

Nursema Kocakaplan, *Takhayyul in al-Fārābī and Avicenna*, Klasik Yayınları: İstanbul, 2024. 229 pages. ISBN: 9786259823232.

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Few comprehensive studies address the epistemological, metaphysical, and socio-political dimensions of *takhayyul* in Islamic philosophy from a holistic perspective, resulting in a significant gap in the field. Nursema Kocakaplan's work, *Takhayyul in al-Fārābī and Avicenna*, offers a valuable contribution to filling this gap with an analysis grounded in historical continuity and conceptual coherence. Kocakaplan presents a key literature review in the "Introduction," examining the works of Dimitri Gutas, Richard Walzer (d. 1975), Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), Michael Marmura (d. 2009), Yaşar Aydın, and Herbert A. Davidson (d. 2021) (pp. 20-26). These authors made notable contributions but tended to approach al-Fārābī (d. 950) and Avicenna (d. 1037) in a fragmented way. They fall short of providing a comprehensive framework for the transmission and transformation of *takhayyul* as a concept within the Islamic tradition. Kocakaplan's study, however, addresses the historical continuity and conceptual transformation of *takhayyul* from ancient-Hellenistic thought to Islamic philosophy through historical context and conceptual analysis.

The work is structured into four chapters and uses a systematic methodology. The first chapter examines the origins of *takhayyul* in ancient Hellenistic philosophy and its transmission to Islamic philosophy. The second chapter analyzes *takhayyul*'s relationship with other faculties of the soul and its psychophysiology.

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cal function. The third chapter addresses *takhayyul* in prophecy and divination. The fourth chapter explores its transformation into inspiration, symbolic expression, and legislation. This structure gives the reader a systematic analysis from the concept's origins to its role in Islamic philosophy.

The first chapter of the book, titled "The Conceptual and Historical Background of *Takhayyul*," investigates the development of the concept in the history of philosophy, spanning a broad set of frameworks from ancient Hellenistic philosophy to Islamic thought. Opening the chapter by emphasizing the wide semantic field of *takhayyul* within the context of Islamic philosophy, Kocakaplan addresses its functions, ranging from epistemic acquisition to the prophetic experience and the establishment of social order. This functionalist perspective is critically important for understanding the central role of *takhayyul* in the epistemological systems of al-Fārābī and Avicenna. The author argues that *takhayyul* should not be regarded merely as the faculty that produces mental images, but additionally as a concept deeply intertwined with epistemological, metaphysical, and political processes.

In the section devoted to the origins of the concept in ancient Hellenistic philosophy, Kocakaplan traces the historical development of *takhayyul* beginning with the notion of *phantasia*. Within this framework, she offers an etymological analysis, noting that the Greek term *phantasia* carries the meanings of "to appear" and "to produce an appearance in the mind." According to this account, *phantasia* first appears in a literary context in Herodotus's *Histories* (d. 425 BCE), but only becomes a subject of philosophical inquiry with Plato (d. 347 BCE). Plato's characterization of *phantasia* as a domain where images generated by sensory perception intersect with *doxa* initiates the first major debates concerning the ontological status of the concept (pp. 30-34). For Aristotle (d. 322 BCE), *phantasia* functions as an intermediary stage between sense perception and *nous*. As he indicates in *De Anima*, there exists a close relationship between *phantasia* and thought, a relationship that underscores the necessity of *takhayyul* in cognitive processes. Within the framework of Neoplatonism, Kocakaplan highlights that Plotinus (d. 270) regarded *takhayyul* as a reflector of divine inspiration (pp. 43-44). It becomes evident that, beginning with Neoplatonism, the faculty of *takhayyul* began to acquire not only an epistemological but also a cosmological function.

Tracing the transmission and transformation of the concept of *takhayyul* into Is-

lamic philosophy constitutes one of the most original contributions of the chapter. Analyzing the transfer of the ancient Hellenistic notion of *phantasia* into Islamic philosophy within the context of the translation movements, the author draws attention to the conceptual transformations that occurred in works such as Aristotle's *Kitāb al-Nafs* (*De Anima*) and *Kitāb al-Khaṭāba* (*Rhetoric*). In mapping this process, Kocakaplan views the concept of *takhayyul* as not merely adopted terminology but rather as the product of an epistemological and ontological reconstruction (pp. 50-55).

Despite the strengths of the first chapter's structure, a more in-depth comparison between Aristotelian and Neoplatonic perspectives could have enriched its historical analysis. Moreover, addressing the sociopolitical causes behind the semantic shifts in the context of the translation movements and integrating these causes with Dimitri Gutas's analyses of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement would have further strengthened the discussion. Nevertheless, this chapter presents a robust framework, positioning *takhayyul* as an epistemological and metaphysical faculty within the history of philosophy. In this respect, the chapter goes beyond earlier studies in the field by providing both historical depth and conceptual coherence, thereby establishing a strong theoretical foundation for the chapters that follow.

The second main chapter of the work, titled "The Psycho-Physiological Structure and Function of *Takhayyul*," focuses on the psycho-physiological constitution and functions of *takhayyul*, elaborating its place among the faculties of the soul. In this chapter, the author examines the position of *takhayyul* within the internal cognitive faculties, drawing upon al-Fārābī's and Avicenna's conceptions of the soul, and explores its relationship with bodily temperament in considerable depth. Here, *takhayyul* is presented not merely as a cognitive faculty, but also as an expression of the unity between body and soul. Beginning the chapter with a survey of the definitions and faculties of the soul, Kocakaplan discusses the views of al-Kindī (d. 866 [?]), al-Fārābī, and Avicenna, building upon the Aristotelian tradition that defines the soul as a "substance that moves itself independently." Within this framework, she sequentially analyzes the vegetative soul, the animal soul, and the rational/intellectual soul. The most salient point in this analysis is the detailed and satisfying examination of the relationship between *takhayyul*, bodily temperament, and the other faculties of perception (pp. 73-103). According to this model, common sense (*ḥiss mushtarak*) synthesizes data from the external senses to produce unified perceptions. The faculty of *mutakhayyila* stores these perceptions, reprocesses them, and even generates new

imaginative forms. The *mutafakkira* engages with these forms analytically and synthetically to produce knowledge. Memory and recollection ensure the preservation and retrieval of these forms when needed. The faculty of *wahm* intuitively discerns the benefit or harm inherent in objects (pp. 79-85). Within this structure, al-Fārābī emphasizes the function of *takhayyul* as a recipient of inspiration from the Active Intellect, whereas Avicenna situates *takhayyul* more clearly among the soul's cognitive faculties (pp. 82-83).

One of the original aspects of the chapter is its emphasis on the relationship between *takhayyul* and bodily temperament and physiology. Kocakaplan deepens the discussion by examining Avicenna's theory of bile balance, as presented in his medical work *al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb*, in connection with the physiological foundations of the *mutakhayyila* faculty. At this point, the author's systematic presentation stands out methodologically; she thoroughly investigates the interrelatedness and functional unity of the internal cognitive faculties. A more detailed exploration of the connections between Avicenna's medical texts and his philosophical writings in the context of temperament theory could have enhanced the analytical strength of this section. The second chapter nevertheless offers a comprehensive analysis of the psycho-physiological dimensions of *takhayyul*, addressing both cognitive processes and the body-soul relationship. Kocakaplan's approach here fills a significant gap in the literature and enables a renewed assessment of the psycho-physiological aspect of *takhayyul* within the framework of Islamic philosophy.

The third chapter of the work, titled "Prophethood in the Context of *Takhayyul*," focuses on the central function of *takhayyul* in the prophetic theories of al-Fārābī and Avicenna. This chapter argues that *takhayyul* is not merely a psychic faculty, but also a vital instrument in the reception of divine knowledge and its transmission into a symbolic register. Kocakaplan carefully analyzes the role played by ancient-Hellenistic philosophical traditions—particularly the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic legacies—within this framework, demonstrating how *takhayyul* is re-conceptualized in the context of prophecy. Furthermore, the chapter places special emphasis on the direct and indirect influence of the Active Intellect upon *takhayyul*. This focus paves the way for understanding the prophet as both a metaphysical intermediary and an educational figure. Within this framework, Kocakaplan first discusses the transmission of the concepts of prophecy and inspiration from ancient Hellenistic traditions into Islamic philosophy. She notes that Aristotle's association of the Active Intellect

with the human body and its faculties in *De Anima*, and subsequently Alexander of Aphrodisias's (d. 200-210) interpretation in *De Intellectu*, in which the potential intellect becomes actual through its relation to the Active Intellect—conceived as divine—marks a pivotal turning point in the transmission of these concepts into Islamic philosophy (pp. 107-110). Additionally, Plato's notion of prophecy in the *Timaeus* and Plotinus's interpretations concerning *takhayyul* as a mediator of divine reality shaped the theories of Islamic philosophers regarding the concept's psychological function in prophecy. In this context, Iamblichus's (d. 325) idea that divine inspiration is symbolized through *takhayyul* gains a new form in the thought of al-Fārābī and Avicenna (pp. 130-133).

The mimetic capacity of *takhayyul* is also examined in detail in this chapter, offering a significant contribution to the debates centered on this faculty. According to al-Fārābī, the prophet's faculty of *takhayyul* perceives the intelligible knowledge emanating from the Active Intellect in the form of sensory images, and, through these images, constructs a system of law that is comprehensible to the broader society. Avicenna, on the other hand, grounds this function of *takhayyul* in a more pragmatic context, based on the premise that the general public is incapable of grasping metaphysical truths. Within this framework, Avicenna's approach is interpreted as an instance of "epistemic hierarchy," whereby *takhayyul* functions as a mediating faculty that bridges the epistemological gap between the philosopher and the masses. Another original area of discussion in this chapter concerns the degrees and qualities of the prophet's *takhayyul*. Al-Fārābī asserts that the prophet possesses the capacity to receive knowledge from the Active Intellect directly and flawlessly. Avicenna, by contrast, associates this capacity more with the process of acquiring knowledge and processing sensory data. It is evident that both philosophers consider the power of *takhayyul* to be a fundamental criterion in the determination of prophetic rank (pp. 120-137).

Additionally, in this chapter, Kocakaplan addresses the prophetic experiences in states of wakefulness and dreaming. During revelation, *takhayyul* is directly influenced by the Active Intellect and receives intelligible knowledge in the form of concrete images, whereas dreams are presented as a prophetic experience in which *takhayyul* continues to function during sleep. According to Avicenna, the clarity and accuracy of dreams depend on an individual's temperament and the purity of their *takhayyul* faculty (pp. 115-120). Finally, the detailed comparison between the prophet's *takhayyul* and those of the philosopher, the mystic (*ʿarīf*), the magician, and the

madman is particularly noteworthy. The prophet's *takhayyul* receives divine knowledge from the Active Intellect in its entirety and transforms it into symbols that serve social utility. The philosopher's *takhayyul*, by contrast, operates on a more abstract and conceptual level. The *takhayyul* of the mystic and the magician, on the other hand, produces respectively mystical intuitions or deceptive representations, and thus differs qualitatively from that of the prophet (pp. 141-158).

Methodologically, the third chapter underscores the strong link established in the previous chapters between the ancient Hellenistic tradition and Islamic philosophy, centered on the faculty of *takhayyul*. However, a more critical comparison between the theories of *takhayyul* in Iamblichus and Plotinus and the approach of al-Fārābī could have added further depth to this section. Likewise, brief references to Averroes's (d. 1198) critiques of *takhayyul* and al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) conceptualization of the term could have enriched the chapter's connection to the broader literature. Nonetheless, Kocakaplan's approach offers a systematic and holistic framework for understanding the function of *takhayyul* in prophetic psychology. In doing so, it allows *takhayyul* to be seen not only as an individual faculty but also as a foundational element of social order.

The fourth and final chapter of the work, titled "The Transformation of Imaginal Forms into Inspiration, Symbolic Expression, and Law," focuses on the social, legal, and political dimensions of *takhayyul*. Within this framework, the author analyzes in detail the role of *takhayyul* in the philosophic systems of al-Fārābī and Avicenna, particularly in the transmission of divine knowledge through symbolic language and in how such knowledge becomes the foundation of sharī'a and societal order. Thus, *takhayyul* is portrayed not merely as a faculty of the individual soul, but also as a legislative mechanism that regulates collective life. The chapter begins by focusing on the role of dreams in prophecy. Kocakaplan notes that the ancient Hellenistic understandings of prophecy served as a source for al-Fārābī's and Avicenna's views on this subject, and she explains in detail how the concepts of dreams and prophecy were transformed within the framework of Islamic philosophy and integrated into theories of prophethood. Various types and sources of dreams are also discussed in this context; for instance, bodily conditions, daily experiences, and divine inspiration are identified as factors influencing the formation of dreams. Prophetic dreams are distinguished from other types by their coherence, meaningfulness, and universal truth (pp. 162-176). Kocakaplan also examines the revelatory experience of the proph-

et during wakefulness, emphasizing that the perfection of the prophet's *takhayyul* faculty enables the transformation of abstract knowledge received from the Active Intellect into sensible and concrete forms. These forms acquire a perceptible shape that can be grasped by the public and thus become the foundation of social order. Al-Fārābī holds that the prophet's *takhayyul* is so powerful that he perceives these forms as if they exist externally even while awake, and, from these perceptions, he produces laws to organize society (pp. 171-172).

One of the distinctive aspects of the fourth chapter is its strong emphasis on the expressive symbolic capacity of *takhayyul*. The prophet's ability to articulate the divine knowledge he receives through symbols, allegories, and metaphors in a manner comprehensible to the public further underscores this emphasis. This approach aligns with al-Fārābī's conception of the virtuous first ruler as someone who must be both a philosopher capable of accessing metaphysical truths and a prophet-legislator able to translate those truths into a language intelligible to the masses. Avicenna, on the other hand, analyzes the prophet's *takhayyul* faculty—specifically, its capacity to transform metaphysical truths into sensible forms—within the context of his epistemological theory. According to him, this capacity renders the prophet not only a metaphysician, but also a lawgiver who organizes and governs society.

Considering the overall content of the chapter, Kocakaplan's depth of conceptual analysis is methodologically noteworthy. However, a comparative evaluation of the relationship between *takhayyul* and politics in the thought of al-Fārābī and Avicenna and subsequent developments in Islamic political philosophy, such as Averroes's critiques of prophecy and *takhayyul*, could have further enriched the discussion. Additionally, a more detailed examination of how Avicenna connects his theory of temperament in *al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb* to the prophet's capacity for leadership would have added analytical depth. Nevertheless, the fourth chapter systematically reveals the function of *takhayyul* in transforming divine knowledge into shari'a and social order. Kocakaplan's approach offers a unique contribution to the literature of Islamic philosophy by situating the concept of prophethood within both epistemological and socio-political contexts.

Nursema Kocakaplan's *Takhayyul in al-Fārābī and Avicenna* can be said to fill a significant gap in the literature of Islamic philosophy by offering a unique perspective on the concept of *takhayyul*. In systematically tracing the conceptual continuity

from ancient Hellenistic philosophy to Islamic thought, the work presents a holistic account of the epistemological, metaphysical, and socio-political dimensions of *takhayyul*. The book thus makes a valuable contribution not only to the scholarship on al-Fārābī and Avicenna but also to broader studies that seek to reassess the role of the *takhayyul* faculty within Islamic intellectual traditions. Another strength of the work lies in its interdisciplinary approach, which allows *takhayyul* to be framed not only as an individual cognitive faculty but also as a capacity foundational to the construction of social order. The conceptual depth of Kocakaplan's treatment of the ancient Hellenistic legacy's influence on Islamic philosophy provides a level of coherence to the work as a whole that surpasses the fragmentary approaches prevalent in the literature. Particularly, the comparative analysis of al-Fārābī's and Avicenna's views on *takhayyul* in the context of prophecy and politics adds methodological richness to the work. However, a more extensive engagement with the connections between Avicenna's medical texts and philosophical writings could have deepened the analysis of the physiological basis of *takhayyul*. Similarly, although the similarities and differences between al-Fārābī and Avicenna on the topic are systematically presented, brief references to the conceptualizations of *takhayyul* by Averroes and al-Ghazālī would have further reinforced the book's place in the scholarly literature.

Al-Fārābī's interpretation of *takhayyul* as the faculty capable of directly receiving divine forms from the Active Intellect, and Avicenna's view of *takhayyul* as a bridge within epistemic processes, together succeed in illuminating the multiple layers of the concept. However, a more critical comparison between the *takhayyul* theories of Iamblichus and Plotinus and the approach of al-Fārābī could have enhanced the methodological depth of the study. Nevertheless, the coherence of the book's arguments, and the use of both primary and secondary sources as argumentative supports, is of considerable value. In conclusion, Nursema Kocakaplan's *Takhayyul in al-Fārābī and Avicenna* stands out as one of the rare monographs, especially in Turkish, to integrate the epistemological, metaphysical, and sociopolitical dimensions of the concept of *takhayyul* in Islamic philosophy. Kocakaplan's conceptual precision, her attention to historical continuity, and her interdisciplinary engagement make the work a valuable resource for Islamic philosophy research and academic circles more broadly.