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Jewish-Islamic Scholarly Interaction: The Influence of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī on Moses Maimonides Regarding Human Characteristics, Faculties, Perfections, and Ranks

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Abstract

Al-Fārābī is a renowned and influential Muslim philosopher who has impacted not only Muslim scholars but also scholars of other religions, among whom Moses Maimonides is one of the most significant. This study, employing an analytical and comparative approach and drawing upon the works of both al-Fārābī and Maimonides, seeks to answer the question of how much Maimonides was influenced by al-Fārābī in the domain of philosophical psychology, particularly regarding human characteristics, faculties, perfections, and ranks. The findings indicate that Maimonides was influenced by al-Fārābī in various areas, frequently citing him and his works as a primary source. However, in many instances, to avoid provoking sensitivity or opposition from his audience,

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he refrained from explicitly mentioning his source, though it is evident that al-Fārābī's works were among his principal references. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that Maimonides was influenced by al-Fārābī not only in the structure of his works but also in his fundamental theories concerning human characteristics, faculties, perfections, and ranks. His conceptual framework and terminology also reflect al-Fārābī's influence, to the extent that the title of one of his major works on faculties, perfections, and moral philosophy was derived from one of al-Fārābī's works.

Keywords

al-Fārābī, Maimonides, Islamic Philosophy, Jewish Theology, Philosophical Psychology, Human Faculties and Perfections.

1. Introduction

Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), known as the "Second Teacher," was a renowned and influential philosopher of the Islamic world in the fourth century AH. He is widely recognized as the founder of Islamic philosophy, particularly Aristotelian and Peripatetic philosophy in the Islamic world. Al-Fārābī authored numerous works across various philosophical domains, formulating profound and original ideas. While much can be said about his life, works, and thought, this is not the place to delve into these aspects (for more on his life, works, and ideas, see Rudolph, 2012, vol. 1, pp. 526–654; Walzer, 1991, pp. 778–781). A significant issue regarding al-Fārābī concerns his influence on others. He was an immensely impactful scholar whose ideas have been studied and adopted by philosophers from his time to the present. Due to this lasting influence, he was given the title of "Second Teacher" after Aristotle, who was known as the "First Teacher." Notably, al-Fārābī's influence was not limited to Muslim scholars; thinkers of other religious traditions also engaged with his ideas. One of the most prominent among them was Mūsā b. Maymūn al-Andalusī, or Maimonides (d. 600/1204), the Andalusian Jewish scholar known as "Rambam," who holds a distinguished status among Jewish intellectuals and was deeply influenced by Muslim scholars and philosophers, particularly Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (for more on Maimonides' life, works, and thought, see Hyman et al., 2007, pp. 381–397; Epstein, 2009, pp. 251–261).

Maimonides is the most prominent representative of the trend influenced by Peripatetic and Aristotelian philosophy in medieval Jewish philosophical theology.[1] He explicitly identifies himself with

1. It should be noted that medieval Judaism, which primarily thrived in Islamic lands during a period of intellectual and scientific flourishing in the Islamic world, was ←

the philosophical school (i.e., Aristotelian philosophy) and takes a critical stance against *Kalam* (Islamic theology) and Islamic theologians, as well as the textualist or scripturalist approach (see Ibn Maymūn, n.d., p. 243). This stance, however, can also be seen as an imitation of figures associated with Muslim Aristotelian philosophy, particularly al-Fārābī (Stroumsa, 2003, p. 75).

In his article "Maimonides the Disciple of Alfarabi," Lawrence Berman aptly refers to Maimonides as a "disciple of al-Fārābī" (Berman, 1974, pp. 154–178). Following the publication of this article, this characterization became widely recognized in Western scholarship (see Fraenkel, 2008, p. 106). The popularity and acceptance of this description stem from the fact that Maimonides, within the Jewish intellectual tradition, deliberately sought to follow in al-Fārābī's footsteps. Drawing on his works and ideas, Maimonides endeavored to apply al-Fārābī's theory concerning the relationship between philosophy, religion, theology, and law. Samuel ibn Tibbon, the translator of Maimonides' works from Arabic into Hebrew and an admirer of his thought, once wrote to Maimonides requesting recommendations for philosophical and scientific works that he deemed reliable and authoritative. In response, Maimonides wrote the following regarding al-Fārābī's works:

> All of his works are flawless and excellent. One must read and understand all of them because he is a great man. Although the works of Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna] give rise to certain difficulties and

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deeply influenced by the intellectual climate of its surroundings. Consequently, major intellectual trends in Islam found parallels within Judaism. One of the most significant of these was the philosophical movement influenced by Peripatetic philosophers, with Maimonides as its most prominent representative (for an overview of these trends and their key figures, see Jalali, 2011, pp. 19–46).

> do not reach the level of al-Fārābī's, Abū Bakr ibn al-Sāʾigh (Ibn Bājja or Avempace) is also a great philosopher, and all of his works are of the highest quality. (Sirat, 2000, p. 161)

This letter clearly illustrates al-Fārābī's esteemed position in Maimonides' view, as well as the significance he attributed to his works. Maimonides' deep respect for al-Fārābī's, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and Ibn Bājja—and to some extent, Ibn Sīnā—is reflected not only in his letter to Ibn Tibbon but also throughout his other writings. It is evident that he derived much of his thought and philosophy from these Muslim thinkers. Beyond this letter, in which Maimonides partially reveals the primary sources of his intellectual framework, he elaborates further on his influences in a brief treatise composed of eight chapters, commonly known as *Shemonah Peraqim* (*The Eight Chapters*). This work, which focuses on moral philosophy, provides additional insight into the sources he engaged with. As we will discuss further, this treatise is profoundly influenced by al-Fārābī's—even its title appears to be derived from one of al-Fārābī's works. In *Shemonah Peraqim*, Maimonides explicitly states that he drew upon a variety of religious sources, as well as both early and later philosophers, and numerous other figures. He further explains that, at times, he incorporated complete passages from well-known books into his works without citing the author or the title. Maimonides justifies this practice by stating that he believed it was preferable to omit the name of the "speaker" (Davidson, 1963).

Thus, Maimonides often sought to conceal his sources from the reader, possibly to avoid provoking any sensitivities. Nevertheless, he mentions al-Fārābī by name in *Dalālat al-Ḥāʾirīn* (*The Guide for the Perplexed*) on eight occasions. In only one instance (p. 221) does he refer to him with both his title and honorific, "Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī,"

while in the other seven cases, he refers to him simply as "Abū Naṣr" (see pp. 206, 315, 321, 330, 331, and 534). Of these eight references, the first two (pp. 206 and 221) pertain to Maimonides' critique of the theologians' argument regarding the creation of the world and their argument for the existence of God. In these critiques, Maimonides—opposing the theological tradition (*kalām*)—draws upon al-Fārābī's arguments, citing him as a source to support his position. The remaining five references (pp. 315 [twice], 321, 330, and 331) relate to discussions on the creation versus the eternity of the universe, as well as celestial spheres and stars. In some instances, Maimonides employs al-Fārābī's phrasing to clarify and interpret Aristotle's views on the eternity of the universe and to explain the position of the philosophers. In other cases (such as p. 321), he attempts to use al-Fārābī's statements as supporting evidence for his own theory of the world's creation, in opposition to the philosophical doctrine of its eternity and pre-existence.

Given this introduction, it becomes clear to what extent Maimonides was influenced by al-Fārābī and how deeply he engaged with his ideas. This influence is evident across various aspects of Maimonides' thought, from logic to diverse discussions on theology, cosmology, and philosophical psychology. In this study, I examine al-Fārābī's impact on Maimonides regarding the characteristics, faculties, perfections, and ranks or degrees of human beings.

2. Human Characteristics, Faculties, Perfections, and Ranks

We will now attempt to briefly assess the most significant human characteristics, faculties, and perfections that have acquired theological significance and that Maimonides, drawing inspiration from Muslim thinkers—particularly al-Fārābī—has discussed.

Moses Maimonides, reporting from both early and later

philosophers, categorizes human perfections into the following four groups:

1. Perfection of possessions (*kamāl al-qunya*), which is essentially external to both the body and soul of a person—such as wealth, clothing, tools, and property. Maimonides, reporting from the philosophers, states that one who dedicates their efforts to attaining this type of perfection is pursuing mere illusions and fantasies, gaining nothing substantial, as such perfection does not truly belong to the person's essence.

2. Perfection of physique and form (*kamāl al-bunya wa-l-hayʾa*), referring to bodily health, temperament, and the soundness of organs. While this type of perfection pertains to a person's being, it is not considered the ultimate perfection. In other words, it belongs to the human being insofar as they are an animal, rather than in their capacity as a rational human.

3. Perfection of moral virtues, which holds significantly greater importance than the previous two types. However, even moral virtues do not constitute the true ultimate perfection of a human being but rather serve as a preparatory means toward something higher.

4. Perfection of rational virtues (*al-faḍāʾil al-nuṭqiyya*), which is the true perfection of a human being. This consists of acquiring intellectual virtues that lead to sound judgments in metaphysics and theology (Maimonides, n.d., pp. 735–737).

All four types of perfection mentioned by Maimonides are also found in the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*), a work known among the Ismailis in Egypt, to which Maimonides had access (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 1995, vol. 4, pp. 62–63). It is possible that he derived these classifications either directly from the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* or from thinkers who shared their views. However, it is crucial to

note that in this particular section, Maimonides was influenced by two of al-Fārābī's works: *Fuṣūl muntaẓaʿa* (*Selected aphorisms* or *Selected chapters*) and *al-Siyāsat al-madaniyya* (*The Civil Polity*). Although al-Fārābī does not explicitly present these four types of perfection together in the same formulation in these two books, the ideas are scattered throughout both works. In particular, the final and highest form of human perfection—regarded by Maimonides as the ultimate goal of human existence—is deeply rooted in al-Fārābī's thought. Indeed, within these two works, one can discern the framework of these four perfections. Al-Fārābī, in *al-Siyāsat al-madaniyya*, discusses perfections that pertain to the essence of a person, perfections external to the self, and those that have a relational connection to the self (al-Fārābī, 1993b, p. 49). He also elaborates on absolute versus relative perfections (ibid., p. 51) and extensively examines the final and ultimate perfection of human beings (ibid., pp. 36, 74).

Furthermore, in *Fuṣūl muntaẓaʿa*, al-Fārābī discusses physical perfection (al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 23–24), moral perfection and virtues (ibid., pp. 24, 30), intellectual perfection (ibid., p. 30), as well as the first and final perfections (ibid., pp. 45–46, 97), with the entire work primarily concerned with philosophical psychology and philosophical ethics. Therefore, although it is highly likely that Maimonides derived this fourfold list of human perfections from the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, it is by no means improbable that he also drew them from al-Fārābī's works. It is also possible that he took them from both sources—both the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* and al-Fārābī.

In another passage, Maimonides discusses the *first perfection* (*kamāl awwal*) and the *final perfection* (*kamāl akhīr*) for human beings (Maimonides, n.d., pp. 575–576), terms which are borrowed from al-Fārābī. As mentioned earlier, al-Fārābī also refers to the first and final perfections for humanity in *Fuṣūl muntaẓaʿa*. Both emphasize that the

first perfection pertains to worldly and material matters, while the final perfection relates to spiritual and otherworldly concerns.

Having laid out these preliminaries, we will now briefly consider the most important human perfections, powers, characteristics, and ranks that Maimonides seems to have derived from al-Fārābī and been influenced by.

2.1. Intellect

Among the faculties and perfections that humans possess, particularly in the realm of knowledge, the most important is intellect (*ʿaql*). Moses Maimonides places great emphasis on the intellect, its degrees, and various related issues. At the same time, he regards the concept of intellect and its nature as something self-evident and clear, not in need of definition. As a result, he does not provide a formal definition but instead focuses on the importance of intellect and reasoning, as well as its limitations, its various stages, and its relationship to the external world.

Following al-Fārābī, Maimonides considers the human intellect to be the final perfection of humanity (al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 45–46, 97). Before the fall of Adam, God bestowed this intellect upon humanity, and it is through this intellect that humans gain the capacity to be addressed by God. It is based on this intellect that humans acquire the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood (Maimonides, n.d., p. 25). From Maimonides' perspective, it is by virtue of the intellect that the Torah describes humanity as being made in the image and likeness of God (ibid.). In these points, Maimonides is clearly influenced by al-Fārābī, who similarly emphasizes that it is through the intellect that humans acquire the capacity to receive divine revelation and distinguish truth from falsehood (al-Fārābī, 1995, p. 121).

Although Maimonides does not provide a detailed account of the nature of the intellect, he does refer to the connection between the human intellect and the Active Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*), considering the human intellect to be an emanation (*ifāḍa*) from the Active Intellect (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., p. 282). He also discusses the limitations, degrees, and levels of human intellect. From his perspective, just as human sensory perception is limited to certain things, the intellect also cannot comprehend everything and is restricted to grasping only specific objects. Furthermore, the intellect exists in different degrees and levels, varying from person to person—no individual has the capacity to understand and reason about everything (ibid., pp. 67–72). All these views are directly influenced by al-Fārābī (al-Fārābī, 1995, p. 121).

Following al-Fārābī, Maimonides consistently compares imagination (*khayāl*) with intellect, emphasizing that humans share the faculty of imagination with animals, whereas it is the intellect that distinguishes humans from them. His primary purpose in contrasting the imaginative and rational faculties is to critique the views of the theologians (*mutakallimūn*), whom he accuses of relying on imagination rather than reason or intellect (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., pp. 209–210).

2.2. Ultimate Perfection of Humans

A key issue related to the intellect is that of humanity's ultimate perfection. Following the Islamic philosophers, particularly al-Fārābī, Moses Maimonides considers the final and ultimate perfection of human beings to lie in the intellect's apprehension of intelligibles (*maʿqūlāt*). From their perspective, intellectual perfection is the highest and most significant form of human perfection. As previously discussed, in outlining the fourfold classification of human perfections—derived from Muslim philosophers, especially al-Fārābī—Maimonides identifies the final and true perfection of

humanity as the comprehension of intelligibles and the attainment of intellectual virtues. On this subject, he writes:

> True human perfection lies in the attainment of rational virtues (*al-faḍāʾil al-nuṭqiyya*), namely, the conception of intelligibles that yield correct opinions in theology. This is the final end (*al-ghāyat al-akhīra*), the one that completes a person with true perfection, belonging solely to him. It grants him eternal existence, and it is through this that one is truly human. Consider each of the three preceding perfections—you will find that they belong to others, not to you. And if they must, according to common opinion, be considered yours, they still belong both to you and to others. However, this final perfection (*al-kamāl al-akhīr*) is exclusively yours; no one else shares in it with you in any way. Let it be yours alone. Therefore, you must strive to attain this enduring perfection and not exhaust yourself in toil and hardship for the sake of others—O you who neglect yourself! (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., p. 737)

Thus, Maimonides defines true humanity as depending on conceiving intelligibles that lead to knowledge of God and the attainment of correct theological views. Accordingly, he explicitly states that neither the possession of worldly blessings nor physical well-being results in ultimate and eternal happiness, nor do moral virtues, religious acts, or spiritual ranks (Maimonides, n.d., pp. 738, 719). What truly leads to human happiness is the comprehension of intelligibles and knowledge of God's essence and His creations—particularly knowledge of the realm of intellects. Elsewhere, when discussing the first and final perfection of human beings, he identifies the final and ultimate perfection as actualizing one's rational faculty, meaning becoming rational in actuality—that is, acquiring knowledge of all beings within the capacity of human understanding. He writes:

And his final perfection is for him to become actually rational, meaning to possess an intellect in actuality. This occurs when one

attains knowledge of everything that is within human capacity to know regarding all existents, in accordance with his final perfection. It is evident that this final perfection involves neither actions nor ethics; rather, it consists solely of opinions derived through contemplation and necessitated by inquiry. (Ibid, p. 576).

From Maimonides' perspective, it is this final perfection—the apprehension of intelligibles—that ensures human survival (ibid). He extensively discusses the ultimate perfection of human beings and the understanding of intelligibles, dedicating the last four chapters of *The Guide for the Perplexed* to this issue. He interprets divine proximity (*al-qurb al-ilāhī*) as the knowledge of God and His providence (*ʿināya*) over existents, or, in other words, as the union with the Active Intellect (Kreisel, 1997, p. 268), which for humans means the actualization of their intellect. Thus, he emphasizes that the intellect is a divine emanation to humans and serves as the bridge between God and humanity. Strengthening this bridge—bringing humans closer to God and attracting His love—is achieved through the actualization of intelligibles, the comprehension of God, His providence, and governance, as well as the understanding of creation. Conversely, weakening this connection results from preoccupying the mind with anything other than God (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., pp. 718–719).

As we have mentioned, Maimonides, in this discussion, is influenced by Muslim philosophers, particularly al-Fārābī. Although he does not explicitly cite his sources, he indirectly acknowledges in several instances that he has adopted these ideas from philosophers (ibid, pp. 735, 737). It is well understood that by "philosophers" in this context, he is referring to al-Fārābī. As previously noted, Maimonides follows al-Fārābī in most of his discussions, especially in philosophical psychology, and in this particular debate, his influence is evident. Al-Fārābī also defines human nature in terms of intellect

and considers human happiness to be fully realized through the actualization of reason. From his perspective, human intellect is not actualized by default; rather, it reaches its full potential through the apprehension of intelligibles. Once this process is complete, a person attains the rank of the Active Intellect and achieves perfect happiness. Al-Fārābī writes:

> The rational faculty, through which a human being becomes human, is not, in its substance, an intellect in actuality, nor is it naturally endowed with actual intellect. Rather, it is the Active Intellect that makes an actual intellect, making all things intelligible for the rational faculty. … By this faculty, one attains the rank of the Active Intellect. When a person reaches this rank, their happiness is fully realized. (Al-Fārābī, 1993b, p. 35)

Therefore, from al-Fārābī's perspective, human happiness is fully realized when one attains the level of understanding intelligibles and reaches the rank of the Active Intellect. He also emphasizes that when a person grasps intelligibles—particularly the comprehension of ultimate causes—they achieve wisdom and attain their ultimate end, which is happiness (al-Fārābī, 1993a, p. 62). It is evident that Maimonides follows al-Fārābī in this view, namely that human perfection lies in the apprehension of intelligibles and in knowledge of God and His actions. However, Maimonides also seeks to reconcile philosophy and religion in this context. Thus, he asserts that just as philosophers have addressed and elaborated on this issue, the prophets have also discussed it and drawn attention to its significance. On this basis, he appeals to the Bible[1] to emphasize that only intellectual perfection is

1. "This is what the Lord says: 'Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me'" (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

true and praiseworthy, whereas other forms of perfection—including moral virtues and those attained through adherence to religious law—are not genuine perfections in themselves but rather preparatory stages leading to the ultimate perfection (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., pp. 737–738).

2.3. Human Composition from Matter and Form

One of the key concepts in philosophical psychology is the composition of humans from matter (*mādda*) and form (*ṣūra*). This composition, in fact, signifies the dual nature of human beings, encompassing both the immaterial and material, as well as the spiritual and corporeal aspects. Regarding this problem, as in many of his other discussions, Maimonides is influenced by al-Fārābī and other Islamic thinkers. He views the material aspect of humans as their dark and shadowy dimension, while their form represents their luminous and spiritual nature. In this, he is deeply shaped by the intellectual milieu of the Islamic world. Maimonides argues that bodies are subject to corruption, decay, and annihilation only due to their material component, whereas their form remains intact and imperishable. Accordingly, every difficulty that humans face, as well as weaknesses in actions, distress, and anxiety, stem from their material nature and have no connection to their intellectual form (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., p. 483; cf. al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 26–29).

Furthermore, when a person commits sin or error, it is due to their material aspect; whereas all human virtues are governed by the form. Moreover, a person's understanding of intelligibles, including the comprehension of the Divine, as well as their ability to govern the appetitive (*shahawiyya*) and irascible (*ghaḍabiyya*) faculties and avoid improper actions, all depend on the human form (Maimonides, n.d., p. 484).

Maimonides believes that sensation, feeling, sensory perception, sensory knowledge, and sensory pleasure—especially the sense of

touch—all pertain to matter (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., pp. 419, 403, 417, 485). With the cessation of the material and bodily aspects of human nature and the separation of the human form from matter, many of the intellectual virtues are realized. Therefore, he views matter as a great veil and an obstructive barrier to the perception of intelligibles and a separate, immaterial existence (ibid, p. 490). In contrast, he regards thought and intellect as special faculties of humans that are governed by the human form (ibid, p. 488). Thus, Maimonides sees the material and bodily aspects of humans, along with the imaginative faculty—which, from his perspective, is connected to the body and matter—as a significant barrier preventing humans from reaching their ultimate perfection, which is the apprehension of intelligibles. The more a person can distance themselves from bodily powers and material concerns, the greater their capacity to understand intelligibles and approach their ultimate perfection (ibid, pp. 400–403, 485, 488–490). This idea is precisely the same as that which al-Fārābī discusses in his *Fusul muntazaʿa*. He writes:

> This is, indeed, the soul that specifically belongs to the human being, which is the theoretical intellect (*al-ʿaql al-naẓarī*). When it reaches this state, it becomes separate from the body—whether that body remains alive by means of nourishment and sensation or whether its faculties of nourishment and sensation have ceased. For when the intellect no longer requires anything from the senses or imagination in performing its actions, it has transitioned into its afterlife. At that point, its conception of the essence of the First Principle (*al-mabdaʾ al-awwal*) becomes more complete, as the intellect directly engages with its own essence without needing to conceive it through analogy or representation. However, this state is only reached after the prior necessity of relying on bodily faculties and their functions to perform their respective acts. This is the afterlife in which a person beholds his Lord without obstruction

in his vision. (Al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 26–29)

2.4. Moderation

One of the distinguishing features and perfections of the human being is moderation (*iʿtidāl*), a concept emphasized in Maimonides' philosophical psychology under the influence of al-Fārābī. In the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides devotes a discussion to the various tendencies in human nature, the content of which is entirely derived from al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa*. Like al-Fārābī, Maimonides first acknowledges the existence of diverse inclinations within human beings and, consequently, the different actions that arise from these tendencies and traits. He then asserts that at the extremes of these inclinations lie excess (*ifrāṭ*) and deficiency (*tafrīṭ*), both of which must be avoided in favor of the correct path. This correct path—what al-Fārābī refers to as acts of virtue—consists of actions that are balanced and situated between the two extremes of excess and deficiency. Maimonides writes: "The two extremes of excess and deficiency, in all aspects of human character, are not the path of virtue. One should neither pursue them nor accustom oneself to them… The correct path is the precise standard that is balanced in all aspects of human character. It is the trait that, in a balanced way, remains distant from both excess and deficiency and does not incline toward either" (Maimonides, 2000, p. 228).

This point is precisely the one that al-Fārābī emphasizes in *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa* and elaborates upon in detail. A portion of al-Fārābī's statement, which is believed to be the reference for Maimonides' above passage, is as follows:

> The actions that are virtuous are the balanced actions that lie in the middle between two extremes, both of which are evil: one being excess and the other deficiency. Similarly, virtues are mental states

(*hayaʾāt nafsāniyya*) and dispositions (*malakāt*) that lie between two states, both of which are vices: one being excessive and the other deficient. For example, chastity is the mean between greed and the absence of any sense of pleasure. One extreme is excessive, which is greed, and the other is deficient. (Al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 26–29)

2.5. Civility and Politics

One of the characteristics of human beings, as discussed in Islamic philosophical psychology—particularly in the works of al-Fārābī—and which is essentially influenced by Greek philosophy, is that humans are naturally social beings and, therefore, require community and politics. Maimonides, like al-Fārābī, believes that humans are naturally social and, as a result, need society, which in turn requires law, governance, lawmakers, and rulers. Maimonides emphasizes that human nature necessitates two opposing states. First, human inclinations, desires, and dispositions are so diverse and varied that it seems as though each individual is a distinct species. Second, human nature also demands society, and the nature of human beings requires that they live together in a community. On the other hand, such a society, with all its conflicting inclinations, desires, and dispositions, is impossible without governance. Therefore, humans require law and a ruler (Maimonides, n.d., pp. 415–416, 575–578).

In this discussion, Maimonides is clearly influenced by al-Fārābī. In most of his major works, particularly in *Ārāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍila wa-muāddātuhā* (The opinions of the people of the virtuous city and its contraries), *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madaniyya* (The book of civil polity), and *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa*, al-Fārābī addresses this topic, with the central theme of the latter work being the human being, a significant portion of which pertains to society and the necessity of

social life (for example, see al-Fārābī, 1993a, p. 45).

2.6. Human Faculties

Maimonides has a treatise called *Thamāniya fuṣūl* (Eight chapters), which was translated into Hebrew by the translator of Maimonides' works, Ibn Tibbon, under the title *Shemonah Peraqim*. The original Arabic text of *Thamāniya fuṣūl* is not available in Arabic script, but Maurice Wolf translated it into German and included the Arabic text, along with Hebrew script, at the end of his German translation (see Ben Maimon, 1992). Wolf did not include the Arabic text of the introduction to this treatise, which is of great significance, but only provided the text of the eight chapters. However, in his translation, he did include the introduction. Additionally, Herbert Davidson, in his article titled "Maimonides' *Shemonah Peraqim* and Alfarabi's *Fusul al-madani*," has included portions of the Arabic text of the introduction. In this article, Davidson examines *Thamāniya fuṣūl* and compares it with al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa*.[1]

Davidson has rightly clarified in this article that the content of Maimonides' *Eight Chapters* (*Thamāniya fuṣūl*) is entirely derived from al-Fārābī's *Selected chapters* (*Fuṣūl al-madanī*). Likewise, Menachem Lorberbaum has noted that Maimonides' *Eight Chapters* (*Shemoneh Peraqim*) was modeled on and composed based on the ideas in al-Fārābī's *Selected chapters* (*Fuṣūl al-madanī*) (Lorberbaum, 2003, p. 177).

1. It is worth noting that an English translation of al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa* was published by D.M. Dunlop under the title *Fusul al-Madani*, although the correct title is *Fusūl muntazaʿa* (for more details, see al-Fārābī, 1993a, editor's introduction, p. 10). For the Arabic text edited by Dunlop, along with its English translation, see al-Farabi, 1961.

In the aforementioned article, Davidson compares several passages from the two texts, clearly demonstrating that Maimonides fully follows al-Fārābī in his discussions on philosophical psychology and political thought. In the issues we previously noted, this dependence and influence were also evident in *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn* and *Mishneh Torah*. However, the passages in *Thamāniya fuṣūl* further highlight this influence, particularly concerning certain human faculties, including sensation, desire, and aversion—referred to in philosophy as the "appetitive faculty" (*al-quwwat al-nuzūʿiyya*). Before presenting these passages, it is worth noting an important point that Davidson overlooks. This point pertains to the title of Maimonides' *Thamāniyat fuṣūl* and that of al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl al-muntazʿa*. The suggestion here is that even the title of Maimonides' treatise is derived from al-Fārābī's work. Just as al-Fārābī's treatise lacks a distinctive title and is simply named *Fuṣūl al-muntazʿa* ("Selected chapters"), Maimonides' treatise also does not bear a unique name but is titled *Thamāniyat fuṣūl* ("Eight Chapters"), the "eight" referring to the fact that the treatise consists of precisely eight chapters.

In any case, a comparison of two passages from *Thamāniya fuṣūl* with two passages from *Fuṣūl muntazʿa*—the first concerning the appetitive faculty in humans and the second addressing two types of human character—demonstrates that Maimonides was profoundly influenced by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, both in his use of technical terminology, which is largely specific to al-Fārābī, and in his fundamental ideas and theories. It can be asserted with confidence that Maimonides directly drew these passages from al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl muntazʿa*. Given Maimonides' deep admiration for al-Fārābī, as mentioned earlier, this should come as no surprise.

The first passage: On the human appetitive faculty.	
Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa*	Maimonides, *Thamāniya fuṣūl*, chapter 1
The appetitive faculty (*al-quwwat al-nuzūʿiyya*) is that by which an animal inclines toward something, experiences desire or aversion, seeks or flees, prefers or avoids, feels anger or satisfaction, fear or boldness, harshness or compassion, love or hatred, passion or craving, and all other states of the soul. The instruments of this faculty are all the powers that enable the movement of the body and its limbs, such as the strength of the hands for grasping, the strength of the legs for walking, and other bodily functions. (Al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 28–29)	The appetitive part (*al-juzʾ al-nuzūʿī*) is the power by which a person desires or detests something. From this faculty arise actions such as seeking and fleeing, preferring or avoiding something, experiencing anger or satisfaction, fear or boldness, harshness or compassion, love or hatred, and many other psychological states. The instruments of this faculty include all parts of the body, such as the strength of the hand for grasping, the strength of the leg for walking, the power of the eye for seeing, and the power of the heart for advancing or fearing. Likewise, all internal and external organs, along with their faculties, serve as instruments of this appetitive faculty. (Ben Maimon, 1992; see also Davidson, 1963, p. 35)

As is entirely evident from the two passages, Maimonides has taken both the core idea and the key terminology directly from al-Fārābī, making only minimal modifications to the wording. The fundamental term *al-quwwat al-nuzūʿiyya* and all the actions that Maimonides cites as examples of its function are identical in expression and wording to those found in al-Fārābī's text. The only difference lies in the elaboration Maimonides provides at the end of the passage, which, in essence, expands upon al-Fārābī's more concise formulation, where the latter merely alludes to additional bodily organs with the phrase *wa-ghayruhumā min al-aʿḍāʾ* ("and other such organs").

The second passage: The distinction between the virtuous person (*al-insān al-fāḍil*) and the self-restrained person (*al-ḍābiṭ li-nafsih*)	
Fuṣūl muntazaʿa	***Thamāniya fuṣūl*, chapter 1**
There is a distinction between the self-restrained person (*al-ḍābiṭ li-nafsih*) and the virtuous person (*al-fāḍil*). The self-restrained person, although performing virtuous actions, does so while still desiring immoral deeds, longing for them, and struggling against his inclinations. His actions oppose the impulses of his disposition and desires, and he performs good deeds while experiencing	Regarding the distinction between the virtuous person (*al-fāḍil*) and the self-restrained person (*al-ḍābiṭ li-nafsih*), the philosophers say that although the self-restrained person performs virtuous actions, he does so while desiring immoral deeds, longing for them, and struggling with his inclinations. His actions oppose the impulses of his nature, desires, and disposition, and he performs good deeds while

The second passage: The distinction between the virtuous person (*al-insān al-fāḍil*) and the self-restrained person (*al-ḍābiṭ li-nafsih*)	
Fuṣūl muntazaʿa	***Thamāniya fuṣūl*, chapter 1**
discomfort in doing so. In contrast, the virtuous person acts in accordance with his disposition and desires, engaging in good deeds while desiring and longing for them. [...] The self-restrained person has excessive and immoderate desires in these matters, contrary to what is prescribed by proper custom, and while he performs acts in accordance with that custom, his desires remain opposed to them. Nevertheless, in many respects, the self-restrained person assumes the role of the virtuous person. (Al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 34–35).	experiencing discomfort in doing so. In contrast, the virtuous person follows the impulses of his desires and disposition, engaging in good deeds while loving and longing for them. By unanimous agreement among the philosophers, the virtuous person is superior and more complete than the self-restrained person. However, they also state that the self-restrained person may, in many respects, take the place of the virtuous person, albeit at a lower rank by necessity. (Ben Maimon, 1992; see also Davidson, 1963, p. 36).

As evident from Maimonides' wording, he has quoted this passage from the philosophers—in particular, from the philosopher al-Fārābī. Unlike the first passage, which Maimonides presents in his own words, in this passage, he conveys the distinction between the virtuous person (*fāḍil*) and the self-restrained person as articulated by the philosophers. Given Maimonides' deep admiration for al-Fārābī and his access to al-Fārābī's works, it is clear that he has quoted this

passage verbatim from al-Fārābī's *Fusūl muntazaʿa*. Moreover, considering the structure of the *Thamāniya fusūl*, as analyzed by Davidson (1963, pp. 37–40), this framework and its discussions are directly derived from al-Fārābī's *Fusūl muntazaʿa*. Taking this into account—along with the two aforementioned passages and Maimonides' discussions on human faculties and perfections in *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn* and *Mishneh Torah*, as referenced earlier—it becomes evident that Maimonides' psychological views are profoundly influenced by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī.

2.7. Human Categories, Ranks, and Degrees

In philosophical theology's approach to psychology, humans are examined from various perspectives and can be classified according to different criteria. Relevant to this discussion is the categorization and ranking of individuals in terms of the levels and degrees of the soul and spirit from the perspective of Maimonides, as well as an analysis of his intellectual indebtedness to Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī. Maimonides' classification, which adopts a philosophical approach and primarily focuses on the epistemic and psychological dimensions of the soul, is profoundly influenced by al-Fārābī. This influence will be briefly explored in the present discussion.

As previously stated, Maimonides considers human perfection to lie in the apprehension of intelligibles, which, in his view, are imparted to humans by the Active Intellect. The apprehension of intelligibles is a divine emanation received by humans; however, the extent to which an individual attains them depends on their own capacity and aptitude. This emanation from the Active Intellect is bestowed upon two of the human cognitive faculties. Accordingly, Maimonides classifies humans—particularly distinguished individuals—in terms of their epistemic faculties, specifically the rational (*nāṭiqa*)

and imaginative (*mutakhayyila*) faculties. Based on this classification, eminent individuals capable of receiving this divine emanation are divided into three categories:

1. Prophets: The highest divine gift and emanation are received by the prophets, who possess both the rational and imaginative faculties in their fullest perfection. This divine emanation is bestowed upon both of these faculties in the Prophets.

2. Philosophers (or as put by Maimonides, "scholars adept in theoretical inquiry" (*ʿulamāʾ ahl al-naẓar*): In the case of this group, divine emanation is bestowed solely upon their rational faculty and intellectual dimension, with nothing imparted to their imaginative faculty. This lack of emanation may be due either to the scarcity or limitation of what is bestowed upon humans from the realm of intellects or to a deficiency in the individual's imaginative faculty, rendering it incapable of receiving the emanations from the realm of intellects.

3. Statesmen, legislators, priests, and those who experience true dreams: In this group, the emanation of intelligibles is bestowed solely upon their imaginative faculty, while their rational faculty is exceedingly weak. This weakness may stem either from a natural deficiency—where the individual is innately defective in rational faculty—or from insufficient training and practice in the intellectual sciences. Maimonides notes that for some individuals in this category, extraordinary imaginings arise, leading them to believe they have attained a prophetic or quasi-prophetic status. As a result, they experience a profound confusion between true realities and mere fantasies (Maimonides, n.d., pp. 405–407).

Maimonides further divides each of the first two groups into two subcategories, while also recognizing numerous ranks and

degrees among all individuals within the three aforementioned categories. Both philosophers and prophets receive divine emanation in one of two ways: either in a manner that leads solely to their own perfection, without any further effect, or in a way that, in addition to perfecting themselves, compels them to extend this emanation to others—through instruction, authorship, preaching, and guidance. Consequently, without this additional perfection, no scholarly works would be composed, nor would prophets call people to the truth. In fact, it is this *additional* perfection that drives scholars and theorists to teach, write, and develop ideas, and it propels prophets to instruct, invite, and preach—without anything being able to hinder them (ibid., pp. 407–408).

Maimonides' theory can, in fact, be regarded as a form of inference and deduction from al-Fārābī's views and the foundations of his psychological thought. This is because al-Fārābī, in several of his works—particularly in *al-Aʿmāl al-falsafiyya*, *Kitāb al-milla*, *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madaniyya*, *Ārāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍila wa-muḍāddātuhā*, and *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa*—establishes a connection between religion, philosophy, and prophecy. In al-Fārābī's thought, philosophy holds primacy, while religion, in relation to philosophy, occupies a secondary position. As he puts it, religion is "an imitation [representation] and likeness of philosophy" (al-Fārābī, 1992, p. 185; idem, 1991, p. 46).

What distinguishes Maimonides' thought from that of al-Fārābī in this discussion is that al-Fārābī maintains that philosophy receives and conveys knowledge through the rational faculty and intellect, whereas religion receives and conveys knowledge through the imagination in an imaginative form. Consequently, he elevates the status of philosophy—and, by extension, that of the philosopher—above that of religion and the prophet (al-Fārābī, 1992, p. 185). Maimonides,

however, who fundamentally approaches this issue as a theologian (*mutakallim*), while deeply influenced by al-Fārābī's view on the relationship between reason and philosophy, diverges from him slightly in this discussion and modifies his teacher's ideas. Whereas al-Fārābī holds that religious knowledge is acquired exclusively through the imagination and philosophical knowledge solely through reason, Maimonides asserts that religious knowledge is attained through both reason and imagination, while philosophical knowledge is derived purely from reason. As a result, *al-raʾīs al-awwal* ("first headman/ruler") in al-Fārābī's works—who is, in essence, a philosopher (al-Fārābī, 1995, pp. 116–122)—is replaced in Maimonides' thought by the prophet (*nabī*).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Maimonides, like al-Fārābī, upholds the superiority of the rational faculty over the imaginative faculty. However, what elevates true prophets above philosophers in his view is that they, like philosophers, possess a perfected rational faculty. As a result, they are capable of attaining theoretical knowledge of the same kind as that of philosophers. At the same time, they also possess a perfected imaginative faculty, which grants them superiority over philosophers. In contrast, mere possession of the imaginative faculty and imaginative perceptions—characteristic of the third category of individuals—leads only to illusions and conjectures (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., pp. 410–411).

3. Concluding Remarks

Given the aforementioned points, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. One of the most significant, influential, and impactful Muslim scholars is Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Fārābī,

who has been referred to as the "Second Teacher" and the "Founder of Islamic Philosophy." Al-Fārābī's influence and impact were not confined to the Islamic world; scholars from other religious traditions were also captivated by his ideas and works and came under his influence. One of the most notable among them was Mūsā b. Maymūn al-Qurṭubī al-Andalusī (Maimonides), a Jewish physician, logician, philosopher, theologian, and jurist, who frequently referenced and utilized al-Fārābī's works and ideas in his own writings.

2. Maimonides, in various aspects of his thought, was influenced by al-Fārābī and certain other Peripatetic philosophers. Notably, in the domain of philosophical psychology, he was influenced by al-Fārābī regarding human characteristics, faculties, perfections, and degrees of human development.

3. Maimonides was influenced by al-Fārābī in various issues concerning human characteristics, faculties, and perfections, including those related to the human intellect and its relation to the Active Intellect, ultimate and final perfection, the significance of rational contemplation and the apprehension of intelligibles, the composition of humans from matter and form, the concept of moderation, as well as civility and politics. Al-Fārābī's impact on Maimonides in these matters is evident not only in the language and methodology of his discussions but also in the structure of his works and, most notably, in his views and theories.

4. Although Maimonides' intellectual indebtedness to al-Fārābī in these discussions is vast—so much so that some scholars have rightly referred to him as a "disciple of al-Fārābī," and in many instances, he can genuinely be considered an "imitator/follower of al-Fārābī"—it must be noted that Maimonides remained fully committed to the Jewish faith. While he is commonly known as a "Jewish philosopher," he was, in reality, not a philosopher in the strict sense

but rather a *theologian, mutakallim,* and *defender of the Jewish faith*. Given this, although he broadly adopted al-Fārābī's views, he occasionally diverged from him in certain details when he perceived a conflict with Jewish doctrines. One notable example is his discussion on the ranks and degrees of human beings: whereas al-Fārābī assigns the highest position to the philosopher, Maimonides designates it to the prophet.

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