

Influence of Ibn Sino's Suficial Philosophy on Modern Western Philosophy

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Abstract

This article analyzes the influence of Abu Ali Ibn Sina's philosophy and his mystical-metaphysical views on the formation of contemporary Western philosophy. The study examines Ibn Sina's concepts of existence and essence, necessary and possible beings, active reason, soul, and the theory of knowledge within the framework of Western scholasticism and the school of "Latin Avicennism". In particular, the influence of Avicenna on the philosophical views of thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, and Duns Scotus is highlighted. The article argues that Ibn Sina's metaphysical system, which combines Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism, was an important theoretical basis for the development of Western ontology, epistemology, and scholastic methodology.

Keywords: Abu Ali Ibn Sina, Avicennaism, Scholasticism, Metaphysics, Ontology, Essence and Existence, Active Reason, Philosophy of the Soul, Neoplatonism, Aristotelianism, Epistemology, Necessary Existence, Philosophy of Mysticism, Western Philosophy.

1. Introduction

Abu Ali ibn Sina is considered one of the most important intellectual bridges in the history of Eastern and Western philosophical thought. His views on metaphysics, logic, the theory of knowledge, and the soul had a strong influence not only on the development of Islamic philosophy, but also on the formation of European scholastic thought. Starting from the 12th century, as a result of the translation of Ibn Sina's works into Latin, his ideas entered the scientific environment of European universities and laid the foundation for the formation of a philosophical movement called "Latin Avicennism" [1]. Combining Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism, Ibn Sina analyzed the issues of the distinction between existence and essence, necessary and possible beings, active reason, the independence of the soul, and divine knowledge on a deep metaphysical basis.

2. Research Method

During the research, historical-philosophical, comparative and conceptual analysis methods were used. The works *Kitab al-Shifa*, *Al-Najat*, and *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* were studied as the main sources. Also, a comparative analysis was carried out with the works of

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Article history : submitted, 2026/03/15 revised, 2026/04/10 accepted, 2026/05/05 published 2026/06/09

Thomas Aquinas “Summa Theologica” and “De Ente et Essentia”. In the research methodology, the ontological and metaphysical views of Ibn Sina were compared with the philosophical systems of representatives of Western scholasticism [2]. In particular, the views on the distinction between essence and existence, the concept of necessary existence, the theory of active reason and the independence of the soul were studied based on the comparative-philosophical method. In addition, the impact of the translations made by Dominicus Gundissalinus on the European scientific environment was analyzed based on historical sources. The views of modern orientalists and historians of philosophy were also used as theoretical sources in the research [3].

3. Results and Discussion

Ibn Sina's works had a clear influence on Western scholastic philosophy, particularly on thinkers such as Albertus Magnus, William of Auvergne, and Thomas Aquinas. As a result of these translations, Avicenna's philosophy founded the school known as "Latin Avicennism" and served as an important source of influence on philosophical thought in Europe until the 17th century [4]. The philosophical legacy of Ibn Sina played an important role in the formation of medieval Western philosophy. His works entered the European intellectual environment as a result of their translation from Arabic into Latin through Toledo, Salerno and other translation centers starting from the 12th century. In particular, such works as “Kitāb al-Shifā’”, “Al-Najāt” and “Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt” became an important theoretical source for representatives of Western scholastic philosophy. Ibn Sina's views on ontology, metaphysics and epistemology were deeply studied by such prominent scholastic thinkers as Albertus Magnus, William of Auvergne and Thomas Aquinas. They often referred to Ibn Sina as “Avicenna” and considered him the most important commentator and independent philosopher after Aristotle [5]. For example, Albertus Magnus systematically studied Ibn Sina's views on natural sciences and metaphysics and tried to harmonize them with Christian philosophy. In his works, Avicenna's doctrine of existence (wujūd) and essence (māhiyya) served as an important theoretical basis. William of Auvergne, inspired by Ibn Sina's metaphysical doctrine of God, attempted to reconcile the views on the necessity of divine existence and the hierarchy of being with Christian theology. Although he did not fully accept Avicenna's idea of emanation, he highly appreciated his rational approach. The most complex and profound influence of Ibn Sina is evident in the work of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas adapted Avicenna's idea of the distinction between essence and existence to his own metaphysical system, making it one of the central concepts of Christian ontology [6]. Although Aquinas criticized Avicenna's emanational cosmology, he highly valued his rational analysis of reason, knowledge, and existence. In this regard, Ibn Sina was perceived in Western scholastic philosophy not only as an interpretative source, but also as a thinker with an independent theoretical position. As a result of Ibn Sina's influence in the West, a philosophical trend was formed, known in historiography as "Latin Avicennism". Representatives of this school accepted Avicenna's doctrine of necessary and possible existence, the theory of reason and knowledge, the essence of the soul and its relative independence from the body as basic philosophical principles. Representatives of Latin Avicennism often studied and developed Aristotle's philosophy through Ibn Sina's interpretation. This trend was actively discussed in European universities, in particular in the scientific environment of Paris and Oxford, from the 13th to the 17th centuries. Even at the beginning of the new era, some of Avicenna's ideas retained their significance in metaphysical and medical discussions [7].

The influence of Ibn Sina on Western scholasticism shows that he served as an intellectual bridge between the East and the West. Through his works, the rational and metaphysical traditions of Islamic philosophy were absorbed into European thought and played an important role in the formation of scholastic philosophy. Ibn Sina's arguments about metaphysics and existence, as well as the existence of God, left a deep mark on the development of Western scholasticism. The influence of Avicenna is especially noticeable in the works of Thomas Aquinas, such as *Summa Theologica* and *De Ente et Essentia*. He interpreted and incorporated elements of Avicenna's thought, such as the separation of existence and essence, and apophatic theology, into his own philosophical system [8]. Ibn Sina's metaphysical views, in particular his arguments for existence (*wujūd*), essence (*māhiyya*), and the existence of God, left a deep and lasting mark on the development of medieval Western scholastic philosophy. After his ontological system was translated into Latin in the 12th–13th centuries, it was widely discussed in the European intellectual environment and became one of the main theoretical sources of scholastic metaphysics. One of Ibn Sina's most important metaphysical innovations is the conceptual separation of existence and essence. According to his teaching, in any possible being, essence and existence are not the same. Essence is the "what" of a thing, and existence is its real being. Only in God are essence and existence exactly the same, and He is interpreted as a necessary being (*wājib al-wujūd*). This idea served as an important theoretical foundation in Western scholasticism, especially in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas adopted this distinction, adapted it to Christian metaphysics, and used it effectively to explain the hierarchy of beings. In particular, in his work *De Ente et Essentia*, the relationship between essence and existence is systematically analyzed under the influence of Avicenna [9].

Avicenna's approach to proving the existence of God is based on an ontological-metaphysical basis, in contrast to Aristotle's proof from action. He proceeds from the distinction between necessary and possible beings, and proves that existence is ultimately a causal system based on necessary being. This proof later became known in Western philosophy as the "Avicennian proof." Although Thomas Aquinas did not fully accept this argument, he studied its metaphysical foundations in depth and used conceptual elements that show the influence of Avicenna in proving the existence of God in his work *Summa Theologica*. In particular, the clarity of the concepts of causality, necessity, and existence in Aquinas' system is inextricably linked to Avicenna's metaphysical legacy. Aquinas adopted Avicenna's apophatic method, arguing that the essence of God cannot be fully comprehended by the human mind, but is realized through knowledge of Him. This plays an important role in Aquinas's theological methodology [10].

Ibn Sina's metaphysical views - the separation of existence and essence, the concept of necessary existence, and the model of divine knowledge based on apophatic theology - served as an important methodological and theoretical basis for the development of Western scholastic philosophy. In particular, Thomas Aquinas deeply absorbed this heritage and successfully integrated it into his independent philosophical system in the works "*Summa Theologica*" and "*De Ente et Essentia*". In this regard, Ibn Sina appears as one of the most important intellectual sources connecting Eastern and Western metaphysical thought [11].

Ibn Sina's philosophy became an influential school in Europe, known as "Avicennism", and it influenced thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, and Duns Scotus. Avicennism played an important role in the development of the Peripatetic school in the West, as well as in ontology and the theory of knowledge [12]. Although the Peripatetic (Aristotelian)

school in Europe was initially based on the works of Aristotle, since Ibn Sina interpreted them in a systematic, metaphysically profound way, Western thinkers often studied Aristotle precisely through Avicenna. As a result, Avicennism became an important intellectual support for Western Peripateticism.

Avicenna did not limit himself to commenting on Aristotle's metaphysics, but enriched it with the distinction between essence and existence, and the theory of necessary and possible beings. This approach initiated a new stage of ontological analysis in the Western Peripatetic tradition.

Thomas Aquinas, although he was critical of Avicennism, effectively used its ontological and epistemological views. In particular, the separation of essence and existence, the hierarchy of beings, and the rational model of knowledge occupy an important place in Aquinas's metaphysics. Aquinas adapted Avicennism to Christian theology and integrated it into an independent scholastic system. Roger Bacon is one of the thinkers who paid special attention to Avicenna's theory of knowledge. Ibn Sina's views on the active level of reason (al-*'aql al-fa''āl*), the gradual development of scientific knowledge, are reflected in Bacon's thoughts on the issues of scientific method and experience. Avicennism here served as a theoretical foundation that combined rational knowledge with empirical observation.

Duns Scotus was deeply interested in Avicenna's ontological issues, in particular, his views on the generality of the concept of being and the metaphysical status of beings. Inspired by Avicennism, he tried to interpret being as the most general category. This approach later caused significant debate in Western ontology [13].

Avicennism also played an important role in Western theory of knowledge. Ibn Sina interpreted knowledge as a systematic process that rises from sensory perception to higher levels of intelligence. This model strengthened the rational foundations of knowledge in Western scholasticism and served to form scientific thinking. Avicennism served as an intellectual bridge between Eastern and Western philosophical thought. Through it, the rational-metaphysical traditions of Islamic philosophy were absorbed into the European environment, creating the basis for the formation of Western scholasticism and modern philosophy. The fact that until the 17th century, Avicenna's name was mentioned alongside Aristotle in European universities is a clear proof of this. Translators such as Dominicus Gundissalinus translated Avicenna's works into Latin, creating the main sources for the Western philosophical school. Through these translations, Avicenna's thought became integrally embedded in the Western climate and scholastic thought of his time [14].

Dominicus Gundissalinus was one of the leading representatives of the Toledo school of translation, which worked with both Jewish and Muslim scholars. In this school, translations were often carried out in two stages: first, the Arabic text was translated orally into Hebrew or a local Romance language, and then Gundissalinus rewrote it in Latin. This method was an important tool in conveying to Western scholars the conceptual clarity and terminological system of Ibn Sina's works. Gundissalinus not only translated Ibn Sina's works on metaphysics, psychology, and the theory of knowledge, but also systematized Avicenna's ideas in works such as his *De divisione philosophiae*. Thus, the translation process became not only a purely technical activity, but also a stage of theoretical adaptation. As a result of the translations made by Dominicus Gundissalinus and his contemporaries, Avicenna's philosophy entered the Western scholastic environment directly and systematically. In particular, concepts such as the separation of essence and existence, the doctrine of

necessary and possible beings, and the theory of active reason became the main topics of discussion in Latin philosophy.

Through these translations, Avicenna's ideas began to be accepted as an independent metaphysical system, not as a secondary source for interpreting Aristotle's philosophy. As a result, the name "Avicenna" was often mentioned in Western scholasticism alongside Aristotle. The adaptation of Avicenna's philosophy to the Western climate was gradual and critical. Although some theologians were wary of his emanational cosmology, his rational-metaphysical style was widely recognized. In this way, Avicenna's thought naturally entered the scholastic method - a system of question and answer, definition, and argument. For example, Thomas Aquinas, while criticizing some of Avicenna's cosmological views, successfully integrated his ontological analysis into his own system. This shows that translations were not only a means of transmitting knowledge, but also a means of reshaping philosophical thought.

The translations made by Dominicus Gundissalinus ensured intellectual continuity between the East and the West. Through them, the philosophy of Ibn Sina became an important component of the Western scholastic school and strengthened the theoretical foundations of medieval European philosophy. This process also indirectly influenced the formation of modern philosophy and scientific thought.

Ibn Sina's integration of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism, the distinction between essence and existence, and the theories of the soul were also studied in northern European universities as important documents in the Western philosophical context [15]. One of the most important contributions of Ibn Sina to Western philosophy is the strict distinction between essence (*essentia*) and existence (*existentia*). According to him, the essence of a thing does not require its existence, and for most beings, "what is" and "being" are separate. Only in God are essence and existence exactly the same, and He is interpreted as a necessary being. This concept marked a fundamental turning point in Western scholastic metaphysics and became the central issue of ontological analysis. Especially in the universities of Northern Europe - in such scientific centers as Paris, Oxford, Cambridge - this idea was studied as a basic theoretical concept in textbooks on metaphysics and theology. This doctrine of Ibn Sina was later critically developed by Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus and other scholastics. Ibn Sina combined Aristotle's views on substance, causality and form with Neoplatonist ideas about emanation and higher levels of intelligence. This synthesis was particularly attractive to Western thinkers, as it allowed them to explain metaphysical and spiritual issues while preserving rational analysis. As a result, Avicenna's philosophy was seen in scholastic thought as a model that combined logical rigor and metaphysical depth. Ibn Sina's doctrine of the soul (*nafs*) also aroused great interest in Western philosophy. His attempts to prove the existence of an essence independent of the body through his famous experiment with the "flying man" (*al-insān al-ṭā'ir*) were widely discussed in the framework of psychology and metaphysics at European universities.

This theory served as the main theoretical source in the analysis of issues such as the self-perception of the soul, its relative independence from physical existence, and its elevation through intellectual perfection in the scientific environment of Northern Europe. In particular, the question of the soul's ability to know and its connection with the divine mind was formed in scholastic psychology under the influence of Avicenna.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, the works and ideas of Ibn Sina were studied as compulsory educational material in the universities of Northern Europe. He was valued not

only as a commentator on Aristotle, but also as the creator of an independent metaphysical system. Avicenna's views served as an important methodological basis for the development of ontology, philosophy of the soul, and theory of knowledge.

4. Conclusion

The mystical and philosophical views of Abu Ali ibn Sina played an important role in the development of Western scholasticism and later European metaphysical thought. His teachings on the separation of existence and essence, the concept of necessary existence, the theory of active reason, and the ontological independence of the soul had a significant impact on the formation of Western ontology and epistemology. Through the movement of "Avicennism", Ibn Sina's ideas were widely spread in European universities and served as a theoretical basis for the development of scholastic methodology. The influence of Avicenna's metaphysics is especially evident in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Ibn Sina, by combining Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism, strengthened intellectual ties between the East and the West and initiated a new stage of metaphysical thought.

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