



The Relation of Metaphysics to Political Theory in the Thoughts of Al-Farabi

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Abstract

Purpose

This article explored the extent to which metaphysics has a fundamental relation with politics in the thoughts of Al-Farabi.

Method

In this study, the descriptive-analysis method was adopted, as it attempted to describe Al-Farabi's thoughts on metaphysics and its relation to his political theory. This was then to be followed by philosophical and historical approaches to the subject.

Results/Findings

*Al-Farabi's substantive thoughts fell into two major divisions: metaphysics and politics. Politics properly was intended to achieve the ultimate aim of human beings, which was happiness (*al-sa'adah*) or perfection (*al-kamal*). The highest perfection that man desires to attain is intellectual perfection (*al-kamal al-nazari*). A city (state), which he calls "*al-Madinah*", became a whole similar to the cosmos, and its members—based on their classes—were to cooperate toward achieving happiness. It was through this way that a perfect city/state (*al-madinah al-fadilah*) would be realized.*

Conclusion

Political theory of Al-Farabi encompassed both psychological and cosmological elements. Yet, it was strongly connected to metaphysics. This could be observed in the notion that political science was aimed at the prosperity of men as members of the political community. Al-Farabi's thoughts began with metaphysics or cosmology and moved towards psychology and physiology, and ended with the discourse on politics.

Keywords

Al-Farabi, metaphysics, politics, happiness, perfection.

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Abstrak

Tujuan

Artikel ini mengkaji sejauhmana metafisika memiliki hubungan yang erat dengan politik dalam pemikiran Al-Farabi.

Metode

Metode yang digunakan adalah "deskriptif-analisis", dimana pemikiran Al-Farabi tentang metafisika dan kaitannya dengan teori politik yang ia kembangkan dipaparkan. Dalam analisis, pendekatan filosofis dan historis digunakan.

Hasil/temuan

Substansi pemikiran Al-Farabi terbagi ke dalam dua bagian utama: metafisika dan politik. Politik dimaksud untuk meraih tujuan hidup yang tertinggi dari kehidupan manusia, yaitu kebahagiaan (al-sa'adah) atau kesempurnaan (al-kamal). Kesempurnaan yang tertinggi yang diimpikan untuk diraih oleh manusia adalah kesempurnaan intelektual (al-kamal al-nazari). Sebuah kota (negara), yang ia sebut dengan al-madinah, persis sama dengan kosmos, dan warga negara negara dimaksud –didasarkan pada tingkatan masing-masing- harus bekerjasama untuk meraih kebahagiaan. Hanya melalui cara ini sebuah kota (negara) yang sempurna (al-madinah al-fadilah) dapat diwujudkan.

Kesimpulan

Teori politik Al-Farabi mengandung elemen psikologis dan kosmologis. Namun, yang terlebih penting adalah ia sangat terkait dengan metafisika. Hal ini dapat dicermati pada pandangan bahwa ilmu politik ditujukan bagi kebahagiaan manusia sebagai anggota dari komunitas politik. Pemikiran Al-Farabi berawal dari metafisika atau kosmologi, bergerak ke arah psikologi dan fisiologi, dan berakhir dengan diskusi mengenai politik.

Kata kunci

Al-Farabi, metafisika, politik, kebahagiaan, kesempurnaan.

المخلص

الهدف

يبحث هذا المقال في مدى العلاقة الوثيقة بين الميتافيزيقا والسياسة في فكر الفارابي.

الطريقة

والطريقة المستخدمة هي "التحليل الوصفي"، حيث يتم شرح أفكار الفارابي حول الميتافيزيقا وعلاقتها بالنظرية السياسية التي طورها. في التحليل، يتم استخدام النهج الفلسفي والتاريخي.

النتائج

ينقسم جوهر فكر الفارابي إلى قسمين رئيسيين: الميتافيزيقا والسياسة. تهدف السياسة إلى تحقيق الهدف الأسمى للحياة الإنسانية، ألا وهو السعادة أو الكمال. أعلى كمال يحلم الإنسان ببلوغه هو الكمال الفكري. فالمدينة (البلد)، التي يسميها المدينة، هي تمامًا نفس الكون، ويجب على مواطني البلد المعني - بناءً على مستوياتهم الخاصة - أن يعملوا معًا لتحقيق السعادة. بهذه الطريقة فقط يمكن تحقيق المدينة الفاضلة.

الخلاصة

تحتوي نظرية الفارابي السياسية على عناصر نفسية وكونية. لكن الأهم من ذلك هو أنها ترتبط ارتباطًا وثيقًا بالميتافيزيقا. ويمكن ملاحظة ذلك من خلال وجهة النظر القائلة بأن العلوم السياسية تهدف إلى سعادة الإنسان كأعضاء في مجتمع سياسي. و يبدأ تفكير الفارابي بالميتافيزيقا أو علم الكونيات، ويتجه نحو علم النفس وعلم وظائف الأعضاء، وينتهي بمناقشة السياسة.

الكلمات الرئيسية

الفارابي، الميتافيزيقا، السياسة، السعادة، الكمال

INTRODUCTION

In Islamic history, there are two main approaches promulgated by Muslim thinkers in understanding the nature of politics in Islam. The first is developed by the Muslim jurists. They believe that politics (*siyasah*) is a means through which the teachings of Islam would be implemented. From this perspective, the lives of the *ummah* would always be under the constant guidance and the control of the Islamic teachings (*shari'ah*). Islam is seen as both “religion and the state” (Lambton, 1981, p. 1-12). As such, the Islamic state is created for implementing the teachings of Islam. In this sphere, *siyasah* constitutes “the art of governing them [people] in such a manner as to promote their well-being—physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual. It is the art of ruling or managing the city [state] under a principle or an end. This means that there are different *siyasas* that can be ranked according to the ends which they serve or promote” (Najjar, 1984, p. 92).

From this perspective, political life (*siyasah*) should be well-managed and regulated for the betterment of the lives of Muslim people; and that is to be done “within the province of canonical jurisprudence (*fiqh*)” (Najjar, 1984, p. 93). In other words, the true *siyasah* is to emerge under the domain of Islamic law from which its normative and organizational principles drive. Among the leading jurists who promulgated this theory were ‘Ali b. Muhammad al-Mawardi (d. 1058), Muhammad Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), and Taqiyy al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328). Imam al-Ghazali, for instance, was able to suggest that *siyasah* should be established on the basis of religious sciences, both worldly (*dunya*) and the hereafter (*akhirah*). These two, Najjar asserts, “are complimentary and lead to the same end. But it is the sciences of this world that *siyasa[h]* is most in need of, and that is the science of *fiqh* which regulates life, fixing man’s duties towards God, towards himself, and towards his fellow citizens” (Najjar, 1984, p. 94).

The second approach is philosophical. From this perspective, politics (*siyasah*) is an important branch of philosophical discourse. Politics is considered to be an object of philosophical inquiry, and its principles therefore can be constructed through reason, distinguished from *fiqh* and *kalam* (Najjar, 1958, p. 92-93). Abu Nasr Al-Farabi (d. 950) was a pioneer in this domain. He was the first to introduce political philosophy in the Islamic world (Zeraoui and Uresti, 2021, p. 71-81; Turker, 2007, p. 183-255). As a prominent figure in the history of Islamic philosophy, his thoughts have become the objects of philosophical inquiries. Primarily, his thoughts can be classified into two categories: metaphysics and politics (Fakhry, 2004, p. 116-117; Mahdi, 2001, p. 15-28), two themes which are tightly connected to each other.

It is on this topic that this study focuses its discussion. To be exact, the main bulk of this inquiry is to explore Al-Farabi’s thoughts on metaphysics and its relation to political theory. For this very purpose, the main themes of his metaphysics will be explored in his political theory, which will then be followed by the inquiry into the relation of these two themes.

METHOD

This is a study of the thoughts of a prominent Muslim philosopher of the mid-tenth century, namely Abu Nasr Muhammad Al-Farabi (d. 950), with special emphasis on metaphysics and its relation to his political theory. In this matter, ‘descriptive analysis’ method is to be followed. By this way, Al-Farabi’s philosophical thoughts, mainly metaphysics and politics, are to be explored and their close relation to each other is to be examined. Al-Farabi’s thoughts on these two subjects are to be explored in his main works, including *Mabadi’ ‘Ara’ Ahl al-Madinah al-Fadilah*, *Kitab al-Siyasah al-Madaniyyah*, *Kitab Tahsil al-Sa’adah*, *Kitab al-Huruf*, *Rasa’il fi al-‘Aql* and *Fusul al-Muntaza’ah*. Indeed, his thoughts on metaphysics and politics as well as their relation to each other are delineated in his works.

Further, the description of his thoughts on these two subjects is to be analyzed. The thoughts of this philosopher can certainly be comprehended under the brand of ‘the Islamic philosophical school’ and therefore can be examined in their own rights. This is although his thoughts were influenced by Greek philosophical traditions, including those of Plato’s and Aristotle’s. In the analysis, therefore, the adaptation of both neo-Platonic philosophy and Aristotle’s philosophical thoughts is to be highlighted; and Al-Farabi’s successes in harmonizing and reconciling these two great Greek philosophical thoughts is also to be examined. His ability and success in adapting and synthesizing Greek philo-

sophical traditions- and finally creating new Islamic philosophical and political thoughts- will be brought into light. In this analytical part Al-Farabi's insertion of Greek philosophical thoughts into the tenets of Islam is also explored.

The fact that the Islamic philosophy is "the product of a complex intellectual process in which Syrians, Arabs, Persians, Turks, Berbers, and others took an active part" (Fakhry, 2004) necessitates a historical approach in dealing with this very inquiry. As such, a historical analysis needs also to be pursued in this study, for the sake of tracing the influence of the thoughts of Greek philosophers, especially those of Plato's and Aristotle's on Al-Farabi's thoughts on the issue. It is also through historical analysis can both Islamic religious intellectual and philosophical currents can be uncovered.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Al-Farabi's Metaphysical Thoughts

In the first part of his work entitled *Mabadi' Ara' Ahl al-Madinah al-Fadilah* (Principles of the Views of the Citizens of the Best State) Al-Farabi writes:

The First Existence is the First Cause of the existence of all the other existents. It is free of every kind of deficiency, whereas there must be in everything else some kind of deficiency, either one or more than one; but the First is free of all their deficiencies. Thus, its existence is the most excellent and precedes every other existence. No existence can be more excellent than or prior to, its existence. Thus, it has the highest kind of excellent existence and the most elevated rank of perfect existence (Al-Farabi, 1958, p. 57; Al-Farabi, 1995a, p. 1).

The above statement, which makes up the foundation of his metaphysical thought, bears profound concepts of Al-Farabi's political theory. He insists that there is an Existence, which is the Cause of all other existences. His Existence is uncaused and does not need other existences for Him to exist. From this very perspective, his existence is "necessary" (*wajib*) in the sense that He exists by Himself and that His existence is eternal. All other existences other than Himself are contingent (*mumkin*), which means that its existence would only be possible as it relies on other Existence out of itself.

The Being is viewed as the Intellect that possesses the capacity to know Himself. He is the Most Perfect, Eternal, and Unique by His Essence. He needs no one out of Himself and is unchanged. The Being cannot be proved to exist, for He Himself is a Proof and the First Cause for all other existences. In Him all truths and realities coincide. His essence is the most perfect and the One only (De Boer, 2018, p. 114). Al-Farabi asserts that no definition of his Being can be provided, since in Him all things are one with no different (Madkour, 1963, p. 460). This belief would eventually create the problem of the "One" and the "many." How come the existences of all things are in one to be comprehended, or would not this belief is harmful to the concept of the "Oneness" of God?

Al-Farabi solves this problem through his emanation theory. Even though the theory was borrowed from Plotinus and the Alexandria philosophy, yet as a whole it was in fact the theory developed by this Muslim philosopher himself, induced and formed by his anxiousness to prove the "Oneness" of God and his methods in splitting and synthesizing (Madkour, 1963, p. 460). He insists that from God, through His faculty of knowing and His virtues, emanates the First Intellect (*al-'aql al-awwal*). This means that "thinking" is the same as "creating", for something is created only through thinking. It is from this very First Intellect that the first step toward multiplicity in form of dualism (*dyads*) is to be found. It is through thinking process of the First Intellect, namely thinking of God and itself, emanates the Second Intellect (*al-'aql al-thani*), body (planet) and soul. This process of thinking continues to occur to the emanation of ten intellects, nine planets and nine souls. The last intellect is known as Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'al*) from which human souls, consisting of four elements (fire, air, water, and soil) derive (Madkour, 1963, p. 460).

This emanation theory provides a hierarchical form of intellect and soul. The first intellect constitutes the most transcendent, which is followed by the soul of the planet and other planets. In this very hierarchical construct, the earth and the corporeal world constitute the last in the order. This also means that this world is full of any form of evils. From this very nature, Al-Farabi attempts to combine the Islamic tenets—that is the heaven is sacred, revelation as the main source, and the objectives of spiritual journeys—with those of Greek schools in which any form of spiritualism is sacred and any kind of worldly matter is corrupted (Madkour, 1963, p. 458).

Al-Farabi teaches that God, even though does not move, is in fact the “Prime Mover.” Under the emanation theory, every planet possesses both the intelligence and the soul, and it is driven by the soul. Yet, the soul can do this only after receiving its power from the intellect. The soul moves through its desire to reach the intellect, and this perfect attainment would make it capable of moving its planet. As such, the desire constitutes the source of the movement. That being the case, the intellect is constantly desirable. The lowest level longs for the attainment of the upper level, and all desire to reach the Almighty, who is the “Prime Mover” (Madkour, 1963, p. 458-459). In this concept, Al-Farabi adopts the theory of cosmology developed by Greek astronomers, especially that of Plotemy (Najjar, 2004).

It is also imperative to mention here that Al-Farabi believes in the theory of causality, and the causal relation between the cause and the effect. He holds that the “cause” could be both direct and indirect, in which the direct form can easily be identified. From this very rationale which Al-Farabi develops in his understanding of emanation theory, perhaps it is through this doctrine of the ten intellects does he solve the problem of motion and change. The same theory is also to be used in solving the problem of the “One” and the “many” and in his efforts in reconciling the ten intellects (Madkour, 1963, p. 459).

In metaphysics, the theories of potentiality and actuality constitute the central issues, in which substance and incident, essence and existence, matter and form merge, and on which all their norms are to be found (Hammond, 1947, p. 13). As such, both potentialities and actualities make up the essences of the reality. From this very concept, Al-Farabi goes forward to formulate the principles of causality. He holds that all the existences are generated by a “cause”. This can be proved by motion theory. Motion or change involves the transition from nothing to existence, from potentiality to actuality. Therefore, something which does not exist is incapable of bringing itself into existence. That being the case, there should be something which constitute the first cause, namely the Prime Mover, whose existence is necessary (*wajib*), who is God (Hammond, 1947, p. 16).

Al-Farabi also promulgates the theory of the eternity of this world, a concept which was resulted from the emanation theory. God, as the Prime Cause, has created this world out of matter which, according to Al-Farabi, was caused by the Eternal Existence who is uncreated. He asserts that this very Existence has no form, albeit He has many forms. On this point, Al-Farabi insists:

When people say that God created the world, they simply mean that God produced the world out of matter by clothing it with a determinate form. The world is certainly God's work, and though it comes after Him as a world-form, yet it is equal to Him in time or eternal, insofar as He could not begin to work on it in time. The reason for this is that God is to the world exactly what a cause is to its effect. Since the cause in this case is inseparable from the effect, it follows that He could not, in a given moment, start making it. For, if He could, that would simply imply imperfection on His part while He had been trying to achieve His goal. This, of course, is incompatible with the absolute perfection of God (Al-Farabi as quoted in Hammond, 1947, p. 32).

In line with the concept developed in the metaphysical psychology, Al-Farabi believes in the spiritual essence of man, which is the soul. To him, the soul is simple, undivided, and inseparable from the existence. Therefore, the soul is essentially different from the

body, even though it needs matter (body) for its existence. Being spiritual in nature, the soul forever seeks to be united with the Eternal Spirit (God). This is seen to be the highest achievement by man in this life. However, this very perfection can only be attained through rational knowledge. It is from this perspective does Al-Farabi develop his theory on intellect, which he divides into both “practical” (al-‘aql al-‘amali) and “theoretical” (al-‘aql al-nazari) (Colmo, 1992). Through this intellect, the soul can disassociate itself from matter (body) and maintains its eternal nature. From this belief Al-Farabi develops the theory of the eternity of the soul. Soul will remain immortal after the decease of the body, and it is the soul which will get either reward or punishment in the hereafter, a belief which was strongly rejected- and even condemned- by al-Ghazali for being strayed away from Islamic tenets and it was therefore considered being disbelief (kufr) (Al-Ghazali, 1958, p. 234-245). The question of how much these thoughts of Al-Farabi on metaphysics have a fundamental relation with his political theory will be discussed in the following pages.

Political Theory

Delving into the philosophical thoughts of Al-Farabi will end up with the concept of multiplicity as dualism (dyads), namely both the soul and the matter. Al-Farabi’s distinctiveness on this matter is apparent as he insists that philosophy is not confined only to the speculation of philosophers, but it also ought to be oriented to the earthly life, the corporeal world. This is certainly very much related to his belief in the dual dimensions of human nature, which are both the soul and the body. From this very perspective, Al-Farabi promulgates the two faces of the philosophy, namely theoretical and practical (Najjar, 1958, p. 94; Colmo, 1992, p. 96-97).

Al-Farabi does not provide clear meaning of the practical philosophy (Galston, 1990, p. 55). Implicit definition of the practical philosophy, however, can be comprehended- as opposed to that of the theoretical- as knowledge which can be implemented in real life. As such, it is very much connected to implementing human desires. Even though the ultimate aim of these two types of philosophy is the same, which is the attainment of happiness (al-sa‘adah), yet their closest objective is different. Theoretical philosophy is intended for the attainment of truth, while the practical one is intended to achieve good. From this very perspective practical philosophy is also to be called “political philosophy” (Galston, 1992, p. 96-97).

In his explanation of political philosophy, Al-Farabi makes clear the distinction between “ethical world” and “politics” (siyasa). Even though both revolve around noble behaviors, yet contrast between the two is to be noticed, mainly in the approaches used. Ethics views various behaviors and values at the individual level, while politics discusses these subjects from the social points of view (Al-Farabi, 1994; Najjar, 1958, p. 94). Based on the notion that man is political being, the political organization is then necessary, for it is through this very political organization would the perfection be attained. Ethics in Al-Farabi’s view subordinates to politics. Morality is not the highest achievement that man should have attained in this life. The belief in moral values and its implementation in daily lives are also not the highest achievement attained in this life. The ultimate perfection that man seeks to achieve is, according to Al-Farabi, the “intellectual perfection”, which is also known as al-kamal al-nazari (Najjar, 1958, p. 94).

It is important to notice here that in discussing the issue of politics Al-Farabi begins with the end. The exploration begins by taking into account the ultimate aim of the lives of man. The rationale behind this method is that it is through profound understandings of the ultimate purposes of man’s life are we capable of finding out the ways to achieve them. On this issue Al-Farabi writes as follows:

Political science examines the different classes of voluntary actions and ways of life and the habits, moral characters, inclinations and natural dispositions out of which these actions and ways of life are derived, and the ends for which they are per-

formed. It also examines how they ought to exist in man, the manner of their ordering, and their preservation. It (political science) distinguishes between the ends for which they are performed and ways of life followed. It demonstrates that some of these ends constitute true happiness, other's imaginary happiness and that which is true happiness cannot possibly be attained in this life but in the life to come. It also demonstrates that the actions and ways of life that would lead to true happiness are the noble things and the virtues, and the condition of their existence in man is that they should be properly and commonly practiced in cities and nations (Al-Farabi, as quoted in Najjar, 1958, p. 94).

In other place Al-Farabi insists as follows:

It is the innate disposition of every man to join another human being or other men in the labor he ought to perform: this is the condition of every single man. Therefore, to achieve what he can of that perfection, every man needs to stay in the neighborhood of others and associate with them. It is also the innate nature of this animal to seek shelter and to dwell in the neighborhood of those who belong to the same species, which is why he is called the social and political animal. There emerges now another science and another inquiry that investigates these intellectual principles and the acts and states of character with which man labors toward this perfection. From this, in turn, emerge the science of man and political science (Al-Farabi, 1963a, p. 60; Al-Farabi, 1994, p. 45).

From the above discussion it can be ascertained that for Al-Farabi the ultimate aim of the life of man is to attain both “happiness” (al-sa‘adah) and “perfection” (al-kamal); and the way to achieve them is through practical wisdom (politics). As such relevant questions to be raised here, including (1) what does Al-Farabi mean by happiness? and (2) how do we obtain them? The answers to these questions would certainly have their far implications, involving both theoretical and practical philosophies. We will provide short notes on this point later in this article. On this particular issue Al-Farabi insists that “since what is intended by man’s existence is that he attains supreme happiness, he—in order to achieve it—needs to know what happiness is, make it his end, and hold it before his eyes. Then, after that, he needs to know the things he ought to do in order to attain happiness, and then do these actions (Al-Farabi, 1963b, p. 35; see also Al-Farabi, 1995b, p. 152; Mahdi, 2001, p. 173-195).

It is not easy to grasp the exact meaning of happiness perceived by this Muslim philosopher. Miriam Galston offers three alternative answers to this particular issue: happiness as an exclusive theoretical activity, as a mere political exercise, and the combination of both (theoretical and political). From this last possible answer both theoretical and political elements constitute parts of the essence and the structure which determine the happiness (Galston, 1990, p. 56). Many scholars who have focused their researches on the meaning of happiness as perceived by Al-Farabi have reached the same conclusion (Galston, 1990, p. 7-59).

The problem faced by scholars in this matter lies in the different emphasis put upon by Al-Farabi in his works on the meaning of happiness. In the first place, he portrays the happiness as identical with theoretical perfection. This meaning is to be found in several works by Al-Farabi, including *Mabadi’ al-Ara’ Ahl al-Madinah al-Fadilah* (The Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City), *Rasa’il fi al-‘Aql* (The Epistles on Reason), *al-Siyasah al-Madaniyyah* (The Perfect Regime), and *Fusul al-Muntaza‘ah*. In these works man’s happiness is described in the form of the perfection of the soul in which man has become transcendent entity. In such a case, the soul does not need matter (body) any longer. This is to be attained through “intellect.” In this particular case the “practical intellect” acts as an aide to the “theoretical intellect.”

In his other work, however, especially in his *Tahsil al-Sa‘adah* (The Attainment of Happiness) Al-Farabi insists that happiness would be attained through combination of both theoretical and practical perfection (Al-Farabi, 1995b, p. 1-52). All kinds of virtues,

thoroughness, morals and practical behaviors –together with theoretical excellences- constitute among the schemes through which all nations and their citizens would attain happiness in this life and the life to come (hereafter). On this particular point Galston concludes as follow as:

...Alfarabi's understanding of the nature of happiness must be viewed against the backdrop of his understanding of the meaning of "theoretical perfection" and "practical perfection" –the two fundamental human alternatives. He rejects the narrow interpretation of theoretical perfection as the possession of the theoretical sciences. Then, at the same time that he expands theoretical perfection to include practical philosophy or political science, he also redefines practical philosophy by characterizing its inquiries in terms of the light they shed on happiness and misery, and the noble and the base, instead of confining it to an investigation of the contingent or the voluntary. Alfarabi appears to be saying that because theoretical perfection is concerned with human as well as natural and metaphysical subjects and because knowledge of human things finds its completion in the realization of their best state, theoretical and practical perfection must together constitute the true human end (Galston, 1990, p. 94).

In an effort to attain happiness, the establishment of political structure, which he names as "virtuous regime", becomes necessary. This regime can be defined as "the regime in which men come together and cooperate with the aim of becoming virtuous, performing noble activities, and attaining happiness" (Mahdi, 1987, p. 210). This very ideal can only be realized through four excellences (al-fada'il), namely speculative excellences (al-fada'il al-nazariyyah), theoretical excellences (al-fada'il al-fikriyyah), moral excellences (al-fada'il al-khuluqiyyah) and practical excellences (al-sani'at al-'amaliyyah). It is for the purpose of the realizing happiness in society through the above mentioned excellences (al-fada'il) does Al-Farabi elaborate the concept of "ruler-philosopher", who possesses both theoretical and practical knowledge. This very notion is based on the belief that men have unequal intellectual capabilities. This is also among the reasons behind the establishment of political structure in society in which opportunity is open for those who possess high intellectual capabilities to play their roles in directing, governing, and teaching those who have lower intellectual capabilities. The latter are to play their roles in helping the former (Al-Farabi, 1995b, p. 1-52; Mahdi, 2001, p. 125-168).

Al-Farabi also maintains that human intellect is divided into two categories. The first is "practical" intellect, which studies what ought to be done. The second is "theoretical", which has a role in assisting the soul to attain its perfection. This theoretical intellect is also divided into three kinds: material intellect, actual intellect, and acquired intellect. Material intellect (potential) constitutes the level of capability which possess the power to reach the abstraction and understanding of the essences of everything. It is through perception and abstraction that all the intelligible are brought from potentialities into actualities. This level of intellect is known as "habitual" or the intellect which is actualized in attitudes (behaviors). When the intellect is capable of comprehending the abstract it has successfully attained the acquired intellect, or the intellect which has possess the ability to absorb abstract form which has no any relation with objects (Rahman, 2002, p. 11-14).

In this particular matter, intellect in fact possesses the ability to gradually increase from the intellect in potentiality into actuality; and at the end it moves toward acquired intellect. As a matter of fact these two continuing states differ from each other, even though the second intellect constitutes the stair to reach the higher state. The intellect in potentiality only acts as recipient of all forms which can be absorbed, while the intellect in actuality works to comprehend and digest various concepts. Indeed, acquired intellect is bound to reach communion and inspiration (Madkour, 1963, p. 462). From this very perspective Al-Farabi insists that philosophy is in need of political science. This is to be accomplished by having ruler-philosopher, for it is this type of ruler is able to act as a link between God and his fellow citizens (Al-Farabi, 1985, p. 189; Al-Farabi, 1995a, p. 60-65)

In this context, law is necessary in society for the purpose of creating social order, justice and harmony. The law that Al-Farabi means here is “divine law”, for the true happiness and perfection “consist of the well-being of the soul, i.e. the knowledge of the principles of beings, God and the “spiritual bodies”, and ... this kind of knowledge is accessible only to the philosophers—ahl al-burhan” (Najjar, 1958, p. 99). In his treatment of divine law, Al-Farabi seems to have attempted to present the harmony between Islam and the classical political philosophy, mainly that of Plato. The emphasis on divine law put forward by Plato seems to have led Al-Farabi to elaborate his ideas on the prophet and the ruler-prophet. It is not the place here to discuss in some details the concept of prophecy as elaborated by this Muslim philosopher. Yet, the role played by the ruler-Prophet of Islam in receiving the words of God (revelation) and delivering its messages to mankind are relevant points to be concisely provided here.

This very mission of the prophet necessitates him to become a leader of mankind, both in religious and political spheres. Even though he does not specifically refer to the Prophet Muhammad, Al-Farabi maintains that a prophet receives revelation by imagination, through which he attains the highest perfection. He writes as follows:

It is not impossible that man, when his imaginative power reaches utmost perfection, should receive in his waking hours from the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘al*) ...the *imitations* of separate [immaterial] intelligibles and all other noble [sacred] beings, and to view them. By virtue of the intelligibles he had received, he will thus have [the power of] prophecy about divine things. This, then, is the most perfect stage reached by the power of imagination and the most perfect stage at which man arrives by virtue of his imaginative power (Al-Farabi, 1985, p. 213).

From this standpoint Al-Farabi goes further elaborating his ideas on the Prophet as the supreme ruler. He insists that:

This man [the Prophet] is the true prince according to the ancients; he is the one of whom it ought to be said that he receives revelation. For man receives revelation only when he attains this rank, that is, when there is no longer an intermediary between him and the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘al*); for the passive intellect is like matter and substratum to the acquired intellect, and the latter is like matter substratum to the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘al*). It is then that power that enables man to understand how to define things and actions and how to direct them toward happiness, emanates from the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘al*) the passive intellect. This emanation that proceeds from the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘al*) to the passive through the mediation of the acquired intellect is revelation. Now because the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘al*) emanates from the being of the First Cause, it can for this reason be said that it is the First Cause that brings about revelation to this man through the mediation of the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘al*). The rule of this man is the supreme rule; all other human rulerships are inferior to it and are derived from it. Such is his rank (Al-Farabi, 1963a, p. 172).

From this very perspective, Al-Farabi insists that the philosopher-ruler-prophet is the first highest ruler. Yet, the prophecy is indeed an extremely rare mission. In the absence of the prophet, therefore, the highest power in the state is taken by --the so-called-- the ruler-philosopher. In the case that the power of the philosopher does not exist the state would be ruled by the king-legislator, who is himself the master of law. Again, he is also required to possess philosophical knowledge and wisdom. In the case of the absence of these qualifications in one person, Al-Farabi provides another alternative. He recommends that a state should be ruled by a collective body, consisting of one philosopher and another figure who possesses other qualification (Al-Farabi, 1963a, p.249-251). This clearly suggests that for Al-Farabi being a philosopher constitutes fundamental qualifica-

tion in the realization of a virtuous state. On the issue of succession this Muslim philosopher writes as follows:

The successor will be the one who will decide about what was left undecided by his predecessor. And not this alone. He may change a great deal of what his predecessor had legislated and make a different decision about it when he knows this to be best in his own time—not because his predecessor had committed a mistake but because his predecessor decided upon it according to what was best in his own time, and the successor decides according to what is the best for a later time. Were his predecessor to observe [the new conditions] he would have changed [his own law] also (Al-Farabi, 1963a, p. 172).

This statement clearly suggests that the successor should also possess wisdom and philosophical insights in order to be able to successfully lead the state into the right direction.

In order for the citizens to be able to achieve perfection, Al-Farabi insists that the rulers should pay their attention to this very matter, that is by making every effort to provide good education for the citizens, prepare jobs that are suitable for their competencies, deliver their legal rights, and lead them in war zones (Al-Farabi, 1963a, p. 172). All of these are to be applied in accordance with their competencies and faculties, including philosophers, intellectuals, legislators, theologians, legal experts, and laymen (Al-Farabi, 1990, p. 12-14; Galston, 1992, p. 136). By the way of arranging the citizens in accordance with their faculties—in which each citizen of all competencies would attain happiness—a city (state) is to be seen as equal to the cosmos, and each segment of the citizens are to cooperate to attain happiness (*al-sa'adah*) (Al-Farabi, 1995b, p. 1-52; Mahdi, 1987, p. 164).

In many of his works, Al-Farabi consistently discusses the issues of the way to attain an excellent state (*al-madinah al-fadilah*). Failure to meet all the qualifications—for instance, being unable to have ideal rulers as precondition for the prosperity and happiness—means that the city (state) cannot be seen as virtuous. It is in fact a corrupt city (*al-madinah al-fasidah*), an ignorant city (*al-madinah al-jahilah*), and a misled city (*al-madinah al-dallah*) (Al-Farabi, 1964, p. 57).

Known to be the “founder of Islamic neo-platonism” (Fakhry, 2002), Al-Farabi indeed has some distinctive thoughts *vis-a-vis* the state which make him different from those of his teacher’s (Plato). While Plato developed the idea of a city state, this Muslim Philosopher’s notion of the state is international in character. He expounds three types of state: the first being the city state as the smallest one, the second is the nation-state (the middle state), and the last is the international community as the federation of many nations. For Al-Farabi therefore all these types of state are believed to be the “perfect” model of human association. The political affiliation consisting of several villages, districts and houses are conceived as “imperfect” (Al-Farabi, 1964, p. 69; Al-Farabi, 1985, p. 229-231).

CONCLUSION

Al-Farabi seems to be unhappy with his predecessors, especially al-Kindi and al-Razi, who adopted Platonic school of thoughts by emphasizing only on individual salvation and good, not on social and political matters. He therefore expounds the conception of virtuous city (*al-madinah al-fadilah*) in which the attainment of the happiness and perfection constitutes the main objectives, and even the ultimate aim, that human beings seek to achieve. This conception is directed not only to a certain city and nation but to all nations of the world (Birdisli, 2019, p. 122-139). From this perspective, political theory promulgated by Al-Farabi concerns not only practical knowledge or all sciences which are practical, including good and happiness, but also pertains to the discourses on how to attain good and happiness (Mahdi, 1987, p. 15).

Realization—which means the actualization of all political objectives—is the central theme in philosophy. Prophecy, revelation and the law of God are bonds between knowledge and realization. For this very reason, one should comprehend each of these for

the sake of realizing all objectives (Mahdi, 1987, p. 16). This is the rationale behind the fact that the political theory developed by Al-Farabi, though seems to be elitist and idealistic, is integrated with the real world.

Political theory of Al-Farabi encompasses both psychological and cosmological elements. Yet, the more important point is that it is strongly connected to metaphysics. This very connectivity can easily be observed in the notion that political science is aimed at the prosperity of men as members of the political community. Both happiness (al-sa'adah) and perfection (al-kamal) would depend on behaviors and ideas. Therefore, the political thoughts of Al-Farabi emphasize on the varieties of knowledge that all the citizens need to master together, including on the First Cause, various level of the intellects, the substance of God (spirituality), man, universe, happiness and the hereafter (al-akhirah). As in the case of Platonic models (Zeller, 1969, p. 141-144), Al-Farabi's thoughts, as shown in his works, begin with metaphysics or cosmology and moves towards psychology and physiology, and then end with the discourse on politics.

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