THE IMAGE OF THE PROPHET
IN IBN SĪNĀ'S THOUGHT

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Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisa gambaran tentang Nabi Muḥammad dalam pandangan salah seorang filosof Muslim terbesar, Ibn Sīnā. Penelitian tidak dimaksudkan untuk mendiskusikan pemikiran tersebut secara menyeluruh sebagaimana yang dapat kita temukan dalam karya-karya Ibn Sīnā, tetapi hanya dibatasi pada dua karyanya, yaitu *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwat* dan *Metaphysics X* (*al-Ilāhiyyāt*) dalam *al-Shifā'*, dengan merujuk pada beberapa tulisannya yang terkait.

Kedua karya tersebut menyajikan dua ekspresi yang berbeda atas Nabi. Dalam karyanya yang pertama, Ibn Sīnā menggunakan terma-terma yang sangat filosofis untuk menggambarkan sosok Muḥammad, walaupun dia juga tidak menafikan bahasan agamis. Memang benar bahwa tujuan ditulisnya risalah ini adalah untuk menjawab pertanyaan seseorang tentang argumentasi logis dan bukti dialektis atas eksistensi Nabi, sehingga terkesan bahwa bisa jadi Ibn Sīnā sendiri tidak percaya akan bukti atas kenabian secara filosofis. Tetapi jika kita cermati lebih jauh, kondisi Ibn Sīnā sendiri sebagai Muslim yang sekaligus seorang filosof sebenarnya ikut membentuknya untuk menghadirkan gambaran tentang Muḥammad secara filosofis sekaligus Islamis.

Gambaran Nabi sebagai seorang manusia biasa yang memiliki kelebihan yang diberikan oleh Tuhan kepadanya dan sebagai pemelihara hukum Allah bagi kesejahteraan manusia nampak secara jelas dalam karyanya yang kedua. Dengan merujuk pada kehidupan sosial, Ibn Sīnā menggambarkan bahwa Muḥammad harus menentukan hukuman dan larangan untuk mencegah ketidaktaatan terhadap hukum Tuhan, serta membina kehidupan moral. Jelaslah bahwa figur Nabi di sini digambarkan secara lebih relijius.

Pertanyaan yang mungkin timbul adalah mengapa sosok Muḥammad muncul secara berbeda pada dua risalah tersebut. Kita melihat bahwa

definisi tradisional tentang peran Nabi tidak dapat memuaskan Ibn Sīnā sebagai seorang filosof, sehingga dalam tulisan yang pertama ia lebih menghadirkan figur Muḥammad secara filosofis. Dalam tulisan kedua, nampak bahwa sebenarnya Ibn Sīnā tidak dapat melepaskan diri dari kenyataannya sebagai seorang Muslim, sehingga ia perlu menjelaskan pada dirinya sendiri dan pada ummat Islam pada umumnya tentang peran Nabi sebagai seorang pemimpin sosial. Terlebih lagi lingkungan Islamnya "memaksa" Ibn Sīnā untuk mengharmoniskan antara penyelidikan rasionalnya dengan ajaran-ajaran Islam.

ملخص

تبحث هذه المقالة عن صورة النبى محمد فى نظر أحد أكبر الفلاسفة المسلمين ابن سينا. لا تقصد هذه المقالة بحث جميع أفكاره المتعلقة بالموضوع الموجودة فى مؤلفاته الكثيرة، وانما يقتصر البحث فى مؤلفيه، فى "إثبات النبوّة" و"الالهيات" الموجودة فى كتابه الشفاء.

فى هذين المؤلفين يعرض ابن سينا تعبيرا مخالفا بينهما عن النبى. فى مؤلفه الأول، يستعمل ابن سينا الاصطلاحات الفلسفية لتصوير شخصية محمد دون منافاة اللغة الدينية. لاريب فى أن هذه الرسالة كتبها المؤلّف جوابا للأسئلة حول البرهان والدليل العقلى عن وجود النبى، لأجل هذا لا يؤمن دليل النبوّة فلسفيا. رغم ذلك إذا تأملنا حقّ التأمل فإنه كمسلم وفيلسوف قد ساهم فى إعراض صورة النبى فى لغة فلسفية ودينية.

وصورة النبى كإنسان عادى ذى مزايا وهبها الله اياه وكحافظ أحكام الله لمصلحة الناس ظاهرة فى رسالته الثانية. اعتمادا على الحياة الاجتماعية، صوّر ابن سينا بأنه على محمد أن يعيّف الأحكام والنوافى لمحافظة احكام الله وبنى الخلق. بهذا التعبير ظهر بأن ابن سينا صور شخصية محمد من ناحية الدين.

بعـد ملاحظـة هـاتين الرسالتين يظهـر السـؤال : لمـاذا ظهـرت شـخصيـة

محمد فيهما بوجهين مختلفين. عرفنـا بـأن التعريفـات الكلاسيكية (لقديمـة) عـن

صورة النبى لا تقنع الفلاسفة منهم ابن سينا، فلذلك نجد فى رسـالتة الأولى

عرض ابن سينا صورة محمد من ناحية فلسفية. وفى رسالته الثانية، ظهر بأنه

لا يمكن أن يخلع قميص الاسلام، فيحتـاج إلى بيـان صـورة النبـى مـن الناحيـة

اجتماعية لإقناع نفسه والمسلمين. زيادة على ذلك، فإن المجتمع الاسلامى الـذى

عاش فيه جعله يوازن بين بحوثه العقلية والتعاليم الاسلامية.

IBN SĪNĀ was born in 980 in the town of Afshanah near Bukhā-rā. His father worked as an administrator during Nūḥ ibn Manṣūr's reign (976-997). Through his father and his brother, who were Ismāʿīlī, Ibn Sīnā was introduced to "the account of the soul and the intellect," although in his own words, his soul "would not accept it."[1] His youth was spent studying metaphysiscs, logical, natural, and mathematical sciences.[2]

When his father died in 1002, Ibn Sīnā entered the Sulṭān's palace and left Bukhārā for Gurgānj to work under ʿAlī ibn Maʾmūn (997-1009). After a few other sporadic moves, Ibn Sīnā served the Buwayhid prince Shams al-Dawla until 1021. With the latter's death, Ibn Sīnā was offered the post of vizier by al-Dawla's son and successor Amīr al-Dawla, but he refused, corresponding instead with ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla Abū Jaʿfar Muḥam-mad (d.1041)[3] to whom he dedicated several works and served until his death in 1037. Abū ʿUbayd al-Jūzjānī attributes some forty works to Ibn Sīnā's authorship. Father Anawati adds another 236 works in his bibliog-raphy, while some of them cannot be attributed to Ibn Sīnā with any de-gree of certainty.[4] These works include philosophical and medical trea-tises, as well as narrative writings.

One cannot trace the history of Islamic philosophy without ac-knowledging the debt owed by Muslim philosophers to Greek philosophy. The doctrine of emanation in Ibn Sīnā's thought, for example, is derived, in the main, from Neoplatonic concepts. As some scholars have pointed

out, however, this cannot be taken to imply that all of Muslim philosopher's doctrines are rooted in Hellenic sources. Fazlur Rahman argues that some Muslim philosophers displayed original thinking, and devised new concepts, one of them being the concept of prophecy:

> ...This process has revealed that the basic elements in the philosophical doctrine are all Greek, but that the Muslim philosophers have elaborated them, in some cases have refined them, and, above all, have woven them, together -for the first time in the history of religious thought- in order to suit the image of the prophet. Indeed, in order to make the traditional image intelligible to themselves, they amplified it by adding the element of intellectual perfectionism and by making it the highest of all elements.[5]

The discussion of prophecy in Ibn Sīnā's works is found in his political discourse. One might wonder as to why it is put in his political framework. In fact, it is very clear that, for Ibn Sīnā, the prophet's central role is as a lawgiver, and legislation firmly belongs within the realm of politics. This paper will not provide a complete discussion of Ibn Sīnā's thought on prophecy as found in all his works, but will limit the discussion to two of his treatises, namely *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt*,[6] and the *Metaphysics X* (*al-Ilāhiyyāt*) of *al-Shifā'* (*The Healing*),[7] with reference to some of his related works.[8] These two works proffer divergent expressions of the image of the prophet, and are, therefore, interesting from a comparative perspective. This paper will provide a two part discussion. Part A analyzes the image of the prophet in *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt*. The image of the prophet as a lawgiver, which is different from what we will see in the part A of the discussion, is dealt with in Part B, and is based on the second treatise, al-*Ilāhiyyāt*. An analysis which accounts for these diverging depictions will be provided.

A. The Proof of Prophecies (Based on *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt*)

In this treatise Ibn Sīnā provides a summmation of an oral discussion he had shared with a person who had expressed his misgivings about accepting prophecy. This person was confirmed in these misgivings as "the claims of the advocates of prophecy" lack of "demonstrative argument" and of "dialectical proof."[9] The treatise is made up of two parts. The first part establishes the proof of prophecy and describes its essence. Part two offers an interpretation of certain symbols derived from the Qur'an.

Ibn Sīnā outlines four premises to his argument. He states that anything that exists in another essentially, is actual as long as the latter exists; and anything that exists in another accidentally, exists in it at times potentially, at times actually. The third premise is that whatever exists in another essentially, is always in act and is the cause (*mukharrij*) that changes others from potentiality into actuality, mediately or without mediation. The last premise is that anything which is composed of two things, if either of the two can exist without the other, the other can exist without it. [10]

Having established the aforementioned premises, Ibn Sīnā launches into a discussion of the human soul and its capacity to receive intelligibles from the active intellect. He argues that every human being posesses a rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*) which differentiates them from other living creatures. He divides the powers of the rational soul into three categories since they vary among human beings. The first power is called the material intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*) which has the potentiality to become informed with the universal forms, but has no form in itself *(laysa lahā fī dhātihā ṣūrah)*. The second power, the intellect by positive disposition *(al-'aql bi al-malaka)*, is an intellect in potentiality. It has the capacity and the positive disposition to apprehend the universal forms. The acquired intellect *(al-'aql al-mustafād)* is the third power which is actually informed with the universal forms.[11] Marmura rightly points out that, with regards to this theory of the intellect, Ibn Sīnā merely presented its summation without attempting to prove or justify its premises.[12]

Ibn Sīnā moves on to state that the acquired intellect does not exist actually in the material intellect and hence does not exist in the latter essentially. Its existence, therefore, is due to something in which it exists essentially and through which the potential intellect is actualized. This is called the universal intellect (*al-'aql alkullī*), the universal soul *(al-nafs al-kullī)*, and the world soul (*al-nafs al-'ālam*).[13] In short, he argues that the acquired intellect must exist essentially in the universal intellect.

In his conclusion to the proof of prophecy, Ibn Sīnā assesses the capability of the (ordinary) human soul to receive intelligibles from the universal active intellect. According to him the intelligibles may be received in two ways, directly and indirectly:

> Now the rational soul, as we have shown, receives at times directly and at others indirectly; hence the capacity to receive directly does not belong to it essentially but accidentally. This capacity, therefore, must exist essentially in something else whence

the rational soul acquires it. This is the angelic intellect, which receives essentially without mediation and by its very reception causes the powers of the soul to receive... We have also seen that there are different degrees of strength and weakness, ease and difficulty, in that which receives and that which is received. Now, it is impossible for the capacity to receive to be infinite. For there is finitude in the direction of weakness, which consists of the inability of the power to receive even one intelligible, directly or indirectly, and there is finitude in the direction of strength, which consists in the ability of the power to receive directly.[14]

In short, Ibn Sīnā argues that the capacity to receive intelligibles directly in the ordinary human soul must exist essentially in the angelic intellect (*al-'aql al-malakī*), which receive emanations from the active intellect without mediation (*taqabbala kullu al-ifādāti al-'aqliyyati bighairi wāsiṭah*). This is called the prophet (*al-nabī*), and to him belongs the highest degree of excellence in the realm of material forms. He concludes that since everything which excels rules over that which is inferior, it follows that the prophet rules over all species above which he excels.[15] Here lies the basis of Ibn Sīnā's formulations as to the position of the prophet in his discourse.

Shifting the discussion to the interpretation of the prophet's symbols and metaphors, Ibn Sīnā argues that the prophet's words should be symbol or secret sign (*ramz*) and his expressions hints (*īmā*).[16]

Moreover, the foremost Greek philosophers and prophets made use in their books of symbols and signs in which they hid their secret doctrine-men like Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato... Moreover, how could the prophet Muhammad (may God's prayers and peace be on him) bring knowledge to the uncouth nomad, not to say to the whole human race considering that he was sent a messenger to all? Political guidance, on the other hand, comes easily to prophets; also the imposition of obligations on people.[17]

Accordingly, he quotes certain Qur'ānic passages which have symbolic and metaphoric significance to expound upon what the prophet conveyed from his Lord. An example of these is verse 24:35 "God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp (the lamp is in a glass, the glass is as it were a brilliant star) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither from the east nor from the west." Ibn Sīnā interprets the term "niche" (*mishkāt*) to imply the material *intellect* (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*) and the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*), while the term "lamp" (*al-nūr*) denotes the acquired intellect (*al-*

'aql mustafād).[18] It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper to treat Ibn Sīnā's interpretation of these verses which he employed only as a means of illustrating the prophet's task to speak in symbolic language.

Analysis

In this treatise the image of the prophet is depicted in more philosophic terms which Ibn Sīnā uses to prove the existence of the prophet. His reasons for depicting the prophet and his role in this way are very clear. Ibn Sīnā himself introduces this work by stating that it was written in response to a particular person's need for a logical argument and dialectical proof of the existence of the prophet.

Nevertheless, one cannot simply conclude that this work was a mere response to the needs of one individual for this kind of explanation, or that Ibn Sīnā himself did not necessarily believe in the proof of the existence of the prophet in a philosophical way. On the contrary, it is highly probable that, being a Muslim, and at the same time a philosopher, he needed this kind of proof to satisfy his own rational inquiries. This argument is supported by Fazlur Rahman who states that:

> Avicenna himself tells us in the preface to his epistle on Pophecy (ap. *Tis' Rasā'il*) of the 'doubts' of his correspondent regarding the Faith, and he has rebuked in more than one place the 'irreligious so-called philosophers', just as he has rebuked the 'common herd' and its leaders. This crisis is similar to that of the Hellenistic paganism which the Stoics tried to avert. But quite apart from this crisis, the philosophers too had a desperate need for understanding Islam themselves in terms of their rationalism. [19]

Moreover, it is noteworthy that the ninth and the tenth centuries were the most productive period of the translation movement in the intellectual history of Islam. On the one hand, Baghdad was a "heaven" for this philosophical tradition, but on the other, it was a place where its proponents "were forced to defend their teachings before a sceptical, and somewhat threatened, traditionally minded Muslim intelligentsia."[20] Thus, the environment itself shaped Ibn Sīnā's philosophical image of the prophet.[21] In fact, it has been argued that the Muslim philosophers, including Ibn Sīnā, who lived in an Islamic environment, tried to harmonize their belief in "the supremacy of reason with the absolute claim of Islam."[22] As Strauss points out:

> The medium through which God reveals Himself to man is a prophet, i.e., a human being. The *falāsifa* attempted therefore to

understand the process of Revelation as essentially related to, or as identical with, a peculiar "connatural" perfection, and in fact, the supreme perfection, of man. Being loyal philosophers, the *falāsifa* were compelled to justify their pursuit of philosophy before the tribunal of the Divine Law. Considering the importance which they attached to philosophy, they were thus driven to interpret Revelation as the perfect political order which is perfect precisely because it lays upon all sufficiently equipped men the duty to devote their lives to philosophy.[23]

In reading Ibn Sīnā's concept of prophecy, one is struck by the fact that it is similar to that of Fārābī's (d. 950). In fact, it is important to note that the latter was the first to formulate a theory of prophecy. Hence, Ibn Sīnā's basic concepts are borrowed from Fārābī, even though the former elaborated it "in a fuller account of the intellectual revelation."[24] Additionally, in his autobiography Ibn Sīna acknowledges that it was only with the help of Fārābī's *Metaphysics* (*Kitāb Mā Baʿda al-Ṭabīʿah*), could he understand Aristotle.[25] More importantly, Hajji Khalīfah (d. 1657) asserts that *al-Shifāʾ* is based on Fārābī's book *The Second Teaching (al-Taʿlīm al-Thānī)*.[26]

In discussing the perfect ruler and the perfect association, Fārābī begins:

> In order to preserve himself and to attain his highest perfections every human being is by his very nature in need [*muhtājun*] of many things which he cannot provide all by himself; he is indeed in need of people who each supply him with some particular need of his. Everybody finds himself in the same relation to everybody else in this respect.[27]

After describing the excellent city and the ranks of people who live there, Fārābī goes on to list the qualities of the ruler of that city:

> The ruler of the excellent city cannot just be any man, because rulership requires two conditions: (a) he should be predisposed for it by his inborn nature, (b) he should have acquired the attitude and habit of will for rulership which will develop in a man whose inborn nature is predisposed for it.. That man is a person over whom nobody has any sovereignity whatsoever. He is a man who has reached his perfection and has become actually intellect and actually being thought (intelligized), his representative faculty having by nature reached its utmost perfection in the way stated by us.[28]

It is clear, however, that for Fārābī this ruler has to go through stages to attain proximity to the active intellect:

> There are thus two stages between the first stage of being a man and the Active Intellect. When the perfect Passive Intellect and the natural disposition become one thing in the way the compound of matter and form is one-and when the form of the humanity of this man is taken as identical with the Passive Intellect which has become actually intellect, there will be between this man and the Active Intellect only one stage. And when the natural disposition is made the matter of the Passive Intellect which has become actually intellect, and the Passive Intellect the matter of the Acquired Intellect, and the Acquired Intellect the matter of the Active Intellect, and when this is taken as one and the same thing, then this man is the man on whom the Active Intellect has descended. When this occurs in both parts of his rational faculty, namely the theoretical and the practical rational faculties, and also in his representative faculty, then it is this man who receives Divine Revelation, and God Almighty grants him Revelation through the mediation of the Active Intellect... Thus he is, through the emanation from the Active Intellect to his Passive Intellect, a wise man and a philosopher and an accomplished thinker who employs an intellect of divine quality, and through the emanation from the Active Intellect to his faculty of representation a visionary prophet: who warns of things to come and tells of particular things which exist at present. This man holds the most perfect rank of humanity and has reached the highest degree of felicity. His soul is united as it were with the Active intellect, in the way stated by us. [29]

The above quotation of Fārābī's reveals important similarities as well as differences between Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's conceptions of prophecy. Ibn Sīnā, for instance, highlights the need for partnership within the framework of law, legislation, and prophecy, while Fārābī situates his notion of association within the context of the perfect state and the discourse on the ruler of that state. Moreover, the similarities between Ibn Sīnā's prophet and Fārābī's philosopher-king, as a link between the terrestrial and celestial world, are evident.

There is further similarity between Ibn Sīnā and Fārābī's conceptions of the relation between the active intellect and the prophet himself. In Fārābī's understanding, when the prophet receives a revelation there is no intermediary between him and the active intellect (*ka al-muttaḥiddat*

bī al-'aqli al-fa''āl).[30] In line with this argument, Ibn Sīnā reasons that revelation is the emanation (*al-waḥyu hādhihi al-ifādah*) which the prophet receives from the active intellect without mediation.[31] Some scholars go even further to argue that in Ibn Sīnā's scheme, the prophet is identical with the active intellect.[32]

Nevertheless, there are some differences between the two concepts. First, for Fārābī the ruler must be both philosopher (*ḥakīm*) and prophet (*nabī*).[33] For Ibn Sīnā, however, the prophet is a man who lives in the real world, even though his explanation on the proof of prophecy in this treatise is very philosophical. Second, in spite of the similarities in their conceptions of the relationship between the active intellect and the prophet, Ibn Sīnā's differs from Fārābī's in that the latter's scheme requires the prophet to go through stages of ordinary philosophical thought before attaining revelation,[34] while in the former's, prophetic revelation is something which happens "all at once" (*daf' atan*).[35]

One may conclude from the above explanation that Ibn Sīnā's proof of prophecy is presented in a philosophical, yet Islamic manner.[36] Even while addressing the concept of philosophy in general, he is also making specific reference to the prophecy of Muḥammad. Commenting on the authenticity of Muḥammad's prophethood, he states that it is clear for the reasonable man (*al-'āqil*) to grasp when he compares him with other prophets.[37] Fārābī, on the other hand, does not make direct reference to the prophet Muḥammad. One does find, however, that his conception of the prophet and revelation is Islamic, as he does not separate the role of the ruler of the virtuous city from the prophet who is the recipient of revelation.[38]

Ibn Sīnā's approach to the philosophical interpretation of Qur'ānic verses, also owes much to Fārābī's theory which asserts that religion is the symbolic account of philosophical truth; "the foremost Greek philosophers and prophets made use in their books of symbols and signs in which they hid their secret doctrine..."[39] Fārābī enunciates the conceptual relation between philosophy and religion in his masterpiece *Arā' Ahl al-Madīnah*. It is the philosopher, in Fārābī's conception, who is chosen to be the lawgiver; and religion is described in the context of imitation of the abstract truth.[40]

B. The Prophet as a Lawgiver (Based on The *Metaphysics X [Al-'Ilahiyyāt]* of *al-Shifā' [The Healing]*)

Ibn Sinā begins his explanation by laying down the precept of man as a "social being," who cannot exist in isolation. He goes on to argue that partnership can only be achieved through mutual exchangess (*muʿā-malah*), which are regulated through law and justice. Accordingly, law and justice demand a lawgiver (*sānn*), and a disposer of justice (*muʿaddil*), who is in a position to address the people and authoritatively make them obey to the law.[41]

Ibn Sina proceeds with the discussion on the logical proof of the need for the existence of the prophet, to state:

> Thus, with respect to the survival and actual existence of the human species, the need for this human being is far greater than the need for such benefits as the growing of the hair on the eyebrow, ... Now the existence of the righteous man to legislate and to dispense justice is a possibility...It becomes impossible, therefore, that divine providence should ordain the existence of those former benefits and not the latter, which are their bases... Nor is it possible that the First Principle and the angels after Him should know the former and not the latter. Nor yet is it possible that that which He knows to be in itself within the realm of possibility but whose realization is necessary for introducing the good order, should not exist. And how can it not exist, when that which depends and is constructed on its existence, exists?[42]

Based on this reason, Ibn Sinā argues that a prophet must exist (*fawājibun idhan an yūjada nabiyyun*), and he must be a human (*insān*). He must possess characteristics which are not possessed by others such that he may be recognized, and he will perform the miracles (*muʿizāt*). He is then obligated to establish laws for human's affairs with God's permission, by His command, His revelation, and the descent of the holy spirit upon the prophet.[43]

Regarding the prophet's role, Ibn Sinā argues that he should only teach people about the oness of God, His Truth and His unique essence. Beyond that, a more complex knowledge of God would simply confuse religious masses since it is very rare for people to understand the truth of the divine unity (*al-tauḥīd*), and divine remoteness (*al-tanzīh*). The prophet, then, must instill in them the belief in the return (*al-maʿād*) in a way they can understand.[44]

Ibn Sīnā reasons that being a preserver of legislation, the prophet must preserve the law he establishes concerning man's welfare *(al-maṣāliḥ al-insāniyyah)*. To do that, he must guide the people to repeat certain acts at frequent specified intervals. The noblest of this act of worship is, in Ibn Sīnā's view, prayer *(al-ṣalāt)*, for which the prophet commands good manners for each time of prayer.[45] The prophet is ordered by God to command people to His worship, and to serve as caretaker of men's affairs, their lives in this world and their well-being in the hereafter. He is distinguished from the rest of mankind by virtue of his godliness *(bi ta'alluhihi)*.[46]

Ibn Sīnā maintains that the legislator's first aim in laying down the laws and organizing the city can be categorized into three groups: administrators *(al-mudabbirūn)*, artisans *(al-ṣunnā)*, and *guardians (al-ḥafaẓah)*. Ibn Sīnā then provides a detailed explanation of how the legislator should lead the city's affairs, to mention a few, prohibit idleness, unemployment, gambling, and usury. The legislator must also urge people to the institution of marriage, by which the continuity of the species is preserved, and the proof of the existence of God is revealed.[47]

It is worth noting Ibn Sīnā's perception of women in relation to the legislator's role as a caretaker. In his scheme, women, as irrational *(wāhiyat al-'aql)* human beings, are not permitted to make any decisions with respect to separation (divorce). He goes even further to make the claim that the legislator must veil and seclude women *(an yasunna 'alaihā fī bābihā al-tasatturu wa al-takhaduru)* from men since, in reality, women run the risk of sharing their sexual desires with many men. Unlike their male counterparts, women cannot go to work, and the legislator must, therefore, ordain that men are responsible for meeting her needs. In short, Ibn Sīnā maintains that men must own women, but not vice versa *(wa huwa annahu yumlikuhā wa hiya lā tamlikuhu)*.[48]

Concerning the issue of succession, Ibn Sīnā reasons that the legislator should impose compliance for whosoever succeeds him; and the successors can either be chosen by himself or by the consensus of the elders *(bi ijmā' min ahli al-sābiqah)*. He must decree in his law that in the event of a disagreement and fighting, or the designation of someone other than the virtuous individual, the community would be guilty of an act of unbelief *(kafarū bi 'l-llāh)*. Furthermore, Ibn Sīnā argues that the legislator should make the responsibility for fighting and killing anyone who claims the caliphate based on power or wealth, incumbent upon every citizen.[49]

With reference to communal life, Ibn Sīnā reasons that the legislator must also legislate that people are enjoined to help others with their properties and lives. The legislator must also impose punishments (*'uqūbāt*), penalties (*ḥudūd*), and prohibitions (*mazājir*) to prevent disobedience to the divine law for fear of the afterlife. It is important to note that Ibn Sīnā stresses the moderate (*mu' tadil*) nature of the laws concerning worship, marriage, and prohibition.[50]

To conclude, Ibn Sīnā argues that it is necessary for the legislator to "prescribe laws regarding morals [*al-akhlāq*] and customs [*al-'ādāh*] that advocate justice, which is the mean."[51] Whosoever combines theoretical wisdom (*al-ḥikmah*) with justice (*al-naẓariyyah*) is the happy man. In addition to these qualities, whosoever acquires the prophetic qualities (*al-khawāṣṣ al-nabawiyyah*), becomes almost a human god (*rabban insāniyyan*), whom it is almost permissible to worship, after the worship of God. He is indeed the world's earthly king and God's deputy in it (*sulṭān al-'ālam al-arḍi wa khalīfat al-allāh fīhi*).[52]

Analysis

In this work, Ibn Sīnā depicts the prophet as lawgiver, and provides a very detailed explanation of the role of the prophet in the social realm. While the first section in this treatise engages in a logical, abstract argument on the necessity of the prophet's existence, Ibn Sīnā never loses sight of the prophet as a religious and practical figure in the community. Hence, in this particular work, as well as in *Fī Ithbāt*, one finds that the image of the prophet is depicted in both philosophical and religious terms. In *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, however, the emphasis is on the prophet's role as a religious figure.

It is of course very hard, if not impossible, to determine why Ibn Sīnā chose to depict the image of the prophet in the manner cited above. Ibn Sīnā himself provided no explanation as to why he wrote this treatise as he did in *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt*. One can, nevertheless, understand his approach in an attempt to arrive at an answer by tracing Ibn Sīnā's life. Being a Muslim and, at the same time, a philosopher, it is most likely that he has internalized two images of the prophet: one, a religious figure, and the other, a philosophical figure. As a Muslim, he could not but adhere to the Islamic belief that the prophet does exist. As a philosopher, his intellect strove to assimilate this faith in the existence of the prophet with rational premises.

Again, in this treatise one finds some similarities as well as differences between Ibn Sīnā's concept of prophecy and that of Fārābī. The premise that men are social beings appears in both of their arguments as an opinion which holds that every human being is in need of other people. Moreover, in *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, Ibn Sīnā employs Fārābī's concept of the state to be defined in Islamic teachings, rituals, and institutions. The obligation of prayer, pilgrimage, holy war, prohibitions of gambling and usury, the laws of marriage and divorce, and the institution of the caliphate are all discussed within Fārābī's framework.[53]

Ibn Sīnā's argument that "whoever wins the prophetic qualities becomes almost a human god,"[54] yields the assumption that anyone can be a prophet if they fulfil the qualities mentioned above. Upon closer examination, however, one finds in another part of his argument[55] that it is only a few people who have these qualities. Therefore, he suggests that not everybody can be a prophet.

In this treatise, as well as in *Fī Ithbāt*, Ibn Sīnā states that prophecy is a necessity (*wājib*).[56] Marmura provides an interesting ana-lysis of this notion of the necessity of prophecy in the light of Ash'arite theology.[57] Taking Ghazālī's argument as a representative of the Ash'arite position, Ibn Sīnā's conception of prophecy is brought to question. Ghazālī states that while it is true that the *falāsifa* believe in God (*al-Sāni'*) and the prophecy of Muhammad, they, however, hold some arguments which contradict the Sharī 'ah (*nuṣūṣ al-shar'i*). They believe, in Ghazālī's understanding, that the prophet is unable to explain "The Truth" because the lack of human's understanding of "The Truth" itself.[58] Ghazālī's condemnation can be traced back to the Ash'arite doctrines on prophecy. In Ash'arī's *Maqālāt*, for example, one finds the concept of pre-determination which holds that God determines everything without interference from human beings. As a logical extension of this premise, it can be argued that there is no necessity for God to make the prophet exist.[59]

Marmura notes two senses of Ibn Sīnā's prophecy that contradict the Ash'arite view. The prophet, as one sees in Ibn Sīnā's argument, is needed for introducing good order. This carries two implications: first, it means that the majority of human beings need to be guided by divine law, and Ibn Sīnā takes this further to argue that God could not have created all men virtuous, an obvious negation of Ash'arism; second, the good order, which requires prophets, must be devised by God, and this also contradicts the Ash'arites.[60] Marmura believes that while Ibn Sīnā's political

state is Platonic, the institutions he conceives for it are Islamic. The question arises, therefore, as to why Ghazāli condemned him as irreligious.

Marmura argues that the answer lies in the fact that Ibn Sīnā's prophecy is devised within a "metaphysical framework of necessary emanation" which can never be accepted by the Ash'arites. Moreover, Ibn Sīnā's insistence on the acceptance of certain kinds of miracles was in diametrical contrast to the Ash'arite position.[61] Hence, Marmura concludes that "Avicenna is not accused by al-Ghazāli of giving merely lip service to this fundamental tenet of Islam. Rather, what is at stake is the conception of the diety and prophethood."[62]

It is of course beyond the scope of this paper to judge the dispute between Ibn Sīnā and Ghazāli. One might, however, conclude that Ibn Sīnā's pronouncements on the necessity of prophecy stems from his rational belief in the need for a lawgiver on the one hand, and from his religious belief in the prophets' existence, on the other. Ibn Sīnā's careful avoidance of the word *rasūl* in any reference to the prophet throughout his works, does, however, raise some interesting questions.[63] One might speculate that it betrays his irreligiosity. Nevertheless, if one fully understands the setting in which Ibn Sīnā worked and lived, one may come to the conclusion that his conceptions on prophecy had to have a philosophical formula in order to adapt and speak to the prevailing intellectual environment.

Erwin Rosenthal maintains that there is not enough evidence to show "whether Al-Fārābi and Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd meant by prophecy what the Muslim theologians meant, or rather what Plotinus, and Porphyry meant."[64] It is true, he argues, that "the revealed law of Ibn Sīnā's God" is similar to "the law of Plato's God." This resemblance, however, is not total as the concept of the Shari 'a is extended to the discussion on the hereafter, but is not in Plato's Nomos.[65] Rosenthal reaches the conclusion that Ibn Sīnā and other Muslim philosophers regarded their faith in God and His revelation as their building premises or "starting-point."[66]

Rahman also points out that the adoption of "the Peripatetic doctrine of the Intellect, the later neo-Platonic doctrine of the Law of Symbolization, the Stoic doctrine of the inner inspiration and of external para-perceptual experience, and the equally Stoic doctrine of the 'Civil theology' instituted by the sage-Law-giver," was meant to evoke an adequate image of the Prophet and his actual performance. The doctrine of Intel-

lect, argues Rahman, was introduced as "the necessary base without which the whole superstructure would collapse." Hence, Rahman concludes that the philosophers are justifiably called 'the defenders of the Faith'.[67]

Concluding Remarks

In the history of Islamic philosophy, it is a matter of fact that the *falāsifa* owe much to Greek philosophy. This, however, cannot be taken to mean that all Muslim philosophers' conceptions are Hellenic. In his doctrine of the prophet, Ibn Sīnā elaborated and developed a systematic and, in a way, original conception, which had not been seen previously in the history of religious thought.

In both *Fī Ithbāt* and *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, Ibn Sīnā depicts the image of the prophet in philosophical as well as religious, sociological and political terms. In the first treatise, however, the image is more "philosophic" since the traditional definition and the role of the prophet did not satisfy him. Moreover, it is important to note that Ibn Sīnā's setting itself led him to have this philosophical image of the prophet. In *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, the image of the prophet is drawn in a more religious style because, being a Muslim, Ibn Sīnā needed to understand and explain to himself, and to the masses, what the role of the prophet encompassed as the social leader. Furthermore, living in an Islamic milieu, Ibn Sīnā was forced to harmonize his rational inquires with the Islamic doctrines.

The similarities and differences between Ibn Sīnā's and Fārābī's conceptions of prophecy have been demonstrated. In spite of the fact that the former bases much of his thought on the doctrines of the latter, Ibn Sīnā's approach must be acknowledged as the more systematic of the two.

End Notes

[1] Ibn Sīnā, *Sīrat al-Shaykh al-Ra'īs*. Completed by al-Jūzajānī, edited and translated into English by William E. Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1974), 18-9.

[2] *Ibid.*, 31-2.

[3] *Ibid.*, 41-57.

[4] *Ibid.*, 13.

[5] Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: George Allen and Unwin), 1958, viii.

[6] Ibn Sīnā, *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt* Edited with Introduction and Notes by Michael Marmura (Beirut: Dār Al-Nahār, 1968), 41. Marmura based this edition on a text printed in Cairo *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt* in *Tis' Rasā'il* (1908). He translated this treatise into English as: Avicenna, "On the Proof of Prophecies and the Interpretation of the Prophet's Symbols and Metaphors," *Medieval Political Philosophy,* edited by R. Lerner and M. Mahdi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 112-21.

[7] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifa* : *al-Ilāhiyyāt.* The critical edition of the Arabic original was made by G.C. Anawati and others (Cairo:1960), 435-455. The English translation by M. Marmura: Avicenna, "Healing: Metaphysics X," *Medieval Political Philosophy,* edited by R. Lerner and M. Mahdi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 98-111.

[8] Actually Ibn Sīnā's commentary on prophecy is scattered throughout his many treatises, and this makes the effort to understand his comprehensive approach to prophecy difficult. This paper, however, only concentrates on the two treatises mentioned above, with references to his other works where they relate to the content of both books.

[9] Ibn Sīnā, *Fī Ithbāt* , 42; Avicenna, "On the Proof," 113.

[10] Ibn Sīnā, *Fī Ithbāt*, 42, Avicenna, "On the Proof," 113.

[11] Ibn Sīnā, *ibid.,*43; Avicenna, ibid., 113-4. In some other works, Ibn Sīnā divides the powers of intellect into four kinds, the material (*al-'aql hayūlānī*), the *habitual (al-'aql bi al-malaka*), the actual (*al-'aql bi al-fi'l*), and the acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafād*). See *al-Shifā'* : *al-Ṭabī'iyyāt, Fann* 6: *al-Nafs.* Edited by G.C. Anawati and S. Yazed. Preface and revisions by Ibrahim Madkour (Cairo: al-Hai'a al-Miṣriyya al-'āma li al-kitāb, 1975), 38-40; *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1957), vol. 2, 388-96; *al-Najāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Jili, 1992), vol. 2, 43-4. See also P. Heath, *Philosophy and Allegory in Avicenna* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1992), 65.

[12] M. Marmura. "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies,* 22 (1963): 52. In this article Marmura analyzes Ibn Sīnā's proof of prophecy in detail, trying to show that the latter presents the proof in a descriptive rather than argumentative manner, see especially p. 52-3. This debate, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

[13] Ibn Sīnā, *Fī Ithbāt*, 43-4; Avicenna, "On the Proof," 114.

[14] Avicenna, "On the Proof," 114; Ibn Sīnā, *Fī Ithbāt*, 44. It should be noted here that for Ibn Sīnā the intelligibles include two kinds: primary and secondary. The first are "the self evident truths" and the second are "truths deduced from the primary." Almost all men receive the primary intelligibles, and in a direct way. On the contrary, only a small class of men receive the secondary intelligibles. The latter are those who capable of abstract thought. However, most of men in this class did not receive these intelligibles directly. Here lies the category of the prophet, who receives the secondary intelligibles in a direct way. See Ibn Sīnā, *Avicenna's De Anima: Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb al-Shifa,* edited by Fazlur Rahman (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 46. See also Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological," 51.

[15] Ibn Sīnā, *Fī Ithbāt*, 45-7; Avicenna, "On the Proof," 114-5.

[16] Ibn Sīnā, *ibid.*, 48.

[17] Avicenna,"On the Proof," 116; Ibn Sīnā, ibid.

[18] Ibn Sīnā, *Fī Ithbāt*, 49-50.

[19] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam,* 63.

[20] Alfred Ivry, "Al-Fārābi," *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period.* Edited by M.J.L. Young, et.al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 380.

[21] James Morris argues that it is Ibn Sīnā who brought out most forcefully the need for philosophy to understand "the historically established forms of prophecy" in his *Kitāb al-Nafs* of *al-Shifa'*, Rahman's edition, *maqālah* 4, chapter 2, 169-82. See Morris, "The Philosopher-Prophet in Avicenna's Political Philosophy," *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, Charles E. Butterworth, ed. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 187-8.

[22] Joel. 1. Kraemer, "The Jihād of the Falāsifa," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 10 (1987): 290. It is a matter of fact that Avicenna lived at the time when "the conquering power of religion meets the restraining discipline of rational analysis and explanation, and active minds are immediately engaged in attempts at reconciliation or synthesis." However one should differentiate between his time and that of Kindi and Fārābi, for the latter were "the products of the golden era of Arabic; and Avicenna belonged, in time if not in sentiment, to an historical period and a national phenomenon known as the Persian Renaissance." Soheil M. Afnan, *Avicenna: His Life and Works* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958), 38-9.

[23] Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 10. Strauss, however, does not specifically refer to Ibn Sīnā in this discussion, rather he discusses the situation and condition of the *falāsifa* in general.

[24] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, 31. See also Afnan, *Avicenna*, 26.

[25] Ibn Sīnā, *Sirah*, 32.

[26] Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, second edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 128.

[27] Fārābi, *Ara' Ahl al-Madina al-Fādila*. Translated by Richard Walzer as *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 228-9.

[28] Fārābi, *Ara' Ahl al-Madina*, 238-41.

[29] *Ibid.*, 242-5.

[30] Fārābi, *Ara' Ahl al-Madina*, 244-5.

[31] Ibn Sīnā, *Fi Ithbāt*, 45, 47.

[32] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, 35. However, one might think that this argument goes too far since Ibn Sīnā himself does not clearly state that the two are identical.

[33] Fārābi, *Ara' Ahl al-Madina*, 250-1.

[34] See note 27 above.

[35] Ibn Sīnā dictates that the human soul, so long as it is in the body, cannot receive the intelligibles all at once. It is possible for them to receive them only if the soul separates from the body, and only the prophetic souls can accept the intelligibles either at once (*daf atan*) or almost at once (*qariban min daf atin*), by intuition. These intelligibles (*quwwah qudsiyyah*) are then transformed into symbolic revelation to regulate human beings. Ibn Sīnā, *Avicenna's De Anima, maqālah* 5, chapter 2, 249-50. See also Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, 16-7.

[36] One might disagree with the Islamic character of Ibn Sīnā's prophecy in this treatise: "Here [*in Fi Ithbāt*] Avicenna does not discuss the particular character or ends of the lawgiver, law, or regime. Nor does he insists that such philosophically inspired prophecy is identical to the 'divine' sort of prophecy mentioned at the end of this passage," Morris, "The Philosopher-Prophet," 169. Upon closer scrutiny, however, one finds that this ar-

gument cannot be substantiated, since the terms used in this treatise are Islamic, and Ibn Sinā himself clearly refers to the prophethood of Muhammad, see *Fī Ithbāt*, 47. Nasr even argues that Ibn Sinā's prophecy is one of the special interests in his religious philosophy. In his theory, Ibn Sinā "seeks to formulate a philosophical theory in conformity with the teachings of the Quran and consistent at the same time with his general world view." *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna-Suhrawardi-Ibn 'Arabi* (New York: Caravan Books, 1976), 42.

[37] Ibn Sinā, *Fī Ithbāt*, 47.

[38] See note 31 above.

[39] Avicenna, "On the Proof," 116

[40] Fārābī, *Arā' Ahl al-Madīna*, 278-85.

[41] Ibn Sinā, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 441; Avicenna, "Healing," 99. Ibn Sinā also gives the same account on the necessity of human interaction, and the need for a legislator (*shāri'*) in his *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1958), vol. 4, 802-3. For the English translation of this volume see Shams Inati, *Ibn Sinā and Mysticism: Remarks and Admonitions*, Part Four (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996).

[42] Ibn Sinā, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 442; Avicenna, "Healing," 100.

[43] Ibn Sinā, *ibid.*, 442; Avicenna, ibid., 100.

[44] Ibn Sinā, *ibid.*, 442-3; Avicenna ibid., 100-1.

[45] Ibn Sinā, *ibid.*, 445. See also *al-Ishārāt*, vol. 4, 807.

[46] Ibn Sinā, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 446.

[47] Ibn Sinā, ibid., 447-8. Marmura believes that the greatest legislator (*afḍala al-shāri' īn*) discussed by Ibn Sinā here refers to the prophet Muhammad; see Avicenna, "Healing," 106. Marmura points out that Muhammad is not usually referred to directly in Ibn Sinā's treatises, however, in this particular part, he is positive that "the greatest of legislators" refers to Muhammad; see Marmura "Avicenna's Theory of prophecy in the Light of Ash'arite Theology," *The Seed of Wisdom*, edited by W.S. McCullough (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 159.

[48] Ibn Sinā, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 450.

[49] Ibn Sinā, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 451-2.

[50] *Ibid.*, 453-4.

[51] *Ibid.*, 454; Avicenna, "Healing," 110.

[52] Ibn Sinā, *ibid.*, 455.

[53] See the above explanation on both Ibn Sinā's and Fārābī's conceptions of the state, especially notes 27, 28, 45, 47, and 49. See also Marmura, "The Islamic Philosophers' Conception of Islam," *Islam's Understanding of Itself*, edited by R. G. Hovannisian and S. Vryonis, Jr. (California: Undena Publications, 1983), 99.

[54] See note 52 above.

[55] See, among others, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 443.

[56] Marmura argues that in most of his psychological treatises, Ibn Sinā is content to argue for the possibility of prophecy. He goes on stating that there seems to be one psychological proof for the necessity of prophecy in *Fī Ithbāt*, "Avicenna's Theory," 169. This paper, however, finds that Ibn Sinā argues for the necessity of prophecy in both *Fī Ithbāt* and *al-Ilāhiyyāt*.

[57] Marmura, "Avicenna's Theory," 159-78.

[58] Ghazālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-I'tiqād* (Cairo, no date), 111. The text reads: *walākin lam yaqdiru 'alā al-taṣrīhi bī al-ḥaqqi li kalāli ifhāmi al-khalqi an darkihi*, which, at first

glance, suggests that the prophet lacks understanding about "The Truth." One finds, however, that the text reads *li kalāli ifhāmi*, and not *li kalāli ifhāmihi*. In this sense, the text means that it is the prophet who is unable to explain "The Truth" to his people, *but* because of the lack of human's understanding of "The Truth" itself. Both meanings, however, suggest the prophet's limitation, which is a clue to Ghazālī's critique of the *falāsifa*. See also Marmura, "Avicenna's Theory," 160.

[59] Actually there is no direct statement from Ash'arī where he states that there is no necessity for the prophet's existence. He, however, holds the opinion that everything is predetermined by God, and that He can change every law of the Qur'ān (*wa innahu idhā amara bi sharī'atin thumma sakhahā fainnama dhālika liannahu badalahu fīhā*). *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdiyyat al-Miṣriyyah, 1954), vol. 1, 109. For the discussion on the status of prophecy as *thawāb* (given) or *ibtidā'* (pre-determined), see vol. 2, 122, 162.

[60] Marmura, "Avicenna's Theory," 170.

[61] Marmura, "Avicenna's Theory," 172-5.

[62] *Ibid.*, 178.

[63] Morris argues that Ibn Sīnā's avoidance of the word *rasūl* is related to his refusal to "portray Islamic ethical teachings and religious practices as either necessary or sufficient to attain full human perfection." Morris, "The Philosopher-Prophet," 166.

[64] Erwin J. Rosenthal. *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 150.

[65] *Ibid.*, 149.

[66] *Ibid.*, 150.

[67] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, 63-4.

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mura as "Healing: Metaphysics X," *Medieval Political Philosophy*. Ithaca: Cornell university Press, 1991, 98-111.

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