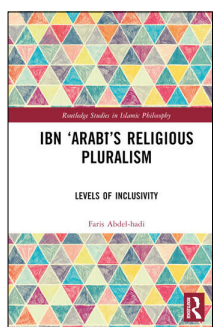


## BOOK REVIEW

### ***Ibn ‘Arabī’s Religious Pluralism: Levels of Inclusivity***

By Faris Abdel-hadi. Routledge, 2025. 266 pp. ISBN 978-1-032-77640-8.  
\$145.00 (hardcover); \$45.99 (paperback); \$45.99 (e-book).



Ibn ‘Arabī (1165–1240) is a towering figure in Sufi tradition. His philosophical framework expands dimensions of Sufism, including the perception of other religions. Faris Abdel-hadi, an independent researcher based in Amman, Jordan, is captivated by Ibn ‘Arabī’s approach towards this question. Based upon his doctoral study on the inclusivity of Ibn ‘Arabī’s religious pluralism, Abdel-hadi offers this brilliant book for readers to perceive the sublime stance of the “the Greatest Master” (*al-shaykh al-akbar*).

The wonderful work is divided into five chapters, in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. The structure is organized identically to the original thesis, apart from the sixth chapter dealing with Ḥaydar Āmulī’s commentary, which is redacted for this publication. As said in the introduction, Abdel-hadi loosely employs Muhammad Legenhausen’s non-reductive religious pluralism, among the varied propositions of Ibn ‘Arabī’s pluralism, as his underlying framework. Legenhausen’s theory proposes that each religion has unique divine qualities through which God may guide people.

Though Ibn ‘Arabī’s passages on religious pluralism are randomly scattered throughout his works, especially in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyah* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, which are the primary texts used by Abdel-hadi, the sun-star metaphor has been the most frequently quoted by scholars and becomes the key point of paradox between exclusivist and inclusivist interpretations. Therefore, the first two chapters deal with constructing Ibn ‘Arabī’s pluralism based on cosmic abrogation and his related descriptions.

With respect to Ibn ‘Arabī’s sun-star metaphor, Abdel-hadi argues, contrary to previous proposals by William Chittick and Nuh Keller, that the

stars are annihilated by the sun's light while at the same time subsisting therein. By this structure, the Muhammadan message replaces previous laws, but the religions remain after Islam's appearance. One specific example discussed by Abdel-hadi is the payment of the *jizyah* tax to allow other religious communities to become incorporated into the Muslim community as an act of mercy.

The two chapters are followed by a dedicated chapter applying his dichotomous theory and to contend with Gregory Lipton's exclusivist arguments regarding Ibn 'Arabī's pluralism. For Abdel-hadi, Lipton's rejection of inclusive interpretations results from his partial reading of Ibn 'Arabī's writings, thereby concluding that other religions are either subsumed or humiliated by the Islamic revelation. Abdel-hadi challenges Lipton's view by arguing that the subsumption is not intended for political subjugation. Ibn 'Arabī's passages of religious pluralism should be understood in the form of good counselling (*naṣīḥah*) for spiritual journey (*sulūk*), thereby warning against ignoring God's manifestations in other systems of belief, or disregarding their capabilities of reaching spiritual heights.

The remainder two chapters focus on Ibn 'Arabī's perception of non-Abrahamic religions, particularly regarding his encounter with the pagan Greek sun-worshippers. Ibn 'Arabī's view is examined by Abdel-hadi in three dimensions, viz., *ijtihād* or the struggle to find the truth, *rahbāniyyah* or the man-made ascetic way, and *nawāmīs* or the non-divine laws. These dimensions clearly reflect the utmost degree to which Ibn 'Arabī accepts other communities to follow their own paths. This framework is regarded by Abdel-hadi as a template to engage with other religions. Abdel-hadi emphasizes, specifically in the fifth chapter, the laws invented by humans. For Ibn 'Arabī, human laws are also divine in nature as they are dictated by the wisdom of sages and philosophers for the benefit of society and to achieve the ultimate goals of the law, i.e., the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

Abdel-hadi concludes this book by highlighting his propositions on Ibn 'Arabī's levels of inclusivity, including the annihilation and the subsistence of the prophetic religions, as well as the inclusion of all other non-prophetic religions. In addition to this, he adds another, more encompassing inclusion: that of all divinities. Abdel-hadi gives two examples of Ibn 'Arabī's remark on this degree. First, Noah's people's belief in their imaginative gods, which in reality are the transformation of God's immanence or *tashbīḥ*. Second, how humans are permitted to give God any form according to one's belief (*i'tiqād*) and spiritual capability, without imprisoning Him with the limitations of those human beliefs.

This valuable book deeply illustrates the intricacy and complexity of Ibn 'Arabī's religious pluralism without simply falling into the paradoxical debate within theology of religions. Faris Abdel-hadi offers a dynamic discourse with profound explorations and nuanced perspectives, thus challenging the reader's understanding and previous interpretations.

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