

## A Reflection on "Immortality" from Farabi's Perspective

Sohrab Haghighat<sup>1</sup> 

Received: 2025/03/10 • Revised: 2025/05/17 • Accepted: 2025/06/15 • Available Online: 2025/07/10



### Abstract

One of the contentious issues concerning Farabi's views is whether he asserts the immortality of souls or not, and, if the former, whether this immortality is personal (individual) or generic (of the species). This article, employing a descriptive-analytical method, argues that Farabi holds the view of personal immortality, though not for all humans, but only for certain individuals. The fundamental reason for the confusion and conflict in views regarding Farabi's stance on the issue of immortality stems from the failure to distinguish between the different souls in the various cities (societies) in his philosophy. Farabi's criterion for explaining immortality is the actualization of human intellect through connection with the Active Intellect. Based on this criterion, he considers only the inhabitants of the two types of cities—the Virtuous City and the Transgressing City—to be immortal, because only the intellect of these two groups of humans becomes actualized. The difference is that the

---

1. Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Philosophy, Faculty of Theology, Shahid Madani University of Azerbaijan, Tabriz, Iran.  
[ac.haghighat@azaruniv.ac.ir](mailto:ac.haghighat@azaruniv.ac.ir)

---

\* Haghighat, S. (2025). A Reflection on "Immortality" from Farabi's Perspective. *Theosophia Islamica*, 5(2), pp. 257-282.  
<https://doi.org/10.22081/JTI.2025.72684.1107>

---

**Article Type:** Research; **Publisher:** Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy

© 2025

"authors retain the copyright and full publishing rights"



inhabitants of the Virtuous City act upon their knowledge, whereas the inhabitants of the Transgressing City abstain from acting upon their knowledge. Humans in all other cities only experience worldly life, and their souls perish with the decay of the body due to the non-actualization of their intellect. Regarding the issue of immortality being personal or generic, a reflection on Farabi's works leads to the conclusion that he posits a specific connection between the body and the temperament on the one hand, and the temperament and the soul on the other, considering each soul specific to a body and vice-versa. Therefore, just as we encounter multiple and individuated souls in worldly life due to the multiplicity of bodies and temperaments, in the afterlife, souls will also be distinguished from one another and will continue their immortal life in an individuated and personalized manner due to the acquisition of multiple and different dispositions and habits.

**Keywords**

Soul, Intellect, City, Immortality, Active Intellect (Aql Fa"āl).

## Introduction

Due to the epistemic limitations of humankind regarding the Other World and its inherent mystery, the belief in the Resurrection (Ma'ād) and the issue of immortality has become a source of preoccupation coupled with anxiety and apprehension. The significance of the Resurrection and life after death is underscored by the fact that it is a core religious tenet and is explicitly affirmed and emphasized by religions, especially the Abrahamic faiths. Alongside the lay perspective, we can note the scholarly and investigative approaches of Theologians (Mutakallimūn), Philosophers (Falāsifah), and Mystics ('Urafā') to this matter. A contemplation of the works of these three groups reveals three distinct types of Eschatology (Ma'ād-shināsi): Theological Eschatology, Philosophical Eschatology, and Mystical Eschatology.

The distinction of Philosophical Eschatology from the other two is that its substantiation, based on the rational analysis of the human essence, i.e., the immaterial soul (Nafs-i Mujarrad), is achieved without reliance on transmitted sources (naql). Broadly speaking, Muslim eschatology encounters two types of Resurrection: corporeal (Jismānī) and spiritual (Rūḥānī). A large segment of early Theologians, including the Mu'tazilis, Ash'aris, and Imamis, relying on transmitted sources as their epistemic foundation, considered man to be composed of a body and a spirit. They regarded the spirit as a subtle or ethereal body (jism-i laṭīf) or an accident subsisting in the body ('araḍ qā'im bi-l-badan) (Asadābādī Hamadānī, 1965, pp. 310-312; Juwaynī, 1416 AH, p. 150; Mufīd, 1414 AH, p. 55). Consequently, the soul is believed to perish with the decay of the body. They therefore affirmed corporeal resurrection—the creation of bodies anew on the Day of Judgment, now referred to as bodily resurrection—by appealing to the absolute power of God.

However, some theologians, particularly later ones such as Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and ‘Allāmah al-Ḥillī, spoke of the immaterial soul, influenced by philosophical doctrines. This is because the concept of immateriality (tajarrud) is fundamentally a purely philosophical concept, perhaps inherited from the Greek philosophers. In contrast, Peripatetic (Mashshā’ī) Philosophers, founded on the principle of the immaterial soul, hold that only the immaterial endures, thus asserting spiritual resurrection. The necessary implications of the cosmological and psychological foundations of a philosopher like Avicenna (Ibn sina), including the denial of the immateriality of imagination (tajarrud-i khayāl) and the rejection of the Mundus Imaginalis, entail the rejection of corporeal resurrection within his philosophical system. This, however, is not inconsistent with his acceptance of corporeal resurrection outside his philosophical framework and based on the Sharia and the confirmation of the trustworthy statement of the veracious one (Avicenna, 1983, p. 423; Avicenna, 2000, p. 682). Illuminationist (Ishrāqī) Philosophers, by transforming their cosmology, introduced corporeal resurrection in the Mundus Imaginalis for some individuals, namely the average (mutawassiṭīn), while positing spiritual resurrection for others, the perfect.

Finally, Mullā Ṣadrā, through his unique perspective on the existential rank of the soul and its transformation from potentiality to actuality and inventiveness, spoke of the inner body created by the soul and proposed two types of resurrection: corporeal resurrection based on the imaginal body and spiritual resurrection.

Building on the discussion of Resurrection, the issue of human immortality and whether this immortality retains a personal or generic identity has been a subject of reflection for philosophers and theologians. Immortality is perhaps a topic whose truths humanity is

naturally curious to know. From a theological and religious perspective, all theologians and divines, relying on the religious text and divine teachings, have spoken of the eternity and immortality of human beings, albeit in different manners and forms. They accept personal immortality by appealing to the individuation of bodies through their recreation by the power of Almighty God.

Muslim philosophers, too, have demonstrated human immortality using a rational and philosophical approach by reflecting on the essence of man, the soul, and proving its immateriality (*tajarrud*). Farabi, as a Muslim philosopher, has philosophically and rationally established the concern for the immortality of some, but not all, human beings within the framework of his own philosophical principles. He defends the personal immortality and individual identity of these individuals in the afterlife.

Regarding Farabi's view, several studies have been conducted:

1. (Davoudi, 1957, pp. 365-372): While this study investigated the survival of souls from Farabi's perspective, it did not examine the role of the "City"—which is one of the most important principles of Farabi's social philosophy—in the survival or non-survival of souls, nor did it address the issue of personal versus non-personal immortality.
2. (Riyahi, 2001, pp. 66-78): This work addressed the survival of the human soul from the perspective of three philosophers: Farabi, Avicenna (Avicenna), and Mulla Sadra (Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn). The author briefly stated Farabi's view and presented Avicenna's criticisms of Farabi, but failed to consider the criticisms of Andalusian philosophers regarding Farabi's view on immortality, as well as the place of "City Studies" in understanding Farabi's theory.

3. (Mansouri and Kahrizi, 2019, pp. 189-210): This research extensively examined the fate of deficient souls in Farabi's philosophy, but the criterion for the survival or non-survival of souls and their relation to the City was only mentioned very briefly. It is, of course, entirely logical that the issue of the type of immortality was not raised in that article, as it was not its primary subject.

It must be stated that one cannot articulate Farabi's final view on immortality by merely conducting an inventory of souls. The differentiation between souls, the relation of souls to the City, and the criterion for the souls' survival, collectively illustrate Farabi's epistemic architecture concerning immortality. The aforementioned articles have not addressed all three components simultaneously, components which possess a geometric relationship with one another. Therefore, they are unable to express Farabi's definitive theory on immortality. This article endeavors to extract, describe, and analyze Farabi's intellectual system regarding immortality by reflecting upon the three aforementioned components. The aim is both to clarify Farabi's final viewpoint on immortality, encompassing both personal and non-personal (generic) aspects, and to provide a response to those who consider Farabi an opponent of Resurrection and immortality, or at least as someone holding conflicted views (*muḍṭarib al-aqwāl*).

### 1. Farabi: Denier or Believer in Immortality

The main impetus for this research is the view of some philosophers regarding Farabi's stance on the issue of immortality. Whether the discussion of Resurrection and the Afterlife is addressed in Farabi's intellectual system is a point of contention among scholars. The basis of this disagreement lies in the statements of philosophers subsequent to Farabi, particularly the Andalusian philosophers. Among these is

Ibn Ṭufayl, a philosopher of the 6th century AH. In his view, Farabi lacked a stable and firm opinion on the survival of souls. Consequently, he ultimately considered Farabi a denier of eternity (khulūd) and immortality.

In the introduction to his commentary on *Risālat Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, Ibn Ṭufayl states that in *Risālat al-Millah al-Fāḍilah* (The Virtuous Religion), Farabi speaks of the survival of wicked souls (nufūs sharīr) (in addition to the virtuous souls), while in his book *Siyāsāt al-Madaniyyah* (The Political Regime), he asserts the survival of virtuous souls only. Furthermore, he claims that in the commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics*, Farabi denied any form of otherworldly felicity (sa'ādah ukhrawīyah), considering felicity to be purely worldly and anything beyond that to be drivel and old women's superstitions (Ibn Ṭufayl, 1994, p. 62). Ibn Rushd (Averroes), another Andalusian philosopher, in his treatise "De materiae intellectu et eius cum intellectu agente conjunctione" (On the Material Intellect and its Conjunction with the Active Intellect)—the Arabic version of which is unfortunately unavailable—reiterated Ibn Ṭufayl's statement and considered Farabi a denier of eternity and immortality (as cited by Al-Fākhūrī, 1979, p. 422).

Some contemporary scholars also consider Farabi's view on the immortality of souls to be not free from conflict (Ṣalībā, 1995, p. 166; Abū Rayyān, 1973, p. 252; Hammond, 1947, pp. 35-36). However, Farabi is regarded as one of the believers in Resurrection and immortality in the works of other Muslim philosophers—a position that Farabi's own works clearly indicate. He, in fact, attributes the denial of eternity to the ancients (Farabi, 1992, p. 142). It appears that the judgment of the Andalusian philosophers regarding Farabi's view stemmed, on the one hand, from their incomplete access to Farabi's works, leading to an inaccurate conclusion. On the other hand, as will be elaborated,

Farabi, within the framework of his City Studies (Madīnah-shināsi), speaks of felicity (sa'ādah), wretchedness (shaqāwah), and eternity (khulūd) not for all souls, but only for certain ones. This point—the failure to distinguish between souls and the assertion of immortality for only some—is key.

## 2. Foundations of Immortality in Farabi's Thought

In Farabi's philosophy, the understanding of human immortality is based on two foundations: metaphysical and social. In other words, Anthropology (metaphysical theory) and City Studies (social-political foundation) are the two pillars Farabi uses to explain and prove immortality for human beings. Indeed, attaining eternity and immortality has an internal component and an external component. The external component—namely, a person's life in the City—holds a special place in completing the internal component, which is the actualization of the human soul in terms of the Intellect. An examination of these two foundations is the essential prerequisite for understanding Farabi's theory of immortality.

### 2-1. Anthropological Foundation

Farabi's first foundation for the issue of immortality is an anthropological foundation. This foundation consists of two principles:

1. The composition of man from body and soul: Man is not merely a material body; rather, there exists a reality beyond the body.
2. Substantial Dualism: The soul and the body are two independent and mutually exclusive substances (jawharān mustaqillān).

In explaining the first principle, it must be said that from

Farabi's viewpoint, man is beyond a mere material body because he possesses a faculty that perceives intelligibles. Since the intelligibles are devoid of material accidents (*mujarrad*), the perceiving faculty must also be immaterial (Farabi, 1966, p. 7). Therefore, man is composed of two dimensions: corporeal (the body) and spiritual (the rational soul or *nafs nāṭiqā*). This is in contrast to animals, which lack this spiritual dimension and whose souls are not immaterial (Farabi, 1992, p. 140).

Farabi, like Aristotle, considers the soul to be the first perfection (*kamāl awwal*) of a natural, organic body possessing potential life (Farabi, 1992, p. 304). The body, due to its materiality and composition, possesses the potential for corruption and disintegration and will ultimately perish. However, the soul, being simple, immaterial (*mujarrad*), and non-material, lacks the potential or capacity for corruption and does not perish with the decay of the body; rather, it persists (Farabi, 1966 p. 120; Farabi, 1998, p. 52; Farabi, 2007, p. 135; Farabi, 1882, p. 64). Thus, when Farabi speaks of the survival and immortality of man, he means the survival of the soul in terms of its rational faculty—i.e., the soul whose intellect has become actualized (*fa'aliyyat yāftah*)—and not the resurrection of the material body or the reconstitution of bodies (*ba'th al-abdān*).

Therefore, when he posits the immateriality of the soul as the criterion for survival, it is the rational part (*juz' nāṭiq*) of the soul, specifically the immateriality of the intellect, which is attained through reaching the stage of the Actual Intellect (Farabi, 1998, p. 42). This is where we encounter rational resurrection (*ma'ād aqlī*) in Farabi's philosophy: the afterlife is achieved not for the body, nor for the soul *qua* soul, but the soul attains immortality in terms of its rational faculty. The corollary of the first anthropological principle is the second principle: the disparity between soul and body. According to the first principle, the soul is immaterial while the body is material.

Since the immaterial is distinct from matter, the soul is distinct from the body. This disparity holds true not only in their existence but also in their attributes (Farabi, 2002, p. 62).

In fact, Farabi's first foundation for the issue of immortality is that the essence of man is something beyond the material body which acquires an immaterial identity through connection with the Active Intellect, thereby becoming independent of the material body for its substance and existence.

## 2. Sociological Foundation

Farabi's second foundation for the issue of immortality is his City Studies. From his perspective, the political and social system has a direct impact on the nature of a person's worldly and otherworldly life. Farabi, influenced by Aristotle, considers man to be "political by nature". A person requires others—i.e., presence in a society—both for the substance of their existence (*qawām wujūdī*) and for the attainment of the highest perfections (*a'lā al-kamālāt*) (Farabi, 1986 a, p. 117; Farabi, 1998, p. 69). Not only humans but even certain animals and plants cannot continue their lives without a society (Farabi, 1998, p. 69).

A person cannot provide all their necessities and needs alone without the help of others. For any kind of perfection, one needs to become a member of a society and collaborate with other members of their species. According to Farabi, the highest good and the ultimate perfections are achieved in the City (*Madīnah*), just as vices and base qualities are also the result of being in the City. Therefore, immortality is not merely an individual matter or the acquisition of virtues; rather, it varies according to people's belonging to different types of cities and societies. The actualization of praiseworthy qualities (*ḥamīdah*) or blameworthy qualities (*radhīlah*), and the felicity (*sa'ādah*) or

wretchedness (shaqāwah) of a person, is contingent upon the society in which they live.

Given the necessity of society for human felicity and wretchedness, Farabi mentions five categories of Cities: 1-The Virtuous City 2-The Ignorant City 3-The Transgressing City (Madīnah al-Fāsiqah) 4-The Changing City (Madīnah al-Mutabaddilah) 5-The Errant City (Madīnah al-Ḍāllah) (Farabi, 1986 a, pp. 115 & 131; Farabi, 1998, pp. 80 & 87).

The inhabitants of each City are granted survival or annihilation, and felicity or wretchedness, corresponding to the political order of their respective City. The Virtuous City: This is the ideal city (utopia) where wisdom (ḥikmah) and philosophy are necessary conditions for its establishment and survival. Due to the presence of a wise leadership and a philosophical king (the Philosopher-King theory), every class is positioned correctly, and every individual is assigned to their appropriate task. The highest degrees of individual perfection are attainable under the aegis of this ideal society. In such a society, due to the connection of the leader's soul with the Active Intellect, the souls of the other inhabitants also find the possibility of connecting with the Active Intellect. They acquire knowledge of matters such as felicity, the Necessary Being (Wājib), the Intellects (ʿUqūl), and the Active Intellect, and they act upon that knowledge (Farabi, 1986 a, p. 124).

The Transgressing City: The inhabitants of this City know and conceive of principles such as the Necessary Being and the Intellects. They also imagine and believe in felicity. They are guided toward actions that bring about felicity, and they know and believe in those actions, but they do not act upon them. Instead, they act upon their desires and impulses, similar to the inhabitants of the Ignorant City, and are like them in terms of actions and morals (Farabi, 1986 A, p. 133;

Farabi, 1998, p. 103). The Ignorant City: The inhabitants of this City fundamentally do not recognize felicity and it has not even occurred to them. If guided toward true felicity, they cannot conceive of it correctly and, consequently, cannot assent to it. They mistake imaginary felicity, such as health, wealth, etc., for true felicity (Farabi, 1986 a, p. 131; Farabi, 1998, p. 87). The Changing City (Madīnah al-Mutabaddilah): The inhabitants of this City were initially like the people of the Virtuous City in terms of opinions and actions, but over time, they have changed (tabaddul), and their opinions and actions have been altered (Farabi, 1986 a, p. 133). The Errant City (Madīnah al-Ḍāllah): Finally, in this City, due to the presence of adeceitful and cunning leader who claims prophethood, the inhabitants are taught opinions and beliefs about God, the Intellects, etc., that are incorrect. They are presented with a felicity that is not, in fact, true felicity (Farabi, 1998, p. 104; Farabi, 1986 a, p. 133).

Thus, based on Farabi's City Studies, a direct connection is established between an individual's life in a society and the leadership of that society on the one hand, and that individual's knowledge, action, and ultimately felicity and wretchedness on the other. Immortality or non-immortality, as well as human felicity or wretchedness, is dependent upon the society in which they live.

### 3. Survival and Immortality of Souls

Given the two aforementioned foundations—the anthropological and the sociological—the question must be asked: Which category of souls, and the inhabitants of which City, will experience a life other than the worldly one? Do the inhabitants of all societies survive, or only those of some societies? In other words, do the souls of all humans remain, or can only the souls of some humans endure? In Farabi's view, only the inhabitants of two Cities, the Virtuous City and

the Transgressing City, experience an afterlife in addition to worldly life.

To elaborate: from Farabi's perspective, the purpose of human creation is to attain ultimate felicity. To achieve this felicity, one needs to know it and set it as one's goal. One also needs to know the actions through which one can reach felicity. Since the knowledge of felicity and the knowledge of the actions leading to it is not innate (*fiṭrī*), a person needs a teacher and guide. This teacher is ultimately the leader of the society, who possesses sufficient knowledge of the actions necessary for felicity (Farabi, 1998, p. 78; Farabi, 1986 a, p. 126). Such a society is the Virtuous City.

Regarding how souls attain survival and immortality in the Virtuous City, the leader in such a City is one whose soul, through its connection with the Active Intellect, actually possesses (*bi-l-fi'l wājid*) all sciences and knowledge (Farabi, 1998, p. 79; Farabi, 1986 a, pp. 125-126). Such an individual can nurture the souls of the people. The human soul has three ranks: sensation, imagination, and intellect. All three ranks are potential at the inception of the soul, and a person can attain actuality in any of these ranks depending on their City and its leader.

In the Virtuous City, under the leadership of the wise ruler, the Intellect, or the rational part of the soul, moves from the potential stage to the actual stage. In fact, as a result of knowing felicity, the Necessary Being (*Wājib al-Wujūd*), the Intellects, and the Active Intellect, the Passive Intellect (*Aql Munfa'il*) becomes actualized and resembles the separated substances (*mufāriqāt*). Following this knowledge, the rational soul becomes independent of the body for its substance and perfection. Consequently, by acting upon the acquired knowledge, it acquires virtuous psychological dispositions (*hay'āt nafsānī fāḍilah*) and becomes felicitous (*sa'adatmand*). Such a soul, having become actualized and separated from the body (*mufāraqat*

yāftah), will not perish with the decay of the body; thus, it benefits from immortality and eternal felicity (Farabi, 1986 a, p. 135; Farabi, 1998, p. 81).

The souls of the inhabitants of the Transgressing City, since they are similar to the people of the Virtuous City in terms of knowledge of felicity, the Necessary Being, and the Intellects, become actualized and consequently separate from the body. However, in terms of action, they are like the people of the Ignorant City. Therefore, they do not perish with the annihilation of the body but endure, experiencing an eternal afterlife in addition to worldly life. This group shares the trait of immortality with the people of the Virtuous City, with the difference that the souls of the Virtuous City will be in eternal felicity (sa'ādah abadī), while the souls of the Transgressing City will be in eternal wretchedness (shaqāwah abadī) (Farabi, 1986 a, pp. 143-144; Farabi, 1998, p. 104). However, the inhabitants of the Ignorant, Errant (Ḍāllah), and Changing (Mutabaddilah) Cities experience only a limited worldly life and perish with the annihilation of the body. This is because the souls of such humans can only be actualized in terms of the sensory (ḥiss) and imaginative (mutakhayyilīyyah) ranks, and their intellect (aql) remains potential (bi-l-quwwah).

At these ranks, the soul is material, like that of beasts, predatory animals, and reptiles, and is dependent on the body for its substance and survival. Therefore, when the matter, or the body, is destroyed, the soul also perishes (Farabi, 1998, p. 83; Farabi, 1986 a, pp. 142-144). From Farabi's perspective, the soul in the ranks of sensation and imagination is subsistent in the body and connected to it, deriving pleasure from subordinate dispositions. Since the soul is material at these two ranks, they perish with the decay of the body (Farabi, 1986 a, p. 42). Even the rank of the Potential Intellect, being a disposition in

the body (hay'at), will be subsistent in the body and non-enduring (Farabi, 1986 a, p. 101).

Thus, it becomes clear that Farabi asserts eternity and immortality for two categories of souls: the Virtuous Souls and the Transgressing Souls, both of which are considered knowing souls. The difference is that the knowledge of the former is accompanied by action, while the knowledge of the latter is without action.

Just as knowledge necessitates the actualization of the rational part of the soul, action also holds a similar position. In Farabi's view, performing the actions that lead to felicity can cause the actualization and perfection of the part of the soul that is naturally prepared for felicity. This perfection leads to that part becoming independent of the body, and consequently, it does not perish with the body's decay (Farabi, 1998, p. 81). In other words, humans are divided into two groups: those with a sound nature and those with an unsound nature. Those with a sound nature may reach felicity (Farabi, 1998, p. 75). Apart from these two groups, the other souls are only actualized in terms of the sensory and imaginative ranks, and their intellect remains potential or material. Therefore, they cannot transcend this worldly life.

An objection might be raised that Farabi's view regarding the non-survival of some souls contradicts the teachings of Islam, which posits an afterlife and eternity for all human beings. This objection can be resolved by distinguishing the methodologies used to approach the issue of Resurrection and Immortality. As noted in the introduction, Farabi addresses the issue of immortality within the framework of his philosophical system and his metaphysical and sociological foundations, using a rational and philosophical approach that is independent of religious considerations. The necessary implication of Farabi's philosophical principles is the immortality of only those humans who have managed to actualize their intellect through connection with the

Active Intellect. Therefore, attempting to reconcile his philosophical view on this matter with religious teachings and analyzing his philosophical perspective through the lens of religious doctrines constitutes a methodological confusion. Just as Avicenna, as a philosopher, proposes one theory regarding the Resurrection, and as a pious, Sharia-adherent individual, accepts another viewpoint, Farabi can also present his view on human immortality consistent with the distinction between the two domains of religion and philosophy.

#### 4. Criterion for Survival and Immortality

From Farabi's perspective, the survival and annihilation of human souls are defined in relation to the body. The condition for the soul's survival and immortality is its independence from the body in its existence and substance. Conversely, the soul's dependence on the body is the criterion for its non-survival and non-immortality (Farabi, 1986 a, p. 105). In essence, immateriality (tajarrud) and actualization are the criteria for survival, while materiality is the criterion for annihilation. Based on this criterion, Farabi asserts survival and immortality solely for the intellect, and not just any intellect, but only the intellect that has progressed from the Hylic (stage to the Actual stage).

In Farabi's terms, it is the rational part of the soul that, by passing from the potential/hylic stage to the actual stage, endures. This is because when the rational part of the soul is perfected and reaches the stage of the Actual Intellect, it becomes similar to the separated substances (Farabi, 1998, p. 42). The immateriality of the soul is the actualization of the potential intellect and its independence from the material body for its substance and perfection. Consequently, with the destruction of the body, the soul that has become immaterial in its rational part is not destroyed but persists. For this reason, in Farabi's

view, although the body is a condition for the soul's origination, the soul does not need the body for its survival (Farabi, 1992, p. 141).

What endures, in fact, is not the soul in all its ranks, but the soul in terms of its connection with the Active Intellect. This connection is formed between the rational part of the soul and the Active Intellect. The rational part of the soul receives the first sciences and the first intelligibles from the Active Intellect (Farabi, 1998, p. 72). These first intelligibles are the first kinds of knowledge (Farabi, 1998, p. 74).

As a result of acquiring these intelligibles and knowledge, the intellect, which was potential at its inception, gradually becomes actualized. Reaching actualization entails the separation of the intellect from the body, allowing it to continue its life independently. If this knowledge is accompanied by action, it brings felicity; otherwise, it results in wretchedness.

Based on this criterion, Farabi's view suggests that after a person's death, souls are divided into three categories: surviving or annihilated. The surviving category is either in felicity or wretchedness: 1- Souls in Eternal Felicity (The Virtuous City): This group consists of individuals who knew felicity and acted upon it, striving to attain it. These are the inhabitants of the Virtuous City, who possessed both the necessary and sufficient knowledge and action. Their souls will be in eternal and everlasting felicity. 2- Souls in Eternal Wretchedness (The Transgressing City): This group consists of individuals who knew felicity but abstained from acting upon it. These are the people of the Transgressing City, who had the necessary and sufficient knowledge but did not act upon it. Their souls remain in eternal and everlasting wretchedness. 3- Annihilated Souls (Ignorant, Errant, and Changing Cities): This group consists of individuals who fundamentally did not recognize felicity and whose intellect did not

reach the stage of the Acquired Intellect. With the decay of their bodies, their souls, which were subsistent in the body, also perish, and they will experience no form of immortality. The inhabitants of the Errant, Ignorant, and Changing Cities constitute this group.

### 5. Personal or Impersonal Immortality

After establishing the immortality of certain souls, the question arises: In what manner do the enduring souls persist? Is this survival personal and individuated, or is it impersonal and generic (ghayr shakhṣī wa nawʿī)? In other words, just as we encounter a multiplicity of souls in this world, do we observe this multiplicity in the afterlife, or do the souls unite with one another or with the Active Intellect? One of the contentious issues in Farabi's eschatology is whether he asserts personal immortality or impersonal immortality. As is clear to those familiar with theological and divine matters, contemporary discourse discusses two types of immortality: Personal Immortality and Impersonal Immortality.

Personal Immortality can be conceived in several ways: 1- Recreation (Corporeal Resurrection / Restoration of the Non-Existent). 2- Transmigration (Tanāsukh). 3- Return of souls to personal bodies. 4- Survival of souls with an imaginal / celestial / ethereal / stellar body. 5- Disembodied Soul (Nafs Nā-mutajassid) Impersonal Immortality can also be realized in several forms: 1- Annihilation in the Universal Soul or Intellect and persistence by its persistence. 2-Annihilation in the Essence of God and persistence by God's persistence. 3-Survival and eternity in the memory and recollection of others. 4-Survival through descendants and progeny and the continuation of the species (generation). (Peterson, 2000, p. 322; Rezazadeh, 2004, pp. 13-15).

Some historians of Islamic philosophy believe that the type of

eternity (khulūd) and immortality in Farabi's thought is ambiguous. One group argues that immortality in Farabi is impersonal (Impersonal Immortality), suggesting the annihilation of the human intellect in the Universal Intellect and ultimately its annihilation in God, "because God is in all things and He is the whole in unity" (De Boer, 1983, p. 131).

Majid Fakhry, however, believes that although Farabi followed Aristotle's path in explaining survival, asserting that only the rational part of the soul is immortal, he differs from Aristotle on the *type* of immortality. Aristotle is said to uphold generic survival, whereas Farabi is believed to embrace individual survival (Fakhry, 1993, p. 145).

The reason for this disagreement may stem from certain statements by Farabi. He discusses the union (ittiḥād) of the fully Actual Intellects with one another at the rank of the Active Intellect, or speaks of the connection (ittiṣāl) of similar souls (Farabi, 1986 a, pp. 137-138; Farabi, 1998, p. 82). While these suggest an impersonal survival, this union and connection are spiritual and do not conflict with their individuation and personal identity (tafarrud wa tashakkhūṣ).

## 6. The Mechanism of Individuation

To explain personal immortality, Farabi posits a specific connection between a human's soul and their body: 1- Unique Fit of Soul and Body: Each soul is attached to a specifically suitable body, and conversely, each body receives its own specific soul. This is because every body, upon reaching a certain degree of temperament (mizāj) equilibrium, is ready to receive a soul. Since every body has its own unique temperament, it receives the soul appropriate to that temperament (Farabi, 1966, p. 119; Farabi, 1882, p. 63). Thus, there is a congeniality (sankhiyyat) between the soul and the body, and the multiplicity of temperaments and bodies necessitates a multiplicity of souls. 2- Matter and Form: The relationship between the body and the

soul is the relationship between matter and form. Every matter has a specific potentiality for receiving a specific form; hence, each body is specific to the soul it receives. 3- Acquired Dispositions as Identifiers: When the soul separates from the body, since they were in multiple and different bodies and temperaments, the psychological dispositions and qualities they acquired are subservient to the bodily temperament, and each disposition is compatible and commensurate with the body's temperament. Consequently, due to the multiplicity of temperaments, souls acquire multiple and different dispositions and habits (*malakāt*). This process distinguishes the souls from one another.

In result, the multiplicity of bodies leads to the multiplicity of souls; and if we have an infinite number of bodies, we will have an infinite number of souls (Farabi, 1986 a, pp. 135-136). Felicity (*sa'ādah*) and wretchedness are states that occur to the soul after its separation from the body: the pleasure resulting from separation from matter, and the pain resulting from the remnants of matter, are the states of the felicitous and wretched souls, respectively. These states are multiple and different according to the multiplicity of souls. Indeed, each soul acquires these states in the afterlife due to the merit it earned in the world. These states are both necessary for those souls and occur by virtue of justice (Farabi, 1882, p. 64). Therefore, human destiny and the soul's felicity and wretchedness are contingent upon the body with which it was associated during its worldly life.

A reflection on Farabi's works reveals the conclusion that he asserts individual survival and personal immortality (Personal Immortality). This immortality is related to the afterlife and is not a form of worldly survival such as transmigration (*tanāsukh*) or other types of impersonal eternity like survival in the memory of others, progeny, or descendants. This is confirmed by the fact that Farabi explicitly rejects transmigration (*tanāsukh*), asserting that the transfer

of the soul from one body to another, as claimed by the Transmigrationists, is incorrect (Farabi, 1882, p. 64; Farabi, 1345 AH, p. 120; Farabi, 1992, p. 138). Finally, it must be stated that in Farabi's Philosophical Eschatology, immortality (jāvidānagī) is an acquired (iktisābī) matter, and human felicity (sa'ādah) and wretchedness (shaqāwah) are the result of one's will and free choice (irādah wa ikhtiyār) (Farabi, 1986 b, p. 83). In truth, Farabi considers felicity to be the result of perfecting choice and subordinating the senses/passions to the intellect. This is because once the intellect is nurtured, imaginations (takhayyulāt) will be unable to provoke the senses into performing blameworthy actions (af'āl madhmūm), which are the enemies of felicity. To strengthen the intellect, one must strengthen the faculty of desire, for one who lacks desire will also lack will, and one who lacks will cannot follow the intellect. Just as the soul is the perfection of the body, the intellect is the perfection of the soul, and man is nothing but the intellect. Furthermore, since eternity and immortality are for the intellect, the people of felicity continue their eternal life in intellectual pleasures, and the people of wretchedness continue theirs in intellectual pains.

## Conclusion

From what has been stated, it is clear that from Farabi's perspective, immortality, eternal life, and true felicity or wretchedness are not for all humans, but only for that category of humans who possess the two components of knowledge and action or knowledge without action. 1-The Truly Felicitous (Inhabitants of the Virtuous City - *Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*): The individual, having lived in the Virtuous City under the wise and Active-Intellect-connected leader, has acquired knowledge of felicity, God, etc., and has performed their actions commensurate with that knowledge. Due to this acquired knowledge, the rational part

of their soul becomes actualized and reaches the stage of immateriality. It becomes similar to the separated substances and, in its substance and survival, becomes independent of the material body. Consequently, this type of soul does not perish with the decay of the body but endures, continuing its eternal life in infinite pleasure. Such a soul is the truly felicitous. 2- The Truly Wretched (Inhabitants of the Transgressing City - *Madīnah al-Fāsiqah*): Humans who have lived in the Transgressing City, although they benefited from the component of knowledge, were deprived of action. Due to their knowledge and the resulting actualization of the intellect, they do not perish with the decay of the body but endure, continuing their life in infinite pain. Such souls are the truly wretched. 3- The Annihilated (Inhabitants of Ignorant, Errant, and Changing Cities): Apart from these two groups, the rest of humanity who lived in other cities (the Ignorant, Errant, and Changing) only benefit from worldly life, and for them, eternity and immortality are meaningless.

Based on this analysis, the following points summarize Farabi's position: Denial of Annihilation: Firstly, since he posits eternity and immortality for some humans, Farabi is not a denier of eternity. Volitional Acquisition: Secondly, this immortality is the result of human knowledge and is consequently a volitional matter. Spiritual Resurrection: Thirdly, for Farabi, the afterlife is not in the form of the reconstitution of bodies or corporeal resurrection. This immortality pertains to the rational part of the soul (the Intellect) and the soul's degree of rational apprehension. Given the immateriality of the intellect, the afterlife is realized as Spiritual Resurrection. Personal Immortality: Fourthly, due to the specific relation between the soul and the temperament on the one hand, and the temperament and the body on the other, we encounter a multiplicity and diversity of souls corresponding to the multiplicity of bodies and temperaments in both

this world and the afterlife. Therefore, the enduring souls, both the felicitous and the wretched, will be in their eternal pleasure or torment in an individuated and personalized manner, despite their possible spiritual adherence to similar souls.

## References

\* Primary Sources (Farabi and Avicenna)

- Abū Rayyān, M. (1973). *Tārīkh al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī al-Islām (History of Philosophical Thought in Islam)*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyah. [In Arabic]
- Al-Asadābādī, H., & Qāḍī, 'A. (1965). *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-'Adl (The Sufficient [Book] on the Topics of Unity and Justice)* (M. 'A. al-Najjār & 'A. al-Najjār, Eds., Vol. 11). Cairo, Egypt: Al-Dār al-Miṣrīyah li-l-Ta'līf wa li-l-Tarjamah. [In Arabic]
- Al-Fākhūrī, Ḥ., & al-Jurr, K. (1979). *Tārīkh-i Falsafah dar Jahān-i Islāmī (History of Philosophy in the Islamic World)* ('A. M. Āyatī, Trans.). Tehran, Iran: Kitāb-i Zamān. [In Persian]
- Al-Juwaynī, 'A. (1995). *Al-Irshād ilā Qawāṭi' al-Adillah fī Uṣūl al-'Itiqād (The Guide to the Decisive Proofs for the Principles of Belief)* (Z. 'Umīrāth, Ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah. [In Arabic]
- Al-Mufīd, M. (1414 AH). *Al-Masā'il al-Sarawīyyah (The Sarawī Questions)* (S. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Mufīd. [In Arabic]
- Avicenna, Ḥ (Avicenna). (1983). *Al-Ilāhīyāt min al-Kitāb al-Shifā' (The Metaphysics of The Book of Healing)* (I. Madkūr & S. Z. Qanawātī, Eds.). Qom, Iran: Manshūrāt Āyat Allāh al-'Uẓmā Maktabat al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī. [In Arabic]
- Avicenna, Ḥ (Avicenna). (2000). *Al-Najāt min al-Gharaq fī Baḥr al-Ḍalālāt (Deliverance from Drowning in the Sea of Errors)* (M. T. Dānishpazhūh, Ed.). Tehran, Iran: University of Tehran Press. [In Arabic]
- Dāwūdī, 'A. (1957). Baqāy-i Nafs dar Naẓar-i Fārābī (The Survival of the Soul in Farabi's View). *Majallah-yi Dānishkadah-yi Adabīyāt va 'Ulūm-i Insānī-yi Dānishgāh-i Tihārān (Journal of the Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, University of Tehran)*, 3(15), pp. 364-372. [In Persian]

- De Boer, T. J. (1983). *Tārīkh-i Falsafah dar Islām (History of Philosophy in Islam)* ('A. Shawqī, Trans.). Tehran, Iran: Mu'assasah-yi Maṭbū'ātī-yi 'Aṭā'ī. [In Persian]
- Fakhry, M. (1993). *Sayr-i Falsafah dar Jahān-i Islām (A History of Islamic Philosophy)* (Translated under the supervision of N. Pūrjawādī). Tehran, Iran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī. [In Persian]
- Farabi, A. (1882). *Al-Thamarah al-Marḍīyah fī Ba'd al-Risālāt Farabiyah (The Pleasing Fruit in Some of Farabi's Treatises)* (F. R. Dieterici, Ed.). Leipzig, Germany: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung. [In Arabic]
- Farabi, A. (1966). *Rasā'il Abī Naṣr Farabi (Treatises of Abū Naṣr Farabi)*. Hyderabad, Deccan, India: Maṭba'at Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmānīyah. [In Arabic]
- Farabi, A. (1986 a). *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah (The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City)* (A. N. Nādir, Intro. & annot.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Mashriq. [In Arabic]
- Farabi, A. (1986 b). *Kitāb al-Millah wa Nuṣūṣ Ukhra (The Book of Religion and Other Texts)* (M. Mahdī, Ed & intro.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Mashriq. [In Arabic]
- Farabi, A. (1992). *Arba' Rasā'il al-Falsafīyah (Four Philosophical Treatises)* (J. Āl-Yāsīn, Ed.). Tehran, Iran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmat. [In Arabic]
- Farabi, A. (1998). *Al-Sīyāsah al-Madanīyah (The Political Regime)* (F. M. Najār, Ed & intro.). Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Maṭba'ah al-Kāthūlīkīyah. [In Arabic]
- Farabi, A. (2002). *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikmah wa Sharḥuhū li-l-Sayyid Ismā'il al-Ḥusaynī al-Shanab Ghāzānī (The Bezels of Wisdom and its Commentary by Sayyid Ismā'il al-Ḥusaynī al-Shanab Ghāzānī)* ('A. Owjabī, Ed.). Tehran, Iran: Intishārāt-i Anjuman-i Āthār va Mafākhir-i Farhangī. [In Arabic]
- Hammond, Rev. R. (1947). *The Philosophy of Alfarabi and its Influence in Medieval Philosophy*. New York, USA: The Hobson Book Press.

- Ibn Ṭufayl, A. (1994). *Risālat Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān (The Treatise of Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān)* ('Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, Ed.). Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī. [In Arabic]
- Manṣūrī, 'A, and Kahrizī, Z. (2019). Farjām-i Nufūs-i Nāqīṣah az Dīdgāh-i Fārābī (The Ultimate Fate of Deficient Souls from Farabi's Viewpoint). *Nashriyah-yi Dūfaṣlnāmah-yi 'Ilmī-Pazhūhishī-yi Falsafah (Quarterly Journal of Philosophy)*, 17(34), pp. 189-210. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jop.2020.75979>[In Persian]
- Peterson, M., Basinger, D., Reichenbach, Bruce., & Hasker, W. (2000). *Aql wa I'tiqād-i Dīnī (Reason and Religious Belief)* (A. Narrāqī & I. Sulṭānī, Trans.). Tehran, Iran: Ṭarḥ-i Naw.
- Rezazadeh, M. (2004). *Marg va Jāvidānagī (Death and Immortality)* (Translation of articles by Hume, Russell, and others). Tehran, Iran: Daftar-i Pazhūhish wa Nashr-i Suhrawardī. [In Persian]
- Rīyāḥī, 'A. (2001). Baqāy-i Nafs-i Insān dar Dīdgāh-i Fārābī, Avicenna wa Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn (The Survival of the Human Soul from the Viewpoints of Farabi, Avicenna, and Mullā Ṣadrā). *Faṣlnāmah-yi 'Ilmī-Pazhūhishī-yi Pazhūhishhā-yi Falsafī-Kalāmī (Journal of Philosophical-Theological Research)*, 3(9), pp. 66-78. <https://doi.org/10.22091/pfk.2001.405> [In Persian]
- Ṣalībā, J. (1995). *Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-'Arabīyah (History of Arab Philosophy)*. Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Sharīkah al-'Ālamīyah li-l-Kitāb. [In Arabic]