

The Interpretation of the Ideas of Spiritual Education, Social Harmony, and Justice in Ibn Arabi's Views

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the role and influence of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi during the 12th-13th centuries, a period marked by the widespread dissemination of Sufism and the emergence of new Sufi orders. This great thinker grew up in al-Andalus and traveled to regions such as North Africa, Egypt, the Hijaz, the Levant, and Anatolia, assimilating diverse cultural and scholarly traditions. The study employs historical-philosophical, source-based, and comparative methods to examine the metaphysical and socio-philosophical ideas presented in Ibn Arabi's works, including "al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya" and "Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam". Furthermore, his concepts of moral accountability ("mukallaflīk"), justice, and spiritual education are shown to be relevant both within the religious-educational debates of his time and in contemporary society. Additionally, the article illuminates Ibn Arabi's philosophy within its historical context and scientifically demonstrates his contributions to socio-political thought.

Keywords: Sufism; Sufi Order; Culture; Stability; Sharia; Spirituality; Enlightenment; Justice; Society; Ibn Arabi; Philosophy; Mysticism.

1. Introduction

In the 12th-13th centuries, Sufism spread widely throughout the Islamic world, and new Sufi orders emerged. Alongside prominent Sufis such as the members of the Khwajagan lineage, Abdul Qadir Jilani, and Najmuddin Kubra, Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi also occupies an important place in history as a thinker who enriched the philosophy of Sufism with profound theoretical and metaphysical foundations. Ibn Arabi, who grew up in al-Andalus in an environment where Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived together and science and culture flourished, traveled to regions such as North Africa, Egypt, the Hijaz, the Levant, and Anatolia, assimilating diverse cultural and scholarly traditions. In his time, as a result of the Crusades, not only military but also cultural and scholarly connections between the West and the East were strengthened. At the same time, disputes intensified among the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools of thought, and tensions arose between Sufis and scholars of Sharia. In his works, Ibn Arabi presented the spiritual and moral upbringing of society as a paramount value, viewing justice as the foundation of peace and stability, and oppression as the source of discord. His ideas have retained their relevance not only for the medieval period but also for contemporary society.

1.1. Study Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- 1) To analyze the socio-political context of Ibn Arabi's life.
- 2) To examine Ibn Arabi's metaphysical and philosophical views.
- 3) To highlight the concept of 'mukallaflīk' in Ibn Arabi's thought.
- 4) To study the role of justice and social harmony in his philosophy.
- 5) To identify the relevance of Ibn Arabi's teachings for contemporary society.

6) To assess the educational and spiritual implications of his work.

2. Methods

The study employed historical-philosophical analysis, source studies, and a comparative approach. In the first stage, historical sources on the political, social, and cultural landscape of the Islamic world in the 12th-13th centuries, particularly the development of Sufism and the emergence of new orders, were examined. Information on Ibn Arabi's life and creative activity, his travels, and the philosophical views formed during them was drawn mainly from medieval Arabic and Persian sources, as well as from modern research.

In the second stage, Ibn Arabi's works, including "Al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya" and other mystical texts, were analyzed using a philological approach. The metaphysical and socio-philosophical ideas in these works, as well as the concepts of "moral responsibility" ("mukallafluk"), justice, and spiritual education, were explored through contextual analysis.

In the third stage, Ibn Arabi's views were comparatively analyzed in the context of the religious and educational debates of his time, as well as the conflicts between Sharia scholars and Sufis. In addition, the influence of the Crusades and cultural exchange on his worldview was examined through historical-philosophical research. As a result, Ibn Arabi's socio-political ideas and their relevance for both the medieval and modern periods were objectively analyzed on a scholarly basis.

The raw materials used for the fabrication of Archimedes screw turbine were sheet metal 2 mm thickness, square pipe 30*30*3 mm, angle iron 30*30*3 mm, shaft 40 mm diameter, large pulley diameter 500 mm, and small pulley diameter 100 mm, bearing 204, belt A type 56, 2 kW Alternator, chain, sprocket, different size of bolt, and nut were used. Measuring tape, bubble level, tachometer, and calliper are instruments that were used while data was collected.

3. Results and Discussion

Sufism (tasawwuf) spread widely throughout the Islamic world in the 12th-13th centuries. During this period, prominent Sufi figures such as the founders of new orders, including the Khwajagan (Mawlana, Abdulqadir Gilani, Najmuddin Kubra, and others), emerged. Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi is also regarded as a great scholar who developed some of the most profound theoretical and philosophical schools of Sufism. The influence of scholars such as al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and al-Farabi had not waned, yet intense debates continued around Islamic philosophy and the science of kalam. Ibn Arabi's teachings enriched Sufism both philosophically and metaphysically. He also traveled to various lands. Although born in Andalusia, he later journeyed through North Africa, Egypt, the Hijaz (Medina, Mecca), the Levant (Damascus), and Anatolia (Turkey). These travels played an important role in his intellectual development and in his reception of diverse cultural influences. In the next paragraph, we will examine these journeys and the mentors he met there, as well as the distinctive formation of his creative work and way of thinking.

During the period when Andalusia (Spain) was under Muslim rule, it was considered the most advanced center of learning in Europe. There, Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived together, contributing to the development of science and culture. Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi was shaped in this environment, which had a significant impact on his broad

worldview. Another distinctive aspect of the era in which Ibn Arabi lived was the cultural interactions between the Near East and Europe. Through the Crusades, not only military but also cultural and scholarly exchanges emerged between the West and the East. Islamic sciences and Sufism began to influence European philosophy and Christian mysticism.

Research that has examined that period in greater depth shows that, at times, there were significant disputes among the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools of thought within Islam. Tensions between Sufis and scholars of Sharia had also intensified. Moreover, some scholars labeled Sufism as an innovation (*bid'ah*) and criticized Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi and other thinkers like him. In fact, some of his works were banned in certain regions and periods. This is evidenced by the following quote from Ibn Arabi's own admission: "If a person does not worship God in the way prescribed by the scholars of Sharia, they accuse him of apostasy ("murtad") and thus act unjustly. The truth is that there are various paths that lead to God, and this is also one of those paths" [1].

In addition, in the preface to his work "*Kitabu tanazzulil amlok min olamil arvoh ila olamil aflok*" ("The Descent of Angels from the World of Spirits to the World of Spheres"), he stated that he had written the book using symbols that the scholars of Sharia would not be able to comprehend, with the aim of protecting it from their criticism: "This book embodies subtle secrets and the radiance of luminous knowledge. The work is entirely based on riddles (concealment) and symbols... My purpose in concealing the divine meanings here is the following: "Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their eyes is a veil" (Qur'an, Al-Baqara, 2:7). It is to protect it from the scholars of Sharia and to avoid suffering from their rejection of it. They cannot perceive the fragrance of the scent of truth; their hearts cannot distinguish between "limma" and "lamma" ("limma" – curly hair, "lamma" – madness; here Ibn Arabi means that they cannot discern between the high and the low)" [2].

Ibn Arabi regards God as the heart of all creation and of the believing servant, and he sees nothing in the world other than truth and reality. The gnostic, he emphasizes, perceives everything "in Him, for He is the vessel that encompasses all things" [3].

Ibn Arabi paid attention to the essence of the events and phenomena taking place in society. He sought to offer his own mystical and philosophical conclusions. As a member of society, he was not indifferent to the life of the community and its people. From the thoughts and ideas he recorded in his works, we understand that he was a devoted citizen and a humanistic thinker. For instance, he emphasized that every member of society has a divine responsibility: "Every person is "mukallaf", that is, entrusted with fulfilling the commands of Allah. This responsibility is absolute and unchanging throughout his life" [4].

From the above idea of the thinker, it becomes clear that every person has a designated role in society and, by deeply understanding this, must be ready to serve for the benefit and harmony of society.

If we analyze more deeply, through his statement "every person is mukallaf", Ibn Arabi intends to convey the following meanings:

1. A person's divine duty in Ibn Arabi's view, a human being is not merely a material entity but a spiritual being who has taken upon himself the "divine trust" [5]. Being "mukallaf", that is, bearing the responsibility to fulfill God's commands, is directly connected to the essence and purpose of human existence.

2. Obedience to the divine will in his Sufi philosophy, man is the “condensed model of the cosmos” (“al-insan al-kamil”) and, through his spiritual perfection, must reflect within himself God’s will and knowledge. “Mukallaflık” points to a person’s ability to act in harmony with God.

3. Absolute and constant responsibility according to Ibn Arabi, “mukallaflık” is not dependent on a person’s specific life circumstances, rather, it means that in every situation and at every moment, one has the duty to participate in the realization of the divine will. This responsibility encompasses not only the obligations imposed by Sharia but also the entirety of a person’s spiritual life.

4. Internal and external commands in his view, “mukallaflık” is not limited to adhering to Sharia; it also includes reflecting and manifesting the divine light within a person’s heart. This is the “inner” “mukallaflık”.

Based on the above, through this idea Ibn Arabi seeks to emphasize not only a person’s responsibility before Sharia, but also their lofty status and responsibility as a spiritual intermediary between heaven and earth.

In the information regarding the development of Sufi knowledge, the essence of Sufism and such concepts as truth, existence, and the human being are analyzed based on various wisdoms. Ibn Arabi’s view is also interpreted: “Judgment is the result of wisdom, and knowledge is the result of gnosis. Whoever lacks wisdom has no judgment, and whoever lacks gnosis has no knowledge” [6]. Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, as a member of society, emphasized that justice must prevail for peace and stability to exist, and that if injustice occurs, various forms of discontent may arise within society, leading to its disintegration. In his work “Futuhat al-Makkiyya”, he wrote: “If justice reigns in society, there will be peace and prosperity. But if oppression prevails, society will fall apart” [7].

If his view is analyzed philosophically, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Justice – the foundation of cosmic order. According to Ibn Arabi’s teaching, justice is one of the names of God (Al-Adl), and its manifestation on earth is realized through human beings. Justice is the expression of the divine will in human society.
2. Oppression – a force that disrupts order. In his view, oppression is the alteration of the natural place of created things. If rulers or individuals commit oppression, they oppose the order established by God, and this naturally disrupts the balance in society.
3. The spiritual well-being of society. In a society where justice prevails, people feel inner peace because they trust in their rights. This leads to peace, social stability, and spiritual advancement. Oppression, on the other hand, breeds distrust, hatred, and worldly ruin among people.
4. The connection between inner and outer purity. In Sufism, any social order is linked to a person’s inner (spiritual) state. If individuals purify their souls and begin justice within themselves, justice will be established throughout the entire society.

With this view, Ibn Arabi indicated that the stability of society depends more on inner spirituality and the implementation of God’s justice in life than on external laws. His perspective is not only political but also has a metaphysical foundation, as he regards society as the earthly reflection of the Divine order. In addition, Ibn Arabi advocated that the foundation of society should be spiritual education. In this regard, he writes in the present work:

“The spiritual upbringing of society depends on the inner purity of each individual. If individuals cultivate their own souls, society will also attain spiritual elevation” [7].

Naturally, Ibn Arabi’s view here not only reflects the idea that the development of social life in medieval society was closely connected to spiritual progress, but also shows how relevant it remains today. Furthermore, the thinker envisions society as a community of individuals oriented toward creation and constructive activity. If each member is spiritually educated, society as a whole will also attain spiritual elevation. This should not be merely an external reform, but an inner, spiritual advancement. According to Ibn Arabi, the most correct and reliable way to reform society is through each individual working on their own self and striving for spiritual perfection.

We could cite many such ideas from the thinker. However, these views alone are sufficient to understand that the Sufi maintained an active stance toward socio-political life and analyzed the ongoing processes through philosophical reflection.

When speaking about the era and society in which Ibn Arabi lived, it should be especially noted that during that century the Great Silk Road and the maritime trade routes passing through the Islamic world were highly active. Trade enriched the Islamic world and strengthened cultural exchange. Many of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi’s journeys were carried out precisely along these trade routes. Naturally, this enriched his understanding of society and politics. As a result, he earned great respect in his time as a Sufi and scholar. Some sultans and amirs honored him and sought his advice.

The thinker Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi lived during the transitional stage of the Middle Ages, a period when the socio-political thought of Islamic society was developing. Ibn Arabi witnessed unique socio-political events that took place across a vast region stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf, events that had both positive and negative impacts on his life.

4. Conclusions and Future Suggestions

4.1. Conclusions

1) One of the prominent representatives of Islamic philosophy and Sufism, the scholar Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi honored with the title “The Great Teacher” for creating the doctrine of “wahdat al-wujud” (the unity of existence) and the concept of the perfect human authored works such as “al-Futuh al-Makkiyya” (“The Meccan Openings”) and “Fusus al-Hikam” (“The Bezels of Wisdom”), which are recognized as among the most significant in revealing the true essence of Sufi philosophy. Ibn Arabi is one of the great theologians who contributed to the theoretical foundation of Sufism through more than five hundred works in accordance with Islamic creed. For this reason, scholars of this field still honor him with the title “Shaykh al-Akbar” (The Great Master).

2) Ibn Arabi’s work “ar-Risalat al-Wujūdiyya” (“Treatise on Being”) is devoted to addressing the general issues of existence. It is one of his most comprehensive works in which he studied this category holistically and systematically, presenting his views on the subject in their most complete form, and analyzing them philosophically and mystically for the first time. The scholar developed his doctrine of knowledge through the concepts of “the single primordial basis of existence” and “the illumination of the inner world”. He substantiated that the existence

of God and man constitutes a single unity. The Sufi's doctrine of "wahdat al-wujūd" not only laid a firm foundation for free thought in Muslim philosophy but also for the development of humanistic ideas. It puts an end to separating the soul from the body and to opposing the spiritual to the material.

4.2. Future Suggestions

Based on the obtained results and conclusions the following future suggestions were made:

- 1) Explore Ibn Arabi's influence on modern educational philosophy.
- 2) Investigate the relevance of Sufi principles in conflict resolution today.
- 3) Conduct comparative studies between Ibn Arabi and other medieval thinkers.
- 4) Analyze Ibn Arabi's concepts in the context of interfaith dialogue.
- 5) Examine how Ibn Arabi's teachings can address current ethical challenges.
- 6) Assess the impact of his works on contemporary Sufi orders.

Declarations

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Consent for publication

The author declares that he/she consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

Author's independent contribution.

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