ul-Zaman Forouzanfar" and articles like "Ibn Tufayl's alive awake from Abdul Rahman Badawi and Mohammad Hussein Saket". An article about Farabi has been published by Hassan Bolkhari entitled "Farabi's Innovations in the Concept and Function of Imagination". But the common denominator of all of them is that, firstly, they have not worked in specialized manner on the subject that we intend here to discuss. Secondly, their discussions are not comparative, but they have examined separately their views on this topic. Therefore, it is necessary that this important philosophical question, which is closely related to the foundations of our Islamic beliefs, be worked in a more detailed research; it is necessary to compare Farabi and Ibn Tufayl, two great Islamic philosophers, so that we can take a new step in explaining this important philosophical question.

Importance of the world of intellect and imagination from Farabi's point of view

Some thinkers may consider Farabi's views on the imaginary world as a reflection of the views of Plato and Aristotle [2]. There is no doubt that Farabi was influenced by the views of the great Greek philosophers and even the Neo-Platonists; but his innovations in this field are so different from the views of Greek philosophy that no neutral thinker can doubt them. Except for people like R. Walters, because of his unfamiliarity with Islamic thought or because of his enthusiasm for the views of Greek philosophers, considers Farabi's views on, for

example, the imagination and the philosophy of prophecy, to be derived from Greek principles and foundations [3].

In Chapter 24 of his book *On the Perfect State*, Farabi considers a third function for the imaginative power that has no previous precedent: "The third task is to imitate and represent them" [4]. He believes that the human imagination has the ability, in addition to using the imitation of the senses, to receive imitation from the intellect and cause perception and movement in humans. It is interesting that the imitation of the imagination of the senses were mentioned by philosophers before Farabi, but the imitation of the rational power and the superior powers outside of human existence were first proposed by him. Farabi uses this invention to explain the nature of revelation. In the twenty-fifth chapter of *On the Perfect State*, while proving the conjunction of the imaginative power with the active intellect, he discusses the way of revelation to the divine prophets and the vision of the angels by them. In his view, if the imaginative power in man is strong and powerful and sensory imitation has not fully mastered it, so that all human attention is paid to external sensations and on the other hand it is not completely at the disposal of the rational power, that is to say in the waking state, like in the sleeping state, it is freed from domination of (external sensations and the rational power), so it can represent in common sense the things that are emanated to the imaginative power by the active intellect, and are perceived by the imagination through the imitation of external sensations. When the common sense perceives them, it undoubtedly affects the power of vision. Then, the impression of the power of vision causes images of them to be illuminated in space; then, these images suspended in the luminous air return to the power of vision, and then to the common sense, and finally to the power of imagination.

Ibn Tufayl and the world of intellect and imagination

The imaginal world and the power of imagination are also of great importance for Ibn Tufayl. However, no other philosophical book is available from him except *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*; but by examining this book, we can achieve the great importance he attaches to the imaginary world for the growth and development of human beings. Ibn Tufayl believes that the imagination is able to comprehend the intelligibles without the presupposition of the existence of a power called intellect [5]. Farabi and Ibn Sina and his contemporary Ibn Tufayl have explained the importance of conjoined imagination in the union of man to the world of intellects in their works. The imaginal world or the world of immaterial forms, which in religious terms is called the intermediary world, is a level of the universe that has some characteristics of the material world such as quantity, quality and position, but is immaterial [6].

Immortality of the soul and its felicity and affliction according to the theory of conjunction

According to Ibn Tufayl, the human souls have three states in its earthly life in relation to the necessary being: the souls who did not know their Creator at all during the time of being in the world of sensations, and had no relationship with Him. Their lives have been spent in complete ignorance like cattle. According to Ibn Tufayl, these souls will not survive, but they will be mortal with the death of their bodies.

The second state is that of the souls who, during the process of managing the body and engaging in the senses, have recognized the necessary being and realized his power and greatness, but nevertheless have turned away from the Truth and stepped on the false path. According to Ibn Tufayl, such souls will be deprived of the pleasure of observation after separation from the body, who may be relieved of many pains after enduring many hardships, or may be immortal in it forever.

The third state occurs for those souls who, while being in the world of sensations, recognize the necessary being, walk in the path of Truth before being expelled from the body, and constantly think in the glory and power of their Creator, and go through the stages of perfection until death. Such souls will be in endless joy and happiness after separation from the body and will constantly observe the Truth [7].

The important point in this division is Ibn Tufayl's obedience to Farabi, especially in believing in the annihilation of the ignorant souls. Although philosophical historians differ on whether or not Farabi believes in immortality; but one cannot ignore the influence of Islamic teachings on him and accept such a claim about him. Of course, his collection of statements in this regard also confirms his belief in the immortality of the soul after death and its union and conjunction to the source of grace and the supreme principle. Our excuse for addressing this subject is that it is not in line with the purpose we have for writing these lines; but there is less doubt that he believes in the non-immortality of the ignorant souls. The same thing that Ibn Tufayl also pointed out and believed in following him [8].

Ibn Tufayl believes that anyone who wants to unite with the necessary being should have three types of actions in relation to the three relations he has with these facts: 1- actions in which he assimilates animals; "this assimilation is due to the fact that the human soul is accompanied by a dark body with scattered members and different powers and different tendencies"[7]. 2- Actions in which he assimilates celestial bodies. 3- Actions in which he manifests his likeness to the necessary being. "The third action and assimilation is obligatory upon him, because of his essence qua essence. And because his essence has known the necessary being." [7]

According to Ibn Tufayl, the first assimilation not only does not primarily cause observation, but also prevents it. But it is necessary because it causes the stability and continuation of material and animal life, which is necessary for human beings to assimilate celestial bodies, as well as to achieve secondarily and accidentally observation. But the second assimilation is necessary

because it removes the physical evils from him, which is done in a circular motion, spinning around until he is unconscious. The third assimilation, for which in fact the first and second assimilations were a preparation, causes the disappearance of all essences and forms and intellects from his essence in such a way that he only sinks into the Essence of Divine Unity. At the same time, he sees nothing in the world of existence except the one living subsistent Essence. In this way, Ibn Tufayl ends his spiritual journey. With the idea that he has combined the views of philosophers and mystics and has linked religion and philosophy together and established them on the basis of reason; the same thing that Farabi thinks about it in *On the Perfect State* in the connection between Plato and Aristotle, or where he explains prophecy and revelation based on the views of philosophers about the imaginary world.

Conclusion

The importance of the imaginal world for Farabi and Ibn Tufayl is due to the role that these two philosophers attach to in explaining prophecy and revelation. As it has been said, Farabi considers the prophets as people whose power of imagination, while having intellectual power and theoretical argument, have been free of the fence of senses and found the ability to represent immaterial intellects.

It seems that, in the creation of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* and the role he gives to the imaginary world in visualizing the truths of the world of intellect and guiding them, Ibn Tufayl takes Farabi's views for explaining the revelation and Prophets' relationship with the spiritual world. The belief and faith that these two Muslim philosophers felt in their rational and philosophical explanation of religious principles such as revelation has been a concern that has turned the motivation of both philosophers into an emphatic enthusiasm and has led to the creation of works in this field.

As it was observed, Farabi and following him Ibn Tufayl, by defining and explaining a new function for the imaginary world in its connection with intellect, presented a more comprehensive and complete discussion about imagination and thus a new step in explaining the revelation and conjunction of prophets and saints with the source of revelation. This has not been achieved except due to the belief that these two Muslim philosophers felt in their rational and philosophical explanation of religious principles such as revelation.

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