

*This paper was published in IQRA: Journal for Islamic Identities and Dialogue in Southeast Asia, Volume 1 (2013), pages 73-92. IQRA is a multidisciplinary journal published annually by the Al Qalam Institute of the Ateneo de Davao University, Philippines.*

## **ENVISIONING A PERFECT CITY: AN INTRODUCTION TO AL FARABI'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

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### **Introduction**

This paper focuses on Al-Farabi's political philosophy. It addresses specifically his thoughts on the following issues: first, the qualities of the ruler, second, the difference between Excellent City and the Ignorant City; and last, his concept on how to attain happiness. Before proceeding into these issues, the paper provides an account of his life. During Al-Farabi's time, a perfect city was a just vision, and the wisdom of perfectly achieving it was close to impossible. Even so, this is perfectly true in today's society. However today, Al-Farabi's political thoughts, especially on the type of ruler who should lead the community will hopefully inspire Muslim leaders to live and lead nobly. Of course, attaining the philosopher-king state of leadership is also close to impossible even today. Moreover, it is my hope in this paper for the Muslim communities look back into what the classical Muslim philosophers like Al-

Farabi were saying on the characteristics of a ruler and what a city should look like. Eventually, his political thoughts will inspire Muslim community on the importance of a city being ruled and guided by genuine happiness.

For purposes of clear discussion, the word “City” refers to a state or a city-state. Al-Farabi’s “*Ara’ ahl al-Madinah al-Fadila*” translated by Richard Walzer (1985) in his book *On the Perfect State of al-Farabi*, is used as the primary source. His “*Tahsil al-Sa’adah*” translated “Directing Attention to the Way to Happiness”) translated by Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman (2007) in their book *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, (2007) is another important source.

### **Al Farabi’s Life and Works**

Al-Farabi’s complete name was Abu Nasr ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn Uzlag Al-Farabi; and he is referred to as Farabi, Alfarabi, Ibn Abi Rabi and Abu Nasr by writers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was born towards the end of the ninth century, between 257-339 C.E. in the small town of Wasidj in Farab, now Otrar in Kazakhstan, in Turkish Transoxiana, and died in December 870-950 C.E. in Damascus at the age of eighty. He grew up during the reign of Nasr I ibn Ahmad of the Samanid dynasty which considered itself as Persian and has been associated in Islamic history with learning. In Bukhara, he pursued his advanced study of fiqh, music and later religious sciences. Upon completing his studies, he became a *qadi* (judge), but he

abandoned his job and left for Baghdad in his early forties to study philosophy and logic. At that time, Baghdad was the center of Greek philosophy. According to Munawir Sjadzali (1991), and supported by Osman Bakar (1998), Al-Farabi studied with Nestorian Christian scientist Abu Bishr Matta ibn Yunus, a translator of many works of Plato and other Greek philosophers. During the government of “Abbasid Khalifah”, Al-Farabi studied again with another Christian scientist Yuhana ibn Haylan at Harran, Southeast of Turkey. But, Majid Fakhry (2002) wrote that Yuhana ibn Haylan initiated Al-Farabi to study logic in Baghdad, and Fakhry (2002) believed that Al-Farabi grew up in Damascus, not in Farab. He based his account on Al-Farabi’s lost treatise “Rise of Philosophy” that contains his additional autobiographical information (Fakhry, 2002).

T.J. de Boer (1903), described Al-Farabi as a quiet man with his Sufi dress, and a man devoted to life of philosophy and contemplation. M. Saeed Sheikh (1962), named Al-Farabi as the first Turkish philosopher to make a name for being called “*al-mu’ allim al-thani*” or the second teacher after Aristotle because he was a great expositor of Aristotle’s logic; and continued the harmonization of Greek philosophy with Islam, which was begun by al-Kindi. Joshua Parens (2006), described Al-Farabi as a cosmopolitan man and his life provided him with firsthand experience on the kind of diversity a ruler might face in attempting to establish a regime. However as Parens (2006) wrote, Al-Farabi was a “*little-studied*” philosopher and his influence only lasted in the

tenth century and not to have lasted beyond the thirteenth century. Al-Farabi was barely known in the West because most medieval Christian thinkers were interested in Muslim thinkers primarily as transmitters and modifiers of the metaphysical doctrines of Plato and Aristotle. Yet, Parens (2006) concluded that later thinkers such as Avicenna and Averroes who made more extensive and more novel contributions in metaphysics acknowledged Al-Farabi's pre-eminence among political philosophers in and of Islam.

The focus of this paper, however, is his political theory which was written on his major works in "*Ara' ahl al-Madinah al-Fadila*" or the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City; "*al-Siyasah al-Madaniyyah*" or the Civil Polity; and "*Tahsil am-Sa'adah*" or his treatise on the Attainment of Happiness. According to Fakhry (2002), Al-Farabi wrote a vast series of commentaries such as "*Sharh Kitab al-'Ibarah*" or On Interpretation, which is the only commentary to survive. His lost commentaries were his commentaries on *Analytica Posteriora*, *Analytica Priora*, the *Categories*, *Isagoge* and *Rhetorica*. His other writings, which consisted of a series of analytical treatises that all had survived, were "*Risalah fi'l-Tawti'ah*" or the Introductory Treatise; "*al-Fusul al-Khamsah*" or the Five Sections; "*al-Alfaz al-Musta'malahfi'l-Mantiq*" or the Terms Used in Logic; and "*Kitab al-Huruf*" or the Book of Letters.

Al-Farabi also wrote "*al-Sama al-Tabi'I*," or his commentary on Physics; "*al-Athar al-Ulawiyah*" on Metereology; "*Fi Mahiyat al-Nafs*" on the Perpetuity of Motion and the essence of the Soul; "*Fil-Mawjudat al-Mutaghayrah*" on

Changing Entities and his *“al-Samawa’l-Alam”* or his commentary on Heavens and the World. But, the most important treatise he wrote was *“Fi ma Yasuhwa la Yasuh min ‘Ilm Ahkam al-Najum”* or “On Valid and Invalid Astrological Inferences,” which had survived.

Al-Farabi’s other major works were *“Risalafi’l-‘aql”* or the Epistle on the Intellect; *“Kitabihsa’ al’ulum”* or The Book of the Enumeration of the Sciences; and his best known-work in music *“Kitab al-musiqqa al-kabir”* or The Large Music, which had survived. Others were *“Fi’l – ‘Ilm al-Ilahi”* or Treatise on Metaphysics; *“al-fam ‘Bayn Ra ‘yay al-Hakimayn”* or Treatise on the Harmony of the Opinions of Plato and Aristotle; *“Fi Ism al-Falsafah”* or a treatise on the Name of Philosophy; and *“Fil-Falsafah wa Sabab Zuburiha”* on Philosophy and It’s Genesis.

### **Al-Farabi’s Political Philosophy**

Farabi’s premise in his political treatises was that humans cannot attain the perfection they are destined to outside the framework of political association (Fakhry, 2002, 101), or in al-Farabi’s (1985, 229) words “societies of people”. It is because humans in their very nature cannot live alone, but need constant help from other people to provide them their needs. This brings them together in a community where everybody needs each other to preserve themselves and attain perfection. This political association is directed towards attainment of true happiness or towards contrary goals such as pleasure and

acquisition of wealth. Thus, Al-Farabi arises with his virtuous city against the non-virtuous city.

A perfect or a virtuous city was compared by Al-Farabi to a perfect and healthy body whose organs differed in their natural functions. The heart is the master organ and is in the first rank, while the lower organs or in the second rank functions according to the aim of perfecting the first rank; and the lower organs being served by much lower organs perform their functions for the perfection of the second rank. It is similar to a city where a human master is being served by his subordinates, and the former in turn is being served by the lowest category of subordinates who are not being served by anybody (Al-Farabi, 1985). Al-Farabi compared the relation of the ruler of the city to its other parts into the relation of the First Cause to the other existents. He said that the ranks of the immaterial existents were close to the First Cause, and beneath them were the heavenly bodies, and beneath the heavenly bodies were the material bodies. And all these existents in order of rank were in conformity with the First Cause (Al-Farabi, 1985, 237 and 239). This al-Farabi's theory of preferring a first head of state existing pattern or political situation during his time, but he indeed imagined creating a totally new virtuous state (Sjadzali, 1991, 36).

### **Qualities of the Ruler**

Like the First Cause, the ruler should possess full intellectual perfection by becoming actually intellect and actually being thought (Al-Farabi, 1985, 241). The First Cause relates to God, and God is the ruler of the universe. Al-Farabi's comparison between God and the ruler through his First Cause means that God is the end-life of everything, and that God can govern the world and universe equally and can bring happiness. God is wise and God is everything. If the ruler can be like God, the ruler can bring genuine happiness to the people because, like God, the ruler has an intellectual mind and he can understand and grasp directly the problem of the community and its people.

Al-Farabi required two conditions for rulership, namely: (a) he should be predisposed for it by his inborn nature; and (b) he should have acquired the attitude and habit of will for rulership. The first condition refers to the full intellectual perfection, which is acquiring the Active Intellect; and in between the natural receptive disposition of a man and Active Intellect is the Passive Intellect, which has become actually intellect after perfecting apprehension of all intelligible. Then, a man will have the Acquired Intellect that is in the middle position between the Passive Intellect and the Active Intellect. When this Active Intellect achieved in his theoretical, practical and representative faculties, he will receive Divine Revelation through the mediation of his Active Intellect. And through emanation from his Active Intellect to his Passive Intellect, he becomes a wise man and philosopher who employs an intellect of divine quality; and through emanation from his Active Intellect to his faculty of representation, he

becomes a prophet who warns of things to come and tells things about the present. For Al-Farabi (1985), this man holds the most perfect rank of humanity and has reached the highest degree of great happiness; and he knows every action by which great happiness can be reached. The second condition requires the man to be a good orator. He should be able to rouse people's imagination by his well-chosen words. He should be able to lead people well along the right path to happiness and to the actions by which happiness was to be reached. Also, he should be of tough physique to shoulder the tasks of war (Al-Farabi, 1985, 247). Upon completion of these conditions, Al-Farabi (1985, 247) calls him Imam, the sovereign of the excellent and universal city.

Then, he laid out twelve natural qualities for a ruler to finally establish the ideal city. These are the following: (1) One of them is that he should have limbs and organs which are free from deficiency and strong, and that they will make him fit for the actions that depend on them; when he intends to perform an action with one of them, he accomplishes it with ease; (2) he should by nature be good at understanding and perceiving everything said to him, and grasp it in his mind according to what the speaker intends and what the thing itself demands; (3) he should be good at retaining what he comes to know and see and hear and apprehend in general, and forget almost nothing; (4) he should be well provided with ready intelligence and very bright; when he sees the slightest indication of a thing, he should grasp it in the way indicated; (5)

he should have a fine diction, his tongue enabling him to explain to perfection all that is in the recesses of his mind; (6) he should be fond of learning and acquiring knowledge, be devoted to it and grasp things easily, without finding the effort painful, nor feeling discomfort about the toil which it entails; (7) he should by nature be fond of truth and truthful men, and hate falsehood and liars; (8) he should by nature not crave for food and drink and sexual intercourse, and have a natural aversion to gambling and hatred of the pleasures with these pursuits provided; (9) he should be proud of spirit and fond of honor, his soul being by his nature above everything ugly and base, and rising naturally to the most lofty things; (10) Money, dirham and dinar and the other worldly pursuits should be of little amount in his view; (11) he should by nature be fond of justice and of just people, and hate oppression and injustice and those who practice them, giving himself and others their due, and urging people to act justly and showing pity to those who are oppressed by injustice; he should lend his support to what he considers to be beautiful and noble and just; he should not be reluctant to give in nor should he be stubborn and obstinate if he is asked to do justice; but he should be reluctant to give in if he is asked to do injustice and evil altogether; and (12) he should be strong in setting his mind firmly upon the thing which, in his view, ought to be done, and daringly and bravely carry it out without fear and weak-mindedness (Al-Farabi, 1985).

Al-Farabi did not base his thinking on acceptance of the power system existing during his time (Sjadzali, 1991, 31). Instead of suggesting rules and policies that fit to the political dynasty, Al-Farabi rather developed a completely alternative, different yet fresh and perfect political theory that was impossible to implement by any men. By enumerating the qualities of the ruler and describing the excellent city from the ignorant city, it is obvious that Al-Farabi idealized all aspects of life within a state (Sjadzali, 1991, 31). However, it was impossible to realize Al-Farabi's concept of a state because it was heavily influenced by the Greek way of thinking, especially of Plato's thinking, that the Islamic view was almost blurred (Sjadzali, 1991, 31). This was supported by Fakhry (2002), and says that indeed Al-Farabi unquestionably adopted Plato's Republic and had followed Plato in characterizing philosophical traits of the ruler. But Al-Farabi expanded Plato's thought by adding prophetic qualities (Fakhry, 2002, 104), which showed Al-Farabi's influence of his religious conviction as a Muslim (Sjadzali, 1991, 37).

Fakhry (2002) further stated Plato's philosophic traits as found in al-Farabi's twelve qualities: First, Plato asserts that the philosopher-king should have a constant passion for any knowledge that will reveal to him that endures forever. This is what Plato called "Word of Ideas" which corresponds to Al-Farabi's "Intelligible", which is to a large extent Al-Farabi's sixth quality of a ruler. Second, the philosopher-king should be a lover of truth and a hater of falsehood, which is Al-Farabi's eighth quality of a ruler. Third, the philosopher-

king should be temperate and no lover of money; this is Al-Farabi's tenth quality of a ruler. Fourth, the philosopher-king should be brave, or as Plato puts it, "death has no terrors", this is Al-Farabi's twelfth quality of a ruler. Fifth, the philosopher-king should be fair minded, gentle and easy to deal with; this is Al-Farabi's eleventh quality of a ruler. Sixth, the philosopher-king should be quick to learn and possess a vivid memory; this is Al-Farabi's third quality of a ruler. But there are three traits that appear to be missing in Plato's list. These are eloquence, which is Al-Farabi's fifth quality of a ruler; sound bodily constitution, which is Al-Farabi's first quality; and love of justice, Al-Farabi's eleventh quality of a ruler (Fakhry, 2002, 104-105).

Learning these qualities of a ruler by Al-Farabi makes the heart bleed because finding these qualities in one man is impossible. To find a philosopher-king is impossible. However, it seems that Al-Farabi enumerated these qualities of a ruler because he always thought of the First Cause or the God as the definite description of a person to rule. It may be assumed that, for Al-Farabi, the philosopher-king as the best ruler is only in his mind, in his imagination or, better to say, the ideal ruler that the kings and dynasties should possess.

Even Al-Farabi recognized that it is difficult to find all these qualities united in one man (Al-Farabi, 1985, 249). He came up with an alternative that is if there were two men who share half of each quality, both of them should be considered sovereigns of the city. If all qualities are found in different men, when all of them are in agreement, they should altogether share the rule (Al-

Farabi, 1985, 253). But again, it is another impossible circumstance for two or more men ruling the city. This leads to the description that Al-Farabi was called the “*al-mua'allim al-thani*” or the second teacher after Aristotle (Sheikh, 1962, 74). Aristotle believed that monarchy or a rule by one is the best possible state in principle (Kemerling, 2001), which is similarly referring to the philosopher-king as the only ruler. If the state comes to worst, Aristotle has another social structure which is aristocracy, which is ruled by several rulers (Kemerling, 2001).

Robert Hammond (1947), added that the political philosophy of Al-Farabi is a mixture of Platonic and Aristotelian elements. The main Platonic element in Al-Farabi's political theory is to put all humanity in one universal state which is an organized humanity without national boundaries; and not ruled by a particular king but God (Hammond, 1947, 52). The Aristotelian elements are seen in the form of government from monarchy to a sudden change to aristocracy if the required intellectual and moral traits of the ruler cannot be found but in a few or several persons (Hammond, 1947, 53).

### **The Excellent City Against The Ignorant City**

Like Plato, Al-Farabi was also of the opinion that man is social creature with natural tendencies for forming a community. Al-Farabi's objective of having a community was not just to meet basic living needs, but also to give

man a complete life with happiness not only in this world but in the hereafter (Sjadzali, 1991, 36).

Al-Farabi was referring to an excellent or perfect city when he discussed the conditions for the ruler and his qualities. The other two are Complete and Incomplete Communities. There are three types of Complete Communities, large, medium and small. A large complete community is a merger of many groups of people who agree to merge to help each other and cooperate, a united nations. A medium complete community consists of one group of people living in an area on this earth, a national state. A small complete community consists of residents of a city, a city-state. The Incomplete Communities constitutes a social life at the level of a village, street and family. A family is part of a street community; a street community is a part of a village community; and a village community is part of a city-state community. These were imperfect to be self-sufficient and independent in economic, social, cultural and spiritual fields of their community members (Al-Farabi, 1985, 231 and 299).

In opposition to the excellent city are the ignorant city, the wicked city, the city which has deliberately changed its character, and the city which has missed the right path through faulty judgment. The ignorant city is the city whose inhabitants do not know true happiness and the thought of it never occurred to them. Even if they were rightly guided to happiness, they would either not understand it or not believe it. Happiness for them is the total bodily health, wealth, enjoyment of pleasures, freedom to follow one's desires and

being held in honor and esteem. The ignorant city is divided into six. These are the following: (1) city of necessity; (2) city of wealth and riches; (3) city of depravity and baseness; (4) city of honor; (5) city of power; and (6) democratic city. The city of necessity is the city whose people will cooperate to attain more food, drink, clothes, housing and sexual intercourse. The city of wealth and riches is the city whose people will regard wealth as the sole aim in life. The people of the city of depravity and baseness will give preference to food, drink and sexual intercourse or in general the pleasures of the senses and of imagination in every form and in every way. The people at the city of honor will cooperate to attain honor and distinction and fame, to be treated with respect and to attain glory and splendor in the eyes of other people. The city of power is the city whose people aim in life it to prevail over others and their enjoyment in life is what they get from power. Lastly is the democratic city whose aim of its people is to be free, and each of them doing what he wishes without restraining his passions in the least (Al-Farabi, 1985).

The wicked city has the same views with those of the excellent city but the actions of its people are the same with those of the ignorant city. The city which has deliberately changed has taken different views and actions from that of the excellent city. And the city which misses the right path has the same views with those of the excellent city, but their first ruler is a hoax pretending to be receiving revelation (Al-Farabi, 1985, 257 and 259).

Al-Farabi's description of excellent and ignorant cities is obviously a shadow of Plato's Republic that develops an account of a virtuous city and a virtuous human being and contrasts it with several defective constitutions (Brown, 2009). Comparing the excellent and ignorant cities, the main difference is the presence and qualities of the ruler. In an excellent city, the ruler will lead the city into happiness because the ruler himself attains happiness and he himself is happiness, thus the city itself is happiness. In an ignorant and wicked city, the ruler will lead the city into pleasures which they believed to be real happiness. After this comparison, a flash of pictures comes to mind – what is it like to live in an excellent city or rather in an ignorant city? Is the excellent city of Al-Farabi attainable in the world? Al-Farabi might be referring to a kingdom of God, while the reality we live in this world is the description of an ignorant city.

Just like Plato and Aristotle, Al-Farabi considered the city-state as the best and superior system among the three types of complete communities. Several observers of the Islamic history of political science considered Al-Farabi's opinion strange, because at that time, the Muslim world was divided into kinds of national states, each consisting of many cities and villages with a wide territory. On the other hand, during the time of Aristotle, the city-state was considered as the best political unit for Greece, although that time Greece was a colony of Macedonia and the city-state did not function any longer. Sjadzali (1991) concluded that this particular thought of Al-Farabi was

evidence that in the idealization of political patterns, Al-Farabi indeed ignored the political realities in which he lived (Sjadzali, 1991, 38). Thus, if we look back at the political situation during Al-Farabi's time, Bakar (1998, 145) was correct in saying that Al-Farabi's political science was concerned with social change, transformation and decadence.

Even the classification and composition of citizens were adopted by Al-Farabi from Plato. The ranking of citizens can be seen such that Plato divided the citizens into three: the first and highest class consisting of a head of state with authority and power to govern and manage the state; the second class consisting of the armed forces responsible for the state's safety and security, and against any undermining action, internal as well as external; the third and lowest class consisting of blacksmiths, merchants and farmers or the common people with the task of producing all the material requirements of the state (Sjadzali, 1991, 39). On the other hand, Bakar (1998) emphasized that the central theme of Al-Farabi's political science is happiness. This theme determines the nature, scope, functions and aims of political science. Finally, Al-Farabi explains that true happiness is attainable only through the virtues and the good and noble things. Such things as wealth, honor, and sensual pleasures do not constitute true happiness but are only presumed to be so (Bakar, 1998, 143).

### **The Road to Happiness**

For Al-Farabi, happiness is the highest degree of human perfection. Once we attain happiness, we are in need of nothing else to accompany it. Just like the rank, happiness is the preferred good, the greatest and the most perfect end that man has ever desired (Al-Farabi, 2007, 104-105). Al-Farabi's conclusion was that, we attain happiness only when we come to possess the noble dispositions through the discipline of philosophy; and philosophy comes about through excellent discernment; and excellent discernment comes about through potentiality of the mind to perceive what is correct; and the potentiality of the mind belongs to us prior to all of this (Al-Farabi, 2007, 105-106).

Al-Farabi emphasized that it is only through a city that a person achieves happiness. This is through actions which requires the use of the body and senses; through accidents of the soul such as appetite, pleasure, joy, anger, fear, desire, mercy, jealousy and other feelings; and through discernment by use of the mind (Al-Farabi, 2007, 105).

If the actions are ignorable, it is grounds for blame, while praise if the actions are noble. If the accident of the soul is when they are not what they should be, it is a ground for blame, while the ground for praise is whenever they are what they should be. The division in which one's actions and the accidents of one's soul are either noble or ignoble is called disposition. It is blame whenever the discernment is poor, and it is praise whenever it is excellent. A poor discernment is when a man has neither a true nor false conviction about what he would like to pursue. A poor discernment is simply

called stupidity or weak mind. An excellent discernment is the powerful mind and has a true conviction and is capable of distinguishing with regards to what he receives (Al-Farabi, 2007, 105-106).

Al-Farabi clarified that when both noble disposition and the powerful mind are present, we have goodness and perfection in our being and action. This constitutes human excellence. It is through them that the way we behave in our lives becomes virtuous and that our modes of comportment become praiseworthy (Al-Farabi, 2007).

For Al-Farabi, our actions always follow two courses – either pleasure or pain. It is easy to perform an ignoble action because of the pleasure we experience in doing it. A noble action seems to bring pain, but only because of the assumption that pleasure is the ultimate end of every action. Pleasures result from sensory perception, in which it is thought that indulging into those pleasures is the ultimate perfection. Therefore, sensory pleasures cause the neglect of a noble action (Al-Farabi, 2007).

He wrote about two disciplines that man can afford to do and is capable of doing. One is the discipline which people learned to comfort themselves in cities that include medicine, commerce, navigation and others. The other is the discipline which people learned to comfort themselves in ways of individual behavior. These disciplines have three human aims, and these are the following: (1) the pleasurable; (2) the beneficial; and (3) the noble. However, for Al-Farabi, there are only two types, one in which the aim is to obtain the noble

and another is to obtain the beneficial. What both the beneficial and the noble exactly pertain to is when people comfort themselves in a social group and through this social group, they acquire the ability to do what is good for them. But it is the noble that produces certainty of the truth, knowledge of the truth and certainty being undeniably noble. This discipline is philosophy – either theoretical philosophy or practical and social philosophy. Contrary to Aristotle, Al-Farabi (2007, 116-117) said that practical and social philosophy is the most noble compared to theoretical because this philosophy comprises both ethics or the knowledge of noble actions and politics or the knowledge of the factors that produce noble dispositions for city-dwelling people. On the other hand, Aristotle preferred the theoretical knowledge because it involves the study of truth, and it is knowledge about things that are unchanging and eternal like mathematics, natural science, and metaphysics that will bring people closest to the Divine (Clayton, 2005). In my own opinion, I would prefer Al-Farabi because perfection of knowledge can only be perfected through a cycle, which is a combination of theory and its application and vice versa. A great knowledge, no matter how true and noble, is forfeited and useless without converting them into noble actions. This process is a repetition until a final thought becomes true to both theoretical and practical philosophy.

Al-Farabi's objective in presenting his own virtuous city is to attain happiness which is only attainable by man living in an excellent city. What is the purpose of happiness? His virtuous city might be the kingdom of God, and

a genuine happiness is attainable only with God's rule. This makes happiness an unrealistic aim for human beings. Therefore, happiness for a man will remain a desire and not an absolute truth, because if a ruler cannot be like the First Cause and if the Philosopher-king never exists in the real world, then happiness is not attainable by man. The ignorant and the wicked city and its people will find their happiness according to what they thought is genuine happiness. But it is a false truth and it will never become an absolute truth because this world will never ever attain a genuine happiness. Because of this, the purpose of happiness is to create ideal norms and characters for virtuous individual and virtuous citizens living in a virtuous or excellent city.

## **Conclusion**

The political philosophy of Al-Farabi is not new. It is a re-statement of both Plato and Aristotle, he adopted Plato's Republic and Aristotle's monarchic and aristocratic governments. However, Al-Farabi presented his theory fresh and new to the Islamic world by adding prophetic traits to the qualities of the ruler. Furthermore, it is evident that Al-Farabi envisioned a perfect city, not just a city-state, but also nation-state and a united nations to be under a philosopher-king for mankind to attain happiness through living in a perfectly guided city. Moreover, the idea of a virtuous city is a manifestation that a philosopher like Al-Farabi aimed not to reform the existing political system and

structure of his time, but he envisioned a revolutionized system that was perfect and noble both in the world and in the hereafter.

In today's Islamic society, it is not important whether Al-Farabi's perfect city is attainable by man or not. What struck me is the principle to do well, especially for a ruler to do his job and practice the qualities that Al-Farabi enumerated. It is not necessarily a philosopher-king, and it is not necessarily perfect in all fields and in all qualities. But, to rule the city with goodness is what makes leadership noble in the eyes of the people today and in the eyes of God and at the hereafter – and that is perfect and noble in attaining happiness for mankind.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Abu Nas'r al-Farabi, On the Perfect State of Al-Farabi, trans. Richard Walzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 229-329.

<sup>2</sup> Abu Nas'r al-Farabi, "Directing Attention to the Way to Happiness," in Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources, trans. Jon McGinnis, David C. Resiman (USA: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2007), 104-120.

<sup>3</sup> Majid Fakhry, Al-Farabi, Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism (Oxford: One World Publications, 2002), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Osman Bakar, Classification of Knowledge in Islam (United Kingdom: The Islamic Texts Society, 1998), 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> T.J. de Boer, The History of Philosophy in Islam, trans. Edward R. Jones (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967), 107.

<sup>6</sup> M. Saedd Sheikh, Studies in Muslim Philosophy (Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1962), 74.

<sup>7</sup> Joshua Parens, An Islamic Philosophy of Virtuous Religion, Introducing Alfarabi (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 3,4,5.

<sup>8</sup> Fakhry, 101.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Farabi, On the Perfect State of Al-Farabi, 229.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 231, 233, 235 and 237.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 237 and 239.

- <sup>12</sup> H. Munawir Sjadzali, Islam and Governmental System (Jakarta: Indonesia-Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies INIS, 1991),40.
- <sup>13</sup> Al-Farabi, On the Perfect State of Al-Farabi, 241.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., 239, 241, 243 and 245.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., 247.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., 247 and 249.
- <sup>18</sup> Sjadzali, 31.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Fakhry, 104.
- <sup>22</sup> Sjadzali, 37.
- <sup>23</sup> Fakhry, 104-205.
- <sup>24</sup> Al-Farabi, On the Perfect State of Al-Farabi, 249.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 253.
- <sup>26</sup> Sheikh, 74.
- <sup>27</sup> Garth Kemerling, "Aristotle: Politics and Art," updated 27, October 2001, <<http://www.philosophypages.com/hy/2t.htm>> (cited 15 April 2010).
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Robert Hammond, The Philosophy of Alfarabi (New York: The Hobson Book Press, 1947), 52.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 53.
- <sup>31</sup> Sjadzali., 37.
- <sup>32</sup> Al-Farabi, On the Perfect State of Al-Farabi, 299 and 231.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., 253, 255 and 257.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., 257 and 259.
- <sup>35</sup> Eric Brown, "Plato's Ethics and Politics in the Republic," update 31 August 2009, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-ethics-politics/#4>> (cited 15 April 2010).
- <sup>36</sup> Sjadzali, 38.
- <sup>37</sup> Bakar, 145.
- <sup>38</sup> Sjadzali, 39.
- <sup>39</sup> Bakar, 143.
- <sup>40</sup> Al-Farabi, "Directing Attention to the Way to Happiness," in Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources, 104 and 105.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., 117.
- <sup>42</sup> Al-Farabi, "Directing Attention to the Way to Happiness," in Classical Arabic Anthology of Sources, 105.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., 105 and 106.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., 107.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., 113, 144 and 155.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., 116 and 177.
- <sup>47</sup>Edward Clayton, "Aristotle: Politics," updated 27 2005, <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/aris-pol/#H4>> (cited 15 April 2010).

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