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## Methodology of Farabian Political Philosophy

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The methodology of Farabi's political philosophy can be discovered through his informal logic. Farabi's logic, in its informal modules, encompasses five techniques of demonstration: proof, dialectics, fallacy, rhetoric, and poetry. Obviously, proof is the first of these five arts and the last one is poetry. There is an intimate relation between these two which I will try to explore in this paper. The ultimate goal of proof is to motivate human beings toward rational happiness in building the Virtuous City – i. e., al-madina al-fadila. However, as people follow their habits and nature, they fail to perceive proof and rational matters. Imagination is the most powerful channel of motivating the public. Thus it is wise to introduce them to rational and intelligible issues via imagination, which could be materialized in poetry. In a nutshell, rulers use proof to address the elites and poetry in media to influence the public through imagination.

**Keywords:** Farabi, political philosophy, proof, poetry, rational happiness, imagination, Virtuous City

### Introduction

The methodology of Farabian political philosophy points to a kind of relation between his political doctrine in the Virtuous City – al-madina al-fadila – and his logical methods of argumentation – including five techniques, i. e., *sanaat khams*. It may well seem odd to claim this sort of connection between the five methods of argumentation and the political doctrine of Farabi. However, such is the bedrock of Farabian political doctrine. Because the final objective of the Virtuous City, as Farabi holds, is to construct rational contentment within human beings as well as across societies through imagination. Imagination goes hand in hand with poetry – *sanaat al-shi'r* – while rationality goes hand in hand with proof – *sanaat al-burhan*. This substantial point, we will argue, is the cornerstone of the link between Farabian logical argumentation and political doctrine.

On the other hand, as we will demonstrate, the art of proof is tightly linked to the art of poetry.

Before we go ahead, it should be mentioned that the informal part of Farabian logic traditionally includes five arts of demonstration: proof, dialectics – *sanaat al-jadal*, fallacy – *sanaat al-mughalatah*, rhetoric – *sanaat al-khatabah*, and poetry. According to

Farabi and his major successors like Avicenna and Nasir al-Din Tusi, these five demonstrative arts are defined as follows. Proof is intended to lead one to certainty. Dialectical method is devised to override one's opponent. Fallacy is aimed to clearly find where demonstrations went wrong. Developed to persuade the audience, rhetoric indicates the power of suggestion. Using imagination and imagery statements, poetry strives to motivate audience to take some action. The point I want to make is that there is a notable connection between proof and poetry in Farabian logic, in spite of their seemingly far distance. In one of his sociopolitical writings, Farabi describes the five parts of the Virtuous City, where in the first part wise leaders use proof and in the following parts – poetry. What has poetry got to do with proof? Or to put another way, what has imagination got to do with certainty? The answer seems to depend on explaining the functions of imagination as well as poetry. From there we can find a clear way to explaining the linkage of poetry and proof in Farabi's political philosophy.

### Functions of Imagination and Imagery for Farabi

Farabi does not point out the essence of imagination as a problem. He does not provide its essential analysis as well as its conceptual analysis. Thus one can come to the conception of imagination in Farabi only indirectly. Therefore, I address his opinion on different perceptions, i. e., sensory perception, imaginary perception and rational perception, and self intellectual faculties, including the faculties of sensation, imagination, and rationality.

Farabi does not see any difference between the imagination faculties of *khial* and *mote khayelah*. He mentions one faculty doing both activities and often calls it *mote khayelah* faculty and sometimes *khial* faculty [Farabi, 1992, p. 51–58]. Avicenna explains how these are distinct. But we cannot find anything like Avicenna's explanation about the five inner senses in Farabi's works.

Farabi does not discuss the nature of perception separately, but he points to the kinds of perceptions in his other discussions. For example, when talking about the first love and the pleasure that one takes in it Farabi says that it may be caused by feeling or imagination or rational science [Farabi, 2003, p. 85; Farabi, 1997, p. 71], and when analyzing the psychical faculties he claims that science may be realized by rational, imaginative or sensory faculties [Farabi, 2003, p. 156].

In his opinion, rational faculty is responsible for rational perception, imaginative faculty – for imaginary perception, and sensory faculties – for sensory perception.

Avicenna completed this theory. He conceptualizes illusion as a kind of perception. We cannot see this term in Farabi's works. Farabi has defined illusion as an imagination of something that does not exist [Farabi, 1987, p. 162].

In his discussion of the faculties of the self Farabi does not define faculty as such. Avicenna believes that "faculty" means both the origin of action and the origin of acceptance. Because the self is characterized either by perception or movement, the faculty could mean perception as the acceptance of origin or stimulation as action from origin. Avicenna has no prefer one of those cases over the other, and if one uses the term of faculty for both perception and stimulation faculties, namely both the origins of acceptance and action; it will be true to his terminology [Avicenna, 1983, p. 7].

Farabi explains the faculties of the self according to their existing order and describes their activities [Farabi, 2004, p. 10; Farabi, 2003, p. 151–155]. One of these faculties is the faculty of sensitivity including touch, sight, auditory, taste and smell senses. There is a dominant sense – the sense of appearance that is the focus of all sensory perceptions, and all other senses act like its spies, each responsible for a special type of information

and a special area of the body, and there is the imagination faculty, which has no servants and agents in the body and will act alone [Farabi, 2003, p. 153–154].

The faculty of imagination preserves the tangible images that are imprinted in the self and also combines some images with others or divides an image into parts creating new images. After the faculty imagination, the rational faculty is created in order for humans to think.

Many times has Farabi emphasized the conceptualization of perception faculties from the practical wisdom point of view [Farabi, 2003, p. 152; 2004, p. 11; 1997, p. 33]. He knows rational faculty as a faculty that allows humans to differentiate between beautiful and ugly in ethics, to act through it, to know, which action should be abandoned or continued, and in addition to find something beneficial or harmful, enjoyable or disgusting. Unlike imagination, which can just perceive the beneficial and the harmful, or the enjoyable and the disgusting, and the sensitive faculty, which can perceive just the enjoyable and the disgusting [ibid., p. 33].

One possibility of defining an object is to collect its activities. This is called a compound particular. Therefore through the activities of imagination faculty we could reach to what it is.

Farabi has defined three important activities of imagination. First, it stores sensory forms, i. e. preserves sensory perceptions after the sensory connection is cut.

Second, it analyzes and synthesizes sensory forms – that is, imagination combines or decomposes them. These combinations and decompositions are various and the faculty of imagination manages them desirably. Their results are sometimes relevant and sometimes irrelevant [Farabi, 2003, p. 154]. Put another way, sometimes combinations and decompositions are in concord with the sensible world, and sometimes they are not [ibid., p. 84, 95]. For example, imagination invents the winged human through combining the wings of the bird with the human body. Imagination can also combine bird wings with the horse body to create a Pegasus.

The third activity is imitation and illustration. Imagination can exercise its power to create metaphors and embodiments. Among various faculties of the soul only the imagination can illustrate the state of affairs through sensibility and rationality – that is, only imagination is able to portray the sensible and the rational matters. Imagination can even imitate the rationalisations of the ultimate perfection like the first principle, the prime cause, non materials, and abstract beings. Imagination clearly embodies these truths using the most exalted and most perfect sensible forms, beautiful and stunning objects. It also embodies the opposite issues – imperfect rational affairs through the use of incomplete, ugly and nasty sensibles [ibid., p. 106–107].

Thus, in short, imagination is the faculty to store, analyze, and synthesize sensory forms. It utilizes these forms to embody the sensible and the rational matters. The Iranian poet Sa'di, for example, creates one of the most attractive metaphors, representing the rational and the sensible issues:

Adam's sons are body limbs, to say, for they're created of the same clay. Should one organ be troubled by pain, others would suffer severe strain. Thou, careless of people's suffering, deserve not the name, "human being" [Sa'di, 2009, p. 15]. Sa'di embodies rational notions like empathy, sacrifice, and grace. Embodying human beings as organs of one body, Sa'di makes them accessible to the imaginary faculty.

Before Farabi, Aristotle spoke of the nature of the imagination in his contemplations on the soul. However, some researchers including me hold that Aristotle did not point out the third feature mentioned here [Aristotle, 1995, 427 a 18–429 a 4, 432 a 9; Black, 1996, p. 185].

Since Farabi does not analyze the quiddity of imagination, I will take up his notion of similarity among human faculties, ranks in the Virtuous City, the spheres of the universe,

and bodily parts. He begins the account of similarity with the spheres of the universe. Beings are ordered from the most perfect to the most imperfect one. The latter only serves, realizes no other things, and never leads. The First Being – al-awwal al-wahid, al-Rais al-awwal – is on the contrary superior and never serves. The First Being always leads. In between the two there exist a wide variety of middle beings leading the lower creatures while serving The First Being. So there is an order, a relationship, and a kind of cooperation among the spheres of the universe [Farabi, 1991, p. 63].

The same relation can be found in bodily parts and the faculties of the soul. This similarity means that the imagination faculty is under the service of the rational faculty and the sensitive faculty is under the service of the imagination faculty. In terms of leadership and creation, the rational faculty is the first and imagination and sensation are next [ibid.]. For Farabi, such is an order to be reproduced in the ranks of a society – namely in the Virtuous City. The status of the first leader of society is comparable to that of the God – that is, The First Being – in the universal system [Farabi, 1991, p. 63–66; 1997, p. 217; 1987, p. 259].

Farabi gives no more explanation about these analogies. Using these imageries has no use for our analysis other than creating a picture of imagination in our mind. The imagination faculty serves as a bridge between the rational faculty and the sensitive faculty. However, we should focus on the bigger picture, namely, the functions of the imagination faculty.

### **Functions of Poetry and Poetic Speeches for Farabi**

In Farabi's writings, there are several points, where he speaks of poems and poetry. Rendering the features of a poem, Farabi says poetic speeches consist of words that excite a mood in the audience, or demonstrate something higher or lower than the reality. These qualities refer to the descriptions of beauty, ugliness, magnificence, disgrace, and so forth. When listening to poetic words, one's imagination creates sensations so real that they resemble our feelings when we look, say, at loathsome objects [Farabi, 2002, p. 66–67].

In this definition of poetry, Farabi emphasizes two elements: poetry's ability to excite sensual emotions, and its tendency to create strong responses in our imagination. Elsewhere he divides poetry into six types: three pleasant and the other three disgusting.

The first kind of poetic words, which Farabi describes as the highest one, aims at improving the faculty of reason, as well as thoughts and actions. It aims to produce real and true happiness; it leads the mind to consider divine actions, and it glorifies the virtues. The second type of poetry attempts to moderate radical qualities and attitudes including anger, egotism, possessiveness, acquisitiveness, and so forth. This second type of pleasant poetic speeches encourages the use of such emotions in order to obtain goodness, rather than in ways that cause discord and result in obscene expressions. The third and last type of desirable poetry aims at the opposite qualities: that is, it tries to do away with apathy and feebleness. This kind of poetry tries to correct these deficiencies, to moderate lassitude, fear, grief, etc. Once more, this kind of poetry aims at good behavior and thoughts.

The three kinds of nasty and wicked poetry are not described in Farabi's work, save for saying that those are of the opposite characters to the three types of pleasant poetic speeches. The nasty poetry works to corrupt thoughts, producing immoderate sensational attributes and temperaments.

Beginning with poetry, Farabi says at the end of the analysis that music, songs and melodies are followed by poetic speeches [Farabi, 2004, p. 53–54]. To sum up, when describing the pleasant poetry and arts, Farabi focuses on those that produce goodness and happiness in the imagination, as well as those that moderate the emotions.

The poetic speeches are mentioned following melodies, notes, and songs, to which I will devote some attention. In many paragraphs of *Kitab al-Musiqi al-Kabir*, also known as *The Great Book of Music*, Farabi discusses melodies and notes. He believes that there are three types of melodies: melodies creating pleasure and comfort with no other effect; melodies creating pleasure and providing the imagination with new ideas; melodies inspiring cheerful or painful sentiments. This division of melodies into pleasing, imaginative, and passive will recur later in *The Great Book of Music*.

When reviewing the motives for singing and playing music, Farabi also describes three: some croon with the intention of attaining comfort and pleasure, and to forget their fatigue and the passage of time; some sing to strengthen or diminish their emotions and sentiments; some sing in order to explain concepts, creating visions.

In his discussion of melodies, Farabi further divides this last category. He introduces four purposes for melodies: melodies that please; melodies that create sensual emotions like satisfaction, affection, anger, fear, grief and the like; melodies that create imaginary forms; melodies that enable humans to understand the meaning of the words that accompany the notes of the song. Many melodies unimpeachably have more than a single purpose [Farabi, 1998, p. 554–555]. Farabi also pays attention to visual arts. He divides all kinds of images, statues, and paintings into two categories: useful and of little use. The latter sort merely creates pleasure, whereas the useful sort, in addition to causing pleasure, nourishes the imagination and creates emotions that embody other meanings [ibid., p. 559].

Farabi also suggests a definition for art in general. At the beginning of *Kitab al-Musiqi al-Kabir*, after dividing music into practical and theoretical, he defines art as a taste and a talent, combined with a rational element. These talents reflect concepts and imaginings that exist within the soul [ibid., p. 13].

On the whole, when discussing art, Farabi focuses on components such as taste, imagination, comprehension – i. e. the understanding of rational issues – sensual emotions, and pleasure. No doubt it should be noted that, as mentioned above, in his view, people come to understand rational truths through the use of their imagination. Furthermore, the arousal of feelings and emotions often originates in the imagination, and in imaginary forms.

### Use of Proof in the Virtuous City

Proof, as I mentioned previously, is conducted to generate certainty, by which one can figure out the rational issues.

According to Farabi, final happiness is the state in which a human being successfully perceives the rational issues, and achieves the nearest possible status to the Active Intellect [Farabi, 1984, p. 31]. For him, normal people cannot understand the rational matters, but they can use their imagination [Farabi, 1992, p. 129–130]. So the rational truths – and thus, the rational happiness – should be somehow transferred to the imagination of such people. This task should be undertaken first by the prophet, who has himself been linked to the Active Intellect, and has thus received all facts in their rational and imaginary forms.

According to Farabi, there are two ways to achieve understanding: one can perceive the essence of a thing and imagine it in its existing form, or one can imagine an idea, and all the things similar to it [Farabi, 1997, p. 225]. It is not possible to speak of or bring into action the particular details of that which is non-sensible – such as the soul, the ten heavenly intellects, the hyle, and all abstract beings. It is not possible, that is, unless they are formed in the imagination. Although such things cannot be felt, we can imagine them through analogy, parallelism, or allegory [Farabi, 1998, p. 43].

This relates to those concepts and beings that one cannot explain or describe through the use of reason alone. However, it is important to note that the majority of people do not have the reasoning power, due to their nature or habitude, to comprehend rationally even those things that can be described in this way [Farabi, 1997, p. 225]. In other words, they are not used for reasoning about the rational affairs. In most people, the soul is attracted to the imagination, and the imagination controls the self. Bodily forces prevent the soul from being solely concerned with its essence and rational perceptions. So the self finds confidence in the sensible to the extent that it denies the existence of rational truths, and considers them to be baseless delusions [Farabi, 1992, p. 129–130]. Thus, the proper method for educating the public on such affairs is through transferring images and resemblances into their minds through the imagination [Farabi, 1997, p. 225].

Elsewhere, Farabi reiterates that the public is not to follow the rational affairs. Human actions are often guided by the imagination, even though the imagination may be in conflict with one's knowledge, or be subject to one's suspicions [Farabi, 1987, p. 502]. In some cases, one's beliefs are actually contrary to what one imagines. One may be quite sure that reality is different from what one imagines. For instance, when a person merely imagines something frightening, he or she feels a sense of horror as if the idea were real. [Farabi, 2004, p. 52–53]. And most people would be afraid to sleep next to a corpse, even though we know that dead bodies are harmless.

Ultimately, in order to make people experience happiness, it is necessary to transfer facts and rational happiness through the use of images and embodied forms.

### **Place of Proof and Poetry Land in the Virtuous City**

Poetry serves a special function in Farabi's Virtuous City. Farabi in his book, *Aphorisms of the Statesman – Fusul al-Madani* also known as *Fusul Muntaza'ah*, describes five states of the Virtuous City. The first section is composed of the sages, as well as those who are clear-sighted in important affairs [ibid., p. 55]. The ultimate leader of the Virtuous City, however, is none other than the prophet. His government is blessed by divine revelation, and all his actions and views are based on heavenly inspiration [Farabi, 1991, p. 44]. The leadership of the Virtuous City is merely assigned to the prophet and his successors – the Imams [Farabi, 1991, p. 44–56, 203; 1992, p. 73–79].

It deserves to stress that for Farabi the actual philosopher and true sage is no one other than the prophet, who is The First Ruler – *al-ra'is al-awwal* – of the Virtuous City [Farabi, 1986, p. 133–134; 1991, p. 44–64; 2003, p. 121, 142].

In the second section, there are the “religion-conveyers”, including orators, missionaries, poets, singers, writers and the like [Farabi, 1992, p. 51–58]. Farabi places these poets, singers and the like, all of whom I refer to as artists, immediately after the prophet, and next in importance to orators and religious missionaries.

Now we come to the function of poets in the Virtuous City. Among the elements mentioned in Farabi's discussion of art, the imagination and the comprehension of rational affairs are the most useful in explaining the task of poets. As mentioned above, Farabi believes that the most exalted poet is the kind that uses imaginary forms to lead the people to imagine divine thoughts and actions. Moreover, desirable poetry, by nourishing the imagination, works to moderate extremes of emotions.

According to Farabi's theory of the imagination, there is a relation between the imagination and the rational faculty: specifically, the imaginary faculties are able to access the rational affairs through imaginary and sensory forms. The ultimate goal of rulers is to provide the public with rational happiness. The prophet, through revelation, perceives all the truths, both rationally and in his imagination. He has the ability to perceive

the essence of truths; in addition, he knows the metaphors and analogies through which to describe these truths.

But since rational perception of true happiness is not possible for the public, metaphors are provided that will appeal to the peoples' imagination.

The poets produce rational happiness through creating sensory and imaginary forms. So the poets perform an activity similar to that of the prophet. It should be noted that rhetoric performs such a function as well, but in the current analysis we concerned ourselves with poetry and poets. The position of rhetoricians and the functions of rhetoric – *sanaah al-khatabah* – need a distinct research, the importance of which is not neglected in my current studies.

### Conclusion

In Farabian political philosophy, the true and real happiness of a society is a matter of proof that could be reached via poetry. The art of proof pertains to the first rank of Virtuous City, while the art of poetry pertains to the second part.

Farabi describes two kinds of poetry: positive poetry, and normative poetry. Positive poetry or poetry as it is includes desirable and undesirable formations; these are classified into six different kinds. Normative poetry is presented by the poet of the Virtuous City. The ultimate goal of the Virtuous City is to provide the public with rational happiness. But, given that the public, based on their nature and their habits, are unable to perceive rational truths, rational happiness must be brought to their imagination. The poet of Virtuous City is able to convey rational happiness through the poetry, using sensory and imaginary forms. Such being the case, the poet like the prophet brings rational happiness to people's minds.

If one os to draw a distinction between the prophet and the philosopher – as typical of the so-called “theories of prophecy”, one would say that the epistemological source (the Active intellect / Archangel Gabriel) to true “happiness” is the same for the philosopher/wiseman and the prophet, but they acquire it in different ways: the philosopher – through the improvement of the theoretical power of the mind, and the prophet – through imaginative power, then I simply repeat the Farabi's clear notion: the prophet and the real philosopher/wiseman, and The First Ruler of the Virtuous City are identical and for Farabi the true philosopher is none other than the prophet.

### Acknowledgement

I deeply appreciate the anonymous reviewer for the very helpful and constructive comments.

## Методология политической философии Фараби

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Методология политической философии Фараби может быть раскрыта через его неформальную логику. Логика Фараби в ее неформальных элементах охватывает пять методов демонстрации: доказательство, диалектику, ложный довод, риторiku и поэзию. Понятно, что

доказательство – первый из этих пяти способов, а поэзия – последний. Между этими двумя методами существует тесная связь, которую я попытаюсь исследовать в данной статье. Конечно цель доказательства – побудить людей к разумному счастью в создании Добродетельного града – т. е. *al-madina al-fadila*. Однако, поскольку люди следуют своим привычкам и природе, им не удастся постичь доказательство и рациональные аргументы. Воображение является самым мощным средством мотивации широкой публики. Таким образом, можно познакомить ее с рациональными и умопостигаемыми вопросами при помощи воображения, которое реализуется в поэзии. Итак, правители используют доказательство, чтобы обращаться к элитам, а поэзию – для влияния на публику посредством воображения.

**Ключевые слова:** Фараби, политическая философия, доказательство, поэзия, разумное счастье, воображение, Добродетельный град

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