

Alfarabi's Concept of Happiness *Sa'ada* (سعادة):
***Eudaimonia*, The Good and *Jihad Al-Nafs* (جهاد النفس)**

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Distinguished Alfarabi scholars such as Muhsin Mahdi and Majid Fakhry have described Abu Nasr Alfarabi as one of the greatest Islamic political philosophers and as the founder of Islamic Neoplatonism. The medieval Islamic community considered him the "Second Master" with Aristotle being the "First Master". Abu Nasr Alfarabi was born in approximately 870 A.D. in a small village, Wisaj, near Farab in Turkistan . There is no consensus of whether he was of Turkish or Persian origin. After finishing his early school years in Turkistan , Alfarabi moved to Baghdad where he studied grammar, logic, philosophy, music, mathematics, jurisprudence and the sciences as well as the exegesis of the Quran. He was the student of Abu Bishr Matta bin Yunus, the great translator and interpreter of Greek philosophy. Alfarabi was among the earliest Islamic philosophers to introduce Greek thought to the Islamic world. "He makes them see that this tradition belongs to them no less than to the Greeks, and that they must make it their own, because it is concerned with matters closest to their minds and hearts." ("History of Political Philosophy" 209) this is one of the influences of Alfarabi in the Islamic culture, described by

Muhsin Mahdi. Alfarabi sought to connect classical political philosophy with Islam. He was also among the Islamic philosophers who preserved and transmitted the legacy of ancient Greek thought to Europe . He adopted some aspects of Greek philosophy and revised others to be applicable to the Islamic world. Alfarabi contributed to the fields of mathematics, philosophy, politics, logic and music. His works influenced the Islamic philosophers who followed him, particularly Ibn Sina (Avicenna) Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and Maimonides as well as western philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas who derived his essence-existence doctrine from Alfarabi. Alfarabi died in Damascus in 950 A.D. at the age of 80 years leaving a number of books on logic, metaphysics, ethics, political science, medicine, sociology and music. Alfarabi believed that the first purpose of inquiry is the knowledge of the First Cause (God), His characteristics and His influence on the universe. He searched for unity and order in the universe. In his works Alfarabi compared the order and unity of the body and its organs to the order and unity of the city and the universe. Alfarabi also believed that there is a general unity between Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy. He emphasized that philosophy is one unit, since its only aim is the pursuit of truth. Alfarabi was a truth seeker; he devoted his life to contemplation and speculation.

Since the translation of many of Alfarabi's works from Arabic to English, there has been a lot of interest in studying his philosophy. Many scholars such as Mahdi, Butterworth, Fakhri and Galston have written books about Alfarabi and his works. Most of these scholars have focused on Alfarabi's virtuous city and his philosophy on Plato and Aristotle. However, there has not been enough attention and scrutiny devoted to Alfarabi's concept of happiness. Some scholars such as Ali Abu Melhem didn't perceive the concept of happiness as a major theme in Alfarabi's works. In his introduction to the *Attainment of Happiness*, by Alfarabi, Abu Melhem, clarifies that Alfarabi did not write the title of the book. He states that the subject of the book is not

happiness because Alfarabi mentioned happiness only briefly. According to Abu Melhem, the subject and the purpose of the book is to introduce the different kinds of sciences, their importance and the way of attaining them (6). Likewise, Muhsin Mahdi, a renowned Alfarabi scholar who translated several of his books to English, did not discuss in detail Alfarabi's concept of happiness. In his introduction to *The Attainment of Happiness*, Mahdi states that Alfarabi's main argument is the relationship between philosophy and religion (6). In fact happiness was not only the main subject of *The Attainment of Happiness* but it was also discussed in several other major works including *Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*, *The Civil Politics* and *The Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*. Alfarabi's happiness was a major topic in Majid Fakhry's book *Al-Farabi*. Fakhry acknowledges the importance of happiness to Al-Farabi's philosophy, "Al-Farabi dwells on this divine or semi-divine goal of happiness in a number of works." (93). Likewise, Mariam Galston acknowledges the importance of happiness in Alfarabi's works by devoting a chapter in her book *Politics and Excellence* to the "problem of happiness" as she calls it. She examines the nature of happiness according to Alfarabi and whether it is considered a theoretical activity, political activity or both (Galston 55).

In this paper I will examine the concept of happiness and its importance in Alfarabi's major works, taking into consideration the influence of Islam and Greek philosophy on Alfarabi's philosophy. The paper will also discuss the similarities between Eric Voegelin's philosophy and Alfarabi's philosophy as they relate to happiness. The purpose of this paper is to remove the dust from Alfarabi's concept of happiness and return the brilliance to it.

Happiness According to Alfarabi

Alfarabi starts his book, *The Attainment of Happiness* by stating "nations and citizens of cities attain earthly happiness in the first life and supreme happiness in the life beyond when four human things are met: theoretical virtues, deliberative virtues, moral virtues and practical arts" ("The Attainment of Happiness".25). Although Alfarabi makes a distinction between earthly happiness and supreme happiness, he makes no further mention of earthly happiness in the rest of his book. Earthly happiness is necessary in this life for the attainment of supreme happiness in the afterlife, yet it is clearly incomplete and secondary to supreme happiness.

Happiness to Alfarabi is the absolute good. It is the good that is desired for its own sake where there is nothing greater to achieve. Achieving happiness is the purpose of life. Alfarabi makes happiness the reason for human existence. He expressly states that God created us to achieve happiness, the ultimate perfection. To Alfarabi, anything that helps a person achieve happiness is good and anything that obstructs a person from achieving happiness is evil. Happiness is achieved when the soul of the person reaches perfection, in which it needs no material substance to exist. One need not only comprehend and be conscious about happiness; one must also desire happiness and make it the purpose of life. If one's desire for happiness is weak and one has a different purpose in life, the result will be evil ("The Attainment of Happiness" 25-46)

Alfarabi describes each of these virtues and arts in detail and shows how they can be attained. Theoretical virtues consist of the sciences, the purpose of which is to have understanding of all the beings with absolute certainty. A portion of the theoretical virtues is possessed by people without an awareness of how they were acquired. These are the first premises or primary knowledge. First, a person must understand the conditions and the states of the first premises and their order. The rest is acquired by investigation, meditation, teaching and learning. At this stage, a person investigates the principles of being of the animals, the rational animals (human beings), the physical principles, the soul, the intellect and the intelligibles. After the principles of being are known, this will require the person to search for other higher principles that are not bodies or in bodies, but are metaphysical. Alfarabi asserts that natural principles are not sufficient to understand metaphysics and achieve happiness and perfection. Other principles are needed, namely rational and intellectual principles. A basic understanding of intellectual principles is not sufficient for the achievement of happiness. One needs to labor with these intellectual principles. According to Alfarabi, a person must join other human beings in order to labor with these principles because an isolated individual cannot achieve the ultimate perfection. To Alfarabi one cannot attain happiness outside the framework of political association. From this association emerges the science of man and political science. The science of man is the examination of the purpose for which man is made. Alfarabi explains that in these sciences, which are metaphysical, one must understand the first premises to this genus. One must investigate and understand every being in this genus until one reaches a being that possesses no principles at all, but is itself the first principle of all beings. After understanding this Being that has no defects, one should

investigate the influence of this Being on all other beings. Through this investigation, a person comes to know the ultimate causes of the beings.

After knowing and understanding the first cause, one should investigate all the things that are good, virtuous and noble, which are useful in achieving happiness. One must also know the things that are evil, vice and base, that obstruct achieving happiness. According to Alfarabi, the science that studies and investigates this is political science. Alfarabi defines political science as "knowing the things by which the citizens of cities attain happiness through political association." (Mahdi, "Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle" 24). According to Alfarabi theoretical sciences cover only the intelligibles that do not vary at all.

Deliberative virtues, on the other hand, cover voluntary intelligibles that vary across time and place such as events that occur by accident or by the will, such as a natural disaster or a war. Deliberative virtue is that "by which one discovers what is most useful for some virtuous end." (Mahdi, "Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle" 28) The deliberative faculty can discover both evil and good means. If the ends are evil, then the means discovered by the deliberative faculty are evil. If the ends are good, then the means are good. Alfarabi defines a certain deliberative virtue called political deliberative virtue. Political deliberative virtue enables a person to discover what is most useful for a virtuous end for a nation or a city or common to many nations, either for a long period or a short period. One cannot possess deliberative virtue and especially political deliberative virtue without possessing moral virtue, the third of the virtues required for happiness. For a person who wishes the good for himself or herself or for others has to have virtuous moral character. According to Alfarabi theoretical virtues, deliberative virtues, moral virtues and practical arts are inseparable.

Alfarabi offers two primary methods by which nations can achieve these virtues, either through instruction or through formation of character. Instruction introduces the theoretical virtues to nations and cities through speech alone. The formation of character on the other hand introduces moral virtues and practical arts through habituating the citizens in "doing the acts that

issue from the practical states of character by arousing in them the resolution to do these acts."
(Mahdi, "Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle" 35)

In *Civil Politics*, Alfarabi again emphasizes the importance of understanding the intelligibles and the first premises for achieving happiness. He points out that not every person has the capacity to understand these things. The people, who have the capacity to understand the intelligibles and the first premises, will not necessarily achieve happiness. These innate capacities make it easier for people to achieve happiness, but it is up to them to work toward this goal. To Alfarabi, innate and natural characters can be developed, strengthened or weakened. Alfarabi compares virtuous acts (either possessed by nature or acquired) to the art of writing. The more you practice the art of writing the better you become. Likewise, the more you practice virtuous acts the more virtuous you become, which will eventually lead you to happiness ("Civil Politics" 85-91).

Alfarabi believes that a person needs a teacher or a master that can guide him or her toward achieving happiness. Likewise, a city or a nation needs a master that can direct it toward happiness. This master can be the king, the imam or the philosopher. Imam, in Arabic means one whose example is followed. It refers to Muslim clergy. Alfarabi argues that the function of the imam, the philosopher and the legislator (king) are the same. This is an attempt by Alfarabi to combine Philosophy and religion as well as to emphasize the importance of politics or political participation in Islam. According to Alfarabi, philosophy is the superior science, the purpose of which is to achieve supreme happiness. Thus, a philosopher, or a king who has acquired philosophy and happiness can lead a state toward happiness. He explains that like the science of philosophy, religion supplies knowledge about the first principle and cause of beings. Moreover,

they both work toward achieving happiness. The only difference between them is that religion is based on imagination, while philosophy is based on conception or intellectual perception. Thus, the imam, the king and the philosopher have the same purpose. People who are guided by this kind of ruler (philosopher, king, imam) become virtuous and happy people. To Alfarabi, a virtuous city is a city in which people cooperate and help each other for the purpose of attaining happiness. The non-virtuous city on the other hand is the city whose people don't know happiness. Happiness doesn't even come to their minds. If they were to be guided towards happiness they wouldn't understand it or believe in it. Alfarabi discussed the destiny of the souls of the citizens of the virtuous city and the ignorant city and its different types. He believed that the souls of the citizens of the virtuous city are immortal. However, the souls of the citizens of the ignorant city are mortal and thus their destiny is to suffer. Thus according to Alfarabi political association should be directed towards the attainment of happiness.

The Influence of Greek Philosophy

Alfarabi was greatly influenced by both Plato and Aristotle in his philosophy in general and in his concept of happiness in particular. He was also greatly influenced by Islam. Despite the substantial influence of Plato and Aristotle, Alfarabi generates a unique discussion of happiness, which is an amalgamation of those ideas of Plato and Aristotle that are consistent with Islamic philosophy. He selects portions from each of these three influences to generate a complete description of happiness. Alfarabi's concept of happiness is a product of his experience and his understanding of Greek philosophy and Islam. His concept of happiness combines Plato's

concept of the good, Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia* (happiness) and the Islamic concept of *Jihad Al nafs* (struggle of the soul). I will discuss each of these influences in detail.

Unlike Aristotle's developed concept of happiness, Plato's concept is more obscure. Plato's concept of the Good is similar to happiness as defined by Aristotle and Alfarabi. The Good is the source of intelligibility. Plato discussed "the Good" in his paradigm, the divided line. He believed that the highest goal in all of education is knowledge of the Good. He argued that just as the sun provides light by means of which we are able to perceive everything in the visual world, so the Form of the Good provides the ultimate standard by means of which we can apprehend the reality of everything that has value. According to Plato human beings aim at the good and nobody voluntarily chooses evil. Evil actions are the product of lack of insight. He argued that theoretical reason is the highest activity of man and a necessity to attain happiness. In this regard, Plato seems to suggest that the masses are incapable of grasping the truth. This is illustrated in the allegory of the cave where Plato suggests that the masses cannot see the truth directly but are satisfied with an imitation of reality. To Plato the good is the source of intelligibility. Similarly to Al-Farabi happiness is the attainment of intelligibility. Both of them described their concepts as the goal of life and both of them excluded any materialistic entities from their concepts. In talking about Plato's and Alfarabi's philosophy, Mahdi said, "Both direct the eyes of the citizens to a happiness beyond their worldly concerns." ("History of Political Philosophy", 207)

Happiness (*eudaimonia*) according to Aristotle is "an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if the virtues are several in number, in accordance with the best and most perfect" (348). Happiness is the highest of all goods. It is a first principle and cause of all goods. It is a self-sufficient activity always chosen for itself. While other virtues are chosen for

themselves, they are also chosen for the sake of happiness but happiness is the only thing chosen only for itself and not for the sake of other things. Aristotle distinguished between the life of amusement and the happy life. He believed that amusement is not self sufficient like happiness. Aristotle proposes two possible paths to happiness and asks which of the two is best, a life of virtuous activity or a life of *theoria*. The first path defines happiness as a practical virtue and therefore in need of external goods. Aristotle said, "A man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is not very likely to be happy" As we said, then, happiness seems to need this sort of prosperity in addition." (342). In the second path happiness is defined as *theoria*, or the contemplation of eternal truths for an entire lifetime. *Theoria* is the highest activity of reason. Ultimately, Aristotle explicitly chooses *theoria*, a self-absorbed activity over practical virtue (*arête*). This involves attending to one's own well-being, over engagement with others. Not only is the life of *theoria* superior to any other, it is higher than human. The life of practical *arête* achieves *eudaimonia* in a lesser sense because of the necessity of material goods in this life. The life of *theoria* limits the need for material goods, which can impede it. Perfect *eudaimonia* is enjoyed by the Gods and is theoretical rather than practical. Aristotle implies that in achieving *eudaimonia* one approaches becoming a God (Adkins 297-299).

Although Alfarabi's concept has many similarities with that of Aristotle, there are several fundamental and important differences. The similarities include the fact that happiness is the highest of all goods, chosen only for itself and the goal of life. The means of achieving happiness and the nature of happiness according to Alfarabi are different. It is clear that the path described by Alfarabi's is not one of self absorbed contemplation for an entire lifetime but through knowledge and action applied together, "Whatever by its nature should be known and practiced, its perfection lies in it actually being practiced." (Al-Talbi 3) In addition, Alfarabi differs with

Aristotle and Plato on the relationship between virtues and happiness. To Aristotle, virtues are sought for their own sake and for the sake of happiness. In the *Republic*, Plato asserts that justice, which is a virtue, should be sought for its own sake. To Alfarabi, virtues are sought only for the sake of happiness. However, they all agree on the importance of virtues in achieving happiness.

A substantive difference between Alfarabi and both Plato and Aristotle is the availability of happiness to the masses. To Plato, reason is the highest good and only those capable of rational contemplation can reach this good. Despite the undeniable influence of the "two wise ones" on Alfarabi, their consensus on the limited number of people who can achieve happiness poses a dilemma for Alfarabi with regard to his other major influence, Islam. Muslims hold that the Quran describes morality in the most perfect form and is available to anyone. Islam is based on a divinely revealed law in which everyone can participate. Alfarabi deals with this dilemma by arguing that, each person can achieve happiness at his own level, "to each man according to his rank in the order of humanity, belongs the specific supreme happiness." (Alfarabi, "The Attainment of Happiness" 75). He also makes his definition of happiness more practical than theoretical as described above. In her book, Galston addressed this issue in detail and concluded that Alfarabi's concept of happiness included both theoretical perfection as well as practical perfection. She believed that by giving practical perfection an essential role in the attainment of happiness, Alfarabi departed from his teachers, namely Aristotle and Plato (57). Galston questioned the importance of practical perfection in Plato's happiness. She argues that although Plato's philosopher as presented in the *Republic*, is active in political endeavors, the philosopher must return to the cave and he does this reluctantly. As such, she suggests that the philosopher's political activity is irrelevant for achieving happiness or at least not necessary for its attainment. Thus, she suggests that Plato and Aristotle are in agreement that political activity (a part of

practical perfection), although important are not necessary for achieving happiness. This departure from his Greek predecessors was necessary, in order for Alfarabi to be consistent with Islam and the concept of *Jihad al nafs*, as will be discussed next. The immediate implication of a practical rather than a theoretical road to happiness, is that through specialization, each person can achieve his own specific supreme happiness. This is fundamentally different than the single method of solitary contemplation prescribed by Aristotle. Unlike *theoria*, which can only be achieved by the philosopher, happiness to Alfarabi can be achieved by the warrior, and the artisan in addition to the philosopher. Despite making happiness available to the masses, Alfarabi differentiates the philosophers by giving them the responsibility of leadership in happiness.

It can be noted here that the distinction that Alfarabi makes between earthly happiness in this life and supreme happiness in the next is particularly relevant to the dilemma posed by Aristotle. This dilemma is that humans not only have base desires but genuine needs to survive that preclude the achievement of happiness which is defined by all as an activity of the soul. This is resolved by Aristotle by choosing a life of *theoria* that minimizes one's needs, over a practical virtuous life in which needs and human interaction are prevalent. The resolution reached by Alfarabi is consistent with Islamic theology, namely that earthly happiness exists but is limited. On earth one prepares oneself for the supreme happiness, which is achieved by the transition to the next life in which the soul sheds the earthly body. This supreme happiness is the one sought for its own sake. The conception that supreme happiness is reached only in the next life relieves Alfarabi of the problem of dealing with the body and its genuine needs, and allows him to propose a vibrant practical life rather than a recluse theoretical life.

The Influence of Islam

Alfarabi's conception of happiness is highly consistent with Islamic theology. At the very beginning of *The Attainment of Happiness*, Alfarabi distinguishes between earthly happiness in this life and supreme happiness in the afterlife. This statement indicates that as a Muslim, Alfarabi believes in the afterlife. There are several indications that suggest that Alfarabi believes that earthly happiness is secondary and derived from supreme happiness. First, he omits any further mention of earthly happiness in the rest of the book and frequently qualifies happiness with the word supreme. Second, he uses the term "*Al sa'ada al dunia*" to describe earthly happiness in the first life. The word *dunia* has two meanings, one literal, which means earthly and one metaphorical, which means lowly. If he only meant earthly happiness he may have said "*Al sa'ada fi al dunia*" or happiness on earth. Furthermore, in the same sentence he describes happiness in the afterlife as the supreme happiness (*Al sa'ada al quswa*). When one examines these two terms together, it is clear from the terminology that the intention is that one is lowly and the other is supreme rather than one being merely earthly and the other supreme. This description of a relatively unimportant earthly life when compared to the afterlife is a major theme of Islamic theology. In Islam, all that humans do in this life is for the afterlife and so earthly life derives its importance solely from the afterlife. Several verses in the Quran point to the lowliness of this earthly life. "♦And the life of this world is nothing but provision of vanities." (Quran 3:184) "Every soul shall taste death. And We test you by evil and by good by way of trial. To Us must you return." (Quran 21:35) This verse shows that this life is merely a period of probation. It is only important because it determines if we are to be punished or rewarded. Another verse says, "When death

comes to one of them, he would say `O my Lord send me back to life in order that I may work righteousness in the things I neglected." (Quran 23:99-100). This shows that earthly life is a process where we have the opportunity to find the good and do it. Alfarabi who is very aware of these concepts in Islam, did not go on to deal with the differences between earthly and supreme happiness and given the context of Islamic theology, he did not need to. Alfarabi, linked the four human things necessary to achieve happiness to both earthly and supreme happiness. Here, Muhsin Mahdi raised the question of whether according to Alfarabi these things are sufficient to achieve supreme happiness or whether there is divine aid that is also necessary. Mahdi states, "Alfarabi could not simply have overlooked what most Muslims believed to be the primary condition for attaining ultimate happiness", namely the intervention of divine grace ("Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy" 174). Alfarabi addresses this indirectly by prescribing the examination of the interaction between the First Cause and all other beings including ourselves. However, this question is beyond the scope of this article.

In Islamic theology, the universe in which man is placed was not created for trivial goals. The universe was created teleologically and so was man. The goal of man and the entire universe is to reach God. Man is the highest of all that was created by God. The Quran states that every human being is born with the divine spirit breathed into him. God commands the angels to kneel before man "So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit (*ruh*), fall down making obeisance to him" (Quran 15:29). After the initial creation, the Quran no longer uses the word *ruh*, but thereafter uses the word *nafs* to refer to the soul. The Quran reveals that from the point of view of God, the soul (*nafs*) is the entity that attains happiness and the

attainment of happiness depends on the development of the soul. The soul is judged and the soul enters heaven. The Quran describes three levels of development for the soul. The first is *al nafs al ammarah*, one wont to command evil. It is the lowest stage of spiritual growth ruled by low desires and animal passions. Man submits to his carnal desires. The next stage is *al nafs al lawwamah*, the self-accusing soul, where the conscience is active. The final stage is the stage of perfection, *al nafs al mutma'innah*, or the soul at rest, one that is in perfect peace having attained the goal of perfection. The only aim of man is the gradual acquisition of the divine attributes or intrinsic values as listed in the different names of God such as most just, most loving, and all-good. However, a person is not merely a spiritual entity. The soul is linked to a physical organism that has needs. Ultimate spiritual perfection cannot be achieved unless the needs of the physical organism are satisfied. In satisfying the physical needs one achieves the economic values, which are necessary for the realization of spiritual perfection but are secondary. Each of the intrinsic values at which we aim is good in itself but incomplete by itself. They all advance in harmony with each other. All of them converge on the ultimate goal, the value of all values, the end of all ends, the *summum bonum*. In Islam, when the human will is directed at the ultimate goal, it is said to have surrendered itself to the will of God and achieves happiness.

The process of developing the soul takes place in the stage of development called *al nafs al lawwamah*. This stage is defined by a struggle that takes place within the self in which the person has become aware of a higher deeper reality and struggles to direct all thought and action through an aware and conscious center rather than moving from one base urge to the next. This struggle to manage and control the self is called the greater struggle or *Jihad*, more specifically *Jihad al nafs* the struggle of the soul, "And whosoever strives (*jahada*), strives (*yujahidu*) only for himself. Surely Allah is self sufficient, above need of His creatures." (Quran 29:6). During

this stage of active *Jihad*, the lower self is subdued and the higher potentials are realized. The person struggles with turning his inner self and his worldly life into a new way of living that understands the true reality in which the material is only a small portion. One begins to understand the covenant that his soul made with God when God brought all the souls of the children of Adam that will be born and asked them, "Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes; we bear witness. Lest you say on the day of Resurrection: We were unaware of this." (Quran 7:172). Upon realizing this true reality, the person begins the greater struggle to make himself true to this covenant.

The above examination of the religious Islamic understanding of the soul, the struggle of the soul, and the ultimate purpose of existence as defined by God in the Quran provides a basis upon which to examine Alfarabi's theory of happiness. It is now clear that in Islam, happiness, the path to happiness and the struggle are clearly defined. The teleological framework is defined: God created man. Man is God's greatest creation. God made a covenant with each person's soul prior to his coming to life. God created man to achieve bliss (happiness) in the next life through a clearly defined struggle in this life called *Jihad*. This framework as defined by Islam left little room for Alfarabi in defining his theory of happiness. The similarities to Plato and Aristotle are evident in Alfarabi's discussion of happiness in that happiness is an activity of the soul, in accordance with virtue, and is sought for itself. There are three main aspects of happiness in which Alfarabi deviates from Greek philosophy: 1) Alfarabi explicitly spells out the teleological process that Man was created by God to achieve happiness ("The Attainment of Happiness" 43-44). 2) Alfarabi's process for the attainment of happiness is a practical struggle much closer to *Jihad al nafs* than it is to the recluse *theoria* described by Aristotle. 3) Alfarabi's concept of happiness is not exclusive to philosophers but available to the masses who can achieve happiness

through this process. I argue that all of these deviations from Greek philosophy are necessary if Alfarabi is to remain within the bounds defined by Islam. Because the Quran and *Hadith* (the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad) are so explicit in describing the purpose of man's creation, it was inevitable for Alfarabi to explicitly define the teleological process as he did. Because the path of struggle was spelled out in the Quran as a practical daily human struggle, Alfarabi could not describe it as a theoretical struggle. Because every soul made a covenant with God and is responsible for struggling in this life, happiness cannot be exclusive to the philosopher.

After appreciating the degree of similarity between Islamic religious theology and Alfarabi's philosophy, we note the unusual absence of Islamic terms in his writings. He could have simply stated that the path to happiness requires *Jihad al nafs*. Instead there is a notable almost intentional absence of the use of any Islamic terms. This is despite the clear influence of Islam on Alfarabi as noted above. This is because he considers his philosophy universally valid. His view of philosophy in general is that it is a universal endeavor that does not change from nation to nation or from religion to religion. There is a conspicuous absence of an admission that Islam factors at all in his philosophy. For that, he exposes himself to the criticism of copying the Greeks (Mahdi, "Al-Farabi's Imperfect State " 692).

Political Participation and Happiness

To Alfarabi participation in the community of being is necessary for the attainment of happiness. Alfarabi believes that an isolated person cannot achieve happiness "For an isolated individual cannot achieve all the perfections by himself and without the aid of many other

individuals." (Mahdi, "Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle" 23). The reason for this is intrinsic to humanity, "It is the innate disposition of every man to join another human being or other men in the labor he ought to perform." (Alfarabi, "The Attainment of Happiness" 44)

Alfarabi is consistent with the Quran, which states, "O mankind! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know each other" (Qur'an 49:13). Here God states that He created us in different groups that we may know each other. This verse clearly supports both the importance of association and the innateness of this quality. According to Alfarabi, political association can be of two types, one directed toward happiness and the other directed toward contrary goals. When political association is directed towards happiness, the product is a virtuous city, whereas when it is directed at pleasure, or wealth, the product is a non-virtuous city full of misery and depravity. The way Alfarabi defines a virtuous city illustrates the importance of participation. He believes that a virtuous city is a city in which its people help each other to attain happiness. Help is connected to happiness not just through action but also linguistically. The vast majority of words in Arabic come from a three letter root. *سعد* (*sa'ida*) is the three letter root verb, meaning to be happy. *سعادة* (*sa'ada*), is the noun derived from the root and it means happiness. *ساعد* (*sa'ad*) is also derived from the root word *sa'ida* and it means to help. Purely linguistically, there is a fundamental relationship between helping and happiness. Note that Alfarabi studied linguistics and mastered the use of language. Thus, he would have a deep understanding of the relationship of the word *سعادة* (*sa'ada*) and the word *ساعد* (*sa'ad*).

The manner of political participation according to Alfarabi is supported by the Quran, "And [as for] the believers, both men and women - they are friends and protectors of one another: they [all] enjoin the doing of what is good and forbid the doing of what is evil, and are constant in prayer, and pay the poor-rate, and pay heed unto God and His apostle." (Quran 9:71). This verse

shows that women and men are to work together through religion (prayer), through social justice (helping the needy), and through political action. The above verse from the Quran, is fundamental to the basic understanding of Islam by Muslims, that it is each individual's social responsibility to be conscious of those things that are good and evil in the society and to encourage yourself and others to do what is good and forbid yourself and others from doing what is evil. This brings us to the definition of political science according to Alfarabi who states:

Then he should investigate all the things by which man achieves this perfection, or that are useful to him in achieving it. These are the good virtues and noble things. He should distinguish them from things that obstruct his achieving this perfection. These are the evils, the vices and the base things. He should make known what and how every one of them is and from what and for what it is, until all of them become known, intelligible and distinguished from each other. This is political science. It consists of knowing the things by which the citizens of cities attain happiness through political association. (Mahdi, "Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle" 24)

Therefore, Alfarabi's conception of 'knowing what is good and evil and doing what is good' is essentially identical to that described in the Quran. To this basic Islamic concept, Alfarabi adds two important elements. He defines it as political science, and makes it a prerequisite for the attainment of happiness, which he previously defined as the purpose of human existence. It follows that Alfarabi describes the leader of the city as the one able better than anybody else to identify every action conducive to happiness and guide others to true happiness and the actions

leading to it. Therefore the leader is the one who best understands political science and is most able to guide others to happiness.

In the *Hadith*, the prophet Mohammad said, "The believers, in their love, mutual kindness, and close ties, are like one body; when any part complains, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever." (Hardy). The analogy of the society as a body is used by Alfarabi. He compares the virtuous city to a sound body whose organs cooperate but differ in rank and function. The master organ, the heart is akin to the master ruler. Alfarabi's city is also a microcosm of God's universe. The ruler of the city is compared to the first cause.

Eric Voegelin and Alfarabi

In his tribute to Eric Voegelin, John Hallowell states, "If there is any modern thinker who can be said to have engaged in the pursuit of truth in the spirit in which Plato carried on that pursuit, that thinker is undoubtedly Eric Voegelin." (3). Like Alfarabi and like most true philosophers, Voegelin's philosophy is a search for the transcendent source of order. Both Alfarabi's and Voegelin's philosophies are empty of ideologies. They did not create any ideological system or doctrine; rather they both opened a path of inquiry toward existence and its First cause. Both of them focus on the path of search and inquiry. Alfarabi, for example discusses in great detail the way of attaining and achieving happiness more than discussing the nature of happiness itself. All we know about the nature of happiness is that it is the absolute good and that it is desired for its own sake. He named his book the *Attainment of Happiness* and not Happiness, focusing again on the way or the path. Alfarabi's book "*Altanbih ala Sabeel Al Saa'da*" illustrates my point. The

translation of the title is, "The Direction to the Way of Happiness". Likewise, if we look at Plato's concept of the Good, we find more information about the way to the Good than about the nature of the Good. We are told that the Good is "Author and governor of the intelligible order, of the world of reality" (Plato 204), but the path to the Good is explained in detail from imagination to belief to understanding and then reason. Likewise, Voegelin's philosophy focuses on the way or path of inquiry on "*Zetema*". *Zetema* as defined by Voegelin is "the conceptual illumination of the way up from the depth of existence." ("Plato" 83). Voegelin's *zetema* is similar to Alfarabi's way of attaining happiness. In other words it is like the struggle of the soul (*jihad al nafs*). Voegelin states, "*Zetema* as an ongoing quest for truth never achieves a final resting point; it comes to a halt only with the death of the philosopher" (Elliott). Similarly the way for happiness cannot be stopped, since supreme happiness cannot be achieved except in the after life. Likewise in Islam the journey of the struggle of the soul doesn't end until the body dies and the soul goes to the next life. This idea is beautifully illustrated in Islamic practices around death. When a person dies, the family places obituary notices in the mosques and the streets. This obituary starts by a Quranic verse "O soul at rest (*al nafs al mutma'innah*), return to thy lord, well pleased, well pleasing, so enter among my servants and enter my garden." (Quran 89:28). This verse is placed on the obituary hoping that the soul has moved from *al nafs al ammarah* to *al nafs al lawwamah* to *al nafs al mutma'innah*, so that it finds its quietude and its happiness. Like Alfarabi's concept of happiness, which should be desired for its own sake, *Zetema* should be equipped by motivation and emanated from an inside source.

Furthermore all of these concepts, *zetema*, happiness, the Good, the struggle of the soul and *eudaimonia* contain a degree of mystery. This mystery reflects the nature of the Being to which all of the inquiry is directed. Both Alfarabi and Voegelin demonstrate the importance of the

Being in their philosophy. Although Voegelin was influenced by Christianity and Alfarabi was influenced by Islam, they agree on the fundamental questions of human existence or the First Reality. Like Alfarabi, Voegelin believes that truth could not be achieved in an intellectual vacuum. He states, "Truth about the constitution of being, of which human existence is a part, is not achieved in an intellectual vacuum, but in the permanent struggle with preanalytical notions of existence, as well as with erroneous analytical conceptions." (Sandoz 38). This struggle and analytical conception was also required by Alfarabi to achieve happiness and perfection. Alfarabi and Voegelin believe that philosophers have the responsibility of teaching the citizens to undertake the struggle. Alfarabi states "The perfect philosopher must have the capacity for teaching all the citizens and for forming their characters so as to enable everyone to achieve the happiness or perfection he is capable of attaining by nature." (Mahdi, "Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle" 6). Similarly Voegelin illuminates the importance of philosophy and philosophers in a city by saying, "The philosopher's office thus is twofold: he must set forth the truth by elaborating it analytically, and he must guard the truth against error." (Sandoz 39). The truth that Voegelin is referring to in this statement is the truth of existence. Thus, Voegelin's philosopher is similar to Alfarabi's conception of a philosopher, an imam who is knowledgeable of the first principle and cause of the beings. This also emphasizes Alfarabi's belief (following the ancient Greeks) that philosophy and religion are two expressions of a single truth.

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