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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Farabi's view on happiness

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#### Abstract

Happiness has been one of the important issues in the history of philosophy. The nucleus of al-Farabi's political philosophy is the concept of happiness which he takes from Greek philosophy. He believes that man has been created to achieve the highest happiness (saadah). In order to reach this goal, he must learn the virtues, which Farabi identifies with knowledge. Farabi speaks of happiness both of this world and the hereafter. He believes that there are four kinds of virtues that when form the qualities of a nation or of the people of city, their worldly happiness in the next are insured. According to him, theoretical perfection is the ultimate happiness and theoretical knowledge is the only good in itself. One of the goals of education is the creation of the ideal community, the one whose cities all work together in order to attain happiness. The present paper examines Farabi's views on the perfection and the attainment of happiness and the ways leading to it.

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#### Introduction

Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr (870-950) was known to the Arabs as the second teacher (after Aristotle), for he was one of the world's great philosophers and much more original than many of his Islamic successors. A philosopher, logician and musician, he was also a major political scientist. "In political science he preferred to follow Plato's Republic and laws, as understood by middle Platonic thinkers, convinced that Plato's theoretical philosophy had been superseded by Aristotle, but that his analysis of the imperfect states and his solution of the problems of politics remained valid and compatible with the change political conditions. Within al-Farabi's framework, both philosophic illumination and its translation into symbols, which are forms of revelation, emanate from the Active intellect, the tenth separate intelligence, which is symbolized in Islamic terms by the angel Gabriel, who communicated revelation to Muhammad. In this way, al-Farabi vests Plato's philosopher king and lawgiver with the garb of a prophet. Farabi presents the perfect society as one in which people cooperate in striving for happiness. He developed a conception of a state which, although it is an earthly society, is a stage on the way to eternal life.

#### Farabi's Political Thought

It is mentioned that "while, recasting the philosophical views of Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek thinkers Al-Farabi always keeps in view the Islamic tenets which have formed the inner links of his writings. In his political philosophy, he has followed the same line. Under the influence of Plato and Aristotle he evolves his own system which markedly differs from the system of the Greeks, the Iranians as well as the Indians. (Sharif, 2002:704) Regarding the city-state, al-Farabi believes that the city-state (Madinah) and the family state (manzil) are places that contain inhabitants, no matter whether their dwelling are constructed of wood, mud, wool or hair. "The house or family is limited to only four relationships: husband and wife, master and slave, father and son, and property and proprietor. He who makes them unit in co-operation and aims at providing for them an abode with best facilities and maintenance is called the master of the family. He is in the house what the administrator of the city is in the city. In the field of necessity of society, al-Farabi says, "Men are naturally so constituted that they need many things for their best achievements. Hence, they need mutual help and co-operation, by uniting their individual efforts for different objects they organize different societies. (Farabi, 96)

He has divided human societies into perfect and imperfect. The perfect society includes great, middling, or small. The great human society is the one consisting of several nations uniting themselves in one unit and helping one another. The middling one is the society of one national part of the world, and the small is the society of the people of a city. (Lieden,1964:53-54)The imperfect society is that of the people of a village, a locality, a lane, or a house, the last being the smallest.Now, the highest good and perfection are primarily achieved through volition and will. Similarly, evil finds its scope by volition and will. The city-state can, therefore, develop by mutual help and efforts to attain some evil purpose or to attain happiness. The city in which the members of the society co-operate to attain happiness is in reality the ideal city-state (al-madinat al-fadilah), the society, the ideal society, and the nation, the ideal nation. (sharif,705)

## Happiness

The nucleus of Farabi's political philosophy is his concept of happiness (saadah) which he takes from Greek philosophy. Man's goal, is to acquire happiness. In order to reach this goal, he must learn the virtues, which Farabi identifies with knowledge. Knowledge is the basis for achieving happiness after death and is the way between the two worlds. After being liberated from material conditions, we may achieve complete happiness. Al-Farabi present the perfect society as one in which people cooperate in striving for happiness. He developed a conception of a state which, although it is an earthly society, is a state on the way to eternal life. In a virtuous society and a virtuous city(al-madina al-fadila),every one cooperates to gain happiness through goodness. A virtuous world is one in which all nations collaborate to achieve universal happiness. A virtuous society strives to preserve the souls of all its inhabitants. (New world Encyclopedia:3)Al-Farabi suggested that there are different types of happiness, corresponding to different types of people. The theoretical life, possible through an illumination of the human intellect, combined with the necessary moral virtues, is the happiest life, but it is not possible for all humans, which makes the practical life the happiest for the vast majority of people.

Al-Farabi speaks of happiness both of this world and the hereafter. He says that there are four kinds of virtues that when form the qualities of a nation or of the people of a city, their worldly happiness in this world and eternal happiness in the next are insured. Such as: Speculative virtue (al-fadail al-nazariyyah), theoretical virtues (fadail al-fikriyyah), the moral virtues (fadail al-khulqiyyah) and the practical arts

(al-sanaat al-amaliyyah).Speculative virtues represent those sciences which aim at the highest object, knowledge of existing things including all their requirements. These sciences are either natural in man, or they are achieved by effort and learning.(sharif,2001,v.1:705)According to al-Farabi, theoretical perfection is the ultimate happiness and theoretical knowledge is the only good in itself. From this doctrine it clearly follows that all other things which are good can be good only as means to theoretical perfection, they cannot be good in themselves.(Ansari,1964:33)

He has divided souls into three degree: souls of celestial bodies, souls of the rational animals, and souls of the irrational animals. The souls of the rational animals are the rational faculty. The rational faculty equips man with sciences and arts, and enables him to distinguish good from evil manners and actions. Through this faculty man inclines to do good and avoid evil and realizes the useful, the harmful, the pleasant, and the unpleasant.(Farabi,syasatal madanieh:3-4) Man, understands and realizes happiness only through the speculative ration faculty. The imaginative and the sensitive faculties help the rational faculty in moving man towards those actions which lead to happiness. The good is characterized as voluntary. But if the rational faculty feels happiness only by making an effort to perceive it, while other faculties do not perceive it, then sometimes man considers the pleasant and the useful to be the ultimate ends of life. Similarly, he produces only evil who attains to happiness which he does not recognize as his aim, does not desire it, or desires it with a faint desire, and depots something other than happiness as his end, and exerts all his faculties to achieve that end.(sharif, 2001:707)

According to him, virtue is that state of the soul which gives rise to actions that lead to theoretical perfection. He also in another place says, the virtue of any thing is that which produces excellence and perfection in its being and action.(Ansari,1964:39) The definition of virtue as the excellence of the faculties of the soul elevates the status of virtue from the position of an instrumental good. Another thing which further elevates the status of virtue is the emphasis that al-Farabi lays upon the purity of motive in the pursuit of virtue. He who seeks justice or temperance or any other virtue in a commercial spirit, or pursues them for any external advantage, infact gets nothing except vice and base qualities. For, he does not acquire justice or temperance as good in themselves, nor does he leave what he leaves of ill-doing and vice for itself, because it is ugly and he hates it. (Ibid:43) The recognition of virtue as a

good in itself, as something desirable for its own sake, requires that virtue should be considered as an integral part of the ultimate happiness of man along with the theoretical perfection. But this will virtually mean a revision of al-Farabi's whole conception of happiness.(Ibid)

The knowledge of happiness, "al-Farabi explains includes the knowledge of the First Beings, the Intelligences and the Active intelligence, the spheres, natural bodies and their various grades, man and the faculties of his soul and his relation to the Active Intelligence, the supreme ruler of the state and those who replace him when he is not available, the virtuous polity and the kinds of happiness which the people of the virtuous polity achieve, and the spurious goods which is the lot of the people of the vicious and ignorant polities. The true knowledge of all this is either attained by a true philosopher or a real prophet or by those who follow them and have a right comprehension of their ideas. The philosopher and the prophet receive their knowledge directly from the Active Intelligence which is identified by al-Farabi with the Ruh ul-Amin, the angel who is the medium of revelation."(Ibid)

### Education

Al-Farabi believes that man has been created to achieve the highest happiness (saadah). He should, therefore, know what happiness is and should make it the aim of his life. He, then, needs to know those factors and arts through which he can achieve happiness. But since human individuals are different in nature, it is not in the nature of every man to know happiness or those factors which enable him to reach it by himself. So, he needs a teacher, a guide. (sharif,2001:709) The guide should educate from two ways: 1. Teaching (talim), 2. upbringing (tadib). Teaching (talim) is the method of creating speculative excellences in nations and cities, while upbringing (tadib) is the method of creating and developing moral virtues and scientific arts in nations. Teaching is possible only by expression; tadib is to make nations and citizens habituated to the deeds done through scientific habits. While al-Farabi agrees with Plato in the system of education and in learning from childhood, he emphasizes that speculative science are learnt either by kings and leaders (imams) or by those who preserve these sciences and teach kings and leaders in several ways.(Davari Ardekani,2003:709)

Farabi did not insist on this division, and on another occasion he defined instruction as including discipline. He divides instruction between special and general. The special is that which is achieved exclusively by demonstration. The general public

designates those who are restricted in their theoretical knowledge. (Farabi, 175).

To him, education is founded upon the basis of the human being having certain inborn aptitudes, which he calls nature, in other words the power which the human being possesses at the moment of birth, and which he could not have acquired.No normal human being lacks it, just as the whole is greater than the part. Farabi also speaks about "primary science" and "primary principles". He differs from Plato in that he gives fundamental place to sensory perception. He describes the senses as the paths whence the human soul gains knowledge. Knowledge thus begins with the senses, then becomes an intellectual conception by way of imagination. (Talbi,2000:4-5) In al-Farabi's view, one of the goals of education is to combine learning with practical action, for the purpose of knowledge is that it should be applied, and perfection lies in its being transformed into action." Whatever by its nature should be known and practiced."(Farabi,1987:73) The science have no meaning unless they can be applied in practical reality, otherwise they are void and useless. The real practical sciences are those which are linked to readiness for action, and absolute perfection is what the human being achieves through knowledge and action applied for together. (Talibi,3)

### The Chief of The Ideal State

According to al-Farabi, since people differ in their intellectual capacity, in physical strength, in the exercise of virtuous deeds, and in the acquisition of excellent habits of thinking, feeling, willing, and doing. For this, it is necessary in every department of life and arts the strongest person, of excellent manners, who also knows, acts, and directs, as the chief of that part, the being the subjects. The chief is either one of the first rank who is not subservient to anyone, or he is of the second rank, dominating some, and being dominated by some others.Such ranks develop in relation to the forms of art, e.g., cultivation, trade, medical profession, or in respect of all kinds of human beings.The first chief in general is he who needs no help from anyone. Sciences and arts are his property in actuality, and he needs no guidance from any person in any respect. (Farabi,Sisatel madaniyeh:48-49)

He believes that "the prince or the Imam is prince and Imam by virtue of his skill and art, regardless of whether or not anyone acknowledges him, whether or not he is obeyed, whether or not he is supported in his purpose by any group; just as the physician is physician by virtue of his skill and his ability to heal the sick, whether or not there are sick men for him to heal, whether or not he finds tools to us in his

activity, whether he is prosperous or poor-not having any of these things does not do away with his physicianship. Similarly, neither the imamate of the imam, the philosophy of the philosopher, nor the princeship of the prince is done away with by his not having tools to use in his activities or men to employ in reaching his purpose".(Mahdi Mohsen,1962:49) According to al-Farabi, The Imam or the chief of the ideal state is the chief of the ideal nation, and of the whole inhabited part of the Al-Farabi believes that the sovereigns of an ideal state who succeed one another are all like one soul, as if there were one king who continued all the time. Similar is the case with a group of people who administer the state together at a time in one or more than one city. The whole group is just like one sovereign, their souls being like one soul. Uniformity is found in every stage and in every part of the state and people flourishing at different times look as if they were one souls working all the time in the same way. If there is continuity and harmony at a particular stage, even different groups of people, whether of one or more than one state, would appear as one soul.

The people of the Ideal state have something common to all of them in their learning and acting. But different groups of people belonging to different ranks and stages have some sciences and deeds peculiar to them. Through both of these, people achieve happiness, and by displaying these they obtain an ideal psychical form. This form grows stronger and stronger and better and better by constant performance of those deeds.(sharif2001:713-714)According to al-Farabi, "the ideal state consists of five kinds of people: The excellent, the linguists, the secluded, the struggling, and the steady. The excellent people are the philosophers, the intellectuals, and the people of opinion in great affairs. As for linguists, they are the orators, speakers, poets, musicians, writers, and the like. The secluded people are the mathematicians, statisticians, physicians, astronomers, and the like. The struggling people are the fighters, the defenders, and all those who take their place. The steady are those who earn money in the city, for example cultivators, traders, and those engaged in other pursuits.(Davari-Ardekani,2003:209)

## Conclusion

We can conclude that, happiness in Farabi's view is the highest perfection. Although he has taken this view from Greek philosophy but Farabi's idea is on the basis of religion. According to him man has been created to achieve the highest happiness. So in order to reach this goal, he must learn the virtues, which Farabi identifies with knowledge. His view of

happiness is not limited to this world, rather it includes both of this world and the hereafter. Because he believes that final happiness will be achieved in the next world. Farabi in his interpretation of education identified philosophy and religion.

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