



## A Reflection on Farabi's Practical Philosophy

Rahman Ehterami<sup>1</sup> 

Received: 2024/06/25 • Revised: 2024/08/27 • Accepted: 2024/10/02 • Available Online: 2025/01/10

### Abstract

Farabi's practical philosophy is one of the most significant pillars of his thought, concerning the relationship between knowledge, politics, and human happiness. This article examines Farabi's interpretation of Greek practical philosophy, particularly the ideas of Aristotle and Plato, within the context of Islamic thought. As the founder of Islamic philosophy and the "Second Teacher", Farabi sought to re-read the Greek rational system within the framework of the religious city. By accepting the epistemological and ontological foundations of Greek philosophy, he aimed to create a synthesis between practical philosophy and the Islamic civic system. This research employs a descriptive-analytical method to investigate Farabi's practical philosophy and its relation to the concept of "millah" (religious community). It uses content analysis to examine key concepts such as 'the virtuous city', 'the first ruler', and 'millah' in Farabi's works. The findings indicate that Farabi, by introducing the first

---

1. PhD, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Tranian Research Institute of Philosophy, Tehran, Iran.

asefehteram@gmail.com

---

\* Ehterami, R. (2025). A Reflection on Farabi's Practical Philosophy. *Theosophia Islamica*, 5(1), pp. 321-344.

<https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.71241.1057>

---

**Article Type:** Research; **Publisher:** Islamic Sciences and Culture Research Institute, Qom, Iran

© 2025

"authors retain the copyright and full publishing rights"



<http://jti.isca.ac.ir>

ruler (the philosopher-prophet), attempts to design a social system where reason and revelation align towards a common goal (the realization of ultimate happiness). In this system, social relations and civic order are organized and depicted based on natural order. Philosophy and 'millah' complement each other as two paths for transmitting rational knowledge and achieving public persuasion within society. The research concludes that Farabi designed an independent system which, although inspired by Greek philosophy, possesses its own distinct logic within his intellectual framework.

### **Keywords**

Farabi, Practical Wisdom, Virtuous City, Happiness.

## Introduction

Greek philosophy, alongside its ontology and cosmology which sought to establish a rational system based on human self-reliant perceptions of them, consistently viewed human beings as creatures possessing free will. It strived to determine the path to human happiness and misery. Aristotle provided a rational method for attaining a certain system regarding the world of natural beings. However, concerning a being with free will (human), it's clear that their will cannot be subject to the necessary causal natural order, and rational knowledge about it cannot be attained through experience and induction. Consequently, a rational system cannot be mapped out for it.

323

Theosophia Islamica

A Reflection on Farabi's Practical Philosophy

What interpretation does Farabi offer of the practical philosophy of Aristotle and Plato? Did his religious perspective manifest itself in the realm of action as well? In other words, despite their differing foundations, Aristotle and Plato believed that human happiness was contingent upon rationality; that is, humans achieve happiness when they possess rational knowledge of beings. Now, the question is: in Farabi's foundational system, how does a human being, in the presence of volitional and non-natural beings, reach that important goal (rational happiness)? Is it possible to provide a system for volitional beings similar to the rational system, so that humanity's path to the ultimate end (rational happiness) can be prepared? Despite the free will of humans in society, how can an individual reach their ultimate end? Plato and Aristotle each provided answers to these questions based on their own ontological and cosmological foundations. What is important for us is to investigate Farabi's answer in his interpretation of Greek practical philosophy within the Islamic world.

The important point is that if someone accepts the fundamentals of Greek thought regarding how humans acquire knowledge and

understanding of the beings in the world, and considers intellectual certainty based on Aristotelian logic as the path to truth, then inevitably, when confronting actions stemming from free human will that are not natural and do not fall under intellectual knowledge, they must choose a path that does not negate the system of theoretical reason concerning the world. Farabi, firstly as an acceptor of the Greek view of self-reliant intellectual thought, and secondly as a thinker nurtured within the framework of religious thought, has actively tried to engage in this area, just as in theoretical philosophy. While maintaining the rational framework of the Greek civil system, he offers an interpretation of it that can be applied to a religious civil system. Similar to the domain of theoretical reason, in the domain of practical reason, he integrates the Greek-rational approach with the fundamental principles of the Islamic world through *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), continuing his tradition of "synthesis" in civil philosophy, just as he did in ontology and epistemology.

Research Aim: Analyzing Farabi's practical philosophy within the context of Islamic thought.

Methodology: Analytical study based on Farabi's works and his reading of the Greek practical philosophical system.

### **Results:**

1. Explaining the role of the First Ruler in the civil system.
2. Clarifying the relationship between philosophy and religion (millahh).
3. Demonstrating Farabi's effort to adapt Greek practical philosophy to the religious order.

Research Innovation: Presenting an analysis of the position of Greek practical philosophy in the formation of Islamic philosophy and its role in the development of Farabi's civil philosophy.

## 1. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

### 1.1. Theoretical Framework

This research is founded on the theoretical framework of Farabi's practical and theoretical philosophy, where the civil system and human happiness are examined as the ultimate goals. Within this framework, Farabi strives to present civil philosophy in alignment with a religious structure and a revelatory system. The key principles of this theoretical framework are: Ultimate Happiness and the Rational Order: Human happiness depends on a rational understanding of the order of existence. The First Ruler (philosopher-prophet) is responsible for guiding society towards this happiness. Relationship between Philosophy and Religion (Millahh): Philosophy (certain knowledge) and religion (millahh) (persuasive methods) are two sides of the same coin, both employed to achieve social order and human happiness. Assimilation to God (Tashabbuh bi al-Ilah) and Civil Order: To attain happiness, humans must assimilate to the inherent order of existence. The virtuous city (Madina Fadila) is a reflection of this rational order in the human world. Role of the First Ruler: The First Ruler, who is both a philosopher and a prophet, guides the city through intellectual and revelatory knowledge, and utilizes persuasive tools to educate the people.

## 2. Rationality and Human Happiness

Farabi identifies the ultimate purpose of human life as reaching perfection and ultimate happiness (سعادۃ قصوی). He asserts that achieving this ultimate happiness is contingent upon rationality (عقلانیت). He believes that just as true knowledge of the world is attained only through certain demonstration, true happiness also depends on true knowledge of the world. In essence, human happiness lies in assimilating to God (تشبیه به اله) through intellectual knowledge of the world's existence.

However, two factors complicate the sufficiency of merely theoretical knowledge for human happiness: firstly, that humans possess free will, and their volitions are not part of the natural order of the world; and secondly, that humans are social by nature (مدني بالطبع), and living in a community is essential for them, with their happiness dependent on the happiness of society.

In Farabi's view, just as the natural and ontological order of the world is realized with ultimate coherence and based on causality, human happiness is achieved when the human volitional and civil system is in harmony with the world's ontological and natural order. In other words, ultimate human happiness lies in assimilation to God. If a human gains knowledge of the system of beings in the world, they have assimilated to God in contemplation. And if, in action, they assimilate to the First Existent's action in managing the system of beings in the world, they have become happy.

Farabi explains his framework by stating that the knowledge leading to human happiness (philosophy) encompasses intelligibles known through certain demonstrations. In reality, the path to the highest good and happiness is not possible except through awareness of this knowledge. However, since humans are naturally social beings, achieving happiness is impossible without the cooperation of others. Every individual must inevitably interact with others and seek their perfection within society, in the company of others. Therefore, in addition to its theoretical dimensions, philosophy must also study the rational principles of human actions and virtues (through which happiness and perfection are attained). Yet, the study of voluntary human actions, especially in interaction with other people (in a city or madina), cannot be separated from theoretical knowledge. Instead, it is a branch of and corresponds to it. In both fields of knowledge (theoretical and practical), their goal and purpose are to understand

causes, reasons, and principles. The difference lies in what is being sought: in theoretical knowledge, it's the causes and reasons of existence, while in practical knowledge, it's the causes and reasons of happiness (Al-Farabi, 1991, pp. 46-47).

Farabi posits that the realization of happiness in a city depends on establishing harmony between the natural order and the human social order. Analyzing how this harmony is achieved, he explains: Theoretical science uses the criteria of need and self-sufficiency of beings for their existence to study the world's entities. However, in civil science, the criterion is the service rendered by beings. This means the system studied by civil science begins with a being that is ultimately in service to other beings and holds no authority, then ascends through the higher ranks of existence to a being that possesses unity in all meanings and serves no other being, with all beings under its governance. Farabi believes this same progression exists within the human faculties in the virtuous city (Madina Fadila). In the virtuous city, this progression starts from individuals and groups who hold no authority and ascends to the First Ruler of the virtuous city. This First Ruler, in their capacity as the ultimate governor and one who serves no other being, resembles God and governs the entire city. After the First Ruler, it reaches a being that is spiritual and named the Trustworthy Spirit (روح الامين). Through this spirit, God reveals divine guidance to the First Ruler of the city, and the First Ruler then governs the city by means of this revelation. Therefore, it is truly God who governs the virtuous city, just as He governs the world of beings. God governs the world in one way and the city in another. So, from Farabi's perspective, God is the governor of both the natural world and the human world. He believes there must be proportion and harmony between the two systems (ontological and civil). Just as there is connection and order among the beings in the world, there must be

connection, order, and practical cooperation among the parts of the virtuous city, all functioning as a single entity with a single action for a single purpose. The First Ruler of the city must emulate God's governance of the world to be able to govern the virtuous city in the same way God governs the world through the natural, ontological system. It is clear that the First Ruler can only emulate God if they possess and understand theoretical wisdom, because understanding the natural order of the world has no path other than certain demonstration, and knowledge based on certain demonstration is precisely theoretical philosophy (Al-Farabi, 1995a, pp. 46-47; Al-Farabi, 1995a, pp. 66-68).

### 3. Characteristics of the First Ruler of the City

In his work *Tahsil al-Sa'adah* (The Attainment of Happiness), Farabi emphasizes the necessity of the First Ruler being a philosopher. He does this by dividing people into two categories: common people (عامي) and elites (خاص), and by analyzing their modes of perception and knowledge. Farabi states that people, in an initial classification, are either common or elite. An elite is someone whose knowledge is based on demonstration (برهان), acquiring knowledge through premises that have reached the highest degree of certainty. This is in contrast to the common people, whose knowledge is based on persuasion (اقناع). The common people are called "common" because their theoretical knowledge relies on what appears to be self-evident (بادي الرأي). That is, the common people's theoretical understanding of the world is the initial, general understanding that comes to their minds without being unique to specific individuals. They have no criterion to prove the truth of their knowledge beyond this initial, shared understanding. Therefore, if someone moves beyond this self-evident understanding and acquires knowledge that is no longer obtained solely through initial, common perception, they are called elite. Farabi believes how



this non-initial understanding is acquired can vary, potentially stemming from induction, sustained effort, experience, and so forth. Farabi emphasizes that the "elite of the elite" (خاص الخواص) is someone whose knowledge is fundamentally *not* based on self-evident understanding at all. In other words, their understanding and knowledge are purely rational (صرفاً عقلي) and based on intellectual demonstrations. Such a person, with such knowledge, must be the First Ruler of the city. The second, third, and subsequent rulers in the human city must be under the leadership of the First Ruler and act towards completing the First Ruler's objectives (Al-Farabi, 1995a, pp. 83-85).

Farabi selects the "elite of the elite" (خاص الخواص) of the city based on the rationality of their knowledge and understanding. He concludes that knowledge itself has various ranks, determined by its degree of certainty, intellectual purity, and minimal reliance on self-evident understanding. The highest rank belongs to knowledge whose results are entirely based on intellectual demonstration, and which allows humans to grasp the intellectual existence of the world's entities (which is the essence of those entities, but their intellectual existence). This knowledge is the chief of all sciences, and other ranks of knowledge possess varying degrees of persuasion, depending on their level of pure certainty and absolute intellectuality.

In Farabi's view, since the ultimate purpose of human life is to achieve ultimate happiness (سعادة قصوى), the best science is the one that leads a person to such happiness. This is the science whose aims and results are entirely based on certain demonstration. Farabi believes that human happiness fundamentally lies in perceiving the intellectual existence of beings. Therefore, the First Ruler of the city is truly the First Ruler only if they possess knowledge of the intellectual existence of beings, are a sage and a philosopher, and all other elites of the city must work towards fulfilling their objectives. He further

states that it's not the case that there's no hierarchy among all those who have reached the level of understanding the intellectual existence of the world's entities. Rather, in his view, if a philosopher, in addition to theoretical knowledge based on certain demonstration, also possesses the ability and power to put theoretical results into practice within the world of human voluntary actions (the city), they are more complete and nobler than someone who lacks such an ability. Such a ruler, who possesses the power and capacity to actualize certain demonstrative knowledge in the city, will guide the people of the city to ultimate happiness. They do this by either teaching demonstrative sciences or by creating persuasive examples with the help of imagination, depending on the intellectual capacity of the citizens. Therefore, in Farabi's exposition, the First Ruler and the Perfect Philosopher are one and the same (Al-Farabi, 1995a, pp. 86-90).

#### 4. Religion (Millahh) and Philosophy in Farabi's Thought

After establishing the ontological unity of the prophet and the philosopher in the role of the First Ruler, Farabi turns to their relationship with the common people. He refers to the First Ruler's actions in fostering belief in rational conclusions among the general populace as "millahh" (often translated as religion or creed). Millahh, in essence, is the process by which the First Ruler educates the city's inhabitants. They employ conventional theoretical and practical opinions to guide individuals in the city toward a specific goal: assenting to rational conclusions. Farabi considers this action synonymous with "religion (din)." His statement is: «هي آراء و أفعال مقدرة بشرائط يرسمها للجمع رئيسهم الأول يلتمس أن ينال باستعمالهم لها غرضا له فيهم أو بهم» "These are opinions and actions determined by conditions, which their First Ruler prescribes for the community, seeking to achieve a specific purpose in or through

their use of these... Millahh and Din are almost synonymous terms" (Al-Farabi, 1991, pp. 43-47).

Farabi explains how the certain conclusions of the First Ruler's knowledge are actualized among the public. He states that the way for these certain results to become real for the public and the people of the city is for the First Ruler to teach them these results. This teaching involves two stages: first, the First Ruler must help the public achieve conceptual understanding, and then guide them to assent to those conclusions. Conceptual understanding can be achieved in two ways: either the public directly comprehends the essence of the concept intellectually, or they form a mental image (an imagined example) that represents that intellectual essence. In the stage of inducing assent, the First Ruler can either provide an intellectual demonstration to create belief in those conclusions in the public's minds, or they can use persuasive methods (through imagination and examples) to generate that assent. Farabi names these two ways of generating assent "philosophy" and "millahh." In his view, if the First Ruler generates assent to rational conclusions among the public by presenting certain demonstration, their work is philosophy. If they bring the public to the stage of assent through persuasion and imagination, their work is millahh (religion). Therefore, it's clear that for Farabi, philosophy and millahh are two distinct paths for generating assent to rational conclusions. The ultimate goal of both is to lead the inhabitants of the city to ultimate happiness.

Farabi considers millahh (religion/creed) to possess both theoretical and practical doctrines, as well as voluntary actions, just like philosophy. He emphasizes that all theoretical and practical doctrines of religion are subordinate to and part of philosophy. He argues that a science (A) becomes a part of another science (B) either when the doctrines of science (A) are without demonstration and are

subsequently proven with demonstration in science (B), or when science (B) encompasses general principles and provides the specific causes for matters in science (A), in which case science (A) would be a part of science (B). Theoretical philosophy provides the demonstrations for the theoretical doctrines of religion. Practical philosophy, on the other hand, provides both the general principles for the practical doctrines of religion and offers the means by which religion, through setting restrictions and conditions for those general principles, determines the conditions and purposes of human actions in society. Therefore, all doctrines of millahh are subordinate to and part of philosophy. Farabi continues by stating that if knowledge of something is demonstrable, then it is included within philosophy. Since philosophy provides the demonstrations for the doctrines of religion (both theoretical and practical), and thus the doctrines of religion become demonstrable, they are consequently incorporated into philosophy (Al-Farabi, 1991, pp. 46-47).

Farabi considers millahh (religion/creed) to be an imitation (محاكي) of philosophy. He sees the work of millahh as creating persuasive assent through the use of examples (مثالات), imagination (تخييل), warning (انذار), and good tidings (تبشير), achieved by establishing laws (نواميس) and other persuasive methods<sup>1</sup>.

١. «الملكة محاكية للفلسفة؛ و هما يشتملان على موضوعات بأعيانها و كلياتهما تعطيان المبادي القصوى للموجودات. فإنهما تعطيان علم المبدأ الأول و السبب الأول للموجودات و تعطيان الغاية القصوى التي لأجلها كَوْن الإنسان و هي السعادة القصوى و الغاية القصوى في كل واحد من الموجودات الأخرى؛ و كل ما تعطيه الفلسفة من هذه معقولا أو متصورا؛ فإن الملكة تعطيه متخيلا و كل ما تبرهنه الفلسفة من هذه فإن الملكة تقنع. فإن الفلسفة تعطي ذات المبدأ الأول و ذات المبادي الثواني غير الجسمانية التي هي المبادي القصوى معقولات و الملكة تخيلها بمثالاتها المأخوذة من المبادي الجسمانية و تحاكيها بنظائرها من المبادي المدنية و تحاكي الأفعال الإلهية بأفعال المبادي المدنية و تحاكي أفعال القوى و المبادي الطبيعية بنظائرها من القوى و الملكات و الصناعات الإرادية؛ كما يفعل ذلك أفلاطن في طيمائوس؛ و تحاكي المعقولات منها بنظائرها من المحسوسات مثل من حاكي المادة بالهاوية/ أو الظلمة، أو الماء و العدم بالظلمة؛ و تحاكي أصناف الصناعات القصوى، التي

Therefore, in Farabi's view, philosophy and millahh (religion) are not two separate realities. Instead, they represent the inner and outer dimensions, or, more precisely, the rational and imaginative methods for understanding the intellectual truth of the world's existents. They both strive to apply the world's order to human actions within the city and to create a civil system that conforms to the ontological order, all aimed at achieving ultimate happiness. The First Ruler, Imam, philosopher, and prophet are all one and the same in

→

هي غايات أفعال الفضائل الإنسانية، بنظائرها من الخيرات التي يظن أنها هي الغايات؛ و تحاكي السعادات، التي (هي) في الحقيقة سعادات، والتي يظن أنها سعادات؛ و تحاكي مراتب الموجود في الوجود بنظائرها من المراتب المكانية و المراتب الزمانية و تتحرى أن تقرب الحاكية لها من ذواتها. (الفارابي ١٩٩٥ الف، صص ٨٩-٩٠)

333

Theosophia Islamica

A Reflection on Farabi's Practical Philosophy

**"For millah (religion) imitates philosophy; and they both encompass the very same subjects and both provide the ultimate principles of existents.** They both provide knowledge of the First Principle and the First Cause of existents, and they both provide the ultimate end for which humanity was created, which is ultimate happiness, and the ultimate end for each of the other existents. **Whatever philosophy provides of these, be it intelligible or conceived, millah provides as imagined.** And whatever philosophy demonstrates of these, millah persuades.

For philosophy provides the essence of the First Principle and the essence of the incorporeal secondary principles, which are the ultimate principles, as intelligibles. Millah, however, imagines them through examples taken from corporeal principles and imitates them with analogues from civic principles. It imitates divine actions with the actions of civic principles and imitates the actions of natural powers and principles with analogues from voluntary powers, virtues, and arts – just as Plato does in *Timaeus*.

It also imitates the intelligibles among them with analogues from sensibles, like someone who imitates matter with the abyss or darkness, or water, and non-existence with darkness. And it imitates the highest kinds of arts, which are the ends of virtuous human actions, with analogues from goods that are thought to be the ends. It imitates the happinesses that are truly happinesses with those that are thought to be happinesses. And it imitates the ranks of being in existence with their analogues from spatial and temporal ranks, striving to bring the imitation closer to their essences." (Al-Farabi, 1995a, pp. 89-90).

their essence, even though multiple names are applied to them (Al-Farabi, 1995a, 92).

Based on this unifying perspective on the truth of philosophy, on the one hand, and his explanation of the inner and outer relationship between philosophy and religion, on the other, Farabi attributes the opposition of some religious scholars to philosophy, or some philosophers to religious teachings, to their failure to grasp the true essence of philosophy and religion. He considers it essential for true philosophers to enlighten those who oppose them (Al-Farabi, 1986, p. 155).

334

Theosophia Islamica

Vol. 5, No. 1, 2025

Farabi also highlights that the precedence of philosophy over religion (millahh) is temporal, not hierarchical. Based on his interpretation of how human knowledge systems develop within a society, he believes that in any human community, given the initial, easy, simple, and general understanding of common perception, the first art form to emerge is one based on words, reflecting immediate, sensory meanings accessible to people. He calls this rhetoric. In subsequent stages, humans advance to meanings without sensory referents and begin to manipulate sensory meanings through imagination, which marks the stage of poetry. From there, they progress to the system of dialectical argumentation and then to the stage of certain demonstration. Therefore, Farabi argues that the precedence of philosophy over millahh is a precedence in temporal appearance, not in rank. The philosopher and First Ruler, having attained the stage of understanding intellectual meanings, then create millahh by using persuasive methods to generate assent in the minds of the public. However, Farabi clarifies which, philosophy or the philosopher, necessarily precedes millahh: Philosophy, as the generation of assent in the minds of the public through certain intellectual demonstration, does not necessarily have temporal precedence over millahh. It is possible for it to emerge in a city *after*

millahh (like in the Islamic world, where philosophy developed after religion). Instead, what necessarily precedes millahh is the First Ruler's attainment of the stage of intellectual understanding of existents *before* the establishment and promulgation of millahh. In other words, Farabi believes that for any philosopher and First Ruler to be able to establish and promulgate millahh (as previously explained), they must first have grasped the intellectual existence of the world's beings and attained theoretical knowledge. Only then does the turn come for millahh. But philosophy itself does not necessarily have temporal precedence over millahh and can follow it. This is because philosophy consists of generating assent to the First Ruler's certain conclusions by providing certain intellectual demonstration (Al-Farabi, 1986, pp. 131-134; Al-Farabi, 1995a, p. 90).

## 5. Outcomes of Farabi's Civil Philosophy

Farabi's thought leads to significant conclusions regarding the integration of philosophy and religion. On one hand, he states that the elite of the elite in the city understands the intellectual existence of beings, is a philosopher, is the First Ruler, and possesses a millahh (striving to achieve public assent to those intellectual conclusions through examples and persuasion). On the other hand, he refers to Plato and Aristotle as philosophers, and even uses Plato's expressions in his *Laws* and other works as examples of "millahh" (Al-Farabi, 1995a, p. 90). This clearly indicates that Farabi fundamentally views them as religious and Islamic in their essence. This is not a result of an eclectic view of Greek thought and religion. Instead, it stems from Farabi's alignment with the philosophical thought of Plato and Aristotle, a product of his particular perspective on wisdom and millahh. It's not merely influenced by works like the *Theology of Aristotle* (a Neoplatonic text misattributed to Aristotle). Rather, it's Farabi's

adoption of a specific philosophical outlook that necessitates the *Theology* being attributed to Aristotle, even if historically inaccurate. For Farabi, because Aristotle is a philosopher within his philosophical system, the *Theology* must be his work (Davari Ardakani, 2033, p. 11).

Farabi's approach represents the founding and revival of philosophical thought in the Islamic world. As he himself stated, he learned this from the founding masters of the science while studying their philosophy. As he explains in *Kitāb al-Jam' bayna Ra'yay al-Ḥakimayn* (On the Harmony of the Views of the Two Sages) concerning the problem of the eternity or createdness of the world: "A foundation based on a particular method and on utmost correctness and solidity, in whose light religious and divine discourse are clarified" (Al-Farabi, 1984b, p. 103).

In Farabi's view, millahh (religion/creed) fundamentally derives its meaning within the context of the city (madina). If there were no city (i.e., if humans were not social by nature), millahh would have no subject matter. To put it another way: if the domain of human actions lies outside the natural order of the world, and humans are social by nature, and social organization is integral to human ultimate happiness, and happiness depends on understanding the intellectual existence of beings, and the First Ruler must be a philosopher to align the system of human actions in the city with the system of beings in the world, then millahh serves as a tool to generate assent to rational conclusions among the common people through persuasive means. It's evident that if we remove human sociality from the premises of this argument, there would be no basis or need for the existence of millahh. This clearly demonstrates the primacy of theoretical reason and the attainment of the intellectual truth of the world's beings in Farabi's thought, in contrast to the subordinate nature of practical reason, civil philosophy, and consequently, millahh.



## **6. Millahh (in both its Theoretical and Practical Doctrines) Conforms to the Natural order; It is not Itself a Part of the Intellectual order of the World**

In Farabi's terminology, "millahh" (religion/creed) is not considered a separate mode of thought from rational thought. Firstly, because humans are rational (their rationality being based on certain demonstration), they view all existing levels of the world and the city as rational. Secondly, because "millahh" in Farabi's philosophy is an integral part of civil philosophy, there's no ground for separation between them that would lead to Farabi's efforts being labeled as eclecticism or a religious interpretation of philosophy. In his explanation, just as the existence of the First Existent necessitates the emanation of existence to subsequent levels of the chain of beings, so too does the existence of the First Existent necessitate the governance of the virtuous city through revelation via the First Ruler. Therefore, the duality of "millahh" and "philosophy" is baseless, as no science has a duality with its own part. In other words, no science has a duality with another science upon which it depends for demonstration and the provision of general principles. To put it differently, no inner reality has an essential duality with its outward manifestation. This perspective on religion and philosophy is what positions Farabi as the founder of Islamic philosophy and the Second Teacher.

Farabi's unique interpretation of practical philosophy raises a crucial question: Does Farabi's effort to reconcile the differences between Plato and Aristotle, and to establish a perennial philosophy, directly relate to his aim of creating a unified relationship between philosophy and religion? In other words, could Farabi have achieved his desired outcome for the relationship between religion and philosophy without first reconciling the differences between Plato and Aristotle? It seems, as Dr. Davari Ardakani suggests (Davari Ardakani,

2003, p. 133), that the disagreement and fragmentation of philosophical opinions would obstruct any attempt to establish a wisdom unified with religion. If Farabi, on the one hand, considered the conclusions of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies to be demonstrative and certain, then acknowledging their divergent views (despite their certainty and their revered status as founders of this science) would imply a lack of unity in the conclusions of intellectual syllogisms. This, in turn, would mean that intellectual conclusions lead to a multiplicity of intellectual existences for beings, ultimately resulting in the discrediting of intellect, demonstration, and certainty itself. Furthermore, the reduction and interpretation of religious thought into philosophical thought, amidst the differing views of philosophers, would not have been persuasive, especially to religious scholars.

Was the establishment of civil philosophy essential and necessary for the founding of Islamic philosophy, or did Farabi merely present this philosophy to broaden the scope of philosophical subjects? And why did this approach not appear in his successors? It seems this issue can be evaluated from several angles. One perspective is that although Farabi, by reducing "Millahh" (religious community) to the actions of the First Leader and presenting his persuasive methods for generating conviction in rational conclusions among the public, considered the alignment of the civil system with the cosmic system to be the First Leader's duty, it must be noted that Farabi, as a thinker, did not view the establishment of civil philosophy instrumentally. That is, Farabi's goal in establishing civil philosophy was not merely to pave the way for Islamic philosophy. Instead, it was a necessary consequence of adopting Greek philosophical principles regarding the truth of human existence (being inherently rational and naturally social) to consider the city-state (madina) as the means to achieve ultimate happiness. Another aspect of Farabi's approach is that

while preserving the philosophical dimension of his civil discussions, it's undeniable that the establishment of civil philosophy, given the social conditions of Farabi's religious era and the prominence of beliefs, especially Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), in the Islamic world, facilitated the establishment and survival of philosophy in general. His successors also diligently pursued the path he had prepared, expanding Islamic philosophy. In other words, considering that the position of do's and don'ts (ethics and Fiqh) in Islam has been central and fundamental from its very beginning, and alongside faith in revealed teachings, belief and action have always been presented as two pillars for a believer to attain happiness, with sacred texts, the Prophet's (PBUH) conduct, and the actions of religious scholars fully supporting this claim, Farabi, as the founder of Islamic philosophy, had to provide a fundamental role for the do's and don'ts of religion within his intellectual system.

Based on this, after solidifying the singular embodiment of the city's leader (the perfect philosopher, law-giver, prophet, and Imam in society) by utilizing the First Leader's imaginative faculty to offer persuasive methods for the public, he established the place of Kalam (Islamic theology). On the other hand, by raising the issue of the successor to the First Leader and the derivation and inference of the First Leader's rulings in the absence of the successor's access to the intellectual existence of beings in the world, he established the place of Fiqh within his intellectual system. Therefore, not only did Farabi have to emphasize civil philosophy as a fundamental pillar of Islamic philosophy for its establishment and acceptance in Islamic society, but also the determination of the relationship between practical matters (do's and don'ts) and religion, and their entrustment to religion, guaranteed the survival and growth of philosophy in the Islamic world. Just as Farabi laid the foundation of this system, his successors

in Islamic philosophy entrusted practical matters to legal and ethical scholars, thereby endorsing Farabi's path. Consequently, the position that theoretical philosophical thought holds in the Islamic world, in addition to relying on certain proofs and the support of Islamic sacred texts for rational thought (according to Farabi's interpretation), has been significantly aided by the establishment of civil philosophy and the entrustment of practical aspects to religion.

Another point is that Farabi, first by separating human voluntary actions from the natural order of the world, and second by explaining the identity of "Millahh" (religious community) within the city-state (through the First Leader's creation of persuasive methods under various headings of "do's and don'ts," etc.), introduced the very important discussion of the conventional (i'tibari) nature of do's and don'ts in Islamic philosophy. This discussion has been more or less present in the language of Islamic philosophers under the topic of *ara' mahmouda* (praised opinions) and has recently flourished with a specific interpretation by the late Muhaqqiq Isfahani and Allamah Tabataba'i. The implication of Farabi's theory in explaining the identity of the *Millahh* was the exemplary creation and convention (ja'l va i'tibar), along with warning, encouragement, and other persuasive methods, to achieve conviction in rational conclusions among the public. This means that the basis of rulings related to the sphere of human actions, given that the natural laws of the world do not operate within it, is founded on the First Leader's creation and convention of laws. This is done with the aim of aligning the system of human action with the natural system to achieve ultimate happiness. The creation and convention by the Law-Giver (Shari'), considering that it is in line with the adaptation of the civil system to the natural system, undoubtedly has a specific meaning of conventionality; it is established with a view to the cosmic order and

is not merely a rational convention in the sense of a commitment or contract. Of course, this is a brief reference to the important discussion of the philosophical relationship between theory and practice from Farabi's perspective, which is considered one of the significant outcomes of Farabi's project in founding Islamic philosophy.

A question that seems to arise concerning the First Leader and Farabi's emphasis on his prior intellectual apprehension compared to the "Millahh" (religious community) and philosophy is: Did the philosopher and First Leader himself reach the stage of intellectual apprehension of beings through certain demonstration (burhan yaqini)? How is the prophet's and Imam's apprehension of the intelligible order of beings in the world (which, according to Farabi's explanations in *Kitab al-Huruf*, can precede the stages of philosophy and the "Millahh") achieved without being taught rational demonstrations by another philosopher? It seems that Farabi's view regarding assimilation to the Active Intellect for apprehending the intelligible existence of beings, especially for a First Leader who has not been educated by another philosopher, has provided sufficient grounds for the divisions of discursive wisdom (hikmah bahthi) and intuitive-illuminative wisdom (hikmah kashfi-ishraqi) in Farabi's successors.

## Conclusion

Farabi, much like he offered a unique interpretation of Greek rationalism within his own epistemology and cosmology in theoretical philosophy – thereby paving the way for concepts like a Creator God – also presented a distinct civil philosophy. In this domain, he identified intellectual knowledge as the true "happiness" of humanity. He introduced the Prophet as the philosopher who understands the

world's natural order. This Prophet, in order to regulate human relationships and guide individuals toward that ultimate happiness, strives to convince the general populace of his intellectual findings. He achieves this through methods of analogy, similitude, encouragement, warning, and the establishment of "do's and don'ts." In other words, from Farabi's perspective, the formation of a city (madina) based on rationality is the sole path to happiness. He entrusts its establishment to a perfect philosopher who, in addition to theoretical perfection in intellectual knowledge of the world, possesses the ability to prepare non-philosophers to accept theoretical intellectual conclusions, leading them to happiness through persuasion. Farabi believes that a philosopher with such characteristics is the "Prophet," who serves as the First Leader of the city. His method for achieving his goal is the "Millahh" (religious community) or "religion." Farabi views the Prophet as someone who is knowledgeable about the natural order of beings in the world and has assimilated with the Divine. He has received certain intellectual knowledge from the Giver of Forms (Active Intellect) and has united with it. Subsequently, to align the voluntary system of humans with the intelligible system of natural beings, he has resorted to persuasive methods, creating analogies and intelligible-to-sensible similitudes, thereby guiding individual and social human voluntary systems towards ultimate intellectual happiness. In essence, by founding civil philosophy and offering a specific interpretation of Greek practical philosophy, Farabi sought to align the civil order with the cosmic order. He believed that human happiness lies not only in theoretical knowledge but also in the realization of a social order consistent with the divine order. Therefore, the First Leader, who is both a philosopher and a prophet, is tasked with guiding society toward happiness by utilizing intellectual demonstration and persuasive methods (the "Millahh"). This article demonstrates how Farabi employed Greek philosophy to

legitimize Islamic philosophy and how he elucidated the concept of "Millahh" as an intermediary between philosophy and society. Ultimately, Farabi's view on practical philosophy reflects his endeavor to preserve the Greek rational system within the framework of Islamic thought. By presenting an image of the First Leader as both a philosopher and a prophet, he sees philosophy and religion as working towards a common goal, believing that the alignment of the social system with the natural system is essential for the realization of ultimate human happiness.

## References

- Davari Ardakani, R. (2003). *Farabi: Philosopher of Culture*. Tehran: Saqi Publishing.[In Persian]
- Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr. (1984 a). *Fusul Muntaza'a* (Extracted Chapters). Edited and corrected by Fawzi Najjar; 2nd ed. Tehran: Al-Zahra Library (A.S.).[In Arabic]
- Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr. (1984 b). *Al-Jam' bayn Ra'yay al-Hakimayn* (The Reconciliation of the Two Sages' Opinions). Introduction and commentary by Dr. Albert Nasri Nadir; 2nd ed. Tehran: Al-Zahra Publications. [In Arabic]
- Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr. (1995a). *Tahsil al-Sa'ada* (The Attainment of Happiness). Introduction and commentary by Dr. Ali Bou Melhem; 1st ed. Beirut: Maktabat al-Hilal. [In Arabic]
- Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr. (1995b). *Ara' Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila wa Mudaddaha* (The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City and its Opposites). Introduction, commentary, and annotation by Dr. Ali Bou Melhem; 1st ed. Beirut: Maktabat al-Hilal. [In Arabic]
- Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr. (1986). *Kitab al-Huruf* (Book of Letters). Introduction, research, and annotation by Muhsin Mahdi. Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq. [In Arabic]
- Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr. (1991). *Kitab al-Millahh wa Nusūs Ukhra* (Book of the Religious Community and Other Texts). Introduction, research, and annotation by Muhsin Mahdi (2nd ed.). Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq. [In Arabic]