

Al-Farabi and Spinoza on Imagination and Prophecy; A Comparative Study

Prof. Dr. Salman Albdour

Abstract:

This paper is a comparative study of the concept of imagination in the philosophy of al-Farabi and Spinoza. It deals with the two philosophers' point of view concerning the role of the imagination in knowledge and prophecy, as well as with the similarities between them and how al-Farabi's views influences Spinoza. The first part of the paper seeks to explain the fundamental role the two philosophers assigned to imagination in attaining knowledge and prophecy. The second part explores similarities between the point of view of the two philosophers, particularly in dealing with prophecy. The third part shows how al-Farabi views were transmitted to Spinoza through the Jewish philosopher Maimonides, whose works were not different, neither in content nor in terminology, from those of other Muslim philosophers, although they were considered an important part of the Hebraic tradition. The paper demonstrates that Maimonides quoted al-Farabi almost verbatim, particularly in his views concerning imagination and its role in prophecy, which explains the indirect influence of al-Farabi on Spinoza.