

The Idea And The Origins Of Becoming Like God In Avicenna

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Abstract. This study aims to examine how becoming like God is handled in Avicenna's philosophy. Basically the article is based on the need to interpret that Plato and Aristotle and Plotinus are philosophers that complement each other, not diverge, in terms of the topic of becoming like God. First and foremost I present Avicenna's arguments using the concepts of becoming like god (*teşebbüh billah*) and becoming like the First (*teşebbüh bi'l-evvel*) as a springboard. Moreover, based on the context in which Avicenna uses the concept of manifestation (*tecelli*), I examine how the idea of unification with God is transformed into an intellectual ideal. In the last section, I present the connection between the journey of becoming a perfected human and becoming like god which was established in the *Metaphysics* volume of *The Book of Healing* (*eş-Şifa*) as a section of the matter which is related to ethics.

Keywords: Aristotle, Avicenna, becoming like god, *homoiosis theoi*, godlikeness, love, manifestation, Plato, Plotinus.

[es] La idea y los orígenes de llegar a ser como Dios en Avicena

Resumen. Este estudio tiene como objetivo examinar el uso de "convertirse en Dios" en la filosofía de Avicena. Básicamente, el artículo se basa en la necesidad de interpretar que Platón y Aristóteles y Plotino son filósofos que se complementan entre sí, no divergen, en cuanto a la cuestión de llegar a ser como Dios. Por lo tanto, este artículo defiende que tanto Platón como Aristóteles influyen en la comprensión de Avicena del "llegar a ser como dios". Ante todo, presento los argumentos de Avicena usando los conceptos de "llegar a ser como dios" (*teşebbüh billah*) y "llegar a ser como el Primero" (*teşebbüh bi'l-evvel*) como trampolín. Además, según el contexto en el que Avicena utiliza el concepto de manifestación (*tecelli*), examino cómo la idea de la unificación con Dios se transforma en un ideal intelectual. En la última sección, presento la conexión entre el viaje de conversión en un humano perfeccionado y el llegar a ser como dios que se estableció en el volumen de *Metafísica* del Libro de la Curación (*eş-Şifa*) como una cuestión relacionada con la ética.

Palabras clave: Amor, Avicena, Aristóteles, divinidad, llegar a ser como Dios, manifestación, Platón, Plotinus.

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1. Introduction

As *homoiosis theôi* (becoming like god), an expression in Greek, is a Platonian term, it has been tried to be comprehended more in relation to Plato's philosophy when

the topic of becoming like (resembling) god is considered as a philosophical topic, and it has been thought that the idea of becoming like god or *homoiosis theôi*, as stated in Plato's work, had come out of the lineage of Plato but not of Aristotelian way of thinking².

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² It can be stated that there are individual books and theses related to Plato's idea of becoming like god; however, there are no individual works other than a few works that examine Aristotle only. The following examples could be given related to those that examine Plato: Culbert Gerow Rutenber, *The Doctrine of the Imitation of God* (New York, King's Crown Press: 1946). This work is a PhD thesis on the idea of becoming like God that dates early. It examines the topic under headings such as the nature of divine, the imitation of the forms, and the imitator of god. P. Hubert Merki, *Homoiosis Theô Von Der Platonischen Angleichung An Gott Zur Gottähnlichkeit Bei Gregor Von Nyssa* (Paulusdruckerei, Freiburg in der Schweiz: 1952). Merki's work, on the other hand, handles the topic together with the process from Plato up until Gregor von Nyssa. The other book that we should name is S. Lavecchia, *Una via che conduce al divino. La homoiosis theô nella filosofia di Platone* (Vita e Pensiero, Milano: 2006). In the articles related to this topic there have been two different points of view as to whether the idea of becoming like God represented an ideal for Plato or it was just a caricature. David Sedley and Jullia Annas put forth in their respective works that the idea of becoming like God represented an ideal for Plato. David Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness" in *Plato II: Ethics Politics, Religion, and the Soul*, ed. by Gail Fine (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), Jullia Annas, "Becoming Like God: Ethics, Human Nature and the Divine", in *Platonic Ethics Old and New*, (Cornell University Press: 2000), pp. 52-71. Another remarkable study is Rachel Rue's article: "The Philosopher in Flight: The *Digression* (172c-177c) in Plato's *Theaetetus*", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, (1993), Vol.11, pp. 71-100. Rue's article represents a significant breakpoint in literature.

Avicenna is a philosopher known as being Aristotelian with regard to the fundamental theories of his philosophy, i.e. as *peripatetic* in classical terms. Although Avicenna's references to Aristotle are clear, his connection to the thoughts related to Plato is an area full of question marks and has been the subject of a variety of debates. In addition to this, due to his approach stated in the last chapter of *Isharat wa-Tanbahat (Remarks and Admonitions)*, there is also a comprehensive discussion that his philosophy had an aspect that embodied mystical tendencies.³ In this article I will examine how Avicenna handled the subject of becoming like god with reference to Aristotle's and Plato's philosophy without becoming a part of the said discussion.

The starting point of my article is the idea that Plato and Aristotle are philosophical figures that complement each other rather than diverge from each other with regard to the subject of becoming like god, and therefore they both influenced Avicenna's thought of becoming like god. My argument is that Avicenna was in a line parallel to Plato and Aristotle in that he diverged the idea of becoming like God from a mystical idea of unification and transformed it into a rational ideal.

In order to support this claim, I establish my article on three main centers. The first of these three central subjects that complement each other is *the idea of imitating the first Principle as part of metaphysics and cosmology*.

In the second part, based on the question "deification or godlikeness?" I head towards to the question whether Avicenna rather placed unification (being one with god) in the center or he established a new foundation out of the idea of *unification (ittihat)* he took over as a mystical cultural background by means of the concept of *manifestation (tecelli)*. In the third part, I examined whether or not the journey of becoming a perfected human being, which has been started off by the human being in or-

der to become a more virtuous and more moral person, which we encounter more as part of ethics and politics, is a journey of becoming like god. In this section I will examine Avicenna's ideas around the concept of *theoria* based on Pythagoreanism, Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus.⁴

Now we can start off with the first of these three main centers, the topic of *becoming like god as becoming like the First Principle*.

2. The Idea of Becoming Like the First Principle

Avicenna uses expressions such as *teşebbüh billah* and *teşebbüh bi'l-evvel* in order to articulate the expression of *becoming like the first Principle*. The expression *teşebbüh billah* is stated as *homoiōsis theo* in Classical Greek which can be translated into English as *godlikeness*. *Godlikeness* means a human being taking his/her god as a moral model and entering into a process of ascending morally by trying to become like him. Avicenna from time to time uses the expression *teşebbüh billah* as the counterpart of the expression of becoming like god and uses the expression *teşebbüh bi'l-evvel* while talking about becoming like god in a way that is connected to the theory of emanation.

The first context in which we will examine the idea of Avicenna's *teşebbüh billah* (becoming like god) is related to the overflowing of being from the first Principle in a way that is connected to the theory of emanation. This is the part of our discussion which is related to the *idea of descending from the first Principle*. Therefore, in this stage the idea of *teşebbüh billah* is handled in way that is related to the explanation of becoming.

God is located as the first mover that does not move in Aristotle's metaphysics, whereas Avicenna chose to explain becoming through the emanation theory by adding Plotinus' idea of the *One* to Aristotle's idea of the first mover that does not move. The first being at the top of Avicenna's emanation system is a god just like Aristotle's god that does not have⁵ anything powerful in

Rue, as opposed to the other figures in the literature, argue that Plato's philosopher that resembles God is a caricature and represents an error, not an ideal. The following examples of some of the rare works that dwell on the topic with regard to Aristotle are: David Sedley, "Becoming Like God in the 'Timaeus' and Aristotle", in *Interpreting the Timaeus – Critias. Proceedings of the IV Symposium Platonicum*, T. Calvo & L. Brisson (eds.), pp. 327-339. (Germany, Academia Verlag: 1997) and Eli Diamond, *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life* (Illionis, Northwestern University Press: 2015), Richard Bodéüs, *Aristotle and the Theology of the Living Immortals*, translated by Jan Edward Garrett, (State University of New York Press: 2000). These two books are among rare works that examine this topic with regard to Aristotle specifically. Daimond's book dwells upon the concept of soul and focuses on *De Anima* whereas Bodéüs' work starts with the excerpts from Aristotle's *Metaphysics (Lambda Book)* and continues with critiques on the position of traditional Greek gods in philosophy. For a book in Turkish related to more detailed literary evaluations on Plato's and Aristotle's ideas of becoming like God, see Şeyma Kömürçüoğlu, *Logostaki Mitos (Mythos in Logos)*, (İstanbul, İz Yayıncılık: 2019).

³ Works such as R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (London, Oxford University Press: 1961), S. J. J. Houben, "Avicenna and Mysticism", *Avicenna Commemoration Volume*, (Calcutta, 1956), Parviz Morewedge, *The Mystical Philosophy of Avicenna* (New York: 2001) argue that Avicenna had a mystical philosophy whereas works such as Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden, New York: 1988), C. A. Nallino, "Muhâveletü'l-müslimîn icâde felsefeti's-sarkıyye", Arabic trans. A. Bedevî, *et-Türâsü'l-Yünânî fi'l-hadâretü'l-İslâmîyye* (Cairo: 1965), pp. 245-296 argue that Avicenna does not have a mystical philosophy.

⁴ As it is known, in the early periods when ancient philosophy had been translated into Arabic, some works that belong to Plotinus had been referred to and accepted as they belonged to Aristotle. One of these books is *Theology of Aristotle*: "This Arabic version of *Enneads* is anything but a neutral and faithful presentation of Plotinus' philosophy (...). The Arabic Plotinus texts belong to the body of translations and adaptations made by al-Kindi's circle in Baghdad in the ninth century. This includes the well-known adaptation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, the *Book on the Pure Good*, known later in the West as the *Liber de Causis*." Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus, A Philosophical Study of the Theology of Aristotle*, (Duckworth: 2002), pp. 1-8. Moreover, for a detailed work that examines Plotinus' Enneads through the concept of being and its translation, see Christina D'ancona, "Platonic and Neoplatonic Terminology for Being in Arabic Translation", in *The Journal of the Project Greek into Arabic Philosophical Concepts and Linguistic Bridges European Research Council Advanced Grant 249431*, (Italy: 2011).

⁵ Aristotle's god that does not have any movement or potential that waits for action does not move even to give other beings except himself any movement. Everything outside god take their first movement from god in a hierarchical order as if they are caught in ecstasy. In this construct we encounter god as a cause final that celestial beings try to become like him being caught in ecstasy. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (1072a20-1072b30), trans. W. D. Ross, in Jonathan Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, The Revised Oxford Translation, One Volume Digital Edition (Princeton, Princeton University Press:

itself and a *transcendent* god in absolute terms just like the god in Islam.

Avicenna's god from which all of the other beings emanate is, just like Aristotle's god, is actually in a constant act of reasoning. The object of god's reasoning is only himself. Everything that are hierarchically below *imitate*⁶ this act, i.e. the act of thinking, that god does in a perfect manner in order to come to existence.

In Avicenna's system the imitation of the god happens in the manner of the imitation of the god's act of thinking. While god is performing the most perfect way of thinking, the other beings with powers in them and those that are less proficient when compared to the god can imitate the act of thinking *as best as they could*. Avicenna says:

"I say, The very desire to imitate the First, inasmuch as He is in act, [renders] the movement of the celestial sphere proceeding from Him in the manner in which a thing proceeds from the conception the necessitates it, even though this is not intended in itself by the first intention. Because this is an imaging of what is in actuality, there is engendered from it a seeking of what in actuality is most perfect. This cannot be in terms of the individual and is thus in terms of succession, which is motion. [This is] because if the one individual is permanent no existence would be realized for [those things] similar to it, and they would remain always potentiality"⁷

In this excerpt the phrase used by Avicenna as an equivalent to the *imitation of god* is to "imitate the First" and the purpose of the philosopher in using this expression is not to develop a *theosophical* explanation or to express a set of mystical orientations. What the philosopher is trying to do is to present a scheme that describes becoming and he does this by using the expression *teşebbüh bi'l-evvel* (imitate the First) around the idea of *becoming proficient or perfected* - based on both Plotinus' idea of the First and Aristotle's idea of the first mover.

As can be seen in the excerpt above, for Avicenna *teşebbüh billah* has been taken into consideration as an attempt to achieve some sort of proficiency or perfectness. The effort to achieve this proficiency is encountered as beings, each of which is made of a variety of forms and matter, which try to become like a divine being which is completely free of matter and is the form of forms. In other words, the quest for proficiency is, in a sense, like the the cause of the existence of the reason and the self/soul (*nafs*) that emanate from the First. When they imitate the act of the first Cause, which is the form of forms, on the one hand they acquire their own

existence and on the other hand, they get involved in the process of proficiency through this imitation.

Following the emanation of the reason and souls from the First in the scheme of emanation, the effort that is necessary for them to be able to render the emanation of the next being in the hierarchical order is expressed with a love for the proficiency of the First being. However, when we talk about *the effort towards perfectedness*, we should also state that we are not assuming a will that is similar to human will in the superlunar sphere. Therefore, at this stage (in the stage of overflowing from the first Being and descending), it would be necessary to make a reminder that the god is *not* a role model to be taken in a voluntary fashion in order to become like him. In this descending model, the relationship between the god and the universe can be explained by the inclination of a lover to the beloved. Just like the god *is not revealing a will* while he is giving the first movement to the universe or while the first Reason is emanating from him, the reason, which will render the emanation of the next hierarchical order by becoming like him and imitating his act of reasoning, performs this imitation through an involuntary disposition and takes its place in the scheme of emanation.

Avicenna reminds the subject of "*becoming like the First and orientation towards the proficient*" while stating "that the mover of the heavenly essence moves it with an infinite power". The heavenly essence does not possess an infinite power itself but acquires an infinite power through thinking about the First and receiving light from its light. By trying to become like the first Principle within the bounds of possibility, it becomes like the goodness in it. Thus, it achieves proficiency. Avicenna states:

"If enjoyment is attained through the act of intellectually apprehending the First Principle and what is intellectually apprehended- or [whatever] is apprehended of Him in an intellectual manner, or by the soul- this would preoccupy one to the exclusion of all things and all aspects [of things]. From this, however, there is emitted that which is of a rank lower than it- namely, the desire to imitate Him to the utmost measure possible. Hence, the seeking of motion becomes necessary, not insomuch as it is motion, but in the manner we have stated. This desire would follow that love, and the enjoyment springing from [love], and this perfecting process arising from desire. It is in this manner that the First Principle moves the body of the heaven"⁸

The idea of realization of the First Principle within the bounds of possibility, is expressed by Avicenna as the desire to imitate Him to the utmost measure possible. In the excerpt Avicenna explains the motion of the first Principle in connection with the concepts of pleasure and desire. In the excerpt thinking about the first Principle is expressed as pleasure. Anything below the first Principle is pleased to reflect on it, and this pleasure restrains them from everything else. This results in becoming like

1984), 3641-3643. (All references I make to Aristotle are pertain to the Barnes' translation). For a similar construct see: Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, translated by Stephen Mackenna and B. S. Page, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.html>

⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (1074b15- 35), in Barnes, *The Complete Works*, 3649-3650.

⁷ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, translated, introduced and annotated by Michael E. Marmura, (Provo Utah, Brigham Young University Press: 2005), 315. (All references I make to Avicenna's *The Metaphysics* pertain to the translation of M. Marmura).

⁸ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 316.

the first Principle *within the bounds of possibility*. As a result of this imitation, the being that is in lower order than this hierarchically is revealed.

Avicenna, after explaining the motion and emanation within the framework of imitating the First Principle, states that the celestial spheres and their motions are numerous; and they are different from each other in terms of direction, speed, and slowness. At this point the philosopher is concerned with the question of “whether or not there is a different force that moves every celestial sphere”. He states that, with an explicit reference to Aristotle, this would not be possible and the principle that enables motion could be a single principle. Moreover, Avicenna states that the spheres are common in one subject even if they are at different speeds. What they have in common is the desire they have for the First: “Now, if all the spheres and motions share in their desire for the First Principle, then, for this [very reason] they share in the perpetuity of motion, and in its circularity”⁹. In another place, he states that this is the only beloved and mover: “The First Cause, would be the object of desire of all, this being in common”¹⁰.

The fact that things existed through emanation from the first Principle and tried to be like him, was because of the absolute proficiency/perfectedness of the First. Nevertheless, the overflowing of things from the First with a desire to become like the First does not contribute to the exaltation or proficiency of the first being. The philosopher states this as in the following:

“The emanation of the existence of things from Him has no entry at all as regards the ennobling and perfection of His essence. Rather, the entry is with respect to His highest perfection and [His being] such that the existence of the whole is emitted from Him not by quest and intending. Hence, the desire for Him must be by way of imitation in this form, not by way of what does not relate to the First in terms of perfection.”¹¹

These expressions of Avicenna should be considered together with the cosmological teachings of Aristotle. In Aristotle as well the sphere of Fixed Stars is moved through an eternal and ever-lasting mover. Within the hierarchical structure, each reality is interdependent. Within this hierarchical structure, god appears as a being that gives form to everything but is not given form by anything. God is the highest good, universal attraction, and the ultimate object of love and desire, as God gives form to all other things. This is because all beings try to imitate the eternal-everlasting, perfected, independent, and spiritual life, which is god himself, in his activities.¹²

The close contact of Avicenna with the Aristotle’s philosophy is quite evident in the point that god is the first principle. However, here I think that reading the relationship that Avicenna established between the celestial movements and becoming like god, accompanied by

a quote¹³ from Plato’s *Timaeus*, would contribute to the matter. The first excerpt is as follows:

“The god invented sight and gave it to us that we might observe the orbits of intelligence in the universe and apply them to the revolutions of our own understanding. For there is a kingship between them, even though our revolutions are disturbed, whereas the universal orbits are undisturbed. So once we have come to know them and to share in the ability to make correct calculations according to nature, we should stabilize the straying revolutions within ourselves by imitating the completely unstraying revolutions of the god”.¹⁴

Aristotle and Avicenna, as we have seen in the excerpts above, attributed absolute proficiency to the First Principle that does not move. Everything other than the First Principle was located in levels lower than the First in terms of proficiency. These less proficient beings attempted to acquire both their being and their proficiency by imitating the perfected being.

While in Aristotle’s and Avicenna’s line absolute proficiency is attributed to the first Principle which is the root of becoming, and as the theme of becoming is -in cosmological sense- stated as *becoming like the first Principle*, when we look at the excerpt of *Timaeus* (47c), we see that the movements in the universe and orbits are attributed proficiency and that the theme of becoming is stated as having connection with the *movements of the universe* which are divine. Let us highlight a significant difference here: While in Avicenna and Aristotle, becoming like the first Principle was an ontological explanation, in *Timaeus* the idea of becoming was handled with more moral tones. Plato states that the human being was blessed with an eye in order to follow the unstraying cycles of the sky and to render our incomplete movements in line with these unstraying movements. When a human being gets his/her share from the celestial order and organizes his/her movements according to these movements, s/he would have imitated the unstraying movements of god (imitating the completely unstraying revolutions of the god).^{15 16}

⁹ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 318.

¹⁰ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 325.

¹¹ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 322.

¹² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1072a20 et seq., 3640 et seq., in Barnes, *The Complete Works*, 3641 et seq.

¹³ For an example of an article that interprets the related quotations of *Timaeus* with regard to becoming like god, see. David Sedley, “Becoming Like God in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle”, in *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias Proceedings of the IV Symposium Platonicum: Selected Papers*, ed. T. Calvo & L. Brisson (Academia Verlag: 1997), 327-39. Moreover, see Timothy Mahoney, “Moral Virtue and Assimilation to God in Plato’s *Timaeus*”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, (2005), Vol. XXVIII, pp. 77-91.

¹⁴ Plato, *Timaeus* (47c), in John Cooper (ed). *Plato: Complete Works*, (Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company: 1997), 1250. (All references I make to Plato pertain to John Cooper’s translation).

¹⁵ In *Timaeus* the reason, the most dominant part of our soul, such as the sight and hearing ability, was characterised as a *gift from the gods to us*. Reason is the vehicle that will raise us to the skies, to which we are related, from the earth. If a human being focuses his/her attention on strengthening this kinship through reason, concentrating on true wisdom and love of learning, if s/he nurtures his/her immortal aspect, there is no obstacle left before becoming like the divine. However, if s/he does not do it, s/he chooses to feed the desires of the body, not the mind, then s/he will only feed the mortal side.

¹⁶ The idea of immortality of soul and its relation with Aristotle and Plotinus’ system; see Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna’s Psychology*, (London, Oxford University Press: 1952), pp. 6, 12 vd.

When attention is paid, it will be seen that these keywords are *being related to the thoughts and movements of the universe*. In the excerpt it is stated that the human being's becoming like god is rendered dependent on keeping this kinship alive and fed.¹⁷ As a result Plato promises us the following: "When this conformity is complete, we shall have achieved our goal: That most excellent life offered to humankind by the gods, both now and forevermore".¹⁸

Now we can go back to Aristotle's and Avicenna's line: Avicenna considered the theme of *teşebbüh billah* (becoming like god) as becoming like the first mover by staying true to Aristotle's construct. However, since *Timaeus* did not cover the idea of an unmoving mover, the idea of becoming like the god/ godlike was stated in the form of becoming like having the most perfected style of moving in the heavens. Human being can overcome the lack of perfectedness in his/her movements by looking at the movement which is absolutely proficient; moreover, s/he could become like him and be as wise and immortal as him, thus living the most perfected life. Then in Plato becoming like the perfectedness of the celestial movements and imitating the harmony in the celestial movements help the human being become more perfected whereas in Aristotle's and Avicenna's line, the celestial movement itself takes place in order to achieve the proficiency of the first mover.

Now I would like to move forward to the concept of *manifestation* (*tecellî*) which is also linked to the ontological system of Avicenna and examine a very much debated example in the literature with regard to Avicenna.

3. Deification or Becoming Like God: Unification Vs. Manifestation

Deification and becoming like god are two separate terms used to refer to different phenomena.¹⁹ According to Russell, "no formal definition of deification occurs until the sixth century, when Dionysius the Areopagite declares: Deification is the attaining of likeness to God and union with him so far as is possible".²⁰

Although becoming like god and deification express different situations, we can state that from time to time these two situations are intertwined. For example, in the Islamic mysticism, it is envisaged that the person would enter a journey of perfection to become morally purified and to rise to a higher spiritual level. At this stage God's mercy, love, and forgiveness set a higher model that the

disciple would try to look up to. However, at the end of the journey, one can experience union, the experience²¹ which is considered to be the real purpose of this journey.

The human's desire to live in union with the god is not only encountered in the members of the monotheistic religions, but it can also be encountered among the pagan followers of ancient religions. While the mystical experience of this union in monotheistic religions takes place as a highly abstract, spiritual experience, we see that in ancient religions the deification or becoming like god is tried to be carried out by means of concrete objects or animals.²²

Both Avicenna and Plato inherited a cultural background that allowed the union of the divine space and the human space, or which allowed the divine to be visible in the human world. This heritage which is inherited by Avicenna is the idea of the mystical unification of the human and god whereas the heritage that Plato encountered is the matter of *divine possession*, which is the result of the interaction between the human and the god that the Greek culture allowed.

Plato, as he had discussed extensively in the *Phaedrus* dialogue, transformed the traditional understanding of inspiration by introducing a new dimension to the concept of classical inspiration with the idea of philosophical inspiration.²³ Avicenna, on the other hand, transformed the concept of the manifestation, which he had expressed that was understood as unifying with god, by moving it away from the meaning of unification (*ittihad*), imitating the first principle, and placing it on the basis of acquiring being. Here we can say that both philosophers re-expressed the traditional heritage they inherited in terms of the topics of divine possession and unification in their own philosophical systems.²⁴

²¹ When it comes to Islamic mysticism, we must say that this experience of union is understood not as the unification of two separate beings, their experience of being one, but also as the destruction of one's existence in the other and the destruction of the self.

²² In ancient religions there are beliefs that unification could be achieved by eating the flesh of an animal that is believed in which the divine manifests itself, or by drinking its blood. See for before mentioned rituals and beliefs: James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Editions: 1998), Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, translated by John Raffan (Cambridge, Harvard University: 1985).

²³ According to Morgan, "Plato elaborates and emphasizes his point by developing an abstract vocabulary of inspiration. The noun *enthousiasmos* appears first in Plato and Democritus (DK68B18), while the adjective *enthousiastikos*, the noun *enthousiasis* and verb *enthousiazô* are first preserved in Plato. This development of a technical vocabulary of course reflects a general interest in the technical analysis and criticism of poets starting in the second half of the fifth century, but also reveals how hard Plato wanted to explore and press the concept. Instead of illuminating a problematic issue (the madness of love) by something better known and generally agreed upon, Plato has Socrates connect it with an exaggerated interpretation of the cultural practice of poetry, prophecy, and initiatory purification, an interpretation that foregrounds direct divine intervention in the mortal world." See. Kathryn Morgan, "Inspiration, Recollection and Mimesis in Plato's *Phaedrus*", in *Ancient Models of Mind: Studies in Human and Divine Rationality*, edited by David Sedley and Andrea Nightingale (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2010), 50.

²⁴ Some beliefs and rituals in ancient Greek culture allowed different forms of unification of human nature and divine nature. In Cornford's work the following example is cited: "The worshippers of Dionysus believed that, when they held their orgiastic rites, the one God entered into each and all of them; each and all became *enthoi*; they 'partook' of the one divine nature, which was 'communicated'

¹⁷ Plato, *Timaeus* (90a-d), in *Complete Works*, 1288-1289.

¹⁸ Plato, *Timaeus* (90d), in *Complete Works*, 1289.

¹⁹ The word *deification* is used in English in order to mean turning into god while becoming like god is expressed as *godlikeness*. In Arabic becoming god is used as *teellüh*, *ittihad* (unification) and becoming like god is used as *teşebbüh billah*. However, there are also uses that the word *teellüh* does not express a full meaning of deification. In classical Greek, *homoiosis theô* means to be like the gods, but *entheoi* means to unite with a god. Deification can also sometimes be used to refer to a person, as an attribute referred to somebody by others after his or her death. This situation is mostly expressed by the word *apotheosis*.

²⁰ Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2006), 1.

Let us try to see how Avicenna transformed the notion of *unification* (*ittihad*), found in some groups of Islamic mysticism, through the concept of *manifestation* (*tecelli*). In doing so we have to express that in *The Treatise of Love*, which is our primary source of reference, and in particular in this text there is the following expression: “the highest degree of approximation to It is the reception of Its manifestation in its full reality, i.e. in the most perfect way possible, and this is what the Sufis call unification (*ittihad*)”²⁵.

The concept used in the Islamic culture in order to express unifying with the god is the concept of *ittihad* (unification). Along the journey to become a perfected human, the final level in which the separation between the god and the human disappears is called *vahdet* (union). The concept used in the meaning of god appearing or manifesting in a place is the concept of *tecelli* (manifestation). All three concepts point to a special union of the divine and the human.²⁶

In Islamic Sufism²⁷ *tecelli* (manifestation) means “to be evident, to be enlightened, to appear, and to show”.²⁸ *Tecelli* (manifestation) has also been used in order to describe situations such as Allah manifesting himself to his subjects in the heaven, Allah *manifesting* himself in his subjects through his names, and the removal of the veil (unveiling).²⁹

to them all and ‘present’ in each. It is thus we must interpret the three terms –*methexis*, *parousia*, *koinonia*– by which Plato tries to describe the relation of an Idea to its group.” F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* (London, Edward Arnold: 1912), 254.

²⁵ Avicenna, “The Treatise of Love”, translated by Emil L. Fackenheim, in *Medieval Studies*, (1945), Vol. 7, p. 225.

²⁶ Although both in ancient Greek culture and in Islamic community there are mystical experiences such as the unification with God, manifestation of God in human being, we must separate the concept of *manifestation* used in the Islamic community to express these experiences and the concepts like *enthoi* or *theophany* expressing the rituals in the ancient Greece. This necessity is due to the fact that the images of god of the two cultures (one pagan and the other monotheistic) are quite different from each other. In ancient Greece establishing union with god often involves connotations such as the seizure of the human and the capture of his will by the god. In Islamic culture although the concept of god is different (although it is believed that God has vengeance, wrath, jealousy, it is believed that his mercy exceeds his wrath in the last instance), the concept of *manifestation* is far from such a negative connotation. What I am trying to do in this article is not to try to locate the concepts of *manifestation* and *enthoi* on the same plane. What I am trying to do is to express that there are concepts that express the unification of god and human being in two very different cultures and to express that the rituals that these concepts correspond to, and show how Plato and Avicenna, who grew up in two different cultures, handled the idea of becoming like god in a philosophical construct based on the practices of unification with god in their own cultures. This construct was realized with the concept of *manifestation* gaining a meaning again in the system of emanation in Avicenna, while in Plato the concept of *enthoi* was transformed into the concept of *enthusiasm*. In this sense, *the way in which two philosophers approach their own traditions* is very similar.

²⁷ Here I use a general expression like “Islamic mysticism”. I am aware of the fact that sufism contains a lot of schools, opinions, and dispositions in itself. However, the variety of meanings the concept of *manifestation* has in different chronological terms, works, and dispositions is so far from the limits of this article. I would like to pass on a few encyclopedic information that will present us just as much as possible with regard to the concept of *manifestation* in the classical sufism literature and what had Avicenna imagined when he said *manifestation* (*tecelli*).

²⁸ Seyyid Cafer Seccâdî, *Ferheng-i Istilahat ve Ta’birat-ı İrfani*, translated by Hakkı Uygur (İstanbul, Ensar Neşriyat: 2007), 462.

²⁹ Sahl said: “Revelation is in three states: revelation of an essence, which is unveiling; revelation of the qualities of essence, which is

According to the definition of *tecelli* in Seccâdî, “the sign of God’s manifestation with his secrets in his subjects is that the subject remains severely under the influence of the manifestation and becomes completely immobilized and cannot control himself. If a person can change himself by putting in effort, these are thoughts that are obtained through deduction not through manifestation.”³⁰ We can consider this description of Seccâdî, which he made in order to distinguish manifestation, together with the examples given by Plato about inspiration: When we look at the examples of a poet under divine influence reciting poems due to this influence, an oracle making prophecies under the divine power, a disciple performing *telestic* dances in trance under god’s ecstasy, we see that they all have a common point. This common point is that in all three examples there are situations in which the divine inspiration comes to the forefront, while the human mind is in a passive state.³¹ When we look at the definitions of manifestation in the classical period, we see that the divine influence is dominant, not the mind. Both in the understanding of inspiration in the classical Greek culture in which Plato grew up and in the notion of the *tecelli* (manifestation) in the understanding of classical sufism in which Avicenna grew up, the idea of *the union of the god and human under the control of god* is dominant. Avicenna states that the concept of *tecelli* (manifestation) is used by sufis in the sense of *ittihad* (unification) and says:

“We want to show that, every single being loves the Absolute Good with an inborn love, and that the Absolute Good manifests Itself to all those that love It. However, the capacity of the latter to receive this manifestation differs in degree, and so does the connection they have with It. The highest degree of approximation to It is the reception of Its manifestation in its full reality, i.e., in the most perfect way possible, and this is what the Sufis call unification (*ittihad*). In Its excellence It desires that Its manifestation should be received, and the existence of things depends on it”³²

In the excerpt quoted above, Avicenna’s concept of *tecelli* (manifestation) was adapted to his system and the mystical experience which is called unification (*ittihad*) by the mystics in the sense of unification with the absolute good was re-examined within the logic of emanation. Within this context it can be stated that Plato’s approach towards the concept of *inspiration* in his own

illumination; and revelation of the condition of essence, which is the life of the world to come.” (...) “A condition exemplified as appertaining to all the qualities of essence by the saying of Hârithah, “It was as though I beheld the Throne of my Lord coming forth”; it was as though God’s speech was revealed to him during His communication became for him as it were a direct vision”. Abu Bakr al-Kalâbâdhî, *Kitâb al-Ta’arruf li-madhhab ahl al-tasawwuf*, translated by A. J. Arberry (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1977), 117. Although the word used as *tecelli* in the work of the Sahl was employed as *revelation* in the translation of Arberry, we chose to use the expression *manifestation* as the equivalent of *tecelli*.

³⁰ Seccâdî, *Ferheng-i Istilahat ve Ta’birat-ı İrfani*, 464.

³¹ Plato, *Ion* (534a-d), in *Complete Works*, 941-942.

³² Avicenna, *The Treatise of Love*, 225.

tradition and Avicenna's approach to *manifestation in the sense of unification* in his own tradition are the same. In this new formulation of the concept of manifestation each being loves the absolute good involuntarily and is in love with it with malice. On the other hand, the Absolute Good *manifests* in these beings that are in love with him.

This being said, this manifestation received from god has a limit. Due to their beginnings it is *not within the bound of possibilities* of the beings to become like the first being; their capabilities do not allow this. Each being can also realize becoming like the first Principle in terms of their purposes within their own bounds of possibility.³³ In addition to this, the active mind is more privileged in terms of its capacity to accept *manifestation* without needing mediation:

“Returning now to our actual subject, we say this: the agent intellect receives the manifestation without mediation, by penetrating its essence and that of the other intelligible beings through it, which it does per se, actually and eternally. For those entities which conceive the intelligible beings without the assistance of sense-perception or imagination cognize what is posterior as implied in what is prior, what is caused as implied in that which causes it, and the inferior as implied in the superior”³⁴

The fact that god is the first Reason in Avicenna leads to the manifestation of the god and thus becoming. Avicenna states that the active mind, the divine souls, the strength that pertain to living beings, the power of nature and plants respectively enjoy *manifestation*. Enjoying *manifestation* leads the being that accepts *manifestation* to become like the Absolute Good.

“In the same way, the animal and vegetative substances imitate It in their aims when they carry out the actions specific to them. The aim is here preservation of the species, or that of the individuals, or the development of the power and strength of the latter and suchlike, even though in their beginnings aims such as sexual intercourse and nutrition have no resemblance to It. In the same way the human souls perform their good activities, both intellectual and practical, by way of imitating It in their aims. This assimilation is brought about by exercise of justice and intelligence. However, there is, again, no resemblance to It in the beginnings of these aims, e.g., self-instruction and suchlike. The divine angelic souls, too imitate It when they perform their motions and other activities whereby they maintain the continuity of generation and destruction, and sowing and reaping”³⁵

³³ Both Avicenna and Plato use the expression “within the bounds of possibility” while talking about becoming like god. While Plato says that “a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven, and escape means becoming as like God as possible” (*Theaetetus* 176c, in *Complete Works*, 195) Avicenna expresses it as “in the case of every good which has this character, the mind seeks its imitation only to the extent that is possible”. See. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 313.

³⁴ Avicenna, *The Treatise of Love*, 227.

³⁵ Avicenna, *The Treatise of Love*, 227.

Avicenna feels the need to explain one point after he establishes the relationship between *manifestation* and becoming like the Absolute Good: The beings trying to become like the Absolute Good are not similar to him in terms of their beginning. Likewise, the essence of the living beings and plants try to become like him in terms of their purposes; however, becoming like the Absolute Good in terms of the beginning of their purposes is not the case. The human souls perform their intellectual actions and benevolence in order to become like him; however, they are not similar to him at the beginning of these purposes. In a way these expressions can be read as a reflex brought up by the principle of oneness of Islam.

As a result, both Avicenna and Plato took over an intellectual background that allowed god to be visible/ to have influence on another being, and both of them reprocessed this material that reached them and included it in their systems. Avicenna employed the concept of manifestation which has a mystical content and placed this term, that is used by some mysticists in the sense of *unification* with the god on the ground of *becoming like the god by receiving existence from god through love*. This corresponds to a philosophical approach in parallel with Plato's expression of the types of inspiration he inherited from his own culture on a philosophical ground by *transforming* them.

4. Is the Goal of the *Metaphysics* to Become Like God?

Up until this title we examined the connection of the descending of the being from the first Principle with the idea of *becoming like the god* and its relationship with the concept of *manifestation*. We will now examine how the scheme of *descending from this first Principle*, which is caused by the theory of emanation, brings about the idea of *ascension* and the relationship between this idea of ascending/ moral ascension and the idea of *becoming like god*. If we state that descending based on *becoming like god* is a necessity and that ascension is a voluntary, deliberate zone of action, the idea of ascending/ moral ascension will inevitably lead us to the field of ethics, thus leading us to move from the obligatory area to the voluntary zone.

The way Avicenna employed the idea of becoming like God in the later parts of his *Metaphysics*, in fact, compiles the Platonian, Aristotalian, and Plotinus' impacts and enables the philosopher to re-intrepret all of those from his own viewpoint based on his religious faith. One of the main concepts that we will dwell upon with regard to the topic is the concept of *theoria*.

We encounter handling of *theoria* in relation to the idea of becoming like god in Aristotle and Plato just like in Pythagorean thinking. On the other hand, in Plotinus, following these three philosophers, it takes place as a preliminary setting for the human's ability to actively unify with god.

Aristotle states the following with regard to Pythagoreanism in *Protrepticus*:

When Pythagoras was asked, he said, ‘to be an observer of the sky,’ and he used to claim that he himself was an observer of nature, and it was for the sake of this that he had passed into his way of life. And they say that when someone asked Anaxagoras for what reason anyone might choose to come to be born and to live, he replied to the question by saying that it was ‘to be an observer of the sky and the stars around it, as well as moon and sun,’ since everything else at any rate is worth nothing. [51.15|16] Further, if in everything the end is always better (for everything that comes to be comes to be for the sake of the end result, and what is for the sake of something is better, indeed best of all), and the natural end result is the one that is last to be accomplished in accordance with the generation that has naturally grown when the development is completed without interruption, surely the first human parts to acquire their end are the bodily ones, and later on the parts of the soul, and somehow the end of the better part always comes later than its coming to be. Surely the soul is posterior to the body, and intelligence is the final stage of the soul, for we see that it is the last thing to come to be by nature in humans, and that is why old age lays claim to this alone of good things; therefore, some form of intelligence is by nature our end, and ultimately we have come to be in order to be intelligent. [52.4] Now surely if we have come to be, it’s also clear that we exist for the sake of being intelligent and learning something. Therefore Pythagoras, according to this argument anyway, was right to say that it is for the sake of cognition and to observe that every human being has been constructed by the god.” [52.8] ³⁶

The idea of observing the sky, stars, and, in short, the universe that we encounter in Pythagoreanism is to nurture the godlike aspect within the human being. Aristotle states the following in *Protrepticus*:

“For just as we travel abroad to Olympia for the sake of the spectacle itself, even if there is going to be nothing more to get from it (for the observing itself is superior to lots of money), and as we observe the Dionysia not in order to acquire anything from the actors (rather than actually spending), and as there are many other spectacles we would choose instead of lots of money, so too the observation of the universe should be honored above everything that is thought to be useful.” [53.26|54.1] ³⁷

In *Republic* a similar theme is stated as in the following:

“No one whose thoughts are truly directed towards the things that are, Adeimantus, has the leisure to look down at human affairs or to be filled with envy and hatred by competing with people. Instead, as he

looks at and studies things that are organized and always the same, that neither do injustice to one another nor suffer it, being all in a rational order, he imitates them and tries to become as like them as he can. Or do you think that someone can consort with things he admires without imitating them?

-I do not, it is impossible.

-Then the philosopher, by consorting with what is ordered and divine and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can. ³⁸

In Plotinus the whole universe is separated from the first source in a hierarchical order. In Plotinus this separation is just like moving further than a source of light. In this hierarchical order each level is an imitation of the level above.

“In the strength of such considerations we lead up our own soul to the Divine, so that it poses itself as an image of that Being, its life becoming an imprint and a likeness of the Highest, its every act of thought making it over into the Divine and the Intellectual (...) In order, then, to know what the Divine Mind is, we must observe soul and especially its most God-like phase. One certain way to this knowledge is to separate first, the man from the body- yourself, that is, from your body- next to put aside that soul which moulded the body, and, very earnestly, the system of sense with desires and impulses and every such futility, all setting definitely towards the mortal: what is left is the phase of the soul which we have declared to be an image of the Divine Intellect, retaining some light from that sun, while it pours downward upon the sphere of magnitudes [that is, of Matter] the light playing about itself which is generated from its own nature.” ³⁹

As separation from the One enables everything outside the One to exist, return of the being to the One also happens. This, on the one hand, happens through reincarnation just like in Pythagoreanism and in Plato and, on the other hand, it can happen as an act of unification with god.

One of the ways that Plotinus recommends so that unification with god can happen to a human being is theoria. We encounter observation as an activity that prepares the human being to unification with god in Plotinus both in Pythagorean thinking and in Plato’s *Republic* in a similar context.

We encounter Plotinus’ idea of moving towards the One and unification with the One in a mystical manner whereas it is not possible to encounter the same mysticism in Avicenna.

It has been stated that Avicenna follows the path of Plotinus in terms of being getting separated from the One and coming to existence. Moral ascension that

³⁶ Aristotle, *Protrepticus (excerpts of speeches)*, (51.15- 52.8) <http://www.protrepticus.info/protr2017x20.pdf>, pp. 49. Comp: a.g.e., p. 43. (editorial notes).

³⁷ Aristotle, *Protrepticus*, (53.26-54.1), p. 51.

³⁸ Plato, *Republic*, (500c-d), in *Complete Works*, 1121-1222. See also, Plato, *Symposium*, (212a), in *Complete Works*, 494.

³⁹ Plotinus, *Enneads*, V. III. 8-9. <http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.5.fifth.html>

Plotinus sees as a return to the One is handled by Avicenna in a more Aristotelian manner. Avicenna directed his attention to topics such as living together and distribution of work, and did this through a religious interpretation and combined the ideal aspect with the life-style of the prophet. For Avicenna the life-style of the prophet is equivalent to the life of *theoria* that happened at the highest level. The human being that made this happen has reached the ideal of god-like human in the last instance.

Avicenna, in his philosophical system, which begins with logic and finally reaches the summit through metaphysics, dedicates the last pages of *The Metaphysics* to topics with ethical and political themes.

The philosopher begins his investigation on these topics by grounding the classical Aristotelian doctrine that focuses on the idea that human beings have to live within a community. According to this, human beings have to live in communities which are based on division of labor, and living in such a community necessitates complying with an order and establishing certain rules. Avicenna assigns this task of establishing social norms and justice to a divine authority, unlike Aristotle. This authority is the institution of prophecy.⁴⁰

Avicenna argues that, since every human being's power of philosophical thinking is not the same, the prophet can explain what will make human beings happy and unhappy in a way that they could understand.⁴¹

According to Avicenna a person who is described as a prophet is not a person who can appear at any time, and not all matter (body) accept a temperament of his perfectedness. In this case, he states that the Prophet should be both a legislator in the community and that people should ensure that certain habits and actions are repeated throughout the day.⁴² According to Avicenna, if a person fulfills the worshipping (reminders) that remind him of the truth throughout the day in this way, his interest in the body decreases after a while, which creates a purification. Worshippings that are obligatory for human beings are not only for ordinary people but they are also compulsory for the prophet. Avicenna underlines a detail after stating this. The prophet is one of the human beings who has been assigned to govern their affairs and is obligated to worship like the other people, but by a distinction: The way the Prophet is different from the human beings is that he is *he is godly* (*teelluh*), that is, he is like god.

“Moreover, this is the man who is fully [endowed with the ability] to govern the affairs of people in accordance with what will set in order the means of their livelihood [in this world] and of their well-being in their life to come. He is a man distinguished from the rest of mankind by his godliness”.⁴³

The counterpart in the original text of the word *godliness* used in the English translation is not *teşebbüh* (becoming like god), but the word *teellüh* (*godliness*) becoming god. However, when we consider this word within its context, the philosopher does not refer to deification that expresses transformation of a human being into god, but he uses this expression to refer to the fact that the Prophet is a human being who governs, regulates, and represents justice among human beings *just like a god*.⁴⁴

In the pages that follow these lines Avicenna focuses on the principles regarding how to establish a social order in which people can live in a fair way. He provides information regarding detailed topics such as the way in which the marriage contracts are realized, how divorce would take place, who is to afford the care for the disabled people in the community, how to eliminate laziness, and child breeding.⁴⁵

In the last pages of *The Metaphysics* he discusses the issues that could be considered within the boundaries of politics, rather than morality. These issues are about how to determine the caliph, how to enact laws, and how to govern people. He mentions the importance of choosing the justice, that is, the golden mean while enacting these laws, and highlights the lack of virtues caused by excess and deficiency.

At the end of his work Avicenna cites the virtues of wisdom, chastity, and courage, and states that their totality is justice, and that justice is outside the theoretical virtue. If one has possessed the spiritual wisdom together with these virtues, s/he has achieved happiness. And besides, if a person has acquired characteristics of a prophet, that is, is the prophet, then in this case s/he is *now almost a god*, and almost after Him, worship of that human being is allowed.

“At the head of these virtues stand temperance, practical wisdom and courage; their sum is justice, which, however, is extraneous to theoretical virtue. [But] whoever combines theoretical wisdom with justice is indeed the happy man. And whoever, in addition to this, wins the prophetic qualities becomes almost a human god. Worship of him, after the worship of God, exalted be He, becomes almost allowed. He is indeed the world's earthly king and God's deputy in it”.⁴⁶

The expression used by Avicenna in this excerpt is the expression “*rabben insaniyyen*” in Arabic. The expression used by the philosopher is literally *human god*. It is no coincidence that the word *rab* is chosen in the human god expression used to characterize the prophet. The word *rab* has the same root with the word *terbiye* (*breeding*) which is an expression that emphasizes the prophet's act of governing, managing human affairs and

⁴⁰ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 364 et seq.

⁴¹ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 366.

⁴² Comp: Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 367 et seq. and *Phaedrus* 249d, in *Complete Works*, 527. Plato says: “A man who uses reminders of these things correctly, is always at the highest, most perfect level of the initiation, and he is the only one who is perfect as perfect can be”.

⁴³ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 370.

⁴⁴ Although the word *teellüh* means to become god, we must emphasize that there is no mention of the deification of the Prophet here. What is meant by the *deification* of the prophet is resembling the divine characteristics in proportion to his power.

⁴⁵ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 370 et seq.

⁴⁶ Avicenna, *The Metaphysics*, 378.

breeding the human beings.⁴⁷ However, the fact that the word *rab* should not be read with a tone that weakens the human-god emphasis here as it has a meaning of breeding, governing. For it is necessary to remember that the philosopher who used the expression *rabben insaniyyen* also used the expression *teellüh* in the previous page to describe the prophet, and those two expressions should be taken into consideration altogether. The human being that Avicenna highlights here through the word *rabben insaniyyen* who is not different from whom Plato's god-like philosopher king. Plato assigns the duty of governing, managing the city and enacting laws to the philosopher-king and imagines an ideal philosopher that resembles god albeit in a metaphorical manner⁴⁸ whereas Avicenna assigns the duties of governing the affairs that benefit the community, enacting laws, and management to the prophet and describes this human being as a human god that combines theoretical, practical, and prophetic characteristics in himself.

It is possible to interpret Avicenna's lines together with Plotinus' discussion on becoming like god and virtue. As it is known, the sections 176a-c in *Theaetetus*, which have been covered frequently in the literature related to the *Enneads* I.2. Platonian ideal of godlikeness, focus on the discussion on god-likeness and virtue.⁴⁹ Plotinus says:

“Since evil is here, haunting this world by necessary law, and it is the Soul's design to escape from evil, we must escape hence. But what is this escape? “In attaining Likeness to god”, we read. And this is explained as becoming just and holy, living by wisdom, the entire nature grounded in virtue. But does not likeness by way of virtue imply likeness to some being that has virtue? To what divine being, then would our likeness be? To the being- must we not think?-in which, above all, such excellence seems to inhere, that is to the Soul of the kosmos and to the Principle ruling within it, the Principle endowed with a wisdommost wonderful. What could be more fitting than that we, living in this world, should become like to its ruler?”⁵⁰

According to Sterne-Gillet, Plotinus here criticizes Plato's idea of becoming like god in an analytical manner. Plotinus analyses how we should comprehend the resemblance of beings in different ontological levels to each other. Here Plotinus agrees with Socrates in claiming that the moral ideal of a human being is to unify the spirit of god.⁵¹

Although Avicenna, in fact, displays an Aristotelian attitude in this section he talks about virtues, distribution of work in the community, and contracts, he focuses the issue on prophethood and thus, moves further away from Aristotle. This is because Aristotle does these organizations without resorting to a divine resource. Avicenna combines Plotinus' idea of returning to the One partially with Aristotle's ideas and restates it through a religious interpretation. Plotinus' prototype of ideal human being who is ascetic and spiritual and completed the journey back to the One has now been evolved into a god-like human being who lives in a community doing distribution of work, however, also reached the level of theoretical virtue that only the prophet could have achieved. “This conflation of Plotinus' One with the God worshipped in Judaism, Christianity and Islam may lead us to expect that the Araptor would modify Plotinus' handling of the origination of cosmos. Of course, the tension between the Neoplatonic belief in a free act of creation is a central theme in Islamic philosophy.”⁵²

5. Conclusion

The conclusions we have reached in this article as we examined Avicenna's idea of becoming like god can be stated as in the following: Avicenna refers to the notion of becoming like God in relation to a number of different themes. The first of these themes is the issue of the overflowing of being from the first principle in connection with the emanation theory. Here becoming like god is stated together with the expression of becoming like the first principle (*teşebbüh bil evvel*), and carries the traces of an Aristotelian construct.

Avicenna's restating of the idea of *unification in the meaning of a mystical union with the god* he had taken from the culture of sufism as *being as a manifestation of god* first of all renders it compatible with the Aristotelian doctrine of being. Avicenna's approach to this issue at the same time shows a similarity with Plato's approach in terms of his way of transforming the previous religious traditions with regard to becoming like god. In this case based on the concept of *manifestation*, as the understanding of being one with the god was moved away from the understanding of a mystical union resulted in the issue of becoming like god to transform into a rational ideal (*theoria*), to be rendered to an intellectual ground just like Plato and Aristotle had done.

Finally, becoming like god is not only a topic related to cosmology and metaphysics in Avicenna, but it is also dwelled on as a subject of ethics and politics. In the last article of *Metaphysics*, mentioning of the prophet as a human being should be read as an analogy with the fact that the one who rules is the ruler /governor like god himself. In a sense, describing the prophet as god-like human should be accepted as the summit of all philosophical teachings of Avicenna. If a person carries out the tasks that s/he has to fulfill and s/he can achieve the

⁴⁷ In the daily use of Arabic, the word *rabbetü'l-beyt* is used for the word *housewife*, and the word *rab* in *rabbetü'l-beyt* is used to point to the person who organizes, governs, and manages the house.

⁴⁸ See: Plato, *Theaetetus* (176c), in *Complete Works*, 195.

⁴⁹ For detailed discussion on the way Plotinus covers virtue and god-likeness, see D. J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 2005), pp. 8-10.

⁵⁰ Plotinus, *Enneads*, (I.2.1.) <http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.1.first.html>

⁵¹ Suzanne Sterne Gillet, “God-Likeness in Plato's *Theaetetus* and in Plotinus' Ὁμοίωσις θεῷ in Plato and in Plotinus”, <http://ubir.bolton.ac.uk/1764/1/Sterne-Gillet%20Suzanne%20Homoiosis%20-%20final%20version.pdf> p. 13.

⁵² Adamson, *a.g.e.*, s. 137.

golden mean (moderation/sobriety) and combine this virtue with the theoretical virtue, it is stated that s/he can be referred to as a god-like human if s/he also embody the qualities of prophet. This expression is the highest point that can be reached by both a metaphor and a perfected human being.

Moreover, as a result of our examination, it was understood that the topic of becoming like god is not a topic that is so convenient to Platonian or Aristotelian

classification. Avicenna not only had been influenced by Plato and Aristotle with regard to the issues related to the beings in different ontological levels resembling each other based on the idea of becoming like god and in the moral and political aspects of the topic, but he also successfully collated the extensive scale of the Greek philosophical background that includes Pythagoreanism and Plotinus also and re-produced them.

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