



Ibn Arabi's Epistemological Views In The Context of Sufism and Islamic Philosophy

Yarashova Mohlaroyim Shukhrat kizi

Teacher, Department of History and Philology, Asian International University

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.47134/bai.v2i1.3616>

*Correspondence: Yarashova Mohlaroyim Shukhrat kizi

Email: mohlaroyimyarashova@gmail.com

Received: 20-11-2024

Accepted: 20-12-2024

Published: 21-01-2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract: *In this article, issues related to the social, spiritual, and moral essence of humans are discussed within the framework of Eastern philosophy's ontological, epistemological, axiological, and philosophical-sufistical principles. The development of gnosis, its place in Eastern philosophical thought, the classification of sufistical knowledge, and its importance in filling the gaps in human spirituality, ethics, and morality are analyzed. The theoretical and practical aspects of Sufism based on Ibn Arabi's sufistical teachings and Sufi science are revealed, along with the concepts of Sharia, Tariqa, and Haqiqa. Furthermore, the methods used by sufis to address religious-philosophical problems, their scientific approaches, and the relationship between the science of jurisprudence and Sufism are analyzed.*

Keywords: *Sufism, Religion, Humanity, Spirituality, Hadith Scholar, Esoteric Scholar, Philosophy, Ontology, Epistemology, Axiology, Culture*

Introduction

In the development of world scientific-philosophical heritage, fundamental research is being conducted within the framework of Eastern philosophy's ontological, epistemological, axiological, philosophical-sufistical concepts, particularly in relation to the social, spiritual, and moral essence of humanity (Afabih, 2022). Specifically, the study of the Creator, the essence of existence, and the nature of humans as proposed in the spiritual heritage of sufis is of great importance. Based on these perspectives, grounding the principles of consensus and tolerance in the context of global cultures and their altruistic significance in the development of enlightened societies has crucial theoretical and scientific value. In this regard, determining the place of gnosis in the development of Eastern philosophical thought, classifying sufistical knowledge, and addressing the gaps in human spirituality, ethics, and morality by referring to the works of the sufis, as well as conducting innovative research on human spirituality, are becoming essential objects of study in today's science (Lala, 2023b). Gnosis (esoteric, spiritual, and sufistical knowledge) was formed, developed, and perfected within the framework of Islam, becoming a life-giving science of

the heart. Knowledge refers to information, teachings, skills, or the understanding acquired through study, analysis, and learning, which is related to a specific field, profession, or area of activity, and includes the system of knowledge concerning nature and society. On the other hand, gnosis refers to the understanding, recognition, comprehension, and divine knowledge that transcends the ordinary realm of learning and is associated with the deeper, spiritual dimensions of existence.

By examining and comparing the sources of gnosis, the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the path of esoteric knowledge becomes evident. As the prospects of philosophical doctrines change in the historical process of development, at the same time, the ideals of Sufism remain unchanged, while also staying dialectically connected to the process of paragenesis (universality). There are no limitations in understanding it (Lala, 2023a). From this perspective, conducting research in the field of gnosis is appropriate from both social and cultural directions (secular, information gathering; religious culture, fulfilling specific tasks and commandments; the culture of the “special”, self-development).

In the development of Islamic civilization, there is a significant distinction between scholars such as jurists (faqih), theologians (mutakallim), hadith scholars (muhaddis), philosophers (faylasuf), intellectuals (mutafakkir), and those of the esoteric knowledge (irfon). They should not be regarded as separate cultural layers. The esoteric scholars (wali, arif, awliya, sayyid, khoja) belong to the highest level of the Muslim elite aristocracy, the “xosul-xos” layer.

Methodology

Sufism is the process of understanding the inner world of a person and deepening the connection with the Creator. Ibn Arabi, one of the great sufis in Sufism, not only advanced religious but also philosophical views in this field. His teachings include deep and complex philosophical reflections on the existence of humans, nature, and the Creator (de Diego González, 2022). To study and understand Ibn Arabi’s teachings, it is necessary to apply several methodological approaches. Through these approaches, the uniqueness and scientific significance of his teachings can be further appreciated.

Applying a historical-analytical method is crucial for understanding Ibn Arabi’s teachings. This method allows the exploration of Ibn Arabi’s place in Sufism and the development of his unique ideas in the historical context. Analyzing the period during which Ibn Arabi lived and his relationships with his contemporaries helps to understand how these influenced the science of Sufism. Furthermore, his teachings encompass key concepts such as Sharia, Tariqa, and Haqiqa, embodying theoretical and practical approaches to leading a person into a correct relationship with the Creator (González, 2023). Through the historical-analytical approach, one can identify how Ibn Arabi’s teachings are connected to his era, and understand why his ideas continue to hold relevance today.

The works created by Ibn Arabi and his descendants occupy a central place in the science of Sufism. By analyzing the texts, the unique approaches, philosophical foundations, and religious concepts of his teachings are explored in greater depth. In his works such as “al-Futuhāt al-Makkiya” and “al-Tanazzulat al-Makkiya”, the advanced theories of Sufism

are expressed. Through the analysis of these works, new understandings of important concepts such as “ilm-i tajalliyat” (science of divine manifestations), “uluhiyyah” (divinity), and “wahdat al-wujud” (unity of existence) can be discovered. The methodology of text analysis aids in further understanding the scientific and religious layers of Ibn Arabi’s teachings and provides insight into the significance of Sufism in contemporary scholarly research.

Ibn Arabi’s teachings require the application of various methodological approaches to study the core ideas of Sufism. Historical-analytical, comparative, text analysis, phenomenological, and conceptual analysis methods can be employed to delve deeper into the scientific and religious aspects of Sufism (Ali, 2021). Using these approaches, one can understand the significance of Ibn Arabi’s teachings in modern scientific research and his place in Sufism. Through the study of Sufism and Ibn Arabi’s teachings, profound concepts regarding human spiritual and moral growth and the relationship with the Creator can be developed.

Result and Discussion

Ibn Arabi’s sufistical teachings sought to explore the unique aspects of Sufism, particularly the relationship between self and others, and how the concepts of Shariah, Tariqat, and Haqiqat (truth) are incorporated in both its theory and practice. In his discussions on the development of sufistical knowledge, Ibn Arabi analyzed the essence of Sufism, as well as concepts such as truth, existence, and the human being, based on various wisdoms.

Ibn Arabi emphasized that “Judgment is the result of wisdom. Knowledge is the result of gnosis. Whoever lacks wisdom has no judgment, and whoever lacks gnosis has no knowledge”. This highlights his belief in the interconnection between knowledge, wisdom, and divine understanding, suggesting that true understanding goes beyond mere intellectual knowledge to encompass deeper spiritual insight (Kars, 2022).

The Sufi, at times, approached the resolution of religious-sufistical and philosophical issues based on his personal viewpoints. In such a theory, the Sufi carried out an analytical solution in two ways:

1. By analyzing the religious-sufistical heritage of past scholars, philosophers, theologians, and sufis, and providing a perspective on the issue based on their teachings.
2. By drawing personal, emotional, and spiritual conclusions.

Ibn Arabi analyzed his relationship with Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) as follows: “For the followers of the faith to understand the basis of their beliefs, the methods of religion are explained through the application of reason and tradition”. This reflects Ibn Arabi’s belief in the integration of rational thought (aql) and transmitted knowledge (naql) in understanding religious principles (al-Mailani).

Al-Farabi was the first to discuss the concept of “active and capable (powerful) intellect”, as well as the division of human intellect into practical (empirical) and theoretical intellects. As a result, Abu Ali Ibn Sina developed the theory of the emanation (tajalli) of the

First Intellect (Aql-i Avval). In Ibn Arabi's teachings, particular attention is given to jurists (faqih) and scholars of religion (ulama al-din علماء الدين). The main duty of the sufi religious scholars is to explain and teach religious rulings and obligations to the people. He emphasized that their numbers should be large, and that the essence of religious practices must be understood through the unity of knowledge and action. Ibn Arabi stated, "People are in need of a large number of leaders in religious law (sharia). For if a person dies without knowing the intellectual knowledge about the soul and body, prayer and fasting, Allah will not question him about these matters, but rather about what he has done through them" (al-Mailani).

Ibn Arabi evaluated the status of jurists (faqih) and referred to their highest level as *ijtihad*. Jurists who reach this level are capable of issuing rulings on religious matters that have no clear solution, doing so independently without the need for assistance from others. They issue these rulings not through outward, apparent knowledge (*zohiri ilm*), but through the inner, intuitive knowledge of inspiration (*batiniy ilham*). Sufis also engage with this knowledge. For this reason, the sufi calls for no objections to be raised against the different methods of issuing rulings between sufi scholars (*mujtahid sufis*) and jurists (*faqih*) (Arabi, 2002).

Ibn Arabiy explained how Sufis should approach the rulings of jurists (*faqih*) and emphasizes that many of them hold a correct worldview. Regarding the relationship between the Sufi on the spiritual path (*salik*) and the traditional jurists, Ibn Arabiy advised: "Do not act against their rulings, and do not exceed the limits of sharia. If one prohibits something and another permits it, do not follow either blindly, and do not resist. Focus on the tasks assigned to you (that is, the practices of Sufism), and you will remain safe. Engage with your own inner self, strive to be with those who follow consensus ("*ahlul-ijma*"), and if you cannot find them, seek those who focus on the hadith ("*ahlul-ahadis*"), and listen to them. Direct your unanswered questions to these groups" (Arabi).

Ibn Arabiy's teachings emphasize protecting Sufis from the attacks of false, unlearned religious leaders and jurists, safeguarding them from unfounded criticism. He draws lessons from the fate of the Sufi Mansur Hallaj, understanding that both government officials and religious leaders, who are influenced by the jurists, could instigate harsh opposition against Sufis (Abdel-Hadi, 2024). Ibn Arabiy therefore calls on his followers to act in cooperation with the times, acknowledging the need for alignment with the prevailing societal conditions.

Furthermore, Ibn Arabiy criticized certain jurists who, driven by worldly interests, consider religion as their own domain. These jurists, whom he referred to as "*ibnu-l-vaqt*" (children of time), are accused of relentlessly persecuting Sufis (Arabi). Thus, the relationship between the outward and inward aspects of the Sharia and Tariqa has been a continuous and evolving one. In the field of Fiqh, Ibn Arabiy highly evaluated the activities of Sufi *mujtahids*, asserting that they do not make the same mistakes that ordinary jurists might make (Barghouti, 2020). He concluded that those who reach the level of *Ijtihad* should be followed by both jurists and Sufis.

Ibn Arabiy also analyzed philosophical sciences, describing philosophy as a special science. He stated that whoever is bestowed with this knowledge is considered wise and knowledgeable. This science is comprehensive (mufassal) and practical, and the wise person, in their state, accurately perceives all situations and things (Arabi).

Philosophy is one of the oldest sciences in human history. Philosophical contemplation and thinking are inherent to human nature, and thus, they are as ancient as humanity itself. Philosophy deals with numerous issues concerning the world, its existence, development, and progress, as well as life, humanity, the essence of time, being, and non-being (Salvaggio, 2021).

In most textbooks where the foundations of philosophy are outlined, it is noted that the term is derived from the ancient Greek word “philosophia,” which means “the love of wisdom” (from “philo” meaning “love” and “sophia” meaning “wisdom”). This represents the literal meaning of the term. Over the centuries, various interpretations of the meaning of the term “philosophy” have emerged, with differing views on its role in society, human life, and the system of sciences. Consequently, the meaning and essence of this term have evolved over time (Pourmahmoud, 2022).

Ibn Arabiy divided philosophy into two parts: theoretical and practical philosophy. According to him, theoretical philosophy derives its conclusions through rational methods, that is, intellectual reasoning. The results of applying these methods in practice may be either positive or negative.

On the other hand, practical philosophy is rooted in the Sufi’s spiritual practices and experiences. Its foundation is based on the “ilmi tajalliyot” (the manifestation of Allah’s light in a person). From a Sufi perspective, this cannot be achieved through human actions alone. It is a grace from Allah, referred to in Sufism as “uluhiy” (Divinity). All actions and words of a true Sufi are divinely inspired. The Sufi, according to Ibn Arabiy, is free from errors, just like a prophet or saint. Prophets and saints are the true sages, whereas philosophers are considered mere wise individuals. However, philosophers are closer to true wisdom, as they recognize Allah better than others do (Arabi).

According to the Sufi thinker, the science of Sufism originates from the Qur’an: “Whoever belongs to its people is also of the Qur’an’s people and is related to Allah. Since the Qur’an is the word of Allah, it means that the word is His knowledge, and His knowledge is His essence”.

Ibn Arabi divided Sufism into three types:

1. False Sufism
2. Rational Sufism
3. True Sufism

Ibn Arabi, analyzing the science of Sufism, believed that the number of ways to reach Allah is as numerous as the creations of Allah (Arabi).

According to the Sufi perspective, false Sufis are deprived of the union with Allah because they have chosen the wrong path to reach the Divine. They imitate the outward appearance and actions of true Sufis while claiming to possess spiritual knowledge that they do not truly have. Ibn Arabi states, “These “false Sufis” cause great harm to Sufism with

their outward appearance and worldview. By wearing the Sufi attire, they become attached to this world, losing sight of their true purpose. They drive the Divine from their hearts and flee from it. They present their prayer rugs, staffs, and miswak (tooth stick) as miracles for the people to see. They do not refrain from what is forbidden, nor detach their hearts from the world. They accept the external appearance of religion, but mix it with polytheism, sitting in the khanaqahs (Sufi lodges) and rabats (Sufi centers), pretending to speak of what is lawful and unlawful" (Arabi).

Conclusion

One of the important aspects of the philosophical heritage of the East is the science of sufism, which plays a distinctive role in ensuring the spiritual and moral perfection of a person. In Ibn Arabi's teachings, the theoretical and practical aspects of Sufism, especially the concepts of sharia (law), tariqa (path), and haqiqa (truth), are analyzed in a unique way. The primary focus in this approach is on the holistic development of a person both internally and externally.

Sufis interpret the essence of knowledge in harmony with ma'rifat (spiritual insight), promoting ideas that ensure the inner and outer progress of a person. According to Ibn Arabi, knowledge and ma'rifat are closely interconnected, and the relationship between wisdom (hikma) and judgment (hukm) guides a person towards true perfection. The foundation of Sufism is emphasized as stemming from the Quran, which divides Sufism into three types: false, rational, and true Sufism. Especially, true Sufism is conceived as the divine grace of Allah, aimed at bringing the person closer to the divine light.

Ibn Arabi did not limit Sufism to theoretical concepts alone but connected it to practical life. He viewed sharia and tariqa as essential foundations in Sufism and called for cooperation between scholars (ulama) and jurists (faqih). At the same time, he urged Sufis to adhere to the boundaries of sharia and emphasized the importance of spiritual inspiration in the practice of religious rulings.

Understanding Sufism based on the Quran and Sunnah, accepting it not only as an external practice but also as an inner spiritual purification, and rejecting false Sufism, remains relevant today. The legacy of Sufis serves as a significant scientific and practical foundation in shaping the principles of consensus and tolerance in contemporary social and cultural processes. Therefore, studying the science of irfan in depth and utilizing the ideas reflected in it for the spiritual development of modern society is considered an important task.

References

- Abdel-Hadi, F. (2024). Ibn 'Arabī's Religious Pluralism: Levels of Inclusivity. *Ibn 'Arabī's Religious Pluralism: Levels of Inclusivity*, 1–266. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003484141>
- Afabih, A. (2022). Examining Ibn Arabi's Kashf Method on the Authenticity of Hadith. *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qur'an Dan Hadis*, 23(1), 111–124. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2022.2301-06>
- Ali, M. H. (2021). Philosophical Sufism: An Introduction to the School of Ibn al-'Arabi. *Philosophical Sufism: An Introduction to the School of Ibn al-'Arabi*, 1–221. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003181040>
- As-Sayyid Ali al-Mailani. "Al-Imamiyyah fi al-Kutub al-Kalamiyyah" (Saudi Arabia): Al-Jami' al-Islamiyyah, pp. 19-74.
- Barghouti, D. (2020). Exploring ibn 'arabi's metaphysics of time and space in sufi ritual: The 'issawiya dhikr of sidi bou-sa'id. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 36(3), 237–248. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X20000445>
- de Diego González, A. (2022). The reception of Ibn 'Arabi's thought in the doctrines of the tariqa Tijaniyya. *Contrastes*, 27(1), 7–28. <https://doi.org/10.24310/Contrastescontrastes.v27i1.10792>
- González, A. D. D. (2023). The Challenge of Muhammad Iqbal's Philosophy of Khudi to Ibn 'Arabi's Metaphysical Anthropology. *Religions*, 14(5). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14050683>
- Ibn Arabi. "Rasa'il Ibn Arabi". -Beirut: Al-Intishar Al-Arabi, 2002. Vol. 2, pp. 98-182.
- Ibn Arabi. "Ruh al-Quds fi Muhasabat al-Nafs". Damascus: Maktabat Abdulwakil al-Durubi, pp. 5-66.
- Ibn Arabi. "Al-Futuhāt al-Makkiyah". Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1985. Vol. 4, pp. 266-307.
- Ibn Arabi. "Ar-Risalat al-Wujudiya". Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiya, 2004. p. 9.
- Kars, A. (2022). Knowledge and Causality in Ibn al-'Arabī's Book of Giving, and the Buddhist Notion of Dependent Origination. *Religions*, 13(9). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13090768>
- Lala, I. (2023a). Necessary Existence and Necessary Mercy: Ibn 'Arabī's Reformulation of Ibn Sīnā's Ontological Proof. *Religions*, 14(8). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14081016>
- Lala, I. (2023b). Transcendental Happiness in the Thought of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn 'Arabī. *Religions*, 14(6). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060729>
- Pourmahmoud, S. (2022). A Study On Simile And Purification In The "Philosophy Of Decoration" Of Iranian Islamic Art From I B N Arabi's Point Of View. *Quintana*, 21. <https://doi.org/10.15304/quintana.21.7833>
- Salvaggio, F. (2021). Polysemy as hermeneutic key in Ibn 'Arabī's Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam. *Annali Di Ca Foscari Serie Orientale*, 1, 53–68. <https://doi.org/10.30687/ANNOR/2385-3042/2021/01/003>

-
- Sobirovich, T. B. (2024). The National Idea as a Driving Force behind Ideospheric Transformation in Uzbekistan: Exploring its Implications and Impact. *Asian Journal of Applied Science and Technology (AJAST)*, 8(3), 170-176.
- Sobirovich, T. B. (2020). The development of democratic society and spiritual renewal in the views of Eastern and Western thinkers. *International journal of advanced research and review*, 5(10), 60-65.
- Sobirovich, T. B. (2024). Exploring the Ideosphere: A Comprehensive Examination of Eastern Philosophical Perspectives and Their Societal Reflections.
- Turdiev, B. S. (2024). Balancing national and universal perspectives: the dialectical dynamics in society's ideosphere. *Asian Journal of Basic Science & Research*, 6(3), 59-65.