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Theory of Emanation in Islamic Thought: A Comparative Study of Ibn Arabi and Al-Farabi

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ABSTRACT

Philosophical Sufism is an intellectual form of Muslim mysticism that primarily employs reason. Al-Farabi and Ibn ʻArabi are regarded among the popular personalities in this realm of knowledge. Al-Farabi, an early Islamic philosopher, did not specifically declare himself a Sufi, but he led an ascetic life. His works are often associated with philosophical Sufism, simply because his philosophical teachings share similarities with Sufi ideologies. Also, Ibn ʻArabī is referred to as the Greatest Master, Shaykh al-Akbar, by his beloved disciples. He is regarded as the first to have introduced a unique and new dimension of mysticism and esotericism in Islam. This innovation later influenced Islamic thoughts and traditions for the past seven hundred years. Both Ibn ʻArabi and al-Farabi contributed greatly to the field of Islamic philosophy, specifically in the discourse of Islamic cosmology. Hence, this paper aims to compare and contrast the two scholars' philosophical teachings on the theory of emanation. Specifically, this paper aims to explore the impact of the Greek method of enquiry on the two scholars' Sufi teachings. It aims to trace how they formed their theory of emanation. It aims to trace the claim of the cosmic emanation from the light of Prophet Muhammad SAW from their teachings. The research method of this paper is qualitative, and its approach is comparative and analytic. This study asserts that Al-Fārābī remains largely committed to the Greek emanationist framework, while Ibn ʿArabī does not adhere dogmatically to the theory. This study in this paper offers a unique comparative analysis of the theory of emanation in the works of al-Farabi and Ibn ʻArabi, and showcases the interplay between the Muslim philosophy and Sufism. It revisits the concept of emanation within an Islamic framework, tracing how rational and mystical philosophies shape cosmological thought.

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1. Introduction

The word 'emanation' is derived from the Latin word '*emanare'*, which means to flow out from and to pour something to the fore. Emanation is the process of origination of fewer entities from the larger or higher entities.[1] In the context of this study, emanation is a philosophical interpretation that attempts to trace the origin of the universe. In this theory, it is asserted that all things flow from an essential principle of reality, usually referred to as absolute being, God. This theory, which is a philosophical school of thought in cosmology, is considered an alternative to the creationist theory of the universe, though sometimes blended with the creationist view. It further supports the idea of '*creatio ex materia*', in the general philosophical arguments. That is, the cosmos is a reformation of pre-existing things and opposes the idea of '*creatio ex nihilo*', which is that nothing comes from nothing.[2]

Emanative theory is often considered Neoplatonic Philosophy because it is a version of Platonic philosophy that was invented by the self-taught philosopher, Ammonius Saccas. He later taught Plotinus, who later spread the teachings in the third century A.D.[3] As Plotinus spread his Neoplatonic teachings further, he described the source of beings as One. He used the metaphor of radiation of light from the luminous source to explain the emanation of beings from the only One.[4] According to him, all the beings in the cosmos are like reflections from the sun or developments and growths from a seed. He likens the Absolute One to a mirror that does not alter the object being reflected.

[1] Amelia Carolina Sparavigna, "The Ten Spheres of al-Fārābī: A Medieval Cosmology," *International Journal of Sciences* 3, no. 6 (2014): 34–39. P 37.
[2] Thomas J. Oord, *Theologies of Creation* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2014). P 4&21.
[3] Lucas Siorvanes, "Plotinus and Neoplatonism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 847–68, P 848.
[4] A. H. Armstrong, "Emanation in Plotinus," *Mind* 46, no. 181 (1937): 61–66. P 61.

To corroborate his view further, Plotinus contends that the first emanation is the Divine Mind or Intellect, which is from the Absolute One.[5] This Divine Intellect is the first Will towards Good. From the Divine Intellect, emanates '*anima mundi*' Soul of the world. Plotinus subdivides the entity that gives the world soul into the upper and lower. He identifies the lower aspect of the Soul with nature. From the Soul of the world emanate individual human souls. Lastly, from this point of humans' soul emanation, the matter emanates the lowest level of being and hence the least perfected level of the cosmos. He says it is only by the Good or through beauty we can recognize or ascend back to the One, that is the Divine Intellect, within the forms and the material things.

Moreover, having gained widespread attention among some Christian theologians, emanative theory found significant development within Islamic philosophy. It was adopted by some Muslims when the books of Greek philosophy were translated into the Arabic language during the Islamic Golden Age. During this period, Muslim philosophers like Avicenna and al-Farabi were attracted to the works of Aristotle and his likes. Their translations and commentaries paved the way for the popularization of Neoplatonism, which inspired the Muslim theologians to reconcile the idea of a transcendent, unitary God with the theory of emanation. Apart from adapting the Neoplatonic philosophy into the Islamic theology, its adoption by the Muslim philosophers also had a great impact on Islamic mysticism. Al-Farabi, the second Muslim philosopher in the history of Islamic philosophy, wrote many works that resemble those of mystics. The later Muslim mystics, like Ibn 'Arabi, were also impacted by this Neoplatonic philosophy in their teachings of Islamic mysticism.

Furthermore, with the adaptation of the theory of emanation into Islamic intellectual thought, it offered an alternative explanation for the creation of the universe, portraying the universe as issuing from an Ultimate Source through a hierarchy of

[5] Edward Moore, "Plotinus (204–270 C.E.)," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2025. P 5.

intermediaries characterized by varying degrees of emanation. The further existence extends from the source, the less perfect it becomes.[6] The first discourse on Islamic theology can be traced to the first Muslim philosopher, al-Kindi. He was the first among the Muslim scholars of his time to adopt the Aristotelian theology of causality. He attempted to synthesize Aristotelian Causality with Plato's 'Form of the Good' or the 'One,' along with other Greek theologies. He concluded that any metaphysical study is a study about God.[7] Then al-Farabi, who was considered the first to introduce the concept of emanation in Islamic theology, continued the legacy of al-Kindi by studying the Aristotelian's theology of causality and integrating it with the teachings of Plotinus and Ptolemaic astro-theology.[8] Although Ibn Sina did not get involved fully in the study of Neoplatonism, he continued to develop Aristotelian theology of causality, which later influenced Muslim thinkers in the East. *As-Suhrawardi* also continued with the study of the theory of emanation and developed his *'ishraqi* idea. He mixed the Peripatetic philosophy with Plato's theology, the perfect realm of Forms, together with the Zoroastrian wisdom. All these had affected his theology.[9] While *Ibn ʿArabī* journeyed to Iraq and Anatolia in search of knowledge, he was influenced by Suhrawardī's Illumination theory.[10]

To this effect, this paper will focus on *Al-Farabi* and *Ibn 'Arabi's* theory of emanation due to their common ideology of Islamic mysticism. Exploring the two scholars' theories of emanation would give more clarity on the key differences between philosophical rationalism and mystical philosophy in Islamic tradition. In the course

[6] Syamsuddin Arif, "Divine Emanation as Cosmic Origin: Ibn Sīnā and His Critics," *Tsaqafah: Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 8, no. 2 (2012): 331–46. P 335.
[7] Peter Adamson, "Al-Kindī," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2024). P 5.
[8] Damien Janos, *Intellect, Substance, and Motion in al-Fārābī's Cosmology* (Montreal: Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 2009). P 47.
[9] Mubarak Fadhilah, *Simulujiya al-Ishrāq* (Algiers: Jāmiʿat Ibn Khaldūn, 2017). P 12.
[10] Khalil Andani, "Metaphysics of Muhammad," *Journal of Sufi Studies* (2019): 99–175. P 144.

of exploring the two scholars' theories, this paper shall be guided by the following questions: 1. How did the two scholars adapt the emanative theory to Islamic philosophy? 2. How did the enquiry method of Greek philosophy impact their theories? 3. How did their theories relate to the emanation of beings from the light of the prophet? The key findings of this paper are that both philosophers are influenced by Aristotelian metaphysics of causality and Neoplatonic emanative theology. As Ibn 'Arabi adopted the theology of Aristotle, hylomorphism, he tried to modify it by developing his own theology. In his version of theology, he posited that *Hyle* is always there, whether with or without the forms attaching to it, unlike Aristotle, who views that *Hyle* is always there only when form attaches to it. Ibn 'Arabi attempted to Islamize the Neoplatonic emanative theory by adapting it to the Quranic concept of '*Kun fayakun'*. al-Farabi sounds little dogmatic in his adoption of Aristotle's and Neoplatonic theory. He tried to modify the theories by concluding that the universe came into being without God's choice but by virtue of His existence. In addition, Ibn 'Arabi is more esoteric in his method of cosmological enquiry, while al-Farabi is more rational and analytic. The cosmic emanation from the Prophetic light is a 'Neoplatonised' idea that went through a series of ideological transformations by the Sufi thinkers like Ibn 'Arabi, and the contemporary Sufi orders like *Tijaniyyah* also adopted the idea of the divine light of Muhammad. The scope of the comparative study covers brief backgrounds of the two scholars, the theory of emanation in Islamic philosophy and Sufism, the two scholars' theories of emanation and the influence of Greek philosophy on their theories, comparative analysis of their theories and the implications and impact of their theories on Sufi metaphysics and later Muslim thinkers.

2. Brief Background of al-Farabi

His full name is *Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭarkhān ibn Awzalagh al-Fārābī*. He was born in the region of Farab in Turkistan. He lived between 870 C.E. and 950

C.E. He was the second Muslim thinker to have ventured into philosophy in the Muslim world after al-Kindi. He was regarded as the father of Neoplatonism among the Muslim philosophers and the second teacher after Aristotle among the general philosophers. He started his educational career in Baghdad. His first teacher was Yuhanna bin Haylan, who was a Christian cleric. In this period, he learnt philosophy, logic, Arabic morphology and syntax, natural and social science, mathematics and Music. In his quest for the knowledge of philosophy and logic, he dedicated most of his time studying Aristotle's work, 'Posterior Analytics'. In this work, he gained lots of insights into Porphyry's 'Eisagoge' and Aristotle's 'Categories', 'De Interpretatione', and 'Prior and Posterior Analytics'.[11] After studying Aristotle's works, he also studied the works of Plato and his student, Plotinus. The impact of Plato's Republic can be seen in his theory of the ideal state, where he argued that an ideal state must be theocratic instead of philosophical. Likewise, the impact of Plotinus' philosophy can also be seen in his theology of emanation.

Moreover, it is learnt that al-Farabi was not a traditional Sufi and did not specifically state he was venturing into Sufism as we know it today. But his life was like that of Sufis, and his works contained the teachings of the Sufis. To elucidate more on his Sufi-like lifestyle, Al-Farabi only practiced asceticism. He detached himself from worldly things. When he was appointed to a political position, under Saif Dawlah in Aleppo, he was never freaked by illusions of materiality. He was humble and lived a lone, simple life, thinking and probing the beauty of the natural world. It is said that he was so deep in his deep thinking to the extent that whenever he wanted to communicate his ideas to people, he only talked in metaphors and short forms.[12] After

[11] David C. Reisman, "Fārābī and the Philosophical Curriculum," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 52–71. P 54.

[12] Taha Faysal, "Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī wa Juhūduhu al-ʿIlmiyyah maʿa Ishārah Khāṣṣah ilā Kitābihi *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*," *Al-Baṣūl al-Islāmī* (2020). P 1.

spending lots of time with Saifud Dawlah in Aleppo, he continued his journey of quest for knowledge to various places, including Egypt. He later returned to Damascus where he spent the rest of his life.[13]

3. Al-Farabi's Theory of Emanation

As discussed before, al-Farabi was a student of Aristotelian's metaphysics of causality. He had also learnt Neoplatonic theology from Plotinus and the astro-theology of Ptolemy. He synthesized all these teachings and came up with his version of emanative theory. He demonstrated it in his own version of theology, as thus:

"Ten intellects or intelligences are coming in succession from the First Being, and, from each of them, a sphere of the universe is produced. The first intellect created the outermost sphere and a second intellect. From this second intelligence, the sphere of the fixed stars and a third intellect had been generated. The process continues, through the spheres of the planets, downwards to the sphere of the Moon. From the Moon, a pure intelligence, defined as the "active intelligence", provides a bridge between heaven and earth.[14] The theory incorporates several Platonic cosmological elements that al-Fārābī did not fully systematize. As a result, al-Ghazālī rejected many of these notions, arguing that they conflict with Qurʾānic cosmological doctrines.[15]

4. Brief Background of Ibn 'Arabi

His full name is Abubakr bin Muhammad bin Ali.[16] Although, other sources revealed that his first name is Muhammad instead of Abubakr.[17] He was of Arab descent from

[13] George Tarabishi, *Muʿjam al-Falāsifah* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿah, 2006). P 449.
[14] Amelia Carolina Sparavigna, "The Ten Spheres of al-Fārābī: A Medieval Cosmology," *International Journal of Sciences* 3, no. 6 (2014): 34–39. P 34.
[15] William Hasker, "Medieval Occasionalism," in *Occasionalism*, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1998), accessed December 16, 2025. P 109.
[16] George Tarabishi, *Muʿjam al-Falāsifah* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿah, 2006). P 43.
[17] Stephen Hirtenstein, "Names and Titles of Ibn ʿArabī," The Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabī Society (2007). P 1.

the noble Arab lineage of *at-Ta'i al-Hatimi* from Yemen. He was nicknamed '*Shaykh al-Akbar*', latinized as '*magnus magister*', and '*Muhyi Din*', a reviver of religion, due to his creativity in religious knowledge. He was born in Murcia, Spain. He lived between 1165 C.E. and 1240 C.E. He started his educational career in Seville, then in Cordoba, where he received his early knowledge from the significant centres of Islamic learning circles. From there, he extended his quest for knowledge to Morocco, then to Tunisia. It is noted that the Andalusian and the North African milieu in which Ibn 'Arabi acquired his early knowledge was full of mystical experiences. This affirmed that Ibn 'Arabi also learnt *'tasawwuf'* from his teachers in his early years of learning.[18] Thereafter, he continued his journey of knowledge to the East of the Islamic world. There, he went to Mecca and performed several pilgrimages. After his pilgrimage, he continued his journey to the North. He visited Iraq, Anatolia, Syria, Egypt and Palestine and received knowledge from the scholars of these milieus. Mystical and social knowledge were notably prevalent in these milieus. The milieus were dominated by the schools of Avicennism, Suhrawardism and Illuminationism. He might have been influenced by the Neoplatonic philosophy of his teachers as well as the thought of *Ishraqi* esoterism during his course of studies in these milieus. Maybe that is why he was so symbolic in his later writings. He later settled and spent the rest of his life in Damascus, Syria. There, he dedicated his time to writing books and teaching. He then wrote his famous *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya.*[19] These books contained his popular Sufi theories like '*al-Insan al-Kamil',* the complete man, the unity of being and the classification of knowledge; rational, delight and mysterious knowledge. His books served as references for the later Muslim thinkers and the Western Orientalists.

[18] Khalid al-Ashmuri, "Ibn ʿArabī: Ḥakīm Mursiya," *Arab Journal* (2023). P 1.
[19] William C. Chittick, "Ebn al-ʿArabī, Moḥyī al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd-Allāh Moḥammad Ṭāʾī Ḥātemī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 7, fasc. 6 (2013): 664–70. P 665.

5. Ibn 'Arabi's Theory of Emanation

Ibn Arabi is also impacted by Aristotelian and Neoplatonic theologies in his writings. The effect of Aristotle's theology of causality can be seen in how he frequently used the Greek word "*Hyle*" to describe the beginning of the universe. '*Hyle'* is translated as Hylomorphism in the modern sense. '*Hyle'* is matter, and '*Morph'* is form. '*Hyle'* is the capacity or the potentiality to become something. '*Morph'* is the organizing principle or structure that determines what the object is.[20] It is like a collection of cells in a living organism. Aristotle used the concept of hylomorphism to explain the change and persistence in the world. He contended that objects persist through change because their underlying matter remains the same, while their form may change. Moreover, Ibn `Arabi used Aristotle's concept of '*Hyle'* to develop his theology at both the universal and particular levels, just like *Jawhar* and '*Ard* or '*Suwar'*.[21] He equates the universal *hyle* with the 'divine cloud', and the particular *Hyle* of the sensible world with the 'dust' from which physical objects are formed. As Ibn Arabi attempted to adapt Aristotle's metaphysics of causality into his Sufi tradition, he also sought to integrate it with Neoplatonic or illuminationist concepts, the theology he probably learned when he journeyed to the East of the Islamic world. Consequently, he came up with the ideas of divine unfolding and manifestation, but with God as the Ultimate Source and Ground of all being.

In addition, it is noteworthy that the notion of being is the main concept of Ibn 'Arabi's expression of his cosmology. Ibn 'Arabi classified his notion of being into the Absolute Being and the conditional being. To him, the conditional being, which is the world of multiplicity, the outward form of God, '*Tajalli*'.[22]

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[20] Michail Peramatzis, "Aristotle's Hylomorphism: The Causal-Explanatory Model," *Metaphysics* (2018). P 19.

[21] Ismail Lala, "Ibn ʿArabī and the Theologization of Aristotelian Hylomorphism," *Religions* (2023). P 8.

[22] Ronald L. Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qurʾānic Prophets: Ibn ʿArabī's Thought and Method in the Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003). P 14.

Indeed, Ibn ‘Arabi elucidates more on his version of the theory of emanation by using symbolic expression in his book, The Tree of Cosmos. He theorised that ‘the multiplicity of being’ emanated from a tree that had also come from the ‘Absolute Being’, God. He depicted this tree as the will and the word of God in the form of ‘*Kun’*. This word is a feature or reflection that emanates from God. This reflection, that is the word of God, ‘*Kun’,* further makes complex emanations in the form of ‘*Fayakun’,* from the higher level towards the lower level of the cosmos. These complex emanations are the continual reflections, ‘omni potency’, from the Absolute Being.[23] As Ibn ‘Arabi heavily depends on the use of symbolism and the language of rhetoric, he implies that emanations are like the Beautiful Names of God or His attributes that emanate and reflect continuously like a mirror in the cosmos.

6. Discussion and Comparative Analysis

Both al-Farabi and Ibn ‘Arabi have been greatly influenced by Greek theology in their method of writing on cosmology. Ibn ‘Arabi, as a successor of al-Farabi in the field of Islamic Philosophy, has tried to improve and adapt the Neoplatonic concepts in Islamic theology. His frequent use of rhetoric makes his work too ambiguous for his audience to comprehend and has attracted criticism from traditional scholars of Islam, such as Ibn Taymiyyah.[24] Also, it is observed that both al-Farabi and Ibn ‘Arabi share some convergent and divergent approaches in their attempts to modify the theology of Neoplatonism.

Regarding the points of their convergence, both scholars are mystical in their approaches to cosmological enquiries. Al-Farabi lived an ascetic life. Even throughout his political appointment by *Saif ad-Dawlah*, he was never moved by material wealth. Instead, he focused on his devotion to worship and to inquire about the natural world. Likewise, Ibn ‘Arabi dedicated most of his early time to learn tasawwuf from the

[23] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, *Shajarat al-Kawn* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1985). P 4.
[24] Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah, *Refutation of Ibn ʿArabī* (Cairo: Noor Book, 2019). P 1.

scholars of the western Islamic world. Then he continued his search for knowledge towards the eastern Islamic world.

In their writings on the First Source of creation, both scholars adopted Aristotle's concept of causality and integrated it into their various modifications of Neoplatonic theology.

Both of them devised the Ptolemaic concept of astro-theology, as they described the planets and stars as part of the process of emanation from the Absolute Being down to the conditional beings. For instance, Ibn 'Arabi used the stars to elucidate his astro-theology as thus:

"وأما رسومها وما فيها من الأفلاك والأجرام، والأملاك والأحكام، والآثار والأعلام، فجعل السبع الطباق، بمنزلة ما يستظل به من الأوراق، وجعل الكواكب في الإشراق، بمنزلة الأزهار في الآفاق"

They both compared the process of emanation at each level with the reflection of a mirror or the radiation of light to the surface. Regarding their points of divergence, both scholars share the same emanative theory and learned its theological basics from different masters. Al-Farabi directly studied Plotinus' works while Ibn 'Arabi learnt his basics from his Sufi masters. Ibn 'Arabi learnt an already modified theology, while al-Farabi learnt it directly and modified it.

As both shared a mystical approach to enquiries, they differed in methods. Ibn 'Arabi employed the esoteric method to gain more insight into his enquiries. While al-Farabi employs the method of rational metaphysics in his enquiries.

Also, al-Farabi sounds a little dogmatic in his Neoplatonic theory as he did not complete its modification. He states that emanation happens with or without the choice of the First Being. It happens with the virtue of His existence. Conversely, Ibn 'Arabi maintains that the emanation happens with the will of the First Absolute being. Al-Farabi describes each level of emanation as an active and independent intellect that is responsible for further emanations, while Ibn 'Arabi also acknowledged that there

are emanations at different levels, but did not use the description of 'intellect' for them, and the emanation that happens from each level is dependent on the Absolute Being.

As al-Farabi's position also implies that the universe is eternal, while Ibn 'Arabi took a clear stance. He opines that the eternity of the universe is determined by the willingness of its changing forms to reconcile with the Absolute Being.

As both scholars adopted the concept of Aristotle's causality as the starting point of their studies, Ibn 'Arabi retained the usage of the Greek terminology '*Hyle'* in his writings and arabised it to '*Hayula',* while al-Farabi rarely used it. He instead adopted an alternative terminology.[25]

In their explanations of the process of emanations, al-Farabi is more literal in his language, while Ibn 'Arabi is more rhetorical and symbolic.

As al-Farabi did not differentiate between the higher level of emanation and the lower levels, Ibn 'Arabi also demonstrate that weakness happens to the continual emanation. He tried to prove this by comparing the first process of emanation with universals and the subsequent processes with particulars.

Ibn 'Arabi used Quranic language to express his theory of emanation. He compared all the processes of emanations with God's attributes and the reflective beautiful Names of God.[26] He used the Quranic word '*Kun'* to depict the universal emanations, and '*Fayakun'* to depict the particular emanations. He also used the word '*Qudra',* which means omni-potency of God, to depict all the events of emanation in the cosmos.[27] It is noteworthy that the devotional lifestyle of worshipping God had driven Ibn 'Arabi to employ the Quranic language in his teachings. While al-Farabi did not

[25] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār Āfāq li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 2016). P 115.

[26] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār Āfāq li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 2016). P 48.

[27] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, *Shajarat al-Kawn* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1985). P 4.

make any use of the Quranic language. As an ascetic and a rational meta physicist, he only adopted the language of his teachers, Plato, Ptolemy and Plotinus, to communicate his ideas.

7. Implications and Influence

Al-Farabi's emanative theory has greatly influenced the succeeding Muslim and non-Muslim Philosophers. *As-Suhrawardi* was one of the later Muslim philosophers, who was also influenced by al-Farabi. Al-Farabi modified and adapted the concepts of Neoplatonism within an Islamic framework, especially his cosmology and metaphysics.[28] This later provided a foundation that *as-Suhrawardi* built upon. He used the ideas to develop his own Illumination theory, *al-Ishraq*. Thus, Ibn 'Arabi later met with *as-Suhrawardi* in Baghdad and received knowledge from him.[29]

Having met with *as-Suhrawardi*, Ibn 'Arabi, of course, used the teachings of *as-Suhrawardi* to develop his theology. Part of this impact is how he modified the concept of *as-Suhrawardi's* illumination to the illumination of Prophetic light as part of the levels of emanation.[30] This can be seen in his book, The Tree of Cosmos, as he depicted the personality of Muhammad SAW as a sunshine branch from the cosmic tree that illuminates the entire universe:[31]

> "واعلم أن الملأ الأعلى مسخرون في نفع شجرة الكون، مستعملون لمصالحها، قائمون بحقوقها، لما فيها من خاصية هذا الغصن المحمدي والنور الأحمدي، فأول ما انسلخ نهار الوجود، من ظلمة ليل العدم، شعشعت أنوار الشموس المحمدية، في أفق جبين آدم عليه السلام، فخرت الملائكة سجدا".

[28] Mubarak Fadhilah, *Simulujiya al-Ishrāq* (Algiers: Jāmiʿat Ibn Khaldūn, 2017). P 34.
[29] Yusuf Dadoo, "Divine Love, Unity of Being, and Religious Pluralism in the Poetry of Ibn ʿArabī," *Journal for Semitics* 15, no. 1 (2006): 175–220. P 181.
[30] Khalil Andani, "Metaphysics of Muhammad," *Journal of Sufi Studies* (2019): 99–175. P 145.
[31] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, *Shajarat al-Kawn* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1985). P 14.

His concept of '*faydh'*, emanation, has also had a significant impact on the later Sufi orders, especially the predominant orders of Africa, like Tijaniyyah, Qadiriyyah, among others. Most of the adherents of these orders found the concepts of Ibn 'Arabi as frameworks for understanding the relationship between God, the universe, and the human soul. They later built upon these ideas and continued to develop their respective concepts up to the present day.

Interestingly, the African Tijaniyyah-Ibrahimiyyah order has also used the concept of the 'Prophet's emanating light' to name their order.[32] Building on this idea, the *Tijaniyyah-Ibrahimiyyah* order reinterpreted the concept to express the overflow of spiritual grace or divine flood, as expressed in the following in the book, *Kāshif al-Ilbās*, "... وتأتي قريبا فيض الختم, هيّئوا بتفريغ أغيار فتحظي بموضع.". Consequently, they adopted the term *al-Fayḍhah* and designated their movement as *al-Fayḍhah al-Tijānīyyah*.[33] Ibn Arabi's teachings also influenced their adoption of '*wahdah al-wujud'*, the unity of being, as part of their ideology. This idea emphasises that all existence is a manifestation of God's oneness. It affected how they approached spiritual practices and emphasised on self-reflection and purification. It affected how they strive for a deeper connection with the divine, which they call it attainment of '*Haqiqah'* or '*Wusul'*. It also affected how some groups within this order, named as "*yan hakika*", in the Hausa language, meaning people of reality, hold radical beliefs by reinterpreting the idea of *Wahdah al-Wujūd* to declare themselves and others divine reflections. They claim their leader, Ibrahim Niass, embodies divine reality (*haqīqah*), and so he is divine.[34]

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[32] Rüdiger Seesemann, *The Divine Flood: Ibrahim Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). P 47.

[33] Andrea Brigaglia, "The Fayḍa Tijāniyya of Ibrāhīm Nyass: Genesis and Implications of a Sufi Doctrine," *Academia.edu* (2001). P 4.

[34] Alidu, Shafiu. "Divine Whispers: Unraveling the Enigma of the Sufi "Yan Hakika" Movement in West Africa." (Tasavvuf Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi 4, no. 2: 3-16, 2025). P 9.

Also, Ibn ‘Arabi’s ambiguous and symbolic language that he used to explain the concepts of God’s attributes and the Beautiful Names that reflect in the cosmos impacted the later thinkers. And many think that as God’s attributes and His names reflect and manifest in the cosmos, then the universe should be part of God, and God as part of the cosmos. This confusion later had several implications for the identities of some Sufi Muslims.[35]

Moreover, Ibn ‘Arabi described the process of cosmic emanations as the word of God, ‘*Kun Fayakun’*. This word of God, which is ‘*Kun Fayakun*’ is part of the Quran. Thus, there are two different words of God: the Quranic word of God and the cosmic word of God. Of course, one out of the two is eternal, which is the Quranic word of God. Ibn ‘Arabi’s position, on the other hand, is rhetorical and ambiguous; that is, the cosmic word of God. With this ambiguity, some later thinkers went ahead to equate the entire cosmos with the eternal word of God, and this is deemed heretic in the Muslim theology. The Quranic word of God is eternal because it is the attribute of God, and the cosmic word of God is just a Divine reflection and is conditional, as explained ab initio.

8. Conclusion

Both al-Farabi and Ibn ‘Arabi are greatly impacted by the Neoplatonic emanative concepts and the Aristotelian concepts of causality. As Ibn ‘Arabi adopted the concepts of Aristotle, hylomorphism, he tried to modify it by developing his own theology. In his version of theology, he concluded that *Hyle* is always there, whether with or without the forms attaching to it. Hence, his theology is clearly in disagreement with that of Aristotle, who holds that *Hyle* is always there only when form attaches to it. Ibn ‘Arabi went ahead to Islamize the Neoplatonic emanative theory by adapting it to the Quranic language of ‘*Kun fayakun’*. However, al-Farabi

[35] Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah, *Refutation of Ibn ʿArabī* (Cairo: Noor Book, 2019). P 35.

sounds little dogmatic in his adoption of Aristotle's and Neoplatonic theory. He tried to modify it and later posited that the universe came into being without God's choice but by virtue of His existence. In addition, Ibn 'Arabi is more esoteric in his method of cosmological enquiry, while al-Farabi is more rational and analytic. Also, it is highly observed that the Sufi ideology tends to metamorphose as time passes; hence, most of the Sufi enterprises of today tend to misrepresent the earlier Sufi versions. Finally, the cosmic emanation from the light of the Prophet is an idea that went through a series of ideological transformations by the later *Shi'i* and Sufi thinkers and through series of 'Neoplatonizations'.

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