

# The Relation of Metaphysics to Political Theory in the Thought of al-Fârâbî

Nanang Tahqiq

This paper is a summary of al-Fârâbî's political theory. His book *Âra' Ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdhila* edited by Nader<sup>1</sup> and translated and also edited by Walzer<sup>2</sup> is the only book this paper focuses on. However, other books or sources are quoted as far as is necessary. For the purpose of avoiding complications and repetitions towards those main sources, footnotes and pages are directly noted within a bracket, after any sentence quoted from either Nader's or Walzer's book. Quotations and footnotes—as expected in and for academic writing—will be attached definitely and clearly when other sources, apart from the above mentioned books are referred to.

Emphasis is placed solely on these two books in order to comprehend totally al-Fârâbî's thought through his original writing, and to encourage the writer in perceiving strictly and broadly his genuine notions of politics. Moreover, this strict limitation afforded the writer with an interesting comparison between Nader's version and Walzer's, since each of them has no similar interpretation—even different writing style—towards *Âra' Ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdhila*.

## Methodology and Research Object

This paper will examine the metaphysical concept concerning al-Fârâbî's politics. Methodologically, it will firstly allude al-Fârâbî's concept regarding the origin and growth of a society or city, and then will explore the concept he used as bases for his political ideas. These basic concepts are called metaphysics, because al-Fârâbî's view of politic was initiated by his metaphysical thought.

Some scholar states that his metaphysical concept embraces six ranks i.e. the First Cause, the second cause, the active intellect, the soul, form and matter.<sup>3</sup> However, as far as *Ârâ' Ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdhila* shows, we should actually consider his idea of 'organs and limbs of the body' to be part of his metaphysic too. Although the organs and limbs of the body are virtually a part of the faculty of the soul (i.e. they are included in the nutritive faculty), their position -in the light of al-Fârâbî's account- transcends other kinds of soul faculties. Several reasons can be offered for such a conviction. Firstly, when compared to the other faculties of the soul -such as the faculty of sense-perception, of appetite, of presentation, and of reason—<sup>4</sup> the nutritive faculty (with its organs and limbs of the body) is always placed as the basic paradigm underlying al-Fârâbî's idea of politics. Moreover, al-Fârâbî's himself always associated the perfect, excellent city/state with the excellent and healthy body. Secondly, the term metaphysics refers to a notion which utilizes some arguments as a base of one's opinion. Furthermore, this notion is used as a *raison d'etre* which can describe, explain and analyze one's opinion. This can be perceived from the term metaphysics which is derived from the Greek *meta ta physica* which means 'after the physics'. Meta means 'after', 'beyond'. Physica is from the words *physikos* which means 'pertaining to nature', or *physis* which means 'nature', 'natural', 'physical'. In terms of philosophy, metaphysics is the study of the underlying, self sufficient ground (principle, reason, source cause) of the existence of all things, the non dependent and fully self-determining being upon which all things depend on their existence. Metaphysics can be also defined as the critical examination of the underlying assumptions (presuppositions, basic beliefs) employed by our systems of knowledge in their claims about what is real. In this sense metaphysics is synonymous with important definitions of philosophy and also with epistemology.<sup>5</sup> According to Aristotle, metaphysics is the cataloging of the study of how such levels of existence relate to one another and how they provide the framework in which activity occurs and by which it is limited. On the other hand, Aristotle also assumed that metaphysics is the study of the ontological and logical status in providing us with truth about reality.<sup>6</sup> Thus, from both arguments, it can be deduced that since al-Fârâbî's political paradigm is associated to and initiated by the limbs and organs of the body, they too can be considered part and parcel of his metaphysical concept.

In the scope of this paper, al-Fârâbî's metaphysical concept concerning the view of the limbs and organs of the body and the faculties of the soul will be analyzed in depth, whereas the other ones such as rational faculty will be briefly mentioned.



### View on Politics and Society

Al-Fârâbî starts advocating his political thought when addressing origin and growth of a city or state. According to him, society appears in the wake of a unification between individuals who need each other. No body can suffice and fulfill his own, either primary or secondary, demands by himself.<sup>7</sup> This mutual assistance among individuals within society is inclined to by their inborn nature (*al-fithra al-thabi'iyya*), and enables every individual to achieve his highest perfection. (*an yabluh afdhal kamalatih*) [Nader: 117; Walzer: 229]. Subsequently, as long as people co-operate, come together and each supplies the needs of other with some specific need of his own, the contribution of the whole community will be brought together for the preservation of and the attainment of perfection for each individual.

The highest perfection for al-Fârâbî is felicity which allows a human being's soul to reach a degree of perfection. However, that soul does not need matter for its support, since it becomes one of the incorporeal things and of the immaterial substances and remains in that state continuously for ever. Therefore, its rank is below that of the Active Intellect [Nader: 105; Walzer: 205-207].

Concerning society, al-Fârâbî alluded that individuals coexist in great numbers, and live in inhabited places which are excellent or unexcellent. The excellent society is divided into perfect and imperfect. The perfect one contains great, medium and small societies within. The great one consists of many groups of people who agree to help and merge with each other. This kind can be compared to the united nations (*al-jam'a fi al-ma'mura*). The medium one contains one group of people. This type can be associated with the national state (*umma*). The small one comprises of the residents of one city and can be identified with the city state (*ahl al-madina*). The imperfect society on the other hand is the union of people in a village (*qarya*), in a quarter (*mahalla*), in a street (*sikka*) and in a house (*manzila*) which is the smallest union of all [Nader: 117; Walzer: 229]. The village and the quarter exist for the sake of a city and in which the relation of the village to the city is that of a servant to the city, while the quarter to the city is a part of the city. The street is a part of the quarter, the house is a part of the street. The city is a part of the territory of a nation, and the nation a part of all the people of the inhabitable world [Nader: 118; Walzer: 229-231].

Al-Fârâbî did not proclaim that the city state is the best type or the only choice for people attaining felicity, for he maintained that those three excellent types can also lead their people to gain the highest perfection, as long as people cooperate to acquire it. In other words, he believed that there could be an excellent united nations, the excel-

lent nation, apart from the excellent city-state [Nader: 118; Walzer: 231)] Thus, it is unsound to claim that al-Fârâbî only focused and deliberated on the city state *per se*.<sup>8</sup>

The unexcellent society is categorized into the ignorant city (*al-madîna al-jahiliyya*), the wicked/ruined city (*al-madîna al-fasiqa*), the shanged/declined city (*al-madîna al-mutabaddala*), the misled/deviated city (*al-madîna al-dhâlla*), and the evil grass [Nader:131;Walzer: 253-255].

The ignorant city is the one where its people do not know true felicity. Even if they were rightly guided to it, they would either not realize it or not believe it. The only felicity they recognize is that of bodily health, wealth, enjoyment of pleasures, freedom to have desire, and being held in honor. Things believe to be the aims of life, although they are in fact superficial and pseudo-felicity. The ignorant city is divided into:

(a) the city of necessity (*al-madîna al-dharûriyya*), that is the city where its people strive for no more than food, drink, clothes, housing, sexual intercourse, and only offer each other mutual assistance in order to obtain those things.

(b) the city of meannes (*al-madîna al-nadhdhâla*), that is the city where its people co-operate to attain wealth and recognizes the latter as the main goal of life.

(c) the city of depravity and baseness (*al-madîna al-khissa wa al-suqûth*), that is the city where its people strive for no more than pleasure connected to food, drink, and sexual intercourse, pleasure of the senses and imagination, and gambling in every form and way.

(d) the city of honor (*al-madîna al-karâma*), that is the city which the aim of its people is to co-operate to have esteem among the nations and to be extolled with respect by word and deed.

(e) the city of power (*al-madîna al-taghallub*), that is city where its people strive to prevail over other and to prevent others from prevailing over them.

(f) the city of democracy (*al-madîna al-jamâ'iyya*), that is the city where its people strive to be free to do anything they wish without restraining their passions [Nader:131-133; Walzer: 255-259].

The wicked city is the one whose views are those of the excellent city, but its actions are those of the ignorant city. The declined city is that whose views and actions were previously of the excellent city, but had been changed into an unpraiseworthy life. The misled city where things have gone astray and had become full of deceit and lies. Its people do not believe in God, and its first ruler deceives his people by confessing to be receiving a revelation from God. The evil grass is people who are of low moral values, uncivilized and of a wild nature.<sup>9</sup>



[Nader: 133; Walzer: 259].

Unlike the unexcellent city, the excellent city resembles the perfect healthy body,<sup>10</sup> whose limbs cooperate to make life perfect. The perfect body has a number of organs and parts which has ranks from the main and ruling parts to the most inferior and lowest ones. Likewise, within the excellent city, people's functions within the state are divided into three parts. The first part is the ruler of the city. Below it are those who perform their actions in accordance with the aims of the first part, followed by those who perform their actions in accordance with the aims of the second part [Nader: 119; Walzer: 223].

In this respect, it is true in supposing that al-Fârâbî held three classifications for people in the state. It is also true that al-Fârâbî, who was if fact influenced by Plato, went beyond Plato himself further. Plato, who tried to think rationally was not successful in finding a rational basis for his theory categorizing communities into three classes. According to Plato, the first class consists of a head of state with authority and power to govern and manage the state. The second comprises the armed forces responsible for the state's safety and security. The third consists of common people charged with the task of producing all the material requirements of the state. To support his classification, Plato obviously required a royal lie conveying that God has created human beings into three kinds: those made of gold, of silver, of copper and iron respectively.<sup>11</sup> Whereas al-Farabi used a view of the organs of the body for comparison, and in which view his other metaphysical concepts are linked.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Rulership of the State*

The ruler is the *Imâm* who has to have twelve qualities simultaneously found together: (1) he should have perfect body organs freed from deficiency, (2) he should have good understanding in understanding everything said to him in accordance to what the other speaker intends, (3) he should have a good memory for everything he has understood, seen or heard, (4) he should be intelligent, bright and can grasp the slightest indication of a thing in the way indicated, (5) he should have a fine diction enabling him to explain perfectly what he devised in his mind, (6) he should love knowledge and learning, be open-minded and open-hearted, (7) he should be fond of truth, truthful men, and hate falsehood and liars, (8) he should not crave food, drink, sexual intercourse, or have an inclination for gambling and pleasures,<sup>13</sup> (9) he should be proud of himself (*kabîr al-nafs*),<sup>14</sup> fond of honor: that his character rises naturally to the most lofty things, (10) money (*dirham wa al-dînâr*) and other worldly goods (*sâ'ir aghrâdh al-dunyâ*) should be of little amount in his view, (11) he should by nature



be fond of justice, hate oppression and injustice and those who practice them. He should urge people to act justly and show pity to those who are oppressed by injustice. To be reluctant when requested to do injustice, (12) he should be strong to do things which his mind firmly requests him to do without fear and weak-mindedness [Nader: 127-129; Walzer: 247-249].

On the other hand, al-Fârâbî realized that to find a person who can fulfill those twelve qualities is difficult. For him, such a man will be found only one at a time [Nader: 129; Walzer: 249-251]. To solve such a problem, al-Fârâbî offered six other prerequisites for the ruler: (1) he could be a philosopher (*ḥakīm*). (2) he could be knowledgeable and able to maintain the laws, customs, rules of conduct promulgated by the first sovereigns. And he should conform all his actions to all of theirs, (3) he could be able to deduce a new law for concept not considered by his predecessors. But in his deduction, he should follow the principles laid down by the first *Imâms*, (4) he could have a good deliberation in his deduction of the new law; when doing this he will try to promote the welfare of the city, (5) he could be good at guiding people by speeches in conformity with the paths of the first sovereigns, (6) he could be of a tough physique in order to shoulder the tasks of war, master the military service as well as the military art [Nader: 129-134; Walzer: 251-253].

Al-Fârâbî greatly emphasized that latter ruler follow the previous ones, because he assumed that all the excellent kings remain the same. Even though each of them ruled the city in different times and situations. They are like one single soul (*ka nafs wâḥid*), and they are as one single king (*ka mâlik wâḥid*). Similarly, the people of the city, the nation, or of the united nations who succeed each other at different times are supported to be like one single soul which remains the same all the time [Nader: 134; Walzer: 259-261].

When a person who fulfills those six qualities is not available, but there are two -one of them a philosopher and the other fulfills the remaining qualities- then both of them will be joint rulers (*kânâ humâ râ'isayn*). When those six qualities exist separately in different individuals: philosophy (*al-ḥikma*) is in one person, the second quality is in another person, the third is in another, the fourth to the sixth are also other individuals, then those six people should together be the excellent rulers. However, when philosophy (or the philosopher) does not exist in the government, whereas the other five qualities do, then the city is without a king, and the sovereign of this city is not a king. Henceforward, when the city has no king, it will be on the verge of destruction. If it happens that no philosopher can be found to be a king of the city, the city will undoubtedly perish [Nader: 130; Walzer: 253].



This passage indicates that the philosopher, for al-Fârâbî, is the only person who has the right to be the head of the state to be called imam. The relationship between the philosopher and the right the ruler is explained by his concept of the active intellect. Only prophet and philosopher are those who can achieve the active intellect, and since only those whose Active intellect can rule, thus, only the prophet and philosopher can rule the city [Nader: 125; Walzer: 145-147].<sup>15</sup>

### View on the Organs and Limbs of the Body

It has been previously mentioned that al-Fârâbî associated the people of the city to ranks of the limbs and organs of the body. Accordingly, al-Fârâbî stated that the heart (*al-qalb*) is the ruling organ of the body, and is not ruler by any other organs. It is followed in rank by the brain (*dimâgh*) which secondary ruling organ. The later is ruler by the heart and ruler other organs. The brain serves the heart through for functions: (1) it regulates the innate heat (*al-harâra al-gharîziyya*) coming from heart—which is the source of that innate heart—to all parts of the body through the arteries in and appropriate temperature, (2) it supplies the sensory nerves (*al-quwwâ al-hassa al-ra'îsa*) for the auxiliaries of the ruling faculty of sense, residing in the heart, can sense, (3) it provides the motor nerves (*âlât al-a'dhâ'*) in order the limbs in the heart can be moved by the will, (4) to provide—together with the spinal marrow (*al-nukhâ'*)—the nerves which have their roots in the spinal marrow with the power [Nader: 92-94; Walzer: 175-181].

Below the brain is the liver (*al-kabîd*), spleen (*al-thihâl*), and organs of reproduction (*a'dhâ' al-tawlîd*). Besides these organs there are organs which are subordinate but work together, individually or with the four ruling parts such as the mouth (*al-famm*), the lung (*al-ri'a*), kidneys (*al-kulliyya*), and others [Nader: 96; Walzer: 183-185]. The lung serves the heart by carrying some air from the out side to it, in order to preserve the innate heat which is in the heart, and to mix with it. If smokiness appears in any part of the heart, it is relieved by removing the smoky part of the air. So that, the amount of innate heat which comes to organs through the arteries, is adjusted. The difference between the function of the lung and that of the brain is that the brain, through its coolness and moisture, extinguishes the amount of smokiness to be found in the innate spirit -which is the result of excessive heat and dryness- so that it makes the innate spirit warm and moist (after having been warm and dry), and prepared to complete a "concoction" (*pepsis*). As a result of this "concoction" the innate heat sustains the sensory and appetitive faculties. But in the case of the lung, "unconcocted" air which had previously not been with the innate heat is brought to it, whereas what had been in it (before) is removed [Walzer: 185].<sup>16</sup>



Coming down to the organs of reproduction, al-Fârâbî had confusing ideas. On one hand, he stated that the activity of the organs of reproduction starts later than of all the others [Nader: 96; Walzer: 187], but the other hand, he claimed that the organs of reproduction have the power/faculty (to create a generation) which is partly ruling (in the heart), and partly serving (in the organs of reproduction) [Nader: 96; Walzer: 187]. However, it is contradictory to say that the ruling part is activated at a later stage, while al-Fârâbî himself always placed the ruling part first, or at least together with other parts either in rank or activity. Another confusing idea is that, on one hand, he placed the following organs in a descending order of rank starting with the heart, the brain, the liver, the spleen, the organs of reproduction, and other subordinate parts such as the mouth, lung, kidneys etc [Nader: 96; Walzer: 183-185]. While, on the other hand, he claimed that the top rank is the heart, the brain, the liver, the spleen, and other parts without considering the organs of reproduction respectively [Nader: 96; Walzer: 185-187]. There is no definite description whether the organs of reproduction are a part of the ruling or serving faculties. While they are admitted to have power/faculty (to create generations) which is partly ruling and partly serving.

Regardless of these confusing ideas, al-Fârâbî maintained that the organs of reproduction have two powers: one prepares the matter; and the other provides the form where the matter moves to. The matter is available in the female, and the form in the male. The matter is provided by the womb (*al-rahîm*), and the form by the semen (*al-manîyy*) [Nader: 96; Walzer: 187]. Inside the womb there is the blood which accepts the semen. The blood is given by the semen the power to





move, to create the organs and to shape the human being. The semen is like the rennet, the blood like the milk, and the action of the semen is like the curdling process (in the case of milk). The embryo (*al-janîn*) is the result of those three elements and their process. The semen is generated by the vessels (*al-aw'iyya*). These vessels are veins (*al-'urûq*) located under the skin of the pubes (*al-'ana*) and the testicles (*al-arfâd al-unthayân*) provide the veins with the supply. The phallus (*al-qadhîb*) is the channel of semen flowing from the vessels—containing veins and testicles—into the womb where it meets the blood [Nader: 97; Walzer: 189].

#### Male and Female Organs

Males and females have different organs and limbs. Male organs and limbs are warmer. The organs and limbs function is to move or to impart movement and are stronger in males, as strong as a male's potency of wrath (*al-ghadhb*) and harshness (*al-qaswa*). Whereas in the female, mercy (*al-ra'fa*) and compassion (*al-rahma*) are stronger. However, it may happen that there are some males whose emotions are similar to females and vice versa. Males and females are not different in the case of the faculty of sense, representation or reason [Nader: 99-100; Walzer: 195-197]. It is indefinite here whether, (a) there is a connection between organs and emotion, (b) the nature of male and female emotions and how they work in general. One does not know the extent of male or female potency of wrath, harshness, mercy and compassion.

As such al-Fârâbî's view of the body and its organs, is actually related to his view of the soul and its faculties. The relationship between the soul and the body is linked by some of the soul's faculties which reside in the heart and are owned by the body. The following description is about the faculties of the soul and their link to the body.

#### View of the Faculties of Soul

The soul has five faculties: (1) the nutritive faculty (*al-quwwâ al-ghâdhiya*), (2) the faculty of the five senses (*al-hawâs al-khamsa*) namely; the faculty to perceive the tangibles (*al-malmûs*), taste (*al-tha'ûm*), aroma (*al-rawâ'il*), sound (*al-ashwât*), colors and visible objects (*al-alwân wa al-mubashsharât*), (3) the faculty to desire or dislike (*ishtiqa' aw ikrâh*) viz. The faculty of appetite (*al-nuzû'iyya*), (4) the faculty of representation (*al-mukhayyila*), (5) the rational faculty (*al-nâthiqa*) [Nader: 87; Walzer: 165].

The faculty of nutrition has one ruling faculty in the heart among the organs of the body, and other subordinate faculties distributed among the other organs. The ruling faculty governs the other faculties

by nature, whereas the subordinate ones conform in their action to the natural aim of the ruling ones. The faculty of the five sense is distributed in the skin, the tongue, the nose, the ear and the eyes which are subordinates. The latter's ruling faculty is again in the heart (here, al-Fârâbî did not mention what it is). The faculty of representation has neither ruling nor subordinate faculties. It is one by itself, and resides in the heart too. Its function is to retain and control the sensibles which it cannot present. The rational faculty has neither ruling nor subordinate faculties. It rules over the faculty of representation, of sense and of nutrition. The appetitive faculty has a ruling and subordinate ones. It is the faculty which makes the "will" and "act" arise. Its subordinate faculties are distributed in different parts of such the body as nerves (*a'shâb*), muscles (*a'dhal sâriya*), hands (*al-yadayn*), feet (*al-rijlayn*), and other parts of the body which can be moved by the will. Whereas its ruling faculty is undefined [Nader: 88-89; Walzer: 166-171].

Among these five faculties is an inter-related connection as follows: (1) the faculty of nutrition is the matter for the faculty of sense, whereas the sensing faculty is the form of the nutrition, (2) the faculty of sense is the matter for the faculty of representation, while the faculty of representation is the form of the sense faculty, (3) the faculty of representation is the matter of the faculty of reason, and the faculty of reason is the form of the faculty of representation. Only the appetitive faculty exists, depends on and connects all those four faculties [Nader: 92; Walzer: 175]. For example, to know a thing may be brought about by the rational, or representative, or sense-perceptive faculty, but the appetitive faculty initiates an action to have such knowledge. A further explanation is that: when there is an appetite to know a thing apprehended by the rational faculty, the act by which the thing desired is attained depends on some faculty within the faculty of the reason; when there is an appetite to know a thing apprehended by sense perception, the act by which it is attained depends on an act of the body and soul together. Thus, there is an amalgamation process between the appetitive and the rational faculty in the first example, and between the appetitive and sense perceptive in the other example [Nader: 90; Walzer: 211].

The nutritive faculty is made to be the servant of the body, while the faculties of sense and representation are both made to serve the body and the rational faculty (*al-nâthiqâ*). However, all three while, serving the body, are ultimately depending on the rational faculty. Support for the rational faculty is primarily provided by the body [Nader: 106; Walzer: 207-209]. On the other hand, the faculty of representation is an intermediate between the faculty of sense and the rational faculty [Nader: 108; Walzer: 211].



1. *Rational Faculty: Active-Passive Intellect, Intelligible*  
 The rational faculty which is a part of the faculty of the soul, is partly practical (*al-'amaliya*) and partly theoretical (*al-nazhariya*). The practical is made to serve the theoretical. This theoretical reason is made for the purpose of bringing human beings to the desired felicity [Nader: 106; Walzer: 209]. In addition, the rational faculty has intellect. However that intellect requires an instrument which transfers it from potentiality to actuality, to become actual intellect (*al-'aql bi al-fi'l*). That instrument is an existent (*dzât*) which is separated from matter (*mâdda*), but provides the 'material intellect' (*al-'aql al-hayûlanîy*) in order for the potentiality to become an actuality. The instrument is like the sun providing the sight (as material intellect) to the eyes (as potentiality), and eventually the eye can see (as actuality). While the 'material intellect' is called the 'Passive Intellect' (*al-'aql al-munfa'al*), the intellect which becomes actual is called the 'Active Intellect' (*al-'aql al-fa'al*) [Nader: 101-102; Walzer: 119-203]. So that, when a human being achieves his Active Intellect he achieves intelligibles (*al-ma'qûlât*) at the same time.

These intelligibles are three kinds: (a) principles of the productive skill, (b) the principles by which one becomes aware of good and evil in a human being's actions, (c) the principles used for knowing the existents, which are not the objects of a human being's actions, and their primary principles and ranks such as the heavens, the First Cause, and other primary principles. As soon as the intelligibles are present in human beings, a natural deduction taken from examination, deliberation and political thought will arise. These intelligibles should be used by a human being to reach his ultimate perfection i.e. felicity [Nader: 102-105; Walzer 203-205]. Now it is obvious why al-Fârâbî emphasized felicity as the very goal of the city or state. Inasmuch as he based his thought on the metaphysical view that the soul and its faculties (including the intelligibles faculty) should be directed towards that felicity.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. *Intellect and Rulership*

When the aim of the state is to obtain the ultimate felicity, and since felicity can be only achieved by the appropriate soul, the ruler of the city should be a man with an appropriate soul, as he is expected to be the determining factor in the state. In this respect, for al-Fârâbî, the intellect determines the appropriate ruler. The ruler of the excellent city cannot be just any man, for rulership presupposes two conditions: (1) it should exist in him from the beginning, as his inborn nature, (2) it should have the habit of will for rulership. The ruler is a person who has reached his perfection, has become actually intellect and intelli-

gized (being thought). His representative faculty should be owned with his inborn nature, and it can receive -either in waking life or in sleep, from the Active Intellect- the particulars, either as they are or by imitating them, and also the intelligibles, by imitating them<sup>18</sup> [Nader: 122; Walzer: 239]. This indicates that the state should be ruled by the specific ruler, just as the limbs cannot be ruled by any other limbs.

Before underlining the process by which a person achieve felicity, the kinds of intellect should be discussed first. When the Passive Intellect within a person has reached its perfection -i.e. has become intellect and intelligized- the total effect of this is that the person simultaneously gains the 'Acquired Intellect' (*al-'aql al-mustafād*). The Acquired Intellect is superior, more perfect and more separate from matter than the Passive Intellect. It is kind of Actual Intellect (*al-'aql bi al-fi'l*) and resides in between the Passive and the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'âl*). The relation of those three elements is as follows, (1) the Passive Intellect is like matter and substratum (*mawdhû*) for the acquired intellect, (2) the acquired intellect is like matter and substratum for the Active Intellect. Whereas the rational faculty is like matter and substratum for the Passive Intellect [Nader: 124; Walzer: 243]. These are the four subjects assisting a person in reaching felicity.

In addition, the process by which a person attains the felicity is through achieving the Active Intellect. The stages of achieving the Active Intellect are as follows. Firstly, the rational faculty should be made the matter or substratum of the Passive Intellect. Next, the Passive Intellect is created to be matter of the Acquired Intellect. Finally, the Acquired Intellect should be the matter of the Active Intellect. These processes should work as one and the same thing at the same time, hence the person will become the man on whom the Active Intellect has descended [Nader: 124; Walzer: 243-245].

### 3. Intellect and Revelation.

If somebody has achieved the Active Intellect by his rational faculty -theoretically or practically—and by his representative faculty, he will be the man who has received Divine Revelation. God giveth His revelation to him through the Active Intellect. There are two categories for emanating revelation to the Active Intellect. If the revelation is emanated to the Active Intellect, then to the passive Intellect through the Acquired Intellect, and finally to the representative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*), that person will be a prophet who warns of things to come and tells of particular things which exist at present. But if the revelation is emanated to the Active Intellect, and the Passive Intellect through the Acquired Intellect (and does not come to the representative faculty), he is a wise man (*hakîm*), or philosopher (*failasuf*), or an



accomplished thinker (*al-mu'taqil 'alâ al-tamâm*). However, both types of people are the most perfect ranks of human beings, and have reached the ultimate degree of felicity, as their souls are united with the Active Intellect. Therefore, only they have the sole right of being rulers of the state, because they know every action by which felicity can be reached [Nader: 125; Walzer: 145-147]. Thus it finally becomes clear why al-Fârâbî gave the top priority to the philosopher after the Prophet to be the only ruler. Ultimately, the philosopher is ranked after the Prophet, or the Prophet in any way is still more superior than the philosopher, because the Prophet can accept the revelation through the representative which can give definite news and information at present or future without lies. This Prophet's power cannot be occupied by the philosopher.

In this respect, it is tempting to notify disputes among intellectuals. Some of them have argued that al-Fârâbî's political thought is the doctrine that religion is an imitation of philosophy in the sense that religion presents without proof insights which philosophy demonstrates or that religion presents through the use of images truths which philosophy grasps as they truly are. Religion is an imitation of philosophy because the latter presents a true and reasoned account of the universe, whereas the former presents an account based upon imagination or opinion. Hence, it is concluded that for al-Fârâbî philosophy is superior to religion in the objects of its knowledge and the manner in which it attains that knowledge.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast, some scholars assume that for al-Fârâbî religion is not subordinate to philosophy, for it is that religion is based upon imagination, on the grounds that such insights are not available through philosophy alone. Because of this philosophy's cognitive shortcomings, thus, philosophy needs religion, and one of its tasks is to elucidate the absolute truth of religion. Philosophy, therefore, is in fact dependent on religion and needs religion "to realize itself".<sup>20</sup>

Imagination, hence, actually becomes religion's potential energy which can exceed philosophical potencies. This can be proved, moreover, through how al-Fârâbî insisted the ruling types to be, first of all, "philosopher-king-prophet"; secondly, "philosopher-king"-not prophet; and finally, "philosopher" who should follow predecessors in establishing Muslims laws and customs in accordance with the Qur'ân, Traditions and legal classic.<sup>21</sup> Those predecessors are the previous supreme ruler or rulers who codified and preserved laws (*sharâ'i*) and traditions (*sunan*) permanently.<sup>22</sup> In this respect, al-Fârâbî traced the excellent role model of the rulers in Muhammad's perfection.<sup>23</sup> This fact indicates corollaries that the Prophet namely Muhammad precedes philosophers, and his faculties transcendences philosophers'. So that,



it is plausible that religion brought by the Prophet is superior to such philosophy, for religion is resulted from by means thoretical perfection exclusively.

### Soul Faculties and the Other Metaphysics

As discussed before, the faculties of the soul are divided into five faculties, each of them with elements in different rank and function; either partly ruling or partly serving. This concept of the ruling and the serving parts is typical in al-Fârâbî. As can be witnessed from his other metaphysical concepts, for al-Fârâbî, the facultie of the soul are influenced by, associated to and based on the idea of the First Cause, the second cause, the active intellect, form and matter.

Briefly, the relationship between all those metaphysics according to al-Fârâbî is as follows. What is most prior absolutely is discussed first. This is the reason for locating the account of the First Cause at very beginning in the *'Ara' Ahl al-Madîna al-Fâdhila*.<sup>24</sup> The First Cause is the Active Intellect Which is intellect, intelligized, and thinking at the same time by itself, in its own essence, because it is in no need of another essence outside itself [Nader: 47; Walzer: 71]. From it every existent emanates, in which it may be whether perfect or deficient. However, it starts with the most perfect existent and is followed by something a little lest perfect than it [Nader: 61-62; Walzer: 101-105].

From the First emanates the existence of the second which is an utterly incorporeal substance, and is not in matter. The second is a direct result of the First and incapable of independent thinking. Following, the second thinks of the First, a third existent follows, but when it thinks of its substantification in its essence, the existence of the First Heaven follows. This process is called emanation, and this emanative movement continues until the eleventh level, with each of existence thinks of the First and its essence. The level from the second until he eleventh is the "second cause". As the result (of thinking the First Cause), the second emanates to the third until the elevevth. Whereas from the First Heaven (as the result of thinking its substantification in its essence) follows necessarily the fixed stars, the sphere of Saturn, the sphere of Jupiter of Mars, of Sun, of Venus, of Mercury, of Moon. This process is a result of individual thinking by them of their substantification in their essence [Nader: 62; Walzer: 107].

The existence occuring after the second cause have a defective existences at the beginning and ascend step by step until each of their species reaches its ultimate perfection in its substance, and consequently in all its qualities. These existents are sublunary entities which are natural, some have will, and some are both natural and voluntary. Each of them is based on two things: matter and form. The order of these



bodies started with the common prime matter followed by the elements superior to that, then the minerals, the plants, the animal lacking speech and thought, and finally the animals endowed with speech and thought [Nader: 63; Walzer: 107-109]. From the last, existent which can speak and think is the soul endowed with the five faculties which are blessed with form and matter.<sup>25</sup>

It becomes obvious from the above explanation, that al-Fârâbî's characteristics of thoughts are always initiated by the ruling or the main thing element in every single thing. Thus, the First Cause is the ruling existent of the incorporeal bodies (the second cause) and other existents after them. The soul is the ruling existent of the body; and the heart is the ruling faculty of the body. However, we have to differ between the cause of the First Cause and other essences. Unlike in its own, the rests require other existents for support.

### Conclusion

Metaphysics is a foundation of ideas used for reference of thought. The metaphysics of al-Fârâbî's political thought is the nutritive faculty—specifically, the organs and limbs of the body— which is a part of the faculties of the soul—such as the sense-perceptive, appetitive, representative and rational faculty—are instruments used for perfecting political concept practically.

The nutritive faculty of al-Fârâbî is influenced and based on other metaphysics like the First Cause, second cause and so on, in terms of either ranks or functions and whether they are partly ruling or partly serving. Al-Fârâbî political concepts is as well as his metaphysical concepts, characterized by idea of ranks and function.

### Endnotes

1. Abû Nashr al-Fârâbî, *Kitab Âra Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila*, edited by Albîr Nashr Nader (Beirut: Dar el-Mashreq Publishers, 1973)
2. Richard Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Ab° Nashr al-F,r,bÓ's Mab,dî' Ahl al-MadÓna al-F,dila* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985)
3. Fauzi M. Najjar, "Al-Farabi: the Political Regime," *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, edited by Ralph Leamer and Muhsin Mahdi (New York: The Free Press, 1963), p. 31-57.
4. See "the faculty of soul" in this paper.
5. Peter A. Angeles, *Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1981), p. 169.
6. Angeles, *Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 170.
7. In this notion, al-F,r,bÓ is influenced by Greek philosophers, particularly Plato and Aristotle. See Munawir Sjadzali, *Islam and Governmental System: Teachings, History and Reflection* (Jakarta: INIS, 1991), p. 37.
8. As it is said by some scholars, see Sjadzali, *Islam and Governmental System*, p. 38.
9. This is an appropriate explanation of evil grass, see Sjadzali, *Islam and Governmental*

System, h. 39.

10. See a description of "the limbs and organs of the body" in this paper.
11. Sjadzali, *Islam and Governmental System*, 39.
12. See page 2 of this paper.
13. Nader uses point (8) to be point (7), while this writing uses Walzer's version in conformity with a logical order.
14. Walzer uses "proud of spirit (*megalopsychos*)"
15. See also the description of relation between "intellect and revelation".
16. This comparative function between the lung and the brain is not available in Nader's version. However, I cannot conclude either whether that comparison is or not written by al-Fârâbî himself.
17. This passage is a further connections and description of p. 2.
18. See the description on "intellect and intelligibles" in this writing.
19. Madjid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 116; Fauzi Najjar, "Al-Fârâbî on Political Science," *Muslim World* 48 (1958): p. 94-103.
20. This thesis is offered by Hans Daiber. See Miriam Galston, *Politics and Excellence: The Political Philosophy of Al-Farabi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), h. 6; and also E.J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 123.
21. See Walzer's commentary, on his *Al-Fârâbî on the Perfect State*, p. 447-448.
22. Galston, *Politics and Excellence*, p. 105-106.
23. Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, p. 448.
24. See Galston, *Politics and Excellence*, 184.
25. This passage is to relate from the idea of the soul to metaphysical concept of matter and form, and down to division of organs and limbs of the body.

---

**Nanang Tahqiq**, dosen Fakultas Ushuluddin IAIN Jakarta, memperoleh gelar MA dari McGill University, Kanada 1996.