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LEADS TO HAPPINESS?

by

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ABSTRACT
AL-FĀRĀBĪ, METAPHYSICS, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE:
IS DECEPTION WARRANTED IF IT
LEADS TO HAPPINESS?

Nicholas A. Oschman

Marquette University, 2020

When questioning whether political deception can be ethically warranted, two competing intuitions jump to the fore. First, political deception is a fact of human life, used in the *realpolitik* of governance. Second, the ethical warrant of truth asserts itself as inexorably and indefatigably preferable to falsehood. Unfortunately, a cursory examination of the history of philosophy reveals a paucity of models to marry these basic intuitions. Some thinkers (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, Grotius, Kant, Mill, and Rawls) privilege the truth by neglecting the *realpolitik*, i.e., the truth is inviolate. Others (e.g., Machiavelli, Bentham, and the often infamous caché of 20th century dictators) focus upon the *realpolitik* to the exclusion of the primacy of the truth. A third group of critical thinkers (e.g., Arendt and Bok) examine the topic but offer no positive, systematic treatment of deception.

Lacking are theories which simultaneously recognize that political untruth is often necessary, but that untruth is only justified when a) truth is politically impossible, b) the necessity of untruth is demonstrable, and c) the truth can be replaced with a minimally injurious untruth. Plato offers one such account in the *Republic*, arguing that deceit must be applied medicinally to the city. However, his account is problematic in detail. One of Plato's inheritors, the 10th century thinker al-Fārābī, advanced Plato's theoretical account, arguing that political governance requires restrained political deception. This deception, the expression of philosophical truths through the symbols of religion, meets the criteria mentioned above, being necessary, demonstrably necessary, and minimally injurious.

But while al-Fārābī provides a valuable model for what justified political deception *could* look like, the lengths to which he must go in order to create a viable model for political deception reveals the untenability of the notion of justified political deception writ large. One must orchestrate an entire cosmos around the notion, notably a cosmos that does not match our own. One must adopt very specific conceptions of human nature, association, and happiness, as well as a particular metaphysics and epistemology. For, while al-Fārābī shows that political deception can be justifiable, he also reveals its unjustifiability outside an idealized setting.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Nicholas A. Oschman

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I. INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL DECEPTION FROM PLATO ONWARD

1. **Introduction**

The oft quipped and bastardized truism that 'politics is the art of compromise,' derived from Otto von Bismarck's less famous claim that 'politics is the art of the possible,' speaks to the very nature of human association.[1] Even in an ideal world, conflicting desires, distinct aims, and differences in political methods mandate compromise between groups. But, this dissertation is not about the kind of political compromise occasioned by distinct human aims. Instead, this project will focus on an altogether more primordial form of compromise than that which occurs between the conflicting interests of disparate groups; this project will focus upon whether, and, if so, when it is appropriate for the leaders of a city, state, or nation to compromise with the truth itself. And, despite the *prima facie* obvious answer that in an ideal world the truth alone ought to dictate policy and that the truth alone ought to be used in defense of said policy, we do not live in an ideal world. Every human association will at times choose opacity, deception, and obfuscation rather than honesty. Every real government will attempt to negotiate and compromise with the truth. Yet, this negotiation remains one sided, as facts are entirely uncompromising partners, ones who serve simultaneously as plaintiff, interlocutor, and judge.

Otto von Bismarck's original insight, which spawned the notion of politics as compromise, serves as a better guidepost for best political practice than the more well-known synopsis of his position, at least when one is concerned with whether a government must obscure the truth, as the truth gives in to no demands. His claim that

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[1] "Politics is the art of the possible, the attainable — the art of the next best" (von Bismarck 1895, 248).

"politics is the art of the possible, the attainable—the art of the next best" is more insightful when dealing with an unyielding interlocutor like the truth itself.[2] Real compromise is not possible with the truth, but concessions can be made in one's communication of the truth. To negotiate with the truth is not to deny the truth's preeminence, but to *justify* a certain concession in which one abandons the expression of simple truth, given certain conditions in which expressing the truth is not a possible course of political action. The truth remains stalwart. But the truth is not always politically possible. Two questions then remain: 1) What is 'the next best' thing after the truth? And 2) what are the conditions by which 'the next best' thing is justified? Broadly speaking, this dissertation concerns the answers to these two questions; it explores the conditions of political action when openness and honesty expose themselves to be politically untenable. Primarily, this project will narrow its focus to one particularly well-developed paradigmatic explanation of the parameters surrounding justified deception, the political philosophy of Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī, a tenth century Muslim Neo-Aristotelian thinker who takes seriously the need for both a ruler's obfuscation of the truth and a ruler's duty to the truth.[3] However, for now, the problem of political deception itself must be motivated more thoroughly.

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Special thanks to Richard C. Taylor for the recommendation of this term 'Neo-Aristotelian'. Generally speaking 'Neo-Aristotelian' should be taken to signify the amalgamation of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic principles which begins concurrently in the 3rd century with the commentary tradition of Alexander of Aphrodisias and the Plotinian school of thought, gets carried through the commentaries of Themistius and the Neoplatonic developments of Proclus, through Syriac translations of these texts, and ultimately arrives in the Arabic language through the *Proclus Arabus* and *Plotiniana Arabica*, although the sources are more numerous, and their relations more intricate, than stated here. At the moment, the term should be taken loosely, although a careful study which taxonomizes the distinct threads contained within this tradition is warranted.

1.1. In Defense of Political Lies

The dissonance between unabashed pellucid truth-telling and the typical course of political action is apparent upon even a cursory inspection. Nor is this a cynical stance. Whether regarding external or internal politics, a certain amount of deception or, at least, concealment is required. In terms of the external, the nature of negotiation itself requires opacity; that each negotiator does not reveal fully her true intentions, her maximum concessions, or her minimal demands lies at the heart of haggling. No skilled negotiator introduces her aimed for price at the outset. In terms of politics inside a single political association, to believe that societal consensus is likely to be achieved by honest and straightforward propositional demonstration alone is naïve. As Aristotle explains, for "some audiences not even the possession of the exactest knowledge will make it easy for what we say to produce conviction. For argument based on knowledge implies instruction, and there are people whom one cannot instruct."[4] The art of political persuasion requires the motivation of both non-experts and those for whom strict demonstration holds little appeal. Unfortunately, as Plato points out in the *Gorgias*, non-experts are ill-equipped to judge expertise (one reason he is so disinclined toward democracy).[5] When a body needs repair, the non-expert easily confuses the benefits of medicine and those of sweetened dishes which are claimed to be beneficial, the benefits of rigorous exercise for the aesthetic improvements brought about by cosmetics.[6] When a soul or a city need repair, the non-expert easily confuses the benefits of the truth, i.e. the art of politics, with the flattery of oratory, which is the mere image of politics.[7] An

[4] *Rhetoric* 1.1.
[5] *Gorgias* 462a-466a.
[6] *Gorgias* 464c- 465e; see also *Republic* 557-559.
[7] *Gorgias* 464d.

unpleasant truth cannot rely on its rectitude alone to persuade a city. A good politician

must make the unpleasantness of the truth at least *seem* equally pleasant with its

falsehood. To quote Mary Poppins, in both the sphere of the body and the sphere of

politics, 'a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down.'[8]

No politician worth her salt is entirely truthful, though the best, perhaps, artfully

dance within reach of the truth. Too many hard truths occur in the governance of a city,

state, or nation to simply air all secrets. Too few citizens can follow the subtle arguments

of policy or can reliably recognize expertise and not be duped by snake oil salesmen. Too

few human beings are capable of viewing the good of the city from the god's eye view,

willing to make hard choices for what is truthfully best for the city as a whole. When

confronted with unpleasant conditions, the politician must communicate certain truths to

those who cannot or will not appreciate the complexities which have brought about said

conditions. Mere honesty is not enough. Rhetoric is required. Rarely will truthful honesty

suffice when the politician must navigate the tensions between the polis's need for

boundaries and the obvious truth that those human beings who live within the polis and

those beyond its territory are essentially the same. It will not suffice when she

communicates the truth that the needs of the citizens are not in fact identical with the

desires of the citizens. Mere facticity might not be enough when the politician must

inspire a low-ranking soldier to bravely stand in defense of her homeland before a

hopeless battle, given the brazen, and often ugly, truth that her service will likely turn

into a sacrifice which will bring a victory which she will never see. And it is inadequate

to persuade a generation to surrender their own comfort for the well-being of the future, a

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[8] Walsh, et al. 2009.

prosperity in which they will not partake. Or to sum up these examples most generally, the truth seems a poor tool when the politician aims to convince the polis to support political actions which are *prima facie* undesirable, actions determined to be necessary only by those capable of following the intricate, and at times counterintuitive, arguments concluded in the cold light of reason. What is best for a polis is determined by the facticity of an action's outcome, by uncompromising truth. What *seems* best for a polis in the mind of any individual citizen is determined by the citizen's own desires and the persuasiveness of the polis's politicians.

Unfortunately, persuasive arguments and sound arguments are not the same thing. A city or a nation is swayed by many forces: tradition, values, emotion, ethos, facts on the ground, and shifts in power, amongst other factors. The most convincing politician is not always the one with the most knowledge nor the one who is most trustworthy. Politics at its best and worst occurs, and has always occurred, in the lacuna between what is and what seems. The good politician knows the truth of what is best for the polis and makes the best seem appealing. The bad one leads the polis to what is worse, either through ignorance, malevolence, or sheer ambivalence to any outcome but her own power. The unfortunate reality is that naïve honesty is often bad politics. Plato knew this.

1.2 Defining the Problem

But before turning to the original philosophical discussion, or at least the first philosophical discussion with any contemporary parlance, of the problem of political deception, namely the one found in Plato, some parameters for the problem should be discussed. After all, political deception is a unique species within a broader genus, i.e.

deception, but also abuts a plethora of other issues unique to public life, e.g. concealment, the *arcana imperii*, the 'problem of dirty hands', and the relationship between rhetoric and truth.[9] And, while ubiquitous in almost every variety of human life, deception writ large remains surprisingly understudied. Perhaps this is because, as Sissela Bok contends while citing Epictetus in her exemplary examination of lying, understanding deception, especially in practical terms, can be frustrating and difficult.[10]

That said, for the purposes of this project, a working definition of deception and lying will suffice, as the particular species of deception being examined, i.e. political deception, brackets many of the most salient disagreements as to how deception should be defined.[11] And, on the whole, a working definition of deception and lying is possible. Namely, a lie or a deception, at least a verbal deception, is the act of knowingly making a statement to another which is false, as if it were true, with the intention of causing them to believe the falsehood.[12] And, by and large, these component parts, a) an informed act

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[9] For discussion about the pernicious and perplexing 'problem of dirty hands', see Walzer 1973 and Coady 2018.

[10] Bok 1978, xxxvi, 10-11. Epictetus explains in the *Encheiridion*: "The first and most necessary division in philosophy is that which has to do with the application of the principles, as, for example, Do not lie. The second deals with the demonstrations, as, for example, How comes it that we ought not to lie? The third confirms and discriminates between these processes, as, for example, How does it come that this is a proof? For what is a proof, what is logical consequence, what contradiction, what truth, what falsehood? Therefore, the third division is necessary because of the second, and the second because of the first; while the most necessary of all, and the one in which we ought to rest, is the first. But we do the opposite; for we spend our time in the third division, and all our zeal is devoted to it, while we utterly neglect the first. Wherefore, we lie, indeed, but are ready with the arguments which prove that one ought not to lie." *Discourses* 536.

[11] Many of the disagreements regarding the definition of 'deception' or 'lying' involve qualifications surrounding either the audience, mainly who is intended and whether the lie is successfully heard or directed at the intended audience, or intention, for example, whether if one is physically coerced to speak untruth qualifies as a lie. Political deception sidesteps these problems, insofar as these kinds of deception pervade the entirety of a governed culture and are performed by those in power by definition. Thus, they are always heard and not coerced. See Mahon 2014, 2016.

[12] One may object to my seeming conflation between deception and lying. After all, it is possible to deceive without resorting to a lie, e.g. when one wears a guise or camouflage, when a slight of hand artists palms a card, or when a deft rhetorician changes the subject after an interlocutor makes a salient refutation. But by and large, political deception occurs through political speech. And the imminent shift to the political sphere

which produces b) a false statement with c) an intention that d) another believes the false statement, are the shared central component parts for most definitions of lying and verbal deception.[13]

But whereas a workable universal definition of lying and deception is rather straightforward, if still harried by counterexamples and the need for further nuance, defining political deception universally in the context of any *realpolitik* is impossible. The definition of lying and deception is perhaps more amorphous than the caricature drawn here, but political deception is multifaceted, so diverse in manifestations that a useful universal definition is nigh impossible.[14] For example, are political deceptions only those deceits which are told by a leader to her people? Do they include deceits told to trade partners? Enemies? Allies? In democracies, are the deceits citizens tell each other political deceits? Are deceits which are told to temporarily hide negotiations or to prevent the fomentation of war of the same kind of deceits as those intended for the accumulation of power? Is a deceit told by a politician seeking office which is told to present an illusion of knowledge and authority the same as a deceit by a ruler who has knowledge and authority?

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renders the distinction between deception and lie moot. And while imperfect, linking lying and deception prevents confusion from the other direction. Namely, to only speak of lying is to risk removing the connotation of intentionality, insofar as many who study this issue closely have questioned whether intention is truly necessary for a definition of lying. Whereas, again, in the political sphere, intentionality is a clear essential component to political deception. See Chrisholm and Feehan 1977, Carson 2006, and Mahon 2014, 2016.

[13] For example, Bok defines a lie as "any intentionally deceptive message which is stated" (Bok 1978, 13). Primoratz defines lying as "making a statement believed to be false, with the intention of getting another to accept it as true" (Primoratz 1984, 54n2). Isenberg defines a lie as "a statement made by one who does not believe it with the intention that someone else shall be led to believe it" (Isenberg 1973, 248). And Mahon, while rejecting a universally acknowledged definition of lying, suggests four necessary conditions for traditional definitions of lying: a) a statement, b) untruthfulness, c) an addressee, and d) an intention to deceive (Mahon 2016).

[14] For some thorough, if incomplete, examinations of the topic, see Bok 1978, 165-181; Arendt 1972, 3-47.

Certainly, a kind of definition for political deception which encompasses all of these cases can be found, e.g. a political deception is the act of making a statement *in the public sphere* to another which is false, as if it were true, with the intention of causing them to believe the falsehood. But, along with being uninteresting and far removed from the *realpolitik* that makes an examination of political deception worthwhile, such a broad definition would be nearly impossible to study in detail. To assess political deception, to examine political deception, one must arrive at a narrower, more manageable conception, even if stipulative, even if it does not characterize political deception *in toto*.

For this reason, henceforward, a political deception will be defined in such a way: the dissemination of information by one in governing power, particularly one with higher epistemic standing than the populace regarding the content of said information, which is conveyed to the governed populace for the purpose of the populace adopting the false as true.[15] Of course, this definition is insufficient to define political deception writ large; it defines a subspecies, not the whole, of deceptive speech in the political arena. Moreover, it anthropomorphizes government, putting the onus on a bilateral interpersonal relationship between the governor and governed, ignoring the much more complicated but well-established interplay between individuals, societies, and systems.[16] Nonetheless, for the purposes here, it will suffice.

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[15] Two things are worth clarifying regarding this definition. First, while narrowing the scope of political deception, it still leaves quite a bit open. The form of government is not stipulated. Neither is the number of governors in a society determined, insofar as any one member of a governing body can participate in this definition as readily as a monarch. It even leaves certain epistemological commitments undetermined. The governor need not have certain knowledge about her falsehood to deceive, she need only have higher epistemic standing regarding the deception than the governed, need only have better information than the ruled. Second, while the phrasing of the above definition is carefully chosen, its meaning should not be lost. It is tantamount to a common notion, namely that which occurs when a ruler with knowledge feeds the populace disinformation.

[16] For one fascinating account of such an interaction directly related to lying, see Simon-Kerr 2015.

1.3. A Method for Study

Given the preceding definition of political deception, the original central

questions raised gain clarity, namely:

> 1) If the truth is not politically possible, what is 'the next best' thing after the
> truth?
> 2) What are the conditions by which 'the next best' thing is justified?

In this context, Question 1 takes on a moral character. Whatever 'the next best' thing is,

surely the arbiter which designates it as such contains a moral element. It presumes

(rightly) that speaking truth is the best recourse, and any substitute for truth must

approximate, if not match, its value. Question 2 guards against arbitrariness. Untruth

must be justified. And, given the preeminence of truth, justification implies that untruth

must be necessary, only used when truth cannot suffice. Many politicians and rulers have

attempted to defend their lies on these grounds; many theorists, including some of whom,

discussed below, have carved out a category for those that aim to meet these conditions,

to describe what is variously called 'lying for the public interest' or 'lying for the public

good.'[17] Although it is difficult to say how much of the former group's description are

sincere and equally difficult to assess whether the latter groups characterizations are

ideal.

Nonetheless, these two characteristics, the 'next best thing' condition, i.e. that a

lie aims at the next best thing to truth, and the necessity condition, i.e. that the truth is not

a viable alternative to the lie, mark the difference between benevolent and malevolent (or

ambivalent) political deceptions.[18] Beneficent political deceptions (which should be

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[17] E.g., Pasquerella and Killilea 2005 and Bok 1978, 165.
[18] As will be discussed in future chapters, al-Fārābī will add a third condition, the certainty condition, to his theory of justified deception. This condition demands that justified deception not only be necessary, but performed by someone that is certain that it is necessary, e.g., *AH* 44-47; *AH* (Ar.) 61-65.

viewed henceforth as a technical phrase) truly aim at the good of the polis, with those that

use them always using the best possible tools, only resorting to untruth when necessary.[19]

However, the questions remain. Do beneficent political deceptions actually exist? Can

political deceptions, broadly considered, ever be justified? And what do beneficent

political deceptions look like?

The proposed method for answering these questions is simple: find an example of

a beneficent political deception or a defense of beneficent political deceptions writ large

which succeeds and analyze it.[20] Such a project, of course, cannot be the definitive study

of the issue, but it may lead to some preliminary conclusions about the nature of

beneficent political deception. It can serve as an introductory jumping off point for the

topic. In this sense, this project is dialectical, not demonstrative. It will confine itself to

the examination of an exemplary case and derive its conclusions from there. Of course,

such a project will not be exhaustive, nor need it be. Because, as will be shown shortly,

there is unfortunately rather meager discussion of the issue in the history of philosophy.

My hope is that this this will be a start.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on finding an exemplary case of

beneficent political deception beginning with a thorough examination of the original

discussion, or at least the first prevalent discussion, of the topic in Plato. This will be

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[19] A great deal of thought went into which adjective should be used to describe al-Fārābī's model for political deception. 'Necessitated', while reflecting the inevitability of a cosmos which requires the use of political deception, does not capture the positive effect intended in al-Fārābī's model. 'Benevolence', while suggestive of the aim of al-Fārābī's brand of political deception (literally, 'to wish well'), does not capture the real effects of political deception on society. Ultimately, 'beneficent political deception' was chosen, because, for al-Fārābī, political deception by the Imām is an act in which the Imām 'does good' for the city, even it is through a deceitful act. See also Footnote 22.

[20] Without firmly establishing a broader metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical framework, reaching any conclusion on this issue seems impossible. For this reason, this project will examine the topic through the lens of another thinker who has developed a systematic philosophical program which allows for a fulsome model of beneficent political deception.

followed by a cursory account of the subsequent history of the topic, most of which is

subsumed under broader discussions of lying which are themselves subsumed under

broader discussions of normative ethical systems. But, those few (often infamous)

thinkers who escape the historical trend toward theoreticality when thinking about

political deception tend, themselves, to devolve into reverence for a *realpolitik* and power

at the expense of ethics, leaving a historical lacuna between those who have no place for

lies and those who hold little regard for the moral weight of the truth. Put bluntly, it is

difficult to find a contender for an exemplary case for beneficent political deception.

That said, one thinker can be found who gives a compelling and fulsome case for

beneficent political deception: Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī.[21] The

remaining chapters will explore al-Fārābī's discussion of beneficent political deception

pertaining to why he thinks it is necessary, what constrains the nature of beneficent

political deception, when it is permitted, who is permitted to deceive, what gives them

warrant to deceive, and the mechanisms that make it justifiable.[22] Whereas the

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[21] His successors, some of whom will be discussed in Chapter 4, also give fulsome accounts, though in part through emulation of al-Fārābī. Also, this is not to say that no other worthwhile examinations of the topic, as constrained here, exist, simply that any that do have not come to light in the research of this dissertation.

[22] Of all the concepts which are clarified in this dissertation, finding the proper terminology by which to label the action of al-Fārābī's Imām is perhaps the most difficult. On the one hand, one could say the Imām does not deceive, but merely 'translates' the truth, insofar as the images which he espouses contain within themselves the means by which to access the truth. However, 'translate' does not involve intentional obfuscation. Nor does the Imām merely 'obfuscate', 'camouflage', 'dissimulate', 'conceal', or 'misdirect' the truth. Al-Fārābī's Imām performs a double-action; his images at once are intended to deceive, insofar as the person without the requisite capacity, habituation, and education to deconstruct the images back to demonstrative truth is intended to take these (strictly speaking untrue) images at face value, yet simultaneously these images are ultimately intended to guide those with the requisite capabilities toward the truth itself. To my knowledge there is no adequate vernacular with which to label the Imām's action. Neither 'Noble Lie' which is inexorably tethered to Plato's doctrine (and I will argue is distinct from al-Fārābī's position) will suffice, nor will 'pious fiction' which also contains too much connotative baggage. As a result, following the oxymoronic example set by Plato's own labelling of his doctrine, as well as the oxymoronic double move which al-Fārābī endorses, I prefer to describe the Imām's act as a 'beneficent political deception', or, to be less turgid, a beneficent deception. So, when I intend to reference this double-move, the notion of 'deception' will be modified with 'beneficent'. The term absent the modifier can be read as signifying the normal, less technical and perhaps more ambiguous, sense of 'deception'. I would

penultimate chapter will draw conclusions concerning al-Fārābī's position, as such, the

concluding chapter will discuss what al-Fārābī's exemplary case of beneficent political

deception reveals about political deception itself and, ultimately, any construction of

social knowledge.[23]

1.4. Thesis

Given what was stated above, the thesis of this project is twofold:

1) Al-Fārābī's account successfully justifies beneficent political deception. While not totally immune to critiques of underdetermination concerning the intricacies of aspects of his position, on the whole, he is able to successfully show why a) political deception is necessary and b) the criterion by which 'the next best' thing to the truth may be determined.
2) While al-Fārābī's account justifies beneficent political deception when considered within its own framework, the particular cosmological, metaphysical, psychological, ethical, and epistemological preconditions which ground his account render it implausible when viewed from a modern day lens.[24] Moreover, the lengths to which al-Fārābī must go to achieve a cogent, necessary, yet ethical account of beneficent political deception reveals how problematic the notion of political deception is in itself.

All told, by showing the numerous preambles needed to justify beneficent political

deception in al-Fārābī's framework, this project aims to show that political deception is

even unjustifiable within the context of any *realpolitik*, though political lies are often

rationalized by appealing to the needs of the *realpolitik*.

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like to thank both Michael Chase and Therese Cory for their individual challenges to my use of the term 'deception' to describe al-Fārābī's model. While their concerns, namely that the term 'deception' is too connotative of brazen and harmful falsehood and is a term which does not capture the ever-present link to the truth in al-Fārābī's conception of religious imagery, accurately identify the peculiarity of al-Fārābī's position in the history of thought concerning deception, the adjective 'beneficent' is meant to mitigate the application of the term to al-Fārābī's idiosyncratic model.

[23] For a discussion of the meaning of the term 'construction of social knowledge' and its relevance to beneficent political deception, see Section 3 of the present chapter.

[24] For example, the heliocentric model of the solar system renders a great deal of al-Fārābī's justification ineffective.

2. <u>Origins in Plato: The Noble Lie</u>

To grapple with the notion of beneficent political deception one must, to some

degree, return to the origin of the idea in Plato. Plato knew that even an ideal ruler would

have to resort to political deception at times. So, he suggested a city run by those with the

most knowledge, but whose rule was ensured by a convincing ruse of the people, not by

the communicability of philosophy.[25] According to his recommendation, the rulers ought

to ensure their status through lying, even to the point of banishing those who are most

equipped to counter their fictions with appealing fictions of their own.[26] Knowledge of

the truth might qualify one to rule, but it is woefully inadequate to put one in the position

to rule.[27] Only persuasion centralizes power.

His doctrine, most famously known as the Doctrine of the Noble Lie, has served

as a key tool for governance in the medieval world, as both a precursor and foil for

modern political theory, and as a lightning-rod for controversy in contemporary political

discourse.[28] But for all of the conversation surrounding the Noble Lie and even Plato's

own recurring discussion of the topic in the *Republic*, what exactly makes a Noble Lie

noble remains unclear.[29] Plato does not give an exact list of which conditions make a

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[25] *Republic* 473c-480a.
[26] *Republic* 379a-b; 398a-b.
[27] *Republic* 477d.
[28] Al-Fārābī's ruling Imām is equipped to 'rouse [other people's] imaginations by well chosen words' like Plato's 'austere poet' from *Republic* 3 in his innovative and adaptive work based on the *Republic*. See *PS* 15.11. He also mirrors Plato's idea that the ruler should alone be free from political deception, instead knowing the truth through philosophy. See *AH* 44; *AH* (Ar.) 61; and *Republic* 414b. Averroes expands these ideas in his *Commentary on the Republic*. See *CR* 32.20-25. Patrick Coby notes how civic virtue functions as a noble lie for Machiavelli, mirroring the Phoenician Lie in the *Republic*, even though it is not directly referenced, while Hobbes clearly has the doctrine in mind when he rejects the 'art of words' which can represent good in the likeness of evil. See Coby 1999, 146; Knowles 2010, 77; Lloyd 2013, 166; *Leviathan* 119. The contemporary critiques are numerous, both academic and social, with the doctrine itself even coming under scrutiny in response to the fall of the Soviet Union and the run up to the Second Iraq War. See Popper 2013; Burch 2007; Nankov 2015.
[29] Of course, whether the term γενναίος should even be translated as 'noble' is a matter of dispute. See below for more.

mere political falsehood a 'Noble Lie'. And while the *Republic* contains both discourse about the qualities of Noble Lies and a very specific example of a Noble Lie, the essential characteristics which give these lies moral permissibility remain enigmatic, largely because his archetypical example of a Noble Lie is not clearly emblematic of all the qualities he abstractly discusses.[30] I will explore the general conditions which Plato suggests mark Noble Lies as a particular species of lie below, but first I will examine the singular example of a Noble Lie which Plato gives, the Phoenician Story, in part because it is often discussed as if it were *the only* Noble Lie, as if Plato's singular example encompassed the entire set of all possible Noble Lies, and in part to reveal why it at least seems problematically ignoble.[31]

2.1. The Phoenician Story

After having discussed the falsehood of most myths in *Republic* 2, and having established the need for rulers to apply falsehoods as medicine to their people, while banishing from the city anyone skillful in imitation (i.e., lying) who is not subservient to philosophy in *Republic* 3, Plato has Socrates aim to "devise (μηχανὴ) one of those useful (δέοντι) falsehoods (ψευδῶν) we were talking about a while ago, one (ἓν) noble (γενναῖόν) falsehood (ψευδομένους) that would, in the best case, persuade (πεῖσαι) even the rulers, but if that's not possible, then the others of the city."[32] He calls the deceptive myth which follows the 'Phoenician Story'. Plato's language here is confusing for two

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[30] See *Republic* 377b-380c, 382a-382e, 389a-d, 398a-b, 459c-d, and 414b-415c.
[31] To avoid the possible confusion brought about by discussing *the* Noble Lie (i.e. the Phoenician Story) in contrast with *a* Noble Lie (i.e. any lie which meets the criteria for nobility), I will henceforth restrict my language to signify Plato's example by the term 'Phoenician Story', leaving the term 'Noble Lie' to signify the general set of all possible Noble Lies.
[32] *Republic* 389b-390a; 398a; 414b-c.

reasons. First, by indicating that Socrates will devise only one useful falsehood, the

impression is given that there is in fact only one possible useful falsehood (or perhaps

one single genealogical falsehood per city).[33] And in fact, many interpreters read it this

way. When discussing the Noble Lie, these authors discuss the Phoenician Story which

follows as if it is the singular Noble Lie; it is not always clear if this is genuine confusion

or merely shorthand. For example, Catalin Partenie remarks informatively that Plato

often modifies existing myths for his own unique purpose (a point I will return to

shortly), and that "this is the case, for instance, of the Noble Lie (*Republic* 414b–415d),

which is a combination of the Cadmeian myth of autochthony and the Hesiodic myth of

ages," as if the phrase 'Noble Lie' ought to only signify the Phoenician Story.[34] The great

Allan Bloom falls prey to the same shorthand, saying, "The only remedy that Socrates

can find is a great lie—the noble lie. This famous lie consists of two very diverse parts."[35]

Thus, he too collapses the notion of the Noble Lie (i.e., Plato's general doctrine of

political deception) into Plato's singular example (i.e., the Phoenician Story) while

explaining the Cadmeian and Hesiodic amalgamation of the Phoenician Story. And

Malcolm Schofield introduces the Phoenician Story as 'the Noble Lie of the *Republic*',

again identifying it as singular and again remarking upon its dual Hesiodic and

Phoenician character. He says, "The Noble Lie of the *Republic* (3.414B–415D) is

presented to the reader as a myth (415A). It is really two myths, or a myth in two parts: a

'Phoenician' theme (414C), on which Socrates then places a no less important Hesiodic

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[33] Plato also describes the laws, hymns, deceptions, and falsehoods used to ensure procreation between the fittest members of the city as a "useful form of drug". *Republic* 459c-460c. Whether this lie should be considered distinct from the Phoenician Story or as merely a part of the larger program which maintains the rule of the golden members of society is unclear.
[34] Partenie 2014.
[35] Bloom 1968, 335.

variation (cf. 8.546E)."[36] Of course, to address the Phoenician Story this way is not

strictly speaking wrong; it is, after all, the only tangible example Plato gives of his 'one

noble falsehood', and the particular terminology shows up here (even though his

discussion of the term ψευδής both precedes this passage and extends well beyond it).[37]

However, it is (a) misleading when Plato is clear that the rulers of his ideal city will have

to use not one falsehood, but a "considerable use of falsehood and deception for the

benefit of those they rule… [as] such falsehoods are useful as a form of drug," and (b)

problematic when the critiques of the notion of the Noble Lie qua beneficent political

deception are often aimed, not at the concepts of beneficent political deception or Noble

Lies as such, but the particularity of the Phoenician Story.[38] In sum, despite common

practice which equates the Noble Lie with the Phoenician Story and Socrates' ambiguous

language directly preceding the introduction of the Phoenician Story, the Phoenician

Story is not identical with the Doctrine of the Noble Lie, but merely one example of it.

Plato's language in *Republic* 3, right before he begins the Phoenician Story, is

also elusive for another reason. The translation of ψευδής, especially in combination with

γενναίος, is particularly vexing, given the possibility that ψευδής can mean anything from

'lie' (i.e., an intentional untruth), 'falsehood' (i.e., an untruth with undefined intention) or

even a fiction, while γενναίος can indicate both nobility (i.e., indicating its moral value)

and grandiosity (i.e., indicating its aesthetic value or even size). G.M.A. Grube translates

the phrase as 'noble falsehood'; Eric Voegelin prefers the playful 'big whopper' or 'big

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[36] Schofield 2006, 284.

[37] See also Footnote 33. One valuable treatment of this issue can be found in the work of Carl Page, who distinguishes between paedeutic lies for children, pharmacological lies which function as a preventative, and the Noble Lie, which he identifies with the Phoenician Tale. Page, counter what I present here, views the Phoenician Tale as a successful pharmacological (and one assumes) paedeautic lie. See Page 1991.

[38] *Republic* 459c-d. I will discuss these critiques in more depth in Chapter 5.

lie'; Benjamin Jowett translates it as 'royal lie'; Desmond Lee, in perhaps the most

charitable of all interpretations, suggests 'magnificent myth'; Chris Emlyn-Jones and

William Preddy translate it as 'noble lie' in the Loeb edition of *Republic* 1-5; and

Cornford prefers the less literal 'bold flight of invention.'[39] No matter the translation

though, the *Republic* is clear that the companion to the ruler's use of ψευδής is deceit

(ἀπάτη) applied medicinally to the city.[40] As Schofield notes, remarking on Hannah

Arendt's rejection of the term 'lie' being used for ψευδής:

> The still influential political philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote in 1967 as follows: "I hope no one will tell me any more that Plato was the inventor of the 'noble lie'. This belief rested on a misreading of a crucial passage (414C) in the Republic, where Plato speaks of one of his myths—a 'Phoenician tale'—as a *pseudos*. Since the same Greek word signifies 'fiction', 'error', and 'lie' according to context—if Plato wants to distinguish between error and lie, the Greek language forces him to speak of 'involuntary' and 'voluntary' *pseudos*—the text can be rendered with Cornford as 'bold flight of invention' or be read with Eric Voegelin . . . as satirical in intention; under no circumstances can it be understood as a recommendation of lying as we understand it." It will by now be evident that Arendt was simply wrong about the interpretation of *pseudos*. The Noble Lie is specifically introduced as one of the 'falsehoods that get created as needed which we were talking about a little while back' (3.414B). Socrates is referring to the useful medicinal lies first exemplified in Book 1 by the case of the deranged friend's dagger, and then categorized near the end of Book 2.[41]

Even though ψευδής *can* be translated with a term as innocuous as 'fiction', Plato clearly

does not intend something so innocuous here. The Noble Lie is no mere fiction or

parable, but a tool for unreflective assent. As Allan Bloom explains, "The difference

between a parable and this tale is that the man who hears a parable is conscious that it is

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[39] *Republic* (Grube), 414b-c; Voegelin 1966, 105; *Republic* (Jowett), 414b-c; *Republic* (Lee) 414b-c; *Republic* (Emlyn-Jones and Preddy) 414b-c; *Republic* (Cornford) 414b-c.
[40] *Republic* 459c. Here Plato is relying on the distinction between falsehood within language and true falsehood (i.e., falsehood in the soul), only the latter of which is always harmful and hated by gods and human beings. See *Republic* 382a-e.
[41] Arendt 1967, 298f.; Schofield 2006, 302-303.

an invention the truth of which is not in its literal expression, whereas the inhabitants of

Socrates' city are to believe the untrue story to be true."[42]

As for the term γενναίος, whether it is interpreted as 'grand', 'magnificent',

'bold', or 'noble', matters little in this context, as it is clearly both 'grand' and 'bold',

being believed by everyone except maybe the rulers in the city, and also 'noble' due to its

proximity to happiness, civic duty, and educational value, as only 'fine and beautiful'

stories will be allowed in the city, ones which are not entirely false, but in accordance

with the pattern required for the education of the citizens of the city.[43] As Schofield

explains:

> Quite how we should understand the main connotation of 'noble' (*gennaion*) in
> the expression 'noble lie' is unclear. Perhaps it is only ironic, or a term of literary
> appraisal: an impressively massive lie, a right royal lie. But it is easy enough to
> see why Plato might think it noble. Devotion to one's city was a widely accepted
> and frequently hymned Greek ideal, familiar from Homer (particularly in the
> figure of Hector in the Iliad) to the Athenian funeral oration. So a myth designed
> to promote such devotion to what Socrates will describe as the good city (e.g.
> 4.427E) might well be regarded as something noble.[44]

In other words, whether the authorial intent of γενναίος is 'grand' or 'noble' the

Phoenician Story and all of Plato's useful lies are clearly intended to be both grand and

noble, being instituted at a young enough age to be believed by all citizens but the highest

leaders, yet having been done so for the sake of education.[45] As for how such a big lie

could be noble, Voegelin explains, "Plato enjoys the paradox that the education of

children begins with untrue stories, that is, with fables and myths." [46] As Socrates notes,

"We first tell stories to our children… these are false, on the whole, though they have

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[42] Bloom 1968, xviii.
[43] *Republic* 377b-378e; 398a-b.
[44] Schofield 2006, 287.
[45] *Republic* 414c; 377a.
[46] Voegelin 1966,106.

some truth in them."[47] A Noble Lie is noble because it leads to a life of nobility which in turn is the case because every Noble Lie holds proximity to the truth.

2.1.1. Content of the Phoenician Story

And yet, even though Noble Lies are used for the sake of education, containing a bit of the truth within them, they remain on the whole false, which raises moral questions about the educational value and moral permissibility of such a lie. Take the Phoenician Story, which is literally the exemplary case. The story is an amalgamation of two myths. The Phoenician portion of the tale is rooted in a myth wherein Cadmus, the son of Agenor, King of Tyre, founded Thebes by sowing a dragon's teeth into the ground, out of which bloomed the warriors who would become the progenitors of Thebes' noble families.[48] The Hesiodic portion comes from Hesiod's Myth of Ages, in which Hesiod describes five periods of history: the golden age under Cronus, in which lived men of nobility such that they even mingled among the gods, "free from toil and grief"; the silver age, during which the first men under the rulership of Zeus lived, those whose lives were marked by longevity in adolescence and foolish strife in abbreviated adulthood; the bronze age, which was marked by a "brazen race" of those who "loved the lamentable works of Ares and deeds of violence"; then the age of heroes, Cadmus, Oedipus, and Achilles, who deserve honor and glory; last, the age of iron, Hesiod's own people, who are restless and full of sorrow.[49] Socrates, though embarrassed and hesitating, suggests

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[47] *Republic* 377a.

[48] *Bibliotheca of Pseudo-Apollodorus* 3.4.1f. See also Partenie 2014; Bloom 1968, 335; Schofield 2006, 284.

[49] *Works and Days* 109-201. See also Partenie 2014; Bloom 1968, 335; Schofield 2006, 284; Pappas 1995, 53-54.

that the city ought to be founded on a tale modelled after these.[50] The citizens should be

told that all their progenitors were "fashioned and nurtured inside the earth", so that they

"think of the other citizens as their earthborn brothers" in times of peace and war,

echoing the origin of the Thebans.[51] But unlike the Thebans, the gods instilled both

fraternity and distinction in the citizens of Socrates' ideal city. For while all are brothers,

the gods "mixed some gold into those who are adequate to rule, because they are the most

valuable", "silver in those who are auxiliaries", and "iron and bronze in the farmers and

craftsmen".[52] Thus, the Hesiodic portion of the myth takes the naturally ordained

legitimacy of civic fraternity which is found in the myth of Cadmus and transforms it into

loyalty; the ruling class rules because the gods, and civic destiny, have ordained it to be

so.

2.1.2. Exposition of the Phoenician Story

One can easily see how the Phoenician story can be of utilitarian benefit to the

city as a whole, but also problematically totalitarian. Not only does belief in the story

garner civic devotion, but clear and established social order, as Socrates concludes the

story by noting that "there is an oracle which says the city will be ruined if it ever has an

iron or bronze guardian."[53] Each class knows that it shares in the success of the city as a

whole, as all citizens come from the same origin; yet each class also knows its proper and

immutable place.[54] As Bloom notes:

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[50] *Republic* 414c-e.
[51] *Republic* 414d-e.
[52] *Republic* 415a-b.
[53] *Republic* 415c.
[54] There is some chance for upward and downward nobility based upon ability, but this seems to occur early in a child's education. See *Republic* 415b-c.

The tale makes them brothers and relates them to this particular patch of land. It identifies city and regime with country, which is the object of the most primitive political loyalty; it gives the motherland life and the principles of the city body. Short of a universal state, nothing but such a tale can make a natural connection of the individual to one of the many existing cities. Moreover, in this way, the regime itself is lent the color of naturalness. The fact that regimes require human institution, as other natural things do not, calls their naturalness into question. But here the very functions which the regime has educated the citizens to fulfill are attributed to nature; the citizens grow into their political roles as acorns grow into oaks. Each might have wondered why he should be devoted to his particular specialty to the exclusion of all others; but now they see that the equipment of their arts belongs to them in the same way their bodies do. This regime is also vulnerable because it conquered or stole the land in which it is established; this imperfect beginning gives ground for later men to argue the right of the stronger in their own interest. This tale provides for that eventuality by concealing the unjust origin of this regime (which we have seen) by a just account of its origin. On the basis of the lie, the citizens can in all good faith and conscience take pride in the justice of their regime, and malcontents have no Justification for rebellion. Such are the advantages of autochthony. The second part of the lie gives divine sanction to the natural hierarchy of human talents and virtues while enabling the regime to combine the political advantages of this hierarchy with those of mobility. In the Socratic view, political justice requires that unequal men receive unequal honors and unequal shares in ruling. This is both advantageous and fitting. In order to be effective and be preserved, the inequality of right and duty must receive institutional expression.[55]

By ingraining the civic order into civic education itself, which in turn mythologizes the civic order into a natural order, Socrates preempts the possibility of dissent. In doing so, Socrates transmutes the very natures of the citizens of the city into their civic functions, with only one class, the guardians, having voice in the organization of civic functionality. And while the Cadmeian portion of the myth maintains the possibility of generational social mobility (i.e. the child of a farmer can be "found to have a mixture of gold or silver" during her education, thus placing her in a higher class), there are no mechanisms for adult advancement.[56] In other words, for the adult, the Phoenician story is a lie which excludes her political voice and denies the possibility of class improvement. Here lies the

[55] Bloom 1968, 335-336.
[56] *Republic* 415c.

problem. As Schofield explains, "*The Republic's* explicit reliance on such a mechanism to secure assent and commitment to the political arrangements it proposes still has the capacity to shock and offend. It makes the Noble Lie a natural focus for many of the major questions the dialogue provokes."[57] This is echoed by Pappas, who notes:

> The myth is meant to generate blind loyalty: it implies that the city is its citizens' mother (414e), and that nothing matters more than each citizen's assignment to the right class (415b–c). The principle of the division of labor, has by now outweighed any question of how the citizens want to live. This might be the first point in the *Republic*, therefore, at which its readers accuse Plato of totalitarian politics.[58]

The Phoenician Story guarantees civic stability while stripping individual autonomy and establishing totalitarian rule.

However, while this does not mean that the Phoenician story is necessarily malicious, it is difficult to conceive of it as overly magnanimous either. Instead, it seems to achieve a minimal aim, namely to bolster against the tyrannical rule which purely favors the powerful.[59] As Schofield asks of the famous lie and its corresponding use of the citizenry as functionaries:

> Lying and using in whose interest? Isn't this ideology mediating a distorted representation of reality designed to deceive and thereby control those who can be got to believe it? To the first question Plato would reply: in the interests of those lied to, or in whom religion is to be inculcated. In other words, he would enter the defence [sic] of paternalism. With the second question he would reject the charge of distortion. What the *Laws'* religious rhetoric and the *Republic*'s Noble Lie communicate is truth.[60]

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[57] Schofield 2006, 293.

[58] Pappas 1995, 53-54.

[59] As C.C.W. Taylor explains, "Ancient tyrannies had, as far as our evidence suggests, no ideology; the principal aim of the tyrant was to preserve power and status for himself and his family and dependents, and while, as in the Sicilian tyrannies of the fifth century B.C., public resources were devoted to the maintenance of that end by such means as building of temples and participation in athletic festivals, there is no indication that tyrannical governments attempted to direct private life for public ends" (Taylor 1997, 31). For Plato, whose city is orchestrated toward a particular civic end which is tied up in his conception of the good, tyranny is untenable.

[60] Schofield 2006, 283.

The Phoenician Story turns most people into functionaries, but Plato seems to think this very transformation through deception is warranted, and even beneficial, for both civic and personal education, though it remains unclear if any of these educational benefits actually affect 'bronze' citizens. Whereas the auxiliaries and guardians, even those who never truly attain philosophical knowledge themselves, benefit from having their sight "looking where it ought to look", having their nature "hammered at from childhood and freed from the bond of kinship with becoming, which have been fastened to it by feasting, greed, and other such pleasures", and having been removed from the temptations raised by private property, the bronze citizen seems only to benefit from a political landscape which does not foment civil war.[61] The bronze citizen in Plato's city seems no better off than she would be in a democracy, at least in times of peace, as she lives just as the democratic citizen does, plying her trade and valuing "desires that make money".[62] So while the Phoenician Story guards the city against tyranny, ensuring that those who rule are precisely those who do not desire honor or power, and thus guards against the horrors of civil war, the deception does not in any way truly educate the lowest of the city's citizens, but only appeases them.[63] It does not teach them virtue or bring them nearer the philosophical life. Rather it encourages them to accept their fate as incapable of the sort of virtue achieved by the guardians.

That said, there are more charitable readings of the Phoenician Story which read its role as intended for the eudaimonia of the entire citizenry. For example, in his analysis of Plato's totalitarianism in response to Karl Popper's critique in *The Open Society and*

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[61] *Republic* 518d; 519a; 516d.
[62] *Republic* 571c.
[63] *Republic* 347c-e.

Its Enemies, C.C.W. Taylor tries to characterize whether the totalitarianism of the

Republic should be dismissed out of hand by analyzing what kind of totalitarianism the

Republic endorses. Taylor critiques Popper for his lack of engagement with the text itself

and Popper's mistaken characterization of Plato as subsuming the happiness of the

citizens under the happiness of the city as a whole, arguing that while Plato does privilege

the city over any individual class, he does so for the sake of the individual.[64] He explains:

> The goal of the polis is the production of as much individual *eudaimonia* as possible. But the majority of people are not capable of *eudaimonia* on their own; since they are incapable of grasping the Good, they cannot provide for themselves that impetus towards it which is a necessary condition for psychic harmony. Left to themselves they will be a prey to their lawless lower impulses, and will therefore sink into an uncoordinated chaos of conflicting desires.[65]

Thus, Taylor reads Plato as adopting a totalitarianism, but a beneficent totalitarianism.

Plato is a paternalist. Taylor elaborates:

> The good condition of the state is thus defined as the state of maximum well-being for the citizens; as…both individual good and the good of the state are of intrinsic value, but here the good of the individual is ultimately valuable, that of the state derivatively. This form of totalitarianism, then, is a form of paternalism… The paternalist theory is a humanist, teleological theory of a familiar kind; it treats recognizable, individual human goods as paramount and evaluates social institutions in terms of their efficacy and efficiency in producing them. Its dubious features are its denial of autonomy as itself a constituent of human welfare, and its claim that some individuals are entitled to wield absolute political power in virtue of possessing knowledge of what is good for themselves and for others, a claim which is contestable both on the metaphysical ground that it is dubious whether such knowledge is possible and on the moral ground that, even if possible, it is doubtful whether it confers political authority.[66]

Note the tenor of Taylor's argument: it is possible to be a totalitarian, a humanist, and on

questionable moral and metaphysical ground all at once. Plato is most assuredly a

totalitarian insofar as he endorses the concentrated authority of the golden guardian class.

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[64] Taylor 1997, 37-38.
[65] Taylor 1997, 42.
[66] Taylor 1997, 33-34.

And he is arguably a humanist, as the rule of the guardians is for the benefit of the other classes. For example, Socrates explains in *Republic* 7 that whereas philosophers who spring up randomly and naturally in the unorganized city are prone to isolation, they have a duty in the city who fosters them. Socrates can:

> …compel them to guard and care for others… We'll say: "When people like you come to be in other cities, they're justified in not sharing they're city's labors, for they've grown there spontaneously, against the will of the constitution. And what grows of its own accord and owes no debt for its upbringing has justice on its side… But we've made you kings in our city and leaders of the swarm, as it were, both for yourselves and for the rest of the city… Therefore each of you in turn must go down to live in the common dwelling place of the others."[67]

The philosopher must obligatorily descend into the darkness of the cave, because there is a symbiosis between all the classes, such that each class reaches their maximal possible fruition. While the guardian class might be the only one capable of full-fledged *eudaimonia* and the only class capable of escaping ignorance, the guardians too have a duty to allow the other classes to flourish, even if this means merely preventing civil war.[68]

On balance, Plato is both concerned with the good of the city and the good of the individual simultaneously, even if the maximal good of the bronze citizen pales in comparison to the good achieved by the golden guardians.[69] As many have noted, Plato's totalitarianism is based, not upon political ruthlessness, but upon an epistemological and anthropological pessimism in which a significant portion of the population is incapable of knowledge. In fact, his pessimism is so great that he fears that death awaits anyone who

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[67] *Republic* 520a-d.
[68] See *Republic* 516d.
[69] Though his aim here is clearly primarily civic happiness. He explains, "In establishing our City, we aren't aiming to make any one group outstandingly happy, but to make the whole city so…" (*Republic* 420a).

tries too forcefully to teach these ignorant masses, just as death awaited Socrates.[70] The

rule of the guardians is based upon their simple desire not to be ruled by someone worse,

more wicked, and more ignorant than themselves, and the medicinal use of deception is

mandated by the poor intellectual breeding of those of the lower classes.[71] As Taylor

explains:

> The combination of Plato's metaphysics and his pessimistic moral psychology
> seems thus to offer a compellingly neat solution to the difficulty we have been
> discussing. There is an objective good for the individual, which everyone wants to
> achieve, but which most are incapable of achieving by their own efforts, since its
> achievement requires a grasp of the nature of that good of which most are
> incapable. Hence society must be so organized that the direction towards that
> good is provided by a ruling elite with the power to direct themselves and others
> towards the good which they alone grasp.[72]

In theory, while the guardian class is the only class to achieve *eudaimonia* (though it

should be noted, by requiring the guardians to care for the other classes, they too must

sacrifice for the good of the city), the Phoenician Story establishes a societal structure

which enables each class to maximize their virtue and allows each class to get as close as

possible to happiness.[73]

2.2. Noble Lies and Education

But even granting (for the sake of argument) Plato's metaphysics and

psychological pessimism, a topic too vast to evaluate here, Plato's Phoenician Story still

raises ethical concerns, particularly insofar as it seems not to exemplify the types of

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[70] See *Republic* 517a.

[71] This of course raises the controversial passage of *Republic* 459-460 in which Socrates advocates for the implementation of an apparent eugenic program. While it is beyond the scope of this project to discuss this subject, see H.D. Rankin's article (Rankin 1965) for a more thorough analysis of the text and Sara Goering's piece (Goering 2014) for a critical analysis of the history of eugenics and its moral problems.

[72] Taylor 1997, 43.

[73] *Republic* 421b-c; 520a-d.

useful lies which are intended for the sake of education. To put it bluntly, Plato's sole

example of a Noble Lie does not exemplify his description of Noble Lies all that well.

Recall that the only stories allowed in Plato's city "are false, on the whole, though they

have some truth in them", "fine and beautiful", intended for the education of the citizens'

souls, meant to instill virtue, and intended to imitate the speech of a decent person.[74] The

Phoenician Story does not achieve these aims very well. While on the one hand the

Phoenician Story does contain some fine elements (e.g. all humans are brothers), some

truth (e.g. not all humans are equally skillful), and educates the citizens about the proper

social order for a city, it lacks educational merit for the bronze citizens, in effect

instructing them to forsake their education, as their natures will prevent them from

achieving knowledge anyway. Coupled with Plato's lack of instruction as to how one

distinguishes between the gold citizen and the bronze citizens, and further, the deceptive

and seemingly arbitrary testing amongst the guardian class in order to distinguish

between he who rules and he who is rejected because he "fails to prove himself", Plato's

fatalistic view that the majority of the citizenry lack any prospects of achieving

eudaimonia highlights the problems inherent within the Phoenician Story.[75] If the lie is,

in part, intended to stifle the educational aspirations of the majority of the citizenry, it

ought to have a mechanism in place to identify those who can and cannot achieve

eudaimonia with perfect accuracy.[76] Even if the Phoenician Story qualifies as a Noble Lie

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[74] *Republic* 377a; 377b; 376e; 378e; 398b.

[75] *Republic* 413a-414a.

[76] It should be noted that there is an alternative reading to Platonic *eudaimonia* than that which I am purporting here. Richard Mohr, eschewing the standard reading, believes that *eudaimonia* in the *Republic* is not achieved by a psychic harmony which involves the rational portion of the soul, but is achieved simply through the fulfillment of civic function. It is beyond the scope of this project to settle this issue, though it is fair to say that if my interpretation above is wrong, it is in quite good and storied company. See Mohr 1987, 131-145.

in theory, it cannot function as a Noble Lie in practice, because it divides humanity

without foolproof mechanisms to accurately apply this division. He even admits that his

proposed testing (which only distinguishes the guardians who are equipped to rule from

the guardians who are not) provides "only a general pattern and not the exact details."[77]

From the viewpoint of the individual citizen awaiting whether they will have the

opportunity to pursue the philosophical life, the exact details matter.

Plato enacts a policy of division and legitimizes it through a lie, because no

rational discourse can justify it. As Bloom explains:

> The lie implies that the city must have some wise ruler who can distinguish the
> qualities of souls, but here that is not underlined, and the emphasis is on preparing
> the citizens to accept both a stability and a movement which go against their
> grain. The first part of the lie differs from the second in that the former attempts
> to make the conventional attachment to the city and its regime seem natural, while
> the latter must provide a conventional support for natural differences which men
> have reason to want to forget. This is why, in the second part of the lie, a god
> must be invoked. The lie, because it is a lie, points up the problems it is designed
> to solve. Perhaps no rational investigation of them could yield a basis for political
> legitimacy.[78]

And while Bloom argues that ultimately there are still good reasons for the lie, it should

unsettle and disturb anyone concerned for justice.[79] Plato might contend that any seeming

injustice brought about by the Phoenician Story merely reflects a natural injustice in the

distribution of talents within the human populace, but he does so without demonstration

of this fact or the mechanism by which one might flawlessly identify these talents. The

Phoenician Story strips human beings of their dignity without providing a means to

assess dignity; it curbs opportunity without first assessing individual limits. While the

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[77] *Republic* 414a.
[78] Bloom 1968, 335-336.
[79] Bloom 1968, 337.

Phoenician Story might function as a Noble Lie macroscopically, ensuring the stability and virtue of the city as a whole, microscopically it actually stifles education.

Surely, this is odd. That the Phoenician Story suppresses the educational ambitions of a majority of his perfect city seems inappropriate in light of Plato's conception of the good life. As Bloom notes, "Socrates, who gaily abandons the founding myth or noble lie he himself made up for the sake of the city, looks quixotic in this light."[80] The same Socrates who views the ultimate goal of humanity as an escape from the darkness of the cave, himself proposes to chain the majority of his citizens to their seats in the shadows, even if he provides slightly better shadows than those which are encountered in the democratic city. This is suggested by the selfsame Plato who in the *Laws* claims that "truth heads the list of all things good, for gods and men alike. Let anyone who intends to be happy and blessed be its partner from the start, so that he may live as much of his life as possible a man of truth."[81] This is suggested by the selfsame Plato who claims in the *Phaedo* that even faulty language "does some harm to the soul."[82] And again, this is suggested by the selfsame Plato who earlier in the *Republic* confidently claims that "to be false in one's soul about the things that are, to be ignorant and to have and hold falsehood there, is what everyone would least of all accept, for everyone hates a falsehood in that place most of all."[83] Later, he even goes so far as to say the soul is immortal, and its most perfected state is its love of philosophy.[84] Nonetheless, he

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[80] Bloom, 1968, ix.
[81] *Laws* 730c.
[82] *Phaedo* 115e.
[83] *Republic* 382b.
[84] *Republic* 611a-612-c.

proposes a founding myth which relegates most of his citizens to an entirely

unphilosophical life.

And while nature might be the main culprit which disables most individuals from

knowing truth, as most of the citizens "are naturally fitted to leave philosophy alone and

follow their leader," Plato's city is not natural, nor does it perfectly mirror nature.[85] The

system of dividing the classes is an artificial one, built upon a lie, which has no

guarantees or checks upon its rectitude.[86] Plato justifies denying universal access to

philosophy because there are some humans naturally unequipped to learn, but never

carefully establishes how to distinguish between those who are capable of learning and

those who are not (and never considers the possibility that one's condition might change

throughout one's life). This is clearly in dissonance with Plato's own esteem for the truth.

As F.E. Sparshott notes:

> Plato frankly regards as sinister the use of non-rational means of persuasion to
> support policies whose merits are objectively uncertain: to use them is necessarily
> to give opinions more weight than they are known to deserve (*Gorgias* 455A-
> 456C, 458E-459C). Two palliative considerations may be noted, however. One is
> that non-rational support is as available to a sound opinion as to an unsound
> (*Gorgias* 456C-457C, *Statesman* 303E-304E); in fact since not everyone can
> appreciate the true merit of all opinions, a sound opinion (even a demonstrable
> truth) needs such backing no less than an unsound one.[87]

The entire problem raised by the Phoenician Story is that the truth which it contains

(despite its apparent falsehood) is not certain, nor can its implementation be certain. It is

not persuasion in defense of certain knowledge, but a deception which establishes a civic

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[85] *Republic* 474c.
[86] This is not to say that there is no metaphysical groundwork for Plato's political philosophy. His class division is built upon his specific conception of human nature and the tripartite soul. However, the method for distinguishing between the classes is never provided in detail. To use Plato's own metaphor, while he provides justification for the possible medicinal use of deception, he never provides a clear method for diagnosis, when it ought to be prescribed, or the particulars of a proper dosage.
[87] Sparshott 1971, 182.

order divorced (at least without a better mechanism for assessing the capabilities of the

individual) from nature. It is not a representation of the truth. The critiques of Plato's

doctrine which I will address in Chapter 5 hinge upon the unfaithfulness of this

representation. A Noble Lie, as such, is intended to be in service to the truth and

education, yet the Phoenician Story is not. Ultimately, the Phoenician Story is a lie which

is not actually representative of one of Plato's useful falsehoods. His sole example of a

Noble Lie is not itself a very good example of a Noble Lie.

2.3. Noble Lies as a Concept

However, to repudiate the Phoenician Story is not the same as a repudiation of the

concept of a Noble Lie as such. To suggest that the Phoenician Story is inadequately

adjacent to the truth, insufficiently effective at bringing about the happiness of the

citizens, and educationally deficient does not preclude that there might be *some* Noble

Lie which avoids these pitfalls. It remains possible, despite one's repudiation of the

Phoenician Story, that there is still merit to the idea of a Noble Lie. As Sparshott noted

above, in the realm of politics, even "a sound opinion (even a demonstrable truth) needs

such [non-rational] backing."[88] Plato's Doctrine of the Noble Lie might remain morally

justifiable if one does not collapse the concept of the Noble Lie as such with the example

of the Phoenician Story. As Shofield explains:

> The culture is and must be saturated with myths that are literally false, and
> deceptive if believed to be factually true. But the deception is legitimate if like the
> Noble Lie and the stories Socrates wants the young to hear, they are morally
> admirable fictions that drug people into sound convictions and lead them to virtue
> (2.377B–C, 378E–379A). What is wrong with Homer and Hesiod is not in the end

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[88] Sparshott 1971, 182.

that they lied, but that there was nothing morally admirable in most of the lies they told (2.377E).[89]

As noted when this chapter began, political lies seem an unfortunate necessity of politics as a whole. They are the politically possible course of action when brash truthfulness is untenable. But such lies must be in the service to something nobler than brazen untruthfulness for the sake of political power. They must themselves stand in for and represent the truth which is politically impossible, as an aid for an ideal. They cannot be the mere flights of fancy of Homer and Hesiod, nor can they be political tools which do not withstand scrutiny, as is the Phoenician Story. Unfortunately, there are not many models for warranted political deception in the history of ideas.

While Plato's Phoenician Story fails to live up to criteria established above for beneficent political deception, it remains instructive in how it fails. Plato carefully considers each criterion for beneficent political deception, both why untruth is necessary and what 'the next best' thing to the truth could be. Regarding the former, he contends that not all humans are endowed by nature to know the truth. Regarding the latter, he gives a description of a Noble Lie in which the lie is educational, containing some, if not the whole, truth in it. Thus, Plato provides a theoretical model for beneficent political deception. And yet, his implementation of the theory is flawed; the Phoenician Story lacks necessity (at least at the level of the particular human being) and fails to be 'the next best' thing after the truth, i.e. an educational falsehood, instead stifling education.

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[89] Schofield 2006, 297. Of course, Schofield here is not distinguishing between the Noble Lie and the Phoenician Story and appears to endorse that the Phoenician Story is itself educational. This is questionable, as mentioned above. Nonetheless, his point stands insofar as founding myths remain important to any society insofar as they are legitimately educational.

But by providing a defective model of beneficent political deception, Plato gives an adumbration of what a successful model might look like.

3. <u>**A Possible Model: A Construction of Social Knowledge**</u>

Through Plato, a clearer conception of what could constitute a successful archetype for beneficent political deception manifests itself. The ambiguous notion of 'the next best' thing to the truth is shown to be quite a particular notion after Plato's examination of the Noble Lie. If the truth is impossible, 'the next best' thing to the truth must be falsehood in service to the truth. In other words, a beneficent political deception must be a lie which is educationally valuable to those who hear it. Of course, the caveat remains that the truth is always preferable to falsity, but now it is clear that any justified beneficent political deception requires (a) that deception is necessary and (b) that any political deception must profit the advancement of the truth.

Such a deception could never become tantamount to truth; believing a lie can never properly be characterized as knowledge. However, assuming the prior conditions for beneficent political deception, one could readily imagine a scenario in which (a) knowledge of truth is necessarily unattainable for a certain portion of a society and (b) an educational fiction is created and presented as a stand-in for the truth, as a bulwark against more pernicious falsehoods and an impetus toward the truth should the impediment which necessitates falsehood ever be removed. In other words, the model for beneficent political deception, as well as the model for the Nobel Lie, is a falsehood for a society which serves as a supporting scaffold when truth in unattainable, but which, importantly, does not serve as an impediment to truth when or if conditions change.

Such beneficent political deceptions must by definition be artificial, insofar as they are created by a political actor who deceives for necessary and altruistic ends. More importantly, such deceits are not divorced from truth; they do not supplant truth. They are in service to truth; they are constructed in reference to truth to function as a necessary political proxy for knowledge in a society. Thus, they will henceforth be termed 'constructions of social knowledge'—political deceptions which serve as necessitated educational surrogates for the truth within a society.[90] These are not mere lies; rather, they are deceptive fictions which orient a society toward the truth.

To fully explicate such a concept, one needs a model of its instantiation. Exactly why such constructions of social knowledge are necessitated must be explained. How such constructions of social knowledge can serve the truth needs further explication. But the criteria for an ideal model, while not found in Plato, is revealed in Plato; through these criteria a search for an educational political deception can proceed.

4. <u>The Paucity of Models for Beneficent Political Deception</u>

Lamentably, after Plato, there are not very many fully developed models of political deception which acknowledge both conditions which must undergird any possible justification for warranted beneficent political deception: (a) that political deception is necessary, and (b) that political deception must profit the advancement of the truth in order to be justifiable. Those few which exist are themselves inheritors of Platonic philosophy (as well as Fārābīan philosophy) and will be discussed in subsequent

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[90] I borrow this terminology from al-Fārābī who says that the Imām is the one who invents (*ikhtaraʻa*) images (*'amthāl*) through which the truth is known (*maʻlūm*) by the association (*ijtimāʻ*) of the city.

chapters.[91] The remaining thinkers who discuss political deception tend to fall into three distinct camps: 1) those who value the truth to such a degree that they deny that deception could ever be ethically necessary, 2) those who emphasize the importance of the *realpolitik* and political consequence to the extent that they deny any intrinsic duty to the truth, and 3) critical thinkers who explore the topic without providing a model for political deception of their own. Unfortunately, only a cursory examination of these camps is possible here.

4.1. Truth Dominant views of Deception

Perhaps the most straightforward of the approaches to political deception is the position which is put forward by those thinkers who believe that truth, as such, is inviolate. For these thinkers, lying to another is simply wrong. For these thinkers, e.g. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, Immanuel Kant, John Rawls, and even John Stuart Mill, lying violates a central duty in ethics, whether said duty resides in a responsibility to the divine or natural law, the rights of others, the moral law within oneself, one's social contract with others, or to utility.[92] For, while the motivations of these thinkers differ, their approach to the topic of deception is generally the same.

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[91] The primary focus of Chapter 4 deals with some of these thinkers.

[92] The utilitarian approach to lying is a unique case and renders both Bentham and Mill hard to classify. Because, while Mill's rule utilitarianism privileges truth-telling insofar as deception leads to self-harm, he admits of exceptions. Likewise, Bentham's act utilitarianism lacks consideration for the truth itself, yet he admits that falsehoods can lead to a variety of nefarious consequences. Nonetheless, Mill more properly fits under 'Truth Dominant view of Deception', insofar as he thinks that truth-telling, as such, holds a privileged place for human utility. For this reason, Bok puts them in their own distinct category. See Bok 1978, 47-46. See also my discussion of each figure below.

For example, Augustine (d. 430) admits to no exceptions; lying is never permissible. He explains, "To use speech, then, for the purpose of deception, and not for its appointed end [i.e., making known one's thoughts to another], is a sin. Nor are we to suppose that there is any lie that is not a sin, because it is sometimes possible, by telling a lie, to do service to another."[93] Aquinas (d.1274), citing Augustine as a source, follows suit, even while acknowledging that lying admits to varying degrees of sin, e.g. a mischievous or pernicious lie (*perniciosus*) is worse than a jocose or humorous lie (*iocosus*).[94] He explains:

> An action that is naturally evil in respect of its genus can by no means be good and lawful, since in order for an action to be good it must be right in every respect... Now a lie is evil in respect of its genus, since it is an action bearing on undue matter. For as words are naturally signs of intellectual acts, it is unnatural and undue for anyone to signify by words something that is not in his mind... Therefore every lie is a sin, as also Augustine declares.[95]

Moving into the modern period, Hugo Grotius (d. 1645) and Thomas Hobbes (d. 1679) each decry the violative character of lies. Hobbes is the more straightforward case, following the Augustinian argument that lies (and even metaphor) violate the intended purpose of speech, saying that to "use words metaphorically; that is, in other sense than that they are ordained for; and thereby deceive others" is an abuse of speech.[96] Grotius is a more interesting case, insofar as he shifts the importance of truth into the domain of rights. He explains:

> But a lie, in this stricter acceptation, [has] some thing unlawful in its very nature... It seems, that no other explanation of it is necessary to be given, except that it is a

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[93] *The Enchiridion* §22.

[94] *Summa Theologiae*, *Secunda Secundae* 110.2.

[95] *Summa Theologiae*, *Secunda Secundae* 110.3.

[96] *Leviathan* 26. Hobbes even goes so far as to make informing the people a duty of the sovereign (even if this duty it to inform them of the sovereign's authoritarian rule). *Leviathan* 231-32. Some have even taken this to be an early doctrine of the 'publicity condition' found in Rawls. See Waldron 2001. That said, others have argued that Hobbes does allow for some deception, particularly regarding what are often called 'white lies'. See Frost 2005.

> violation of the existing and permanent rights of the person, to whom a discourse, or particular signs, are directed. It is a violation of the rights of another.[97]

In shifting the moral obligation from the intended purpose of speech or the truth itself to the rights of another, Grotius reconstructs the problem in an interesting way: he allows for consensual lies (for example in the course of treaty negotiation), he allows for the deception of those who lack rights (e.g., madmen and children), and he opens up the possibility of unrestrained political deception by the sovereign, iff her subjects have relinquished their rights in exchange for benefits (e.g., protection).[98] That said, none of these thinkers leave room for beneficent deception or a construction of social knowledge; all of them, even those that leave room for minor exceptions, hold truth to such a preeminent degree that they deny the possibility of morally justified political deceit.[99]

In the late modern period, Immanuel Kant (d. 1804) famously espoused an ethic that allows for no lying whatsoever. He explains:

> Lying (in the ethical sense of the word), intentional untruth as such, need not be harmful to others in order to be repudiated; for it would then be a violation of the rights of others. It may be done merely out of frivolity or even good nature; the speaker may even intend to achieve a really good end by it. But this way of pursuing his end is, by its mere form, a crime of a man against his own person and a worthlessness that must make him contemptible in his own eyes.[100]

Contra Grotius, the harm of deception is not directed outward, but inward, toward one's inner sense of the moral law and the goodness of one's will.[101] Lying is incongruous with a good will, even if it does not harm another. Interestingly, John Stuart Mill (d. 1873) follows this course. He explains in *Utilitarianism*:

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[97] *De Iure Belli ac Pacis* III 1.11.
[98] *De Iure Belli ac Pacis* III 1.14-15; I.3.8. See also Bok 1978, 37; Miller 2014.
[99] Though Grotius, perhaps, leaves room for amoral political deceit, i.e. a political deceit directed at someone who garners no moral duty, insofar as they have relinquished their rights.
[100] *Metaphysics of Morals* 6:430. See also *On a Supposed Right to Lie*.
[101] See *Critique of Practical Reason* 5:161-2; *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 4:394, 441; *Metaphysics of Morals* 6:429-31.

> But inasmuch as the cultivation in ourselves of a sensitive feeling on the subject of veracity is one of the most useful, and the enfeeblement of that feeling one of the most hurtful, things to which our conduct can be instrumental... we feel that the violation, for a present advantage, of a rule of such transcendent expediency is not expedient, and that he who, for the sake of convenience to himself or to some other individual... acts the part of one of their worst enemies.[102]

As mentioned above, Mill follows this passage by admitting of exceptions (particularly when the truth will bring another to immediate harm), but these cases are very limited and nothing he says suggests that he has any conception of a kind of deception which simultaneously recognizes the obligatory pull of the truth and good consequence.[103] Rather, truth-telling should be one's default stance unless an immediate and defined threat to another permits lying. Concluding with a more contemporary political philosopher, John Rawls (1921-2002) goes even further toward transparency in the political sphere. He adopts a publicity condition as a part of his social contract theory (hinted at in Hobbes' own social contract theory) which demands publicly accessible information. He says, "The point of the publicity condition is to have the parties evaluate conceptions of justice as publicly acknowledged and fully effective moral constitutions of social life."[104] Following Kant, there is no room in his position for any kind of political deception. And, as a whole, this group of thinkers lacks any useful model for justified political deception as constrained by the discussion above.[105]

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[102] *Utilitarianism* II, 33.

[103] *Utilitarianism* II.

[104] Rawls 1971, § 23.

[105] Grotius and Mill might be able to speak to some kinds of political deception, namely when one must deceive an enemy when under imminent threat or when one negotiates with an ally.

4.2. *Realpolitik* Dominant views of Deception

Likewise, there is another, often infamous, approach to political deception which lacks the tools to provide a model for justified political deception. This approach, in many ways, suffers deficiencies from the opposite side of the dilemma, i.e., the dilemma between the necessity of deception and one's obligation to truth, than those suffered by the thinkers in the Truth Dominant camp. Whereas the Truth Dominant approach privileges truth too much to allow any deception, the *Realpolitik* Dominant approach values outcomes (and devalues truth) too much to allow any form of robust moral justification. Rather, the realm of politics gets privileged beyond the realm of ethics, and truth is no longer obligatory for leaders.

The most famous theoreticians of this approach are unsurprising. Niccolò Machiavelli (d. 1527), in one of the most famous passages in *The Prince*, extols his Prince to "know how to follow evil courses if he must" and that "a prudent Prince neither can nor ought to keep his word when to keep it is hurtful to him and the causes which led him to pledge it are removed", for while "it is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, religious, and upright, and also to be so; but the mind should remain so balanced that were it needful not to be so, you should be able and know how to change to the contrary."[106] Such capricious loyalty to the truth is hidden behind what we now call 'the problem of dirty hands', the idea that rulers, by virtue of having to rule, operate on a different ethical plane than their subjects.[107] The position itself reduces to a base form of act utilitarianism; lying is permissible for a ruler if it leads to great deeds. Machiavelli suggests as much when he says:

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[106] *The Prince*, Chapter 18, 80.
[107] See Walzer 1973 and Coady 2018.

> How praiseworthy it is for a prince to keep his word and to live with integrity and not by cunning, everyone knows. Nevertheless, one sees from experience in our times that the princes who have accomplished great deeds are those who have thought little about keeping faith and who have known how cunningly to manipulate men's minds.[108]

But such a position can never justify political deception; it simply denies that political deception needs justification. Jeremy Bentham (d. 1747) can be characterized likewise, for while his act utilitarianism holds the virtue of being egalitarian, i.e. his disregard for the preeminence of the truth does not hide behind the *arcana imperii* as does Machiavelli's position, he is also unable to justify political deception. (Although, he can condemn it or laud it as being nefarious or valuable, respectively.)[109] As he explains, "Falsehood, take it by itself, consider it not as not being accompanied by any other material circumstances, nor therefore productive of any material effects, can never, upon the principle of utility, constitute any offense at all."[110] While lies can cause harmful consequences, these consequences are not a result of any intrinsic duty to truth or truth-telling. Rather than constructing a model to navigate the dilemma, these approaches simply deny any ethical obligation to the truth.

Of course, the aforementioned positions become particularly perilous when they are taken out of the theoretical sphere and implemented in practice.[111] This is not to say

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[108] *The Prince*, Chapter 18, 79.

[109] In fact, Bentham is particularly critical of the effect of political deception, saying: "Parliament (is) a sort of gaming-house; members on the two sides of each house the players; the property of the people—such portion of it as on any pretence may be found capable of being extracted from them—the stakes played for. Insincerity in all its shapes, disingenuousness, lying, hypocrisy, fallacy, the instruments employed by the players on both sides for obtaining advantages in the game: on each occasion—in respect of the side on which he ranks himself—what course will be most for the advantage of the universal interest, a question never looked at, never taken into account: on which side is the prospect of personal advantage in its several shapes—this the only question really taken into consideration..." *Book of Fallacies* 21-22.

[110] *Principles of Morals*, Chapter 16, §24.

[111] Of course, any treatment of political deception, even if beneficent political deception, must account for and recognize the danger it poses. In the most infamous and heinous of cases, those in which deception is entirely unmoored from any subservience to the truth and, more destructively, political power is unmoored from a leader's responsibility to her people, atrocities often ensue.

that either Machiavelli or, especially, Bentham would endorse or are responsible for the most common real instantiations of the *Realpolitik* Dominant position. For, while tyrants often take this tact in their own 'moral' reasoning, tyrants preceded this discussion and will likely endure long past it. But, without dwelling overly long on amoral, immoral, and vicious men—that is a job for historians—, one should note that rejecting the primacy of truth has been a central political ploy from Callicles and Thrasymachus to Hitler and Stalin, and one used by every tinpot dictator who has emulated them.[112] Whether through defining justice as the advantage of the stronger, conjecturing the transcendent status of the leader via the *Führerprinzip*, weaponizing education to wield against one's enemies, or adopting the strategy and use of a *große Lüge*, divorcing morality from the truth and tethering it to power and consequence alone is always dangerous.[113] All told, the *Realpolitik* Dominant position admits great variation, from an egalitarian strict adherence to act utilitarianism to brazen power politics, but, regardless of the variation, any insight in justifying political deception while maintaining that the truth ethically asserts itself will not be found here.

4.3. Critical views of Deception

One final approach to the topic of political deception should be mentioned, namely the more recent approach by thinkers like Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) and Sissela Bok (1934-). (Similar approaches can be found in thinkers who are specifically critical of Plato's approach to deception, like Karl Popper, R.H.S. Crossman, and others,

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[112] E.g., see *Gorgias* 483e-484a; *Republic* 343a-344a.
[113] *Republic* 338c2–3; Hitler 1925, 2.4f.; Weikart 2009, 112f.; Kuntz 2011, 75; Office of the United States Chief Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality 1946, 411-14; Stalin 1934; Hitler 1925, 1.10.

as will be addressed in Chapter 5). While not systematic in their approaches and, thus, unhelpful for providing a successful model for political deception, the descriptive, rather than prescriptive, examinations of deception add careful nuance to the topic. Both Arendt and Bok, both responding, in part, to the release of the Pentagon Papers, share a helpful intuition. In particular, they both suggest that the truth asserts itself. As Bok explains in her sequel to her comprehensive book, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, "I take lying to be *prima facie* wrong..."[114] Despite a landmark study on the topic, it is this primal intuition that she highlights that any justified deception must contend with. Arendt's intuition, rooted in her experience in and study of the happenings and aftermath of the Second World War, is even more ominous and daunting to those trying to justify political deception. She says, "The trouble with lying and deceiving is that their efficiency depends entirely upon a clear notion of the truth that the liar and deceiver wishes to hide. In this sense, truth, even if it does not prevail in public, possesses an ineradicable primacy over all falsehoods."[115] If the truth asserts itself, if it is more primal, ethically and really, than falsehood, then no deception is justifiable, unless the purpose of said deception is to be supplanted by the truth. Only a deception whose aim is to fail can be warranted. But whereas Plato provides the parameters of what such a deception could look like, his model fails. And the rest of the history of philosophy is lacking as well.

5. <u>Al-Fārābī as a Useful Model</u>

Into this gap steps al-Fārābī, the 10th century Abbasid thinker who, inspired by Plato, proposes his own account of beneficent political deception enfolded within his

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[114] Bok 1982, Introduction.
[115] Arendt 1972, §3.

conception of revelation, which is synonymous with his Doctrine of Beneficent Political

Deception.[116] Like Plato, he asserts that political rule must at times be maintained

through the use of some kind of fiction, and like Plato, these fictions must be subservient

to the truth. However, unlike Plato's Phoenician Story, al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent

Political Deception is explicitly pedagogical and intended for the education of all

citizens. Both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 will be devoted to explicating al-Fārābī's position,

but a brief introduction to al-Fārābī's doctrine is appropriate here.

Al-Fārābī argues that perfect political governance requires political deception, but

that this deception requires restraint. This beneficent deception, the expression of

philosophical truths through the images and symbols of religion, meets the criteria

mentioned above. It is necessary, demonstrably necessary, and minimally injurious

(insofar as these deceptions are in fact pedagogically useful and subservient to the truth).

Al-Fārābī contends that political deception is necessary for human happiness

insofar as all humans require association (*ijtimāʿ*) and cooperation (*taʿāwun*), yet all but

the most exemplary humans are inherently deficient. This deficiency (*naqṣ*) is

necessitated by al-Fārābī's entire cosmological model, which necessitates the deficiency

of the human being, insofar as she is brought about through a deficient cause (i.e. the

motions of the heavens) and constituted through a mixture (*ikhtilāṭ*) of matter (*mādda*)

and contrary forms (*al-ṣuwar al-muḍādda*). In other words, while all humans seek

happiness (*al-saʿada*), an entirely intellectual condition only fully realized when a human

being achieves the psychological status of becoming an 'acquired intellect' (*ʿaql al-*

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[116] Henceforth, any reference to the conception of Fārābīan revelation should be read as synonymous with the Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception and vice-versa. The only distinction between the two is that the former connotes the religious sphere while the latter connotes the political sphere.

mustafāḍ), most humans lack the rational capability to achieve this status. They can only achieve a facsimile of this happiness through facsimiles of the truth, expressed by the ruling Imām of a city, which enable them to live virtuous lives and contribute to a community in which, at least, some community members are happy.

Al-Fārābī describes these necessitated facsimiles of the truth as near similitudes (*mithālāt qarība*) of the truth, which have an affinity (*munāsaba*) to the truth and by which the truth is known (*maʿlūm*), even if never known fully. They are not simply deceptions, but untruths subservient to the truth, translations of philosophy into the language and imagery of religion. These are poetical statements (*al-ʾaqāwīl al-shiʿriyya*), statements which serve as a kind of syllogism (*sulujismus*) with the force of analogy (*quwwa qiyās*) and cause appropriate attractions and aversions in the human soul such that a human being with no theoretical or philosophical understanding can still live a life according to the precepts laid down by the philosophers. And for those lucky few members of a society who have the theoretical wherewithal to achieve genuine philosophical happiness, these similitudes of the truth serve as pedagogical stepping-stones on their way to theoretical knowledge.

Central to this entire doctrine is al-Fārābī's conjecture that the ruling Imām of a city is not only qualified to deceive his subjects because humans are deficient and in need of deception or that some deceptions can function in service to the truth (or at least a virtuous life), but also the belief that the ruler is certain (*yaqīn*) about this deficiency and the truth which underlies the images of religion. In other words, the Imām is not only acting justly by translating the truths of philosophy into the images of religion, but he is certain that he is acting justly, having demonstrated the need for deception through the

sciences of metaphysics and psychology and having demonstrated the usefulness of deception to the attainment of happiness through the demonstrative science of ethics (despite this being a rather idiosyncratic view of ethics by al-Fārābī). In sum, al-Fārābī justifies political deception by having a cosmology which necessitates that most human beings are too deficient to relate to the truth directly, contending that there are mechanisms through which the truth can be reliably altered without losing its pedagogical value, and maintaining an epistemology and view of the sciences that allows rulers to have certainty about when and whether deception is appropriate.

Ultimately, I will argue that while al-Fārābī provides a valuable model for what justified political deception could look like, the lengths to which he must go in order to create a viable model for political deception reveals the untenability of the notion of justified political deception writ large. One must orchestrate an entire cosmos around the notion, notably a cosmos that does not match our own. One must adopt very specific conceptions of human nature, human association, and human happiness. One must contend that there are some untruths which remain 'near' the truth. And one must hold to an epistemology which allows for certainty about this entire model. For, while al-Fārābī clearly shows that political deception can be justifiable, he also shows how unlikely it is to be justifiable in an unidealized setting.

6. **The Aims of the Chapters to Follow**

The purpose of this introductory chapter was to raise some of the broader themes surrounding political deception: noting the reality that deception is often a necessary political course, defining the notion of the "construction of social knowledge" and

identifying its intrinsic relationship to beneficent political deception, highlighting and foreshadowing the Platonic origins for constructing social knowledge, noting the scarcity of alternative models for beneficent political deception in the history of philosophy, and introducing al-Fārābī's adoption and adaptation of Plato's use of constructed social knowledge. All of this aims to set up my thesis that al-Fārābī's model for constructed social knowledge is justified within his own philosophical context, and that, while not a universally applicable doctrine, it does provide a model of what the justification for a construction of social knowledge entails.

Moving forward, several issues require exploration. A more detailed introduction to al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception is required, including a literature review of the issues surrounding al-Fārābī's position and the unique methodological concerns raised by al-Fārābī's cannon. After charting out the specific methodological approach for this project, a more detailed examination of beneficent political deception will be possible, especially insofar as it is grounded, for al-Fārābī, in the structure and principles of the cosmos which lead to an inherent deficiency within human associations. This justification is both apparent in al-Fārābī's texts and in the thought of his successors. Once al-Fārābī's model for beneficent political deception is fully explored, possible critiques to his justification can be raised. And within the context of critique, al-Fārābī's reliance upon very unique metaphysical and epistemological principles to justify beneficent political deception becomes apparent, and the exportability of his model is put into doubt. Ultimately, this project concludes with some tangible discoveries about the nature of constructed social knowledge and its usefulness in the public sphere, as highlighted by the Fārābīan approach.

II. CONTESTS SURROUNDING AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S DOCTRINE OF BENEFICENT POLITICAL DECEPTION: BACKGROUND, METHODOLOGY, AND SCHOLARSHIP

1. **Introduction**

In Chapter 1, two broad topics worthy of inquiry were raised. The first, simply put, asked how a ruler or government should proceed when overt truth is not politically possible. The second, inquired as to the conditions, if any such conditions exist, by which a ruler or government can ethically justify abandoning overt communication of the truth. As has already been noted, it is impossible to definitively answer these questions without firmly establishing a broader metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical framework, a task beyond the bounds of this present project.[1] Thus, rather than adopting a direct methodology which approaches the conclusions to these questions decisively, a more cautious methodology has been adopted, one which aims to evoke a shared intuition through a dialectical examination of an already established model of beneficent political deception, by which a more careful examination of this topic can advance, namely the model provided by al-Fārābī. The selection of al-Fārābī is, in part, a response to a lacuna which exists in historical discussions of political deception: thinkers tend to take either Truth Dominant, *Realpolitik* Dominant, or Critical views of deception, none of which provide a helpful model for justified deception, or at least a model that recognizes both the *realpolitik* need for falsehood and the ethical pull of truth-telling.[2]

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[1] Although two general conditions were established, 'the next best' thing condition and the necessity condition, these conditions lend little clarity to the issue, being, in essence, reformulations of the very questions they answer. How these conditions could be applied to a practical model has yet to be determined.

[2] See Chapter 1, 4.1-3.

The dialectical framework of this project will proceed through an examination of al-Fārābī's discussion of these problems. Al-Fārābī is a subtle systematic thinker, who is himself responding to two other subtle systematic thinkers, Plato and Aristotle (as well as the broader Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions). His position is a mature theory of beneficent political deception, even if his broader political, metaphysical, and epistemological commitments may seem foreign to modern philosophical discourse, particularly within a modern democratic context. And while the context of his metaphysics, his historical remoteness, at times, divorces his solutions from tenability within a contemporary context, focusing on someone independent of the modern context has certain advantages, namely the ability to examine political deception outside of any contemporary political climate. In short, one gets the benefits of a careful systematic study of political deception without committing to its first premises. Unfortunately, as will be seen shortly, the study of al-Fārābī poses its own methodological challenges.

Nonetheless, the purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, before assessing the nuance of al-Fārābī's position, a basic outline of his position must be reported. Second, if the topic of beneficent political deception is to be approached through the lens of the Fārābīan system, problems within the study of al-Fārābī and the specific methodology by which one navigates these problems must be raised and established, respectively. Al-Fārābī is no simple thinker, and the relationships between the individual works within his corpus and the relationships between the doctrines within these works remain difficult to navigate. Through examining these puzzling and entangled relationships here, a less convoluted path will be available in Chapter 3, in which a more definitive version of al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception will be established. Third, this

chapter will orient this discussion within the broader context of scholarship regarding al-Fārābī. While little has been written which specifically addresses the ethical justification for al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception, there is abundant study of al-Fārābī's politics, al-Fārābī's metaphysics, and the relationship between the two more generally.

2. Al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception

In 1945, during his first published foray into Fārābīan interpretation in which he delves into the relation between Fārābīan philosophy and politics through the lens of al-Fārābī's 12th century Jewish successor Maimonides, Leo Strauss makes one single overarching claim about al-Fārābī's position: philosophy reduces to politics (and vice versa).[3] Strauss admits that al-Fārābī does not say this overtly, but thinks al-Fārābī's esoteric position is clear; politics, which aims ultimately at the happiness and virtue of humankind, and philosophy, whose *consequence* is the perfection of the human intellect, are coextensive.[4] And, in a certain sense, Strauss is right.

2.1. Al-Fārābī's Educational Program

For the human being, happiness is the ultimate end; politics is, of course, the ordering of the city toward this end or highest good.[5] And, according to al-Fārābī,

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[3] Of course, in "Farabi's Plato" Strauss is interpreting al-Fārābī's own interpretation of the 4th century B.C.E. Athenian. However, as Strauss claims that al-Fārābī held Plato's philosophy to be the true philosophy, this need not pose a stumbling block as to Strauss's view of al-Fārābī's own position.

[4] Strauss 1945, 361, 368-369.

[5] *NE* 1.7; *Politics* 1.1; *NE* 1.2. Here, of course, 'happiness' should be read in the Aristotelian sense of *eudaimonia*, to be well in spirit or to flourish, not simply as pleasure. Happiness, as explored in *NE* 1.7, is the aim of the human life. And "the Good of man is the active exercise of his soul's faculties in conformity with excellence or virtue, or if there be several human excellences or virtues, in conformity with the best

happiness is attained only through intellectual perfection, such that the intellect no longer requires matter, but functions on a universal level.[6] In short, happiness, which is the ultimate aim of politics, and knowledge, which is the ultimate aim of philosophy, are coextensive within the human being. To have universal knowledge is to be perfected and therefore happy, and to be happy is to have universal knowledge. And as humans are the only creatures below the heavens who can possibly be perfected in this most complete way and thus happy, and proper human associations are necessary for this possibility, human beings in the proper political configurations are the only non-heavenly beings capable of this condition.[7] A necessary component of these political configurations is the encouragement of philosophy.[8] In other words, for al-Fārābī, philosophy cannot exist without a proper political configuration, but a proper political configuration (i.e., politics) is itself defined through philosophy.

As a result of the inseparability of politics and philosophy, al-Fārābī recommends a Platonic/Aristotelian program of education for the virtuous city which manifests itself through the practical and particular activity of religion. Human beings, as communal creatures, "cannot attain the perfection" which is their telos, "unless many people who co-operate come together."[9] But cooperation (*ta'āwun*) is merely a practical means toward the end of happiness and does not alone suffice to bring about human fulfillment. Cooperation must be oriented toward truth, and the telos of any educational program

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and most perfect among them. Moreover, to be happy takes a complete lifetime; for one swallow does not make a spring."

[6] *PS* 13.5; *AH* 14f.; *AH* (Ar.) 15f.; *PR* 73. To aid the reader in understanding the core of al-Fārābī's doctrine, both the Arabic of al-Fārābī's texts and a popular published English translation (unless otherwise noted) has been provided in Chapters 2 and 3. For a list of abbreviations to these works, see SHORTHAND FOR PRIMARY TEXTS on page 400.

[7] *PR* 55, 69.

[8] *PR* 76.

[9] *PS* 15.1. فلذلك لا يمكن أن يكون الانسان ينال الكمال ، الذي لأجله جعلت له الفطرة الطبيعية ، الا باجتماعات جماعة كثيرة متعاونين...

must be correctly oriented toward the telos of what it is to be human in order to result in

human happiness, scil., a proper understanding of the metaphysical nature of human

beings. As al-Fārābī explains:

> Since what is intended by the existence of the human being is that he obtain ultimate happiness, to obtain it he needs to know happiness and to set it before his eyes as his end. Then, after that, he needs to know the things that ought to be done so as to gain happiness by means of them, then to perform those deeds.[10]

> وإذا كان المقصود بوجود الإنسان أن يبلغ السعادة القصوى فإنه يحتاج في بلوغها إلى أن يعلم السعادة ويجعلها غايته ونصب عينيه. ثم يحتاج بعد ذلك إلى أن يعلم الأشياء التي ينبغي أن يعلمها حتى ينال بها السعادة، ثم أن يعمل تلك الأعمال. [11]

In other words, while the need for philosophical education mandates that the city install a

religious program which is at heart political, the notion of 'politics' should not be thought

of in the tawdry sense of mere political power, but rather cooperation (*ta'āwun*) within an

association (*ijtimā'*) which aims toward the perfection of philosophical truth (and

ultimately the good). Politics is societal ethics.[12]

2.1.1. The Imām as Educator

Accordingly, al-Fārābī proposes a figure of seemingly mythic perfection, the

originary Imām, whose own genesis cannot itself be accounted for except by conjecture

(as he surely did not himself benefit from well-orchestrated political cooperation), who,

through his knowledge and perfected nature, is able to direct the cooperation of the city

toward its proper aim of happiness.[13] This rare figure, whom al-Fārābī never identifies

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[10] *PR* 78.
[11] *PR* 78.
[12] For this reason, al-Fārābī subjugates religious jurisprudence under political science, as politics is the most generic form of the practical sciences which concern human volition. *ES* 102-107.
[13] *PR* 79; Of course, al-Fārābī does account for the appearance of the Imām; but his explanation is less than satisfactory. He merely arises on account of his "great nature" and such an occurrence is "very rare." See *PR* 79 and *PS* 15.13.

specifically, but who can be tacitly insinuated to reference the prophet Muḥammad (and likely also the other great Abrahamic founders, Moses and Jesus), establishes religion, not as a response to mystical revelation, but as a practical exercise in politics.[14] The Imām is a philosopher qua poet. That is, the Imām is "a wise man and a philosopher (ḥakīm faylasūf)" who, through his perfected intellect and imagination, translates philosophical truths to those who cannot themselves assess the validity of demonstrations, in order to "rouse imaginations by well chosen words" toward the goal of prompting right action.[15] And most importantly, the Imām "knows every action by which felicity can be reached" as "this is the first condition for being a ruler."[16] The Imām is first and foremost a philosopher who knows what it is to be human and thus what is required for human beings to be happy.

Put otherwise, the Imām is an instrument of truth and justice for the city.[17] Analogous to the way God orders the heavens, the Imām brings order to that which is disordered in the city.[18] He "determines [the people's] actions and directs them toward happiness" while arranging the city via law and images.[19] As most people are incapable of conceptual understanding, the Imām must express propositional truths via images, i.e., poetically, resulting in the vast majority of inhabitants holding mere representations of the truth, either by persuasion or compulsion, in order that the city might be properly constituted.[20] He first knows the truth through demonstration, and only after knowing,

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[14] Al-Fārābī is quite open in acknowledging the diversity of peoples, and as a result, the need for multiple religious orientations. See *PR* 70-71, *BL* 147f., and *PS* 17.2.

[15] *PS* 15.10-11. See also 17.2. ;ثم أن يكون له مع ذلك له قدرة بلسانه على جودة التخييل بالقول لكل ما يعلمه.

[16] وهذا الانسان هو الذي يقف على كل فعل يمكن أن يبلغ به السعادة. فهذا أول شرائط الرئيس. ثم أن يكون له مع ذلك... قدرة على جودة Perfect State 15. 11. ;الارشاد إلى السعادة ، وإلى الأعمال التي بها تبلغ السعادة.

[17] *PS* 15.12.

[18] *PS*15.6.

[19] *PR* 101. ; ...إذا رأسهم قدر أفعالهم وسددها نحو السعادة...

[20] *PR* 85; *AH* 31-32; *AH* (Ar.) 47-48.

translates the truth into religious imagery. As al-Fārābī explains, in a passage which will
be referenced on multiple occasions, "Now these things are philosophy (*falsafa*) when
they are in the soul of the legislator (*fī nafs wāḍiʿ al-nawāmīs*)."[21] While the Imām might
know the truth, he does not, strictly speaking, speak the truth, but rather speaks in images
qua images and imperatives which form the basis of the myth and law of religious
discourse. Of course, neither an image nor an imperative hold propositional truth value;
they can strictly speaking be neither true nor false.[22] Instead, following the
recommendations of Plato, the virtuous city employs the Imām as "a more austere and
less pleasure-giving poet and storyteller, one who would imitate the speech of a decent
person and who would tell his stories in accordance with the patterns we laid down."[23]
The Imām organizes the city and leads its inhabitants to those actions and activities which
lead to happiness by reducing the truth into images.

 Here, of course, is the bewilderment. To lead the people to happiness, the Imām
must orient them toward the truth.[24] He does so by instituting an imagistic and legalistic
religion which is not, strictly speaking, true, but rather a near similitude (*mithālāt qarība*)
of the truth.[25] In effect, the Imām has access to what is true and certain, namely the
conclusions of demonstrations, but only gives the inhabitants of the city what is not,

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[21] *AH* 44.6-8; *AH*(Ar.)¶ 61. ‏وهذه بأعيانها إذا كانت في نفس واضع النواميس فهي فلسفة...‏
[22] There are several complications which will need to be addressed here. First, it is obvious that al-Fārābī
understands that while the Imām may not intend images as propositions, the vast majority of the population
will receive the images this way. This appears to be partly due to the expression of these images through
language. An image of Zeus is clearly a mere statue, whereas a poetic description of Zeus may be taken
either as a genuine description with a truth value or merely a piece of poetic artistry. The willful ignorance
of how these images will be received itself raises certain moral concerns. Second, al-Fārābī states clearly
that these images can be more or less true. Exactly what that entails needs to be examined more thoroughly
in Chapter 3. See *AH* 44; *AH* (Ar.) 61; *PS* 17.2; *PR* 86-87.
[23] *Republic* 398b.
[24] Of course, given the fact that most people are incapable of fulsome happiness (i.e., theoretical
perfection), happiness for the average citizen is an ambiguous notion for al-Fārābī. See Chapter 3, 3.2.1.1.1.
[25] *PS* 17.2; *AH* 41; *AH* (Ar.) 56; *PR* 85.

strictly speaking, true.[26] Al-Fārābī even has the audacity to say the truth behind these

symbols is known (*ma'lūm*) through these symbols.[27] But how can the belief in mere

images constitute knowledge? Moreover, how can the Imām, who has access to certain

demonstrable truth be justified in expressing, at best, opaque, or, at worst, disingenuous

doctrines to the denizens of the city? The answer to these questions is subtle and will not

be entirely clear until later in this study. Suffice it to say that while al-Fārābī meets these

objections in his works, at times his solutions seem to reduce to mere conjecture.[28]

2.1.1.1. The Necessity Condition: Human Deficiency

It is clear, however, that the bedrock of any possible justification for the Imām's

use of images lies in al-Fārābī's repeated claims that not all people are capable of

conceptual thought. As was referenced in Chapter 1 and will be developed in Chapter 3,

human deficiency is a key condition for how al-Fārābī justifies his use of deception. If

most human beings are incapable of understanding the truth itself, then some alternative

to the truth becomes necessary. And while al-Fārābī's depiction of the citizenry strikes

the modern ear as acute elitism (and elitism is perhaps the most obvious charge against

al-Fārābī's warrant outside of his own philosophical context), within his own

epistemology al-Fārābī maintains that the conceptual thinker is a rarity, outside the norm

of typical human life according to both nature and custom. As he explains:

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[26] To paraphrase *A Few Good Men*, they can't handle the truth.
[27] *PS* 17.3.
[28] For example, in answering how images can be more true or less, al-Fārābī asserts that of the lower faculties, the imagination is uniquely suited to conjoin with Active Intellect due to its substructures which parallels the substructures of the rational faculty (which he argues extensively can conjoin with the Active Intellect). See *PS* 14.7. This argument is at worst obscure and at best underdetermined. Delving too deeply into these issues is beyond the scope of this chapter about methodology, but these concerns will be addressed in Chapters 3, 5, and 6.

The philosophers [ḥukamā' (lit. *the wise*)] in the city are those who know these things through strict demonstrations and their own insight; those who are close to the philosophers know them as they really are through the insight of the philosophers, following them, assenting to their views and trusting them. But others know them through symbols which reproduce them by imitation, because neither nature nor habit has provided their minds with the gift to understand them as they are.[29]

فحكماء المدينة الفاضلة هم الذين يعرفون هذه ببراهين هذه وببصائر أنفسهم. ومن يلي الحكماء يعرفون هذه على ما هي موجودة ببصائر الحكماء اتباعا لهم وتصديقا لهم وثقة بهم. والباقون منهم يعرفون بالمثالات التي تحاكيها، لأنهم لا هيئة في أذهانهم لتفهمها على ما هي موجودة إما بالطبع وإما بالعادة وكلتاهما معرفتان.[30]

According to al-Fārābī, the third category of people, those that need symbols, comprises the majority of the city, as "most people have no ability, either by innate character or custom, to understand the form or concept [of the principles of existents which are required for happiness]."[31] At minimum, the Imām ought to be ethically permitted to express himself imagistically to this third category of people, as deception can do no harm to those inhabitants of the city who are incapable of grasping the truth anyway. Yet, al-Fārābī's claim is stronger. The Imām *ought* to express himself in images. Al-Fārābī makes this claim despite his demand that any Imām "should by nature be fond of the truth and truthful men and hate falsehoods and liars."[32] Al-Fārābī does not merely think that the Imām's actions are warranted, but that his imagistic expressions are a sort of beneficent deception.[33]

Recall that the Imām, as a religious leader, is a source of orderly action and practice for the city, analogous to how God is the source of order for the cosmos. Initially, the idea of ordering the city through means other than demonstration, i.e.,

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[29] *PS* 17.12.
[30] *PS* 17.12.
[31] *PR* 85. ; وأكثر الناس لا قدرة لهم إما بالفطرة وإما بالعادة على تفهم تلك وتصورها.
[32] *PS* 15.2. ;ثم أن يكون محبا للصدق وأهله ، مبغضا للكذب وأهله.
[33] See note Chapter 1, notes 19 and 22.

ordered and certain argumentation, seems contrary to the Imām's aims. Why resort to

images, a disordered means of communication, when demonstration is available? This

seems cruel, unjust, and raises the plethora of ethical concerns associated with the

Doctrine of the Noble Lie which I foreshadowed in Chapter 1 and will outline in Chapter

5. Of course, the answer is that demonstration as a means of communication is not

available to the Imām, as the innate character and habituation of the average person, she

whom the Imām wishes to communicate with most, renders demonstration

incomprehensible.[34] In other words, the Imām is limited in his options; the city is

inherently and perpetually disordered by the inhabitants who dwell there. He must meet

their limitations.[35] As they cannot possibly comprehend the ordered nature of

demonstration and currently wallow in the disorder of sensible deception, he must give

them a beneficent deception, an ordered disorder. Visually, the phenomenon looks

something like this:

Figure 2.1.1.1

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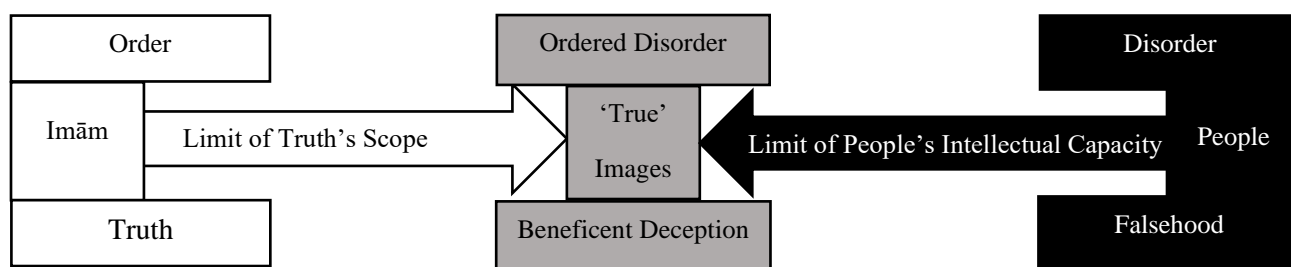
[34] This relationship is an analogue to the Platonic problem of participation, in which what is received is received in accordance with the nature of the recipient, not the extrinsic cause of the participation. This, of course, shows up in the Proclean tradition, eventually arriving in Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, through the *Liber de Causis*, as the pithily phrased 'Receiver Principle', to use Stephen Ogden's term: "whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver." *Summa Theologiae* 1.75.5. See Ogden 2016, 35f.

[35] See Vallat 2004, 169-170.

The Imām, through demonstration, has access to the truth and a responsibility to use this truth to encourage the fulfillment of the human telos in his fellow inhabitants. He is obligated to educate. However, the majority of people are unable to digest demonstrative knowledge; they must encounter the truth in a manner which is coherent to their own faculties. The Imām, through images, raises the people from a state of ignorance to a higher state. They cannot replace falsehood with truth, but they are able to replace it with an image, a beneficent deception, which is 'near truth.' They move from rank disorder to something more orderly, even if it is not perfect.

2.1.1.2. 'The Next Best' Thing Condition: Constructed Social Knowledge

The resulting religion functions as a sort of social or societal knowledge. At first glance, the use of the term 'knowledge' may seem inappropriate, as opposed to, say, 'belief' or 'opinion'. Yet al-Fārābī is clear that both the symbols of religion and the demonstrative truth behind those symbols are known (*maʻlūm*) through religious imagery.[36] This may have the appearance of a mistake; religion in the Fārābīan context is constructed and political. How can true knowledge be constructed? The key is in the faculties of the Imām. The Imām, who knows the truth through demonstration, translates the truth into symbols which are familiar to each city and nation. As al-Fārābī explains, "These things are reproduced by imitation for each nation and for the people of each city through those symbols which are best known to them."[37] The familiarity of these symbols both ensures that the people of the city a) will value the imagistic religion, respecting the order it imposes, and b) potentially discover the limitations of the religion itself, as

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[36] *PS* 17.2-3.

[37] *PS* 17.2. ؛ وتحاكى هذه الأشياء لكل أمة ولأهل كل مدينة بالمثالات التي عندهم الأعرف فالأعرف.

familiar images, qua images, contain hints and indications which point toward the constructed nature of the religion. In other words, the Imām's religion, because it is constructed via images which the people are accustomed to, holds within it the clues and keys to deconstruct itself. While the images themselves are not strictly speaking demonstrative, they contain the requisite information to lead those people capable of demonstration to demonstrative knowledge.

The goal of the Imām is not merely to bring the masses near the truth, though for those who have limited faculties the persuasion and compulsion of religion will bring them nearer felicity than they would have otherwise achieved.[38] Rather, the Imām causes the masses to assent to ordered rule and habituates society as a whole to virtuous behavior. This provides the necessary ethos in which any rare individuals who do have the natural ability to recognize demonstrative truth can transcend their circumstances and obtain demonstrative truth. The images are an introduction to felicity for all, and, for those capable, an initiation into philosophy. As Maimonides explained after inheriting al-Fārābī's doctrine, every parable of the prophets is twofold, holding an outer and inner meaning, like a golden apple covered in silver filigree.[39] The outer imagistic meaning is itself beautiful and valuable, like the silver filigree, but nothing in comparison to the internal golden demonstrative truth. He says:

> The external meaning ought to be as beautiful as silver, while its internal meaning ought to be more beautiful than the external one, the former being in comparison to the latter as gold is to silver. Its external meaning also ought to contain in it something that indicates to someone considering it what is to be found in its internal meaning, as happens in the case of an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree-work having very small holes.[40]

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[38] *AH* 31-32; *AH* (Ar.) 47-48.
[39] *GP* 6b-7a.
[40] *GP* 7a.

For those with limited faculties, the outer imagistic meaning provides order, allowing

them to live a virtuous, if unreflective, life, as opposed to life in pursuance of war and

pleasure.[41] But for those who look closer, the Imām's construction of social knowledge,

i.e. religion, deconstructs itself.

Before examining the esoteric core of the Imām's religious images, it must be

emphasized that the societal order which the exoteric meaning of religion provides is

itself worthwhile. While this order is expressed in an imagistic way, it is still established

by an Imām who knows the human telos demonstrably. As al-Fārābī points out:

> Political science that is part of philosophy is limited… to universals and to giving
> their patterns. It also brings about cognizance of the patterns for determining
> particulars… This science has two parts. One part comprises bringing about
> cognizance of what happiness is—that is what happiness truly is and what is
> presumed to be happiness… Another part comprises bringing about cognizance of
> the actions by which virtuous actions and dispositions are established and ordered
> among the inhabitants of the cities.[42]

> و العلم المدني الذي هو جزء من الفلسفة يقتصر... على الكليات و اعطاء رسومها، و يعرف ايضا الرسوم
> فيتقديرها فيالجزئيات... و هذا العلم جزءان: جزء يشتمل على تعريف السعادة و ما هي السعادة فيالحقيقة
> و ما هي المظنون بها انها سعادة... و جزء يشتمل على تعريف الافعال التي بها تمكن الافعال و الملكات
> الفاضلة و ترتب فياهل المدن.[43]

In short, the Imām knows 1) what happiness is and 2) how the city should be ordered

such that he can bring about happiness.[44] To use Fārābīan vocabulary, persuasion directs

itself toward communicating (1) to the denizens of the city, while compulsion directs

itself toward manifesting (2) in the laws of the city. The division can be put otherwise as

a distinction between orthodoxy/orthopraxy, symbol/law, or Aggadah/Halakhah

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[41] *PS* 18.3, 18.9.

[42] *BR* 15.

[43] *BR* (Ar.) 59.

[44] This orientation brings about 'happiness' both for those capable of full intellectual happiness and for those incapable of intellectual perfection, insofar as they experience maximal civic happiness. See Chapter 3, 3.2.1.1.1.

according to one's preference. Regardless, the veneer of prophetic imagery itself provides

its own progress toward happiness, especially in comparison to the lack of religion or

misinformed religion of the vicious city. Moreover, prophetic imagery provides a

citywide educational opportunity for each generation to recognize the veneer for what it

is, exoteric imagery which points toward something more substantial.

Al-Fārābī's educational program, worked out a millennia before Wittgenstein's

Tractatus, provides justification for the morality of the Imām's imagistic deception of the

multitude: the Imām's ultimate aim is not for people to believe in the images

themselves.[45] In one of his most famous passages, Wittgenstein introduced a pedagogical

method which would forever after be associated with him: Wittgenstein's Ladder. At 6.54

he explains, reflecting on the entirety of the work which came before:

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who
> understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used
> them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the
> ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then
> he will see the world aright.[46]

Effectively, Wittgenstein claims that his work and the propositions claimed therein are

not themselves true, but rather are steps on the way to truth. Insofar as the reader

understands each proposition and then subsequently transcends each proposition, she

advances in knowledge. No individual step is unqualified, and each qualification leads

the reader pedagogically forward. The aim of each proposition is not the truth of itself,

but the truth of the next proposition, whose aim is itself the truth of the following

proposition, and so on. The value of each and every proposition rests on the

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[45] Of course, in recognition of human nature, the Imām is fully aware that some individuals will, and must, believe in the images initially and, in all likelihood, will spend their entire lives believing in in the images alone.

[46] *Tractatus* 6.54.

transcendence which Wittgenstein promises. Unless it is possible, in the end, as he says,

to "see the world aright," the entire exercise, and subsequently each step, is futile.

The Imām's religious images and their educational value are justified by al-Fārābī

in a way corresponding to Wittgenstein's propositions. He remarks:

> When one of them rejects anything as false, he will be lifted towards a better symbol which is nearer to the truth and is not open to that objection; and if he is satisfied with it, he will be left where he is. When the better symbol is also rejected by him as false, he will be lifted to another rank, and if he is then satisfied with it, he will be left where he is. Whenever a symbol of a given standard is rejected by him as false, he will be lifted to a higher rank, but when he rejects all the symbols as false and has the strength and gift to understand the truth, he will be made to know the truth and will be placed in the class of those who take the philosophers as their authorities. If he is not yet satisfied with that and desires to acquire philosophical wisdom and has himself the strength and gift for it, he will be made to know it.[47]

> فما تزيّف عند أحد من هؤلاء شيء ما رفع إلى مثال آخر أقرب إلى الحق، لا يكون فيه ذلك العناد، فإن قنع به ترك، وإن تزيف عنده ذلك أيضا رفع إلى مرتبة أخرى، فإن فنع به ترك. وإن تزيف عنده مثال في مرتبة ما رفع فوقه، فإن تزيفت عنده المثالات كلها وكانت فيه نية للوقوف على الحق عرف الحق، وجعل في مرتبة المقلدين للحكماء؛ فإن لم يقنع بذلك وتشوق إلى الحكمة وكان في نيته ذلك علمها.[48]

The constructed images and symbols of religion contain within them their own

mechanisms for deconstruction, assuming the inhabitants of the city have sufficient

intellectual faculties. But the inhabitant who examines her own faith is unlikely to

dismiss images immediately out of hand. Rather she recognizes the limitations of one

image only to replace it with another subtler, more qualified image. Eventually, if she

does not become confused in her examination or simply become an utter skeptic, she

arrives at the truth which the Imām intended to convey through the image initially.[49] Like

Wittgenstein's Ladder, the entire legitimacy of the method rests upon the end of the

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[47] *PS* 17.4.
[48] *PS* 17.4.
[49] Al-Fārābī addresses his concern for those who get distracted by fallacy and skepticism in *PS* 17.6 and 17.7, respectively.

pedagogical chain, the truth. Ultimately, religious images are only warranted if they are grounded in and may ultimately provoke knowledge, true, demonstrative, and unassailably certain knowledge. The ethical warrant of religion reduces to questions of psychology and epistemology. Insofar as the symbols of religion really are 'the next best' thing to the truth, insofar as they are subservient to the truth, they are justified. The mechanisms of this process will be explored more in Chapter 3.

2.1.1.3. The Certainty Condition: Demonstration

While al-Fārābī's doctrine, pending further explanation, has already met the two conditions need for justified deception established in Chapter 1, al-Fārābī gives himself a third condition which is required for the justification of the expression of philosophy through religious symbols: certainty. While I will attempt to show why al-Fārābī is convinced that the Imām has certain demonstrable knowledge that the city needs religious symbols in Chapters 3 and 6, for now I will simply highlight a simpler explanation for his justification. While his doctrine has myriad mechanisms which must be examined and upheld in order for the doctrine as a whole to be warranted, for al-Fārābī the most fundamental justification as to why the Imām ought to express philosophy through images is that the Imām knows he ought to. The value of religious symbols and laws does not lie in the symbols and laws themselves, but in the certainty of the philosopher-Imām who knows they have value, not as a rote or arbitrary declaration of authority, but as a practitioner of philosophical demonstration whose conclusions can be independently assessed by other philosophers. Al-Fārābī repeatedly insists that the warrant for the Imām comes from demonstration. He explains regarding religion, "When these things thus held

in common are known through strict demonstrations, no ground for disagreement by argument can be found in them."[50] He contends that the Imām must have a perfected rational faculty, among other things, and must be the kind of "man who knows every action by which felicity can be reached."[51] Such a man is "not possible without the theoretical sciences, without the greatest of deliberative virtues, and without the rest of those things that are in the philosopher."[52] Most importantly, the Imām does not himself hold to his own religion, but rather constructs the religion according to his own demonstrative knowledge. Al-Fārābī claims:

> Although it is the legislator who also represents (*yatakhayyalu*) these things (*hāḏihi al-'ashyā'*) through images, neither the images (*mutakhayylāt*) nor the persuasive arguments (*muqanna'āt*) are intended for himself. As far as he is concerned, they are certain (*bal yaqīnīa li-hu*). He is the one who invents (*ikhtara'a*) the images (*mutakhayylāt*) and the persuasive arguments (*muqanna'āt*), but not for the sake of establishing these things in his own soul (*al-'ashyā' fī nafs*) as a religion for himself (*malaka li-hu*). No, the images (*mutakhayyil*) and the persuasive arguments (*'iqnā'*) are intended for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, these things are certain (*yaqin*). They are a religion for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, they are philosophy (*falsafa*). Such, then, is true philosophy (*al-falsafa bi-l-ḥaqīqa*) and the true philosopher (*al-faylasūf bi-l-ḥaqīqa*).[53]

على أنّ واضع النواميس يتخيّل أيضاً هذه الأشياء، ليست المتخيلات له، ولا المقنعات فيه؛ بل يقينية له، وهو الذي اخترع المتخيلات والمقنعات لا ليمكّن بها تلك الأشياء في نفسه على أنّها ملكةٌ له، ﴿إنما﴾ على انّها متخيل وإقناع لغيره ويقين له،وعلى أنها ﴿مِلّة﴾ وله هو فلسفة. فهذه هي الفلسفة بالحقيقة والفيلسوف بالحقيقة.[54]

Put simply, the Imām is justified in deceiving the people because he knows with certitude both that which he aims to communicate through religious symbols and that he ought to

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[50] *PS* 17.3. ; وهذه الأشياء المشتركة، إذا كانت معلومة ببراهينها، لم يمكن أن يكون فيها موضع عناد بقول أصلا.

[51] وهذا الانسان هو الذي يقف على كل فعل يمكن أن يبلغ به السعادة. فهذا أول شرائط الرئيس. ثم أن يكون له مع ذلك... قدرة على جودة *PS* 15.11. ; الارشاد إلى السعادة ، وإلى الأعمال التي بها تبلغ السعادة.

[52] ; وليس يمكن ذلك دون العلوم النظرية ودون الفضائل الفكرية التي هي أعظمها قوة ﴿ثم﴾ دون سائر تلك الأشياء التي تكون في الفيلسوف. *AH* 43; *AH* (Ar.) 60.

[53] *AH* 44.

[54] *AH* (Ar.) 61.

communicate via these symbols, as these symbols are the best possible means in which the denizens of the city will reach their own telos, felicity (*al-saʿada*). The Imām acts politically, but not in the pejorative sense of 'politics' in which the politician exercises power for the sake of some hoped for subjective aim (whether with noble or selfish intention). The Imām acts politically according to the Aristotelian model, in which politics aims at the good of the city and its inhabitants, namely happiness.[55] And al-Fārābī's Imāms act with certainty, as they have themselves "reached the highest degree of felicity (*'aʿlā darajāt al- saʿāda*)", and they have "united as it were (*kāmila muttaḥida*) with the Active Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*)".[56] Knowledge is a necessary precondition for rule.

2.1.2. Real or Ideal?

Of course, the city which has such a political leader would represent a sort of utopian ideal. This should not be surprising given al-Fārābī's Platonic inspiration for his doctrine and the common utopian characterizations of Plato's own *Republic* and *Laws*.[57] That said, it should be reiterated that according to al-Fārābī, the foundation of religious images is conditional upon the advent of a rare human being that knows the telos of human beings and has himself achieved felicity.[58] In the absence of such a leader (or group of leaders), there can be no virtuous city and no warrant for religion. Strikingly, one of the most important defenses for why al-Fārābī is warranted in recommending that

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[55] *Politics* 1.1; *NE* 1.2.
[56] *PS* 15.11.
[57] Bobonich 2013.
[58] While al-Fārābī does allow for communal rule over the city in the absence of a single perfected individual acting in the role of the Imām, he always stipulates that one of these rulers must be a philosopher who has skill at demonstration. In the absence of such a person, he claims the city will undoubtedly perish (at least in virtue). In short, knowledge is a necessary precondition for rule. See *PS* 15.13-14.

the Imām deceive the masses is al-Fārābī's own conditions for who qualifies as an Imām.

The list of human beings qualified to translate philosophical truths into images is

exceedingly short, precisely because the list is constituted exclusively of those human

beings who have attained certainty and felicity. For al-Fārābī's doctrine to be warranted,

not every religion needs to be warranted. In fact, only those religions which express

demonstrative truths imagistically and legislate virtue according to rational felicity

qualify.[59]

But al-Fārābī's doctrine is not merely a utopian ideal, nor was he proposing it as a

merely theoretical experiment. Al-Fārābī was no skeptic, as I will address in Chapter 6.

Along with his aforementioned insinuation that this process has occurred for several

peoples, particularly those peoples who follow monotheism (a position insinuated by al-

Fārābī's successors and contemporaries, Ibn Ṭufayl, Maimonides, and the Ikhwān al-

Safā, respectively), al-Fārābī is explicitly committed to the human capability of achieving

knowledge and attaining the state of the acquired intellect (*'aql al-mustafāḍ*).[60] Those

who achieve this state and also have a perfected imaginative faculty (along with several

other characteristics like a healthy body and a proper moral disposition) are Imāms.[61] In

sum, while the religion which qualifies as virtuous to al-Fārābī must be based upon

demonstrative knowledge, such religions can and do emerge within cities, even if only

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[59] See *BL* 147f. In fact, al-Fārābī's standard is so high, Ibn Khaldūn thought al-Fārābī's political system was a mere hypothetical, unachievable in reality. See *Muqaddima* 127.

[60] Maimonides suggests that the spread of Islam and Christianity has prepared the way for the Messiah via turning the gentiles from paganism toward monotheism. See *Epistle to Yemen* 189. Ibn Ṭufayl's main character Ḥayy, despite having received an epiphany of the truth and recognizing its compatibility with the religion of the mainland, never identifies the religion as Islam, leaving the possibility open that there are multiple instantiation of true religion. See *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*. The hero at the end of *Epistle 22* of the Ikhwān al-Safā is Muslim, but Hebrew by lore, and Christian by manner, indicating the value of all three religions. See *Epistle 22* 314. See also *PP* 4:10-5:7; *PR* 79.

[61] *PS* 15.10-12.

rarely. In fact, he even speaks to the possibility of successive generations having their own visionary Imāms within the same city (and speaks twice to the question of rule if two such Imāms occur in the same time and place).[62]

3. <u>The Primacy of Metaphysics over Politics</u>

In order to reexamine Strauss's initial claim, recall that philosophy is inherently rooted in the political for al-Fārābī, while politics exists as an expression of philosophy. The preeminent figure of both politics and philosophy is the Imām, who by definition functions as both a philosopher and politician.[63] In fact, even the philosopher who lacks the political skill and persuasion of the Imām has a political role to play in the city, and even the poetic politician who lacks demonstrative skill must work in conjunction with the philosophers.[64] No human activity is apolitical; no human activity is unphilosophical (though some activities may be antiphilosophical). But Strauss is incorrect, strictly speaking, to insinuate that philosophy and politics are synonymous for al-Fārābī.

Strauss overstates his position, overreaching and claiming a strict identity between Fārābīan philosophy and politics, despite his own acknowledgement that al-Fārābī never equates the two disciplines explicitly in his writings. He admits in his earlier work that while *homo philosophus* and *homo rex* are the same person for al-Fārābī, "it does not necessarily mean that the two arts themselves are identical."[65] But later in the same essay, he expands the link between the two disciplines. Strauss explains that while al-Fārābī…

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[62] *PS* 15.13, 16.1; *PR* 80.
[63] *AH* 43-44; *AH* (Ar.) 60-61.
[64] *PS* 15.14.
[65] Strauss 1945, 367.

leaves no doubt as to this that philosophy and the royal art are coextensive, he certainly does not say with so many words that they are identical. It would be unfair however to insist too strongly on subtleties of this kind and thus to overlook the wood for the trees… For all practical purposes, Farabi identified philosophy with the royal art.[66]

However, in this case the subtleties matter. Al-Fārābī follows Plato in the relationship between philosophy and politics; the best philosophers and the best politicians are the same. As he explains:

Then [Plato] explained that the man who is philosopher and the man who is prince are the same; each of them is rendered perfect by a single skill and a single faculty; each of them possesses a single skill that supplies the desired knowledge and the desired way of life from the outset.[67]

ثم بيّن ‹أنّ› [الانسان] الفيلسوف و [الانسان] الملك شئ واحد و أنّ كل واحد منهما انما يكمل بمهنة واحدة وقوة وحدة وأنّ كل واحد منهما ‹له› مهنة وحدة تعطى العلم المطلوب منذ اول الامر...[68]

But despite the fact that perfected philosophy and perfected politics exist within the same person, this does not mean that they reduce to the same science for al-Fārābī.

While politics and philosophy always exist in tandem within the human person, and the consequences of properly executed political programs and philosophical programs are identical (namely, the achievement of felicity), the telos of philosophy is fundamentally distinct from the telos of politics. Whereas the telos of politics is identical with its consequence—human happiness —, philosophy results in happiness, but aims at something higher and altogether foreign to terrestrial concerns—universal knowledge and knowledge of the heavenly intelligences.[69] In other words, while philosophy and politics both result in the human good, only politics concerns itself with the human good qua

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[66] Strauss, 1945368.
[67] *PP* 13:5-10.
[68] *PP* (Ar.) 14.
[69] For example, al-Fārābī explains that while it is wisdom to know the reason for the existence and the purpose of human beings, i.e. human happiness, it is even wiser to know the cause of everything, i.e. the first cause. *SA* 53.

human. Philosophy is concerned with that which is transcendent of humanity. Philosophy is concerned with truth. And it is via a link to the truth that the Imām is able to justify beneficent political deception, insofar as it functions pedagogically.

This is important, because there are strong scholarly accounts which argue that al-Fārābī's interest in the truth of metaphysics is disingenuous, as will be discussed shortly. But there are stronger textual and contextual reasons to read al-Fārābī as having a deep commitment to metaphysics which he takes quite seriously, as will be shown in Chapter 3. If al-Fārābī's metaphysics is insincere, his justification for deception is void. Without certainty that humans need beneficent deception and certainty about what religious symbols symbolize, al-Fārābī cannot justify beneficent political deception, and the Imām is just a liar. Religion, in this case, would be just a farce.

But rather than read al-Fārābī as establishing an elaborate deception in which al-Fārābī himself lies about the proper conditions by which the Imām can justifiably deceive, as some suggest, I read him as doing something altogether more ingenious. Al-Fārābī does as he says, and he lays out the proper conditions which enable the Imām to lead a city toward happiness that would not have otherwise been directed toward happiness. To do this, the Imām must use the only available tool at his disposal: beneficent deception. More esoteric readings of al-Fārābī, mentioned below, seem to conjecture a hidden premise—deception cannot be used for honest intentions. Yet, al-Fārābī inventively does just this and employs deceptive images for the sake of truth. In short, al-Fārābī promotes deception, but honest deception. And insofar as these beneficent deceptions, images which are themselves translations of philosophy for the sake of the people of city, are based upon knowledge, one can rightly call them

beneficent deceptions. And insofar as these deceptive images themselves both contain and lead to further knowledge of human felicity, one can rightly describe the resulting religion which is composed of these images as a sort of constructed social knowledge. But, like Wittgenstein's Ladder, the justification of the entire doctrine hinges on its aim. If it all reduces to human politics, then the symbols mean nothing, because they lead nowhere. But if the beneficent political deceptions are a human way to convey transcendent truth that most humans cannot understand otherwise, a way of conveyance which can help lead to human happiness, then they are justified.

Ultimately, if al-Fārābī is to be warranted in his recommendation that the Imām deceive the people of the city through expressing the truth imagistically, the Imām must have genuine, indisputable knowledge of the truth. The broader philosophical position espoused by those who read al-Fārābī esoterically may ultimately be correct in its claim that certain knowledge is impossible, but this is not al-Fārābī's claim. And if al-Fārābī's doctrine is to be tenable, it must rely on certain knowledge for its warrant. If not, his philosophy reduces to, at best, a confused and indefensible doctrine, or at worse, a crass and cynical political ruse. But al-Fārābī's beneficent deception is a sincere deception, a deception directed at truth.

4. <u>Methodology for reading al-Fārābī</u>

A project of this ilk, one which not only analyzes and deciphers a philosopher as enigmatic as al-Fārābī, but also assesses his doctrines philosophically, presents unique methodological challenges. In the broadest terms, assessing the warrant of al-Fārābī's recommendation that the Imām translate demonstrative truth into non-demonstrative

images in a single monograph length work introduces four overarching concerns: 1)

exactly what method should one use when approaching the history of philosophy, at least

regarding a philosophical project of this nature; 2) what is the scope of the Doctrine of

Beneficent Political Deception within al-Fārābī's corpus, given the cryptic and protean

nature of some of his positions and the disputable authorship of some of his works; 3)

what exactly is the issue being assessed, between namely, a) the effectiveness of al-

Fārābī's justification for his doctrine of the Imām *assuming* that his other supporting

doctrines are true or b) the effectiveness of al-Fārābī's justification for the Doctrine of

Beneficent Political Deception considering the *plausibility* of al-Fārābī's other supporting

doctrines; and 4) what are the limits for the scope of this project.

4.1. Reading History of Philosophy Texts

All projects within the history of philosophy have a twofold mandate. On the one

hand, one must address the historical queries of the project, on the other hand, one must

address the philosophical queries. The first methodological concern for this project is

how these two separate aims relate to one another. Which is methodologically more

critical, one's commitment to historical evidence or one's commitment to philosophical

verisimilitude? Of course, the proper course of action is to adopt a methodological

strategy which can incorporate both approaches adequately. By prioritizing history, one

does not want to neglect philosophy or vice versa. One does not want to throw the baby

out with the bathwater. Nonetheless, a methodological strategy must be adopted.

Regardless of whether one finds a historical or philosophical interpretive lens to

be more crucial, chronologically, one must first and foremost be historically grounded.

While I have some methodological concerns with Leo Strauss's approach, he is absolutely right when he instructs the student of the history of philosophy, "The task of the historian of thought is to understand the thought of the past exactly as it understood itself; for to abandon that task is tantamount to abandoning the only practicable criterion of objectivity in the history of thought."[70] Any project which responds to another thinker, whether historical or contemporary, must begin by listening to the concerns of one's interlocutor. But when approaching a historical figure, special care must be taken because there is no chance for correction by the author herself; accuracy becomes even more paramount. To put it otherwise, any 'conversation' which broadly follows the method of elenchus, must start with listening. Accurate history must chronologically come first.

The dilemma between taking a historical or philosophical lens shows up uniquely in the history of philosophy since one's elenchic partner cannot cite her own motivations, clarify her own positions, or respond to objections. Whereas in a dialogue with a living individual, one may ask one's interlocutor about her hidden premises and assumptions, historical figures are unable to answer except through already established texts and possible clues from their predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. In short, one must supply their responses for them. And there are two possible approaches to do so: historical or philosophical. The historical approach attributes to the author only those premises which are explicitly stated by the author, or perhaps by other authors historically related to them. The philosophical approach contests that the argument itself should guide one's interpretation, and any assumption required to make the argument sound should be supplied as a necessary premise, even if this premise is absent from or

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[70] Strauss 1959, 323.

ambiguous within the historical record. The former method ensures accuracy, but only accuracy regarding available texts and not necessarily accuracy as to the beliefs of the historical figures themselves. The latter method ensures a stronger philosophical position, but it may be sullied by divorcing itself from the text and historical context of the author.

Strauss, who prefers the philosophical approach, fears that the historical approach leads one into disregarding the brilliance of historical philosophers. As he explains, "Now, all philosophers of the past claimed to have found *the* truth, and not merely the truth for their *time*. The historicist however asserts that they were mistaken in believing so. And he makes this assertion the basis for interpretation."[71] By turning the philosopher into an object of study, rather than a living subject, the philosopher becomes leaden and unable to respond to the anachronistic philosophical concerns of contemporary scholars. By assuming the invalidity of these philosophers' positions and only following the explicit text, thinkers of the past can appear as dullards, lacking the sophisticated contextual and internal philosophical motivations which drove them to their conclusions within their own contexts. And Strauss is right to fear an extreme version of this historical methodology. But there is no reason to believe that a more moderate historical approach, one which both looks for hidden motivations while also maintaining a deep commitment to the text, is not possible. One need not reduce one's commitment to the explicit text to a blind naivety which assumes philosophical commitments end precisely where the texts do.

On the other hand, the philosophical methodology risks rupturing one's interpretation from the historical and textual context entirely. Strauss is right when he

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[71] Strauss 1959, 324.

suggests that ignoring the philosophical nature of philosophical texts distorts their

meaning. He says:

> It remains then true that if one wants to understand a philosophy of the past, one must approach it in a *philosophic* spirit, with *philosophic* questions: one's concern must be primarily, not with what other people have thought about the philosophic truth, but with the philosophic truth itself. But: if one approaches an earlier thinker with a question which is not his central question, one is bound to misinterpret, to distort, his thought.[72]

However, to maintain a philosophical spirit does not mean only being concerned with the

questions that the philosopher herself raises. It is not distortion to ask questions about an

author which might be tangential to their larger projects; to do so is itself philosophical,

as it engages in the secondary premises which construct the author's central positions. It

is also not a distortion to be concerned with issues which arise out of the text itself,

independent of the author's concerns. Examining inconsistencies, asking questions about

authentic authorship, and identifying historical influences is not pedantic; it is an

appreciation of the value of the text. It is naïve to assume that as a reader divorced from a

philosopher's historical context, one can confidently even identify which issues are

central or not to the author's philosophy. However, one can assess the textual and

historical role that an argument plays.

Ultimately, the approach one takes must be dictated by the question one is asking.

In the case of this particular project, the question is primarily philosophical—is al-Fārābī

warranted in proposing his Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception given his own

philosophical commitments? That said, it is a philosophical question which is predicated

upon a solid understanding of al-Fārābī's authentic position. As a result, my approach

must be twofold. First, I must properly establish al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent

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[72] Strauss 1959, 324-325.

Political Deception. However, as I will note below, such a task raises several difficulties due to the nature of the Fārābīan corpus, most notably questions about al-Fārābī's intellectual development, which texts are genuinely his, and whether his doctrine should be read as sincere or esoteric. Given these difficulties, the historical grounds of my inquiry must be humbler and less definitive. As the primary question of this project is not "What is al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception?" but rather "Is this doctrine warranted?" priority must be given to the philosophical assessment of the doctrine rather than the doctrine itself. Nonetheless, the doctrine itself cannot be neglected or the assessment is an assessment of a strawman.

Thus, although the success of my project cannot be predicated upon a definitive interpretation of al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception which concludes further scholarly examination, neither can my project be deemed successful unless it assesses what can rightfully be described as al-Fārābī's doctrine. So, there are two historical interpretive hurdles which this project must clear. First, I must present a plausible, comprehensive account of al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception and a comprehensive account of those surrounding doctrines which justify his politics. Insofar as these doctrines are presented comprehensively in one single place, this is a feat which has yet to be achieved in scholarly literature. Second, I must account for and expand upon the established scholarly research and demonstrate advancement and continuity with the research that has already been published. This enables the project to proceed to the philosophical stage. The true success of the project depends on the philosophical analysis of al-Fārābī's warrant and whether I successfully show that given

the Imām's knowledge, al-Fārābī is justified in recommending that he express demonstrative truth to the denizens of the city via images.

4.2. The Fārābīan Corpus

The second major methodological concern, which emerges in any Fārābīan scholarship whose scope extends beyond any single Fārābīan text, addresses how one should approach the coherence of the Fārābīan corpus. Three main issues arise. First, which texts should be considered al-Fārābī's texts; in particular, should the *Harmonization of Plato and Aristotle* be included in the Fārābīan corpus? Second, considering the seeming discrepancies and tensions within the corpus as a whole, should one adopt a theory of Fārābīan maturation, and if so, how should the texts be ordered chronologically? Third, given the secondhand quality of our knowledge of al-Fārābī's lost *Commentary on the Ethics*, how should the reported doctrines from this treatise be integrated into one's understanding of al-Fārābī? These three questions must be answered if one wants to appropriately label any Fārābīan doctrine 'Fārābīan.' The questions need not be settled (such an undertaking would merit three distinct dissertations of their own), but must be addressed. In this chapter, I will refrain from providing an exhaustive discussion of these three questions on the Fārābīan corpus, instead merely gesturing toward my methodological approach, though I will touch upon these issues more as they arise in the following chapters.

4.2.1. Authenticating Texts

Addressing the first concern, several works traditionally attributed to al-Fārābī, most notably *Answers to Questions Put to Him*, *Demonstration of Immaterial Things*, *Source of Questions*, and the *Harmonization of Plato and Aristotle*, have been examined under increasing scrutiny in recent scholarship, particularly as to whether they were penned by al-Fārābī himself.[73] For the purposes of this project, the authenticity of the *Harmonization of Plato and Aristotle* is of particular importance, as it gives special insights as to how al-Fārābī understood Plato's doctrines.[74] The scholarship is unsettled, but I find it methodologically prudent to follow the prevailing opinion of the most recent literature. Scholars like Cecilia Martini Bonadeo have shown the explicit consistency between the *Harmonization* and other Fārābīan works, particularly his conception of vision, and as a result, the majority opinion has shifted in favor of the authenticity of the *Harmonization*.[75] As Janos explains, retracting his own former doubt, "The cumulative evidence supporting [the *Harmonization's*] authenticity cannot be ignored and renders the

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[73] See Janos 2012, 239.

[74] Under a more esoteric model of scholarship, the distinct doctrines found in the *Harmonization* were never questioned in light of al-Fārābī's other competing doctrines; any discrepancy was assumed to lie in the difference between esoteric and exoteric texts. In fact, Butterworth never considers the possibility of the *Harmonization's* inauthenticity in his translation. Butterworth 2001. It wasn't until Joep Lameer raised specific concerns in 1994 due to the lack of any Fārābīan attribution in available manuscripts of the *Harmonization*, the idiosyncratic frequency of the use of coordinate expressions in the *Harmonization* compared to the rest of the Fārābīan corpus, and the distinctive doctrines of the *Harmonization*, that the authenticity of the *Harmonization* was really questioned. Lameer 1994, 30-39. While the former reasons are circumstantial, the doctrinal differences require explanation, and in 2008 Marwan Rashed reiterated concern over the authorship of the *Harmonization* citing four distinct doctrines not found in al-Fārābī's other works: the belief in a providential God, the affirmation of God's will, the belief that the world was created out of nothing in time, and the belief in Platonic forms. Rashed 2008, 44-66. Instead of al-Fārābī, Rashed attributed the work to either Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī or his brother, and Damien Janos affirmed that Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī was the most likely author other than al-Fārābī in 2009. As both were students of Abū Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus, and Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī likely studied under al-Fārābī also, Janos raises the possibility that the *Harmonization* could either be Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's work or an authentic early creationist text of al-Fārābī's, leaving the question of authorship open. Janos 2009, 13-14. The question is certainly not settled, and the question is too far afield of this dissertation for me to aim at settling it here.

[75] Martini Bonadeo 2014. See also Martini Bonadeo and Endress 2008; Endress 1991.

attempt to reject [the *Harmonization*] from the Fārābīan corpus premature."[76] For the

purpose of this project, in which the *Harmonization* is used primarily as a tool to show

how al-Fārābī read Plato, knowing that the text was likely written by him, and, if not, it

was written by a close student, will still serve as an indicator for how al-Fārābī may have

acted as a Platonic interpreter.

4.2.2. Developmentalist Approach

However, affirming that al-Fārābī did write the *Harmonization* leads to another

set of challenges. Given the doctrinal discrepancy between the *Harmonization* and other

works like the *Perfect State*, how does one resolve which doctrines are 'Fārābīan'?

Which texts are given priority? In this, I will follow Damien Janos' developmentalist

approach, born out of his cosmological study. He explains when deliberating upon the

authenticity of the *Harmonization*:

> Indeed, doctrinal resemblance or divergence cannot be used in itself as a decisive
> criterion, since it neglects other factors, such as chronology, intention, or context,
> which might play a preponderating role. Moreover, this comparative approach has
> limited explanatory potential, since it does not account satisfactorily for the
> peculiar features of these works, even if one upholds their authenticity and
> stresses their connection with al-Fārābī's other treatises. The approach I will
> endorse relies instead on the hypothesis of a chronological evolution of al-
> Fārābī's cosmological works…[77]

While the *Harmonization* seems to be written by al-Fārābī, it still has distinctive features

which must be accounted for. Janos navigates the tensions in al-Fārābī's texts by dividing

the corpus into two major periods, the early Baghdad period and the later post-Baghdad

period. The former contains primarily his early creationist works like the *Harmonization*

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[76] Janos 2012, 239.
[77] Janos 2012, 240.

and also his commentaries. The latter period contains his emanationist texts like the

Political Regime, *Perfect State*, the *Attainment of Happiness*, and most likely the *Epistle*

on the Intellect.[78] This division, while provisional and subject to correction, seems right.[79]

Moving forward, I will adopt Janos' developmentalist division between late and early

texts, not because it has been conclusively settled, but because it is both explanatory and

its adoption encourages care when comparing multiple texts.

4.2.3. Commentary on *NE*

Last, one hermeneutical difficulty for the Fārābīan scholar remains, how to

incorporate the reported doctrines contained within his no longer extant *Commentary on*

the Ethics. The lost *Commentary*, of which we only have fragments and secondary

accounts, seems to undermine al-Fārābī's entire doctrine of human happiness, but exactly

what it says is disputable. As Chaim Meir Neria lays out, there seem to be four positions

in the lost *Commentary* which disrupt traditional understandings of al-Fārābī, passed

down to us through the texts of four separate authors.[80] However, these four supposed

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[78] Janos 2012, 322-324.

[79] Of course, there are objections to such a stark division. Notably Thérèse-Anne Druart denies the usefulness of the developmentalist approach, largely due to the impossibility of a definitive chronology. Druart 1987. Nonetheless, it seems beyond dispute that the metaphysics and epistemology which ground al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception are all developed in the same period, if one adopts a developmentalist approach, or are simply part of the same corpus, that, at least on this topic, is roughly consistent, if one denies the developmentalist approach. Also importantly, al-Fārābī's commentaries seem to have been written before his mature political texts, meaning one can still glean how he reads Plato and Aristotle from the commentaries, even if his own positions had matured after their writing.

[80] "1) There is no happiness except political (*madanī*) happiness. This teaching is attested by Ibn Bājja and Ibn Ṭufayl. 2) Human immortality is "an old wives' tale," for there is no afterlife. Ibn Bājja tries to defend the mature al-Fārābī against the attribution of this view, Ibn Ṭufayl censures al-Fārābī for it, and Ibn Rushd supplies arguments to explain why al-Fārābī would hold such a view, and possibly criticizing Ibn Bājja. 3) Man's conjunction with the Active Intellect is impossible. This teaching is attested by Ibn Rushd. Either al-Fārābī holds that (1) anything that comes to be in the sublunar world is subject to corruption, and hence cannot bridge the gap between the sublunar and supernal worlds to unite with the Active Intellect and become immaterial; or (2) that there is a limitation to human knowledge and humans cannot acquire demonstrative knowledge through metaphysics, i.e., they cannot know the separate intellects and hence

Fārābīan doctrines not only disagree with extant Fārābīan texts, but with one another.[81]

The confusion raised by the inconsistency of the lost *Commentary's* doctrines is

magnified by the genre of the text itself. The very fact that the text is a commentary raises

concerns about whether the doctrines attributed to the text are doctrines which al-Fārābī

himself affirms or whether they are merely doctrines he attributes to Aristotle.[82] All told,

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cannot unite with them and specifically with the Active Intellect; or (3) that the Active Intellect is an agent cause only, not a final or formal cause. 4) Higher moral quality amounts to a higher degree of God's providence. This teaching is reported by Maimonides." Neria 2013, 76.

[81] Of these three premises, only 4 does not risk undermining the warrant for al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception. However, it does provide a clue as to how centrally one should incorporate the doctrines from the lost *Commentary* into one's reading of al-Fārābī. Noted in the *GP* 3.18, Maimonides claims, "Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī] says in the Introduction to his Commentary on Aristotle's '*Nicomachean [Ethics]*': Those who have the capacity of making their soul pass from one moral quality to another are those of whom Plato has said that God's providence watches over them to a higher degree." *GP* 3.18. Maimonides is the only place we find evidence of al-Fārābī holding this premise in the lost *Commentary*. Observe that the reliance of premise 4 upon a providential God indicates that the *Commentary* would be in agreement with the *Harmony*, an early work according to Janos' developmental theory, as would its genre as a commentary. Yet the other 3 premises seem more topically in line with the later works, specifically insofar as they focus upon conjunction and political happiness. Premise 4 suggests that the lost *Commentary* should be an exoteric work within an esoteric model, due to its religious veneer. While premises 1-3 suggest that it is esoteric, given its political nature, skepticism, and denial of the afterlife. In short, given our evidence, the lost *Commentary* is both early and late, providential and against the afterlife, exoteric and esoteric. It simply defies proper categorization. Of course, that does not mean it is not authentically Fārābīan or faithfully transmitted, but it does raise doubts. One approach would be to simply dismiss premise 4, as only Maimonides reports it, but this too is problematic as our four main sources—Maimonides, Ibn Ṭufayl, Ibn Bājja, and Averroes—are all eleventh and twelfth century Andalusians; while we do not know whether they had access to identical manuscripts or how widely it was disseminated, their shared access to the text, geography, and time period denies simply dismissing any account as idiosyncratic without further argument and context. Likewise, there is little reason to assert that the text available in Andalusia was falsely attributed to al-Fārābī. See Neria 2013. Summarily, we do not have much information about the context of the doctrines contained within the lost *Commentary*, and the information that we do have is enigmatic.

[82] Thérèse-Anne Druart has proposed that the doctrines of the lost *Commentary* should not be incorporated into one's reading of al-Fārābī, due to both its inconsistency with extant texts and the fact it is a commentary. Druart 1997, 403; Neria 2013, 84. As Neria explains: "Recently, Thérèse-Anne Druart advanced a new strategy. Druart argues that we should read al-Fārābī as an independent philosopher whose views are shaped with, but also against, Aristotle. On some occasions, al-Fārābī thinks that Aristotle's philosophy does not give an adequate and satisfactory account of reality. According to this view, one may argue that, as a commentator, al-Fārābī is obligated to search for Aristotle's views even if these views are not shared by him. Al-Fārābī thus argues that Aristotle is rejecting the opinion that the separate good, the good for itself, is the end of political science. However, as for himself, al-Fārābī thinks that conjunction with the intellect is a relevant end for political science." Neria 2013, 84. However, she is not convinced by this strategy. She continues: "This is, of course, a very elegant solution, but is not free of problems. Consider, for example, al-Fārābī's 'tone' in the following passage: 'this is falsehood and something of deceit for Aristotle. It is also invalid in his [Aristotle] view that this good will be the end of political governance.' Similarly, the expression from his commentary on the *EN*, mentioned by Ibn Bājja, Ibn Ṭufayl, and Ibn Rushd, that it is 'an old wives' tale,' indicates his identification with Aristotle's position. It

without more of the text it is impossible to know exactly what doctrines the lost

Commentary contains and whether these doctrines are supposed to express al-Fārābī's or

Aristotle's position. Small fragments and reported summations by narrators with clear

agendas—Ibn Ṭufayl aims to defend Avicenna and al-Ghazālī against al-Fārābī's

'failings' and Averroes aims to show that the material intellect must be immaterial in

contrast to al-Fārābī's more transformative approach—should not form the central core of

one's Fārābīan interpretation.[83] Ultimately, while the doctrines reportedly within the lost

Commentary should be noted, without more context and manuscript support, these

doctrines will play a minimal role in this dissertation.

4.3. Criteria for Assessment

The third major methodological question concerns what exactly the issue being

assessed is, namely between: a) the effectiveness of al-Fārābī's justification for his

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would be especially strange if al-Fārābī had worked hard to reject alternative explanations, just to arrive at the conclusion that Aristotle rejects as a 'tall tale' al-Fārābī's own views. In the end, it seems that al-Fārābī's commentary on the *EN* is as much a scandal to the modern reader as it was a scandal to the medieval philosophers, even if for different reasons." Neria 2013, 84. While Neria's point is well taken, we do not have the 'old wives' tale' text in question or its context. Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Bājja seem to disagree on what the 'old wives' tale' is, with Ibn Ṭufayl describing that human happiness in the afterlife is an 'old wives' tale' and Ibn Bājja saying that all immaterial things which are not seen by the senses are 'old wives' tales.' *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* 100; Pines 1988, 82-83. Meanwhile Averroes adds two more understandings of what al-Fārābī means by an 'old wives' tale.' He both asserts that al-Fārābī believes that the human soul's transformation into an incorporeal being is an 'old wives' tale' and separately that conjunction with the Active Intellect is an 'old wives' tale.' *EPC* 14; See also Davidson 1992, 71. Again, the reports we have are confused. Add to this the fact that Ibn Bājja himself thinks that the lost *Commentary* does not reflect al-Fārābī's own positions. He explains: "As to what is believed about Abu Nasr [al-Farabi] regarding that which he says in his *Commentary on the Book of Ethics*, namely that after death and demise there is no afterlife, that there is no happiness except political happiness, that there is no existence except that which is perceived by the senses and that that through which it is said another existence than the one which [has just been mentioned comes about] is nothing but an old wives' tale. [I am of the opinion that] all this [that which is believed about al-Farabi] is false, [that those are lies used to attack] Abu Nasr [al-Farabi]. For Abu Nasr [al-Farabi] has made these remarks at his first reading [of the *Ethics*]. But what he says on this subject does not resemble these statements of his that are entailed by a demonstration." Pines1988, 82-83.

[83] *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* 13-14; *LCDA* 387-388; Neria even suggests that Averroes in putting arguments into al-Fārābī's mouth regarding premise 3. Neria 2013, 77.

Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception *assuming* that his other supporting doctrines

are true, and b) the effectiveness of al-Fārābī's justification for his Doctrine of Beneficent

Political Deception *considering the plausibility* of al-Fārābī's other supporting doctrines.

This project will not even address the latter concern until the Conclusion, as the

plausibility of al-Fārābī's doctrines is beyond the scope of this project, having no bearing

upon whether al-Fārābī was justified given his own context and intellectual

commitments. Instead, I will focus on what al-Fārābī asserts and how these assertions

support, validate, and justify his Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception. To assess his

success or failure based upon the veracity of his 10th century physics, epistemology, and

metaphysics would predetermine the result, as simple commitments like his commitment

to his own astronomical model, which is itself entangled with his cosmology and

psychology, would render his position unjustified given our heliocentric solar system.[84]

Instead, I will take al-Fārābī's first principles as truthful at face value and attempt to

justify his warrant from these doctrines alone.

4.4. Defining the Scope

The last and final methodological concern is the magnitude of the scope of this

project. A doctrine as central to al-Fārābī's philosophy as beneficent political deception

undeniably raises innumerable tangential questions about al-Fārābī's philosophical

system as a whole. However, this dissertation must have a defined scope. This scope is

limited to al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception in Chapter 3, the legacy

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[84] For example, the limitations of material human beings and the particular symbols which are familiar to a particular city are both determined by the motions of the heavenly bodies. *PR* 70-71. Clearly any symbolic expression which is determined through celestial motion and which is brought about by class disparity based upon limitations in human faculties (which are themselves based upon the motions of the heavens) is not going to be justified given contemporary astronomy and physics.

of this doctrine in Chapter 4, potential problems raised by this doctrine in Chapter 5, that

epistemology which justifies the warrant of the Doctrine of Beneficent Political

Deception in Chapter 6, and the possible warrant for the use of constructed social

knowledge outside of al-Fārābī's specific doctrines in the Conclusion. While tangential

issues will be noted as they arise, they will not be addressed in full.

5. <u>The Status of the Problem</u>

With the possible exception of his commentaries on Aristotelian logic, al-Fārābī is

most famous for his political contributions to medieval philosophy within the *Dār al-*

Islām, contributing to or evoking a response from most of the major figures surrounding

the *Falsafa* tradition, including Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Bājja, Ibn Ṭufayl, Averroes,

Maimonides, and Ibn Khaldūn, among others.[85] Fittingly, abridged accounts of his

contribution to the history of philosophy within historical, popular, and encyclopedic

publications tend to exclusively highlight the political theory which undergirds his

Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception, with perhaps a gesture toward his logical

achievements and his famous moniker as 'The Second Teacher' following Aristotle.[86] Of

course, more focused scholarly works delve much deeper into his philosophy. However,

the clarity of al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception is often taken for

granted, perhaps assumed to be obvious due to its fame. Expositions which

comprehensively describe his conception of revelation have certainly been written, but

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[85] Exhaustively listing al-Fārābī's influence on political thought is far too exacting a task for this project. Suffice it to say, al-Fārābī's political thought was either foundational for or provoked responses within sections of Avicenna's *Kitāb Al-Shifaʾ al-Nafs*, al-Ghazālī's autobiography *al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, Ibn Bājja's *Tadbiru'l-Mutawahhid*, Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, Averroes' *Faṣl al-maqāl*, Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, and Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima*.
[86] For example, Hodgson 1974, 433-437; al-Khalili 2010, 136-137; Hyman 1973, 206-207; Ziai 2008, 63-65.

heretofore have lacked insight into his justificatory method and often focus primarily on

the distinction between revelation (*waḥy*) and prophecy/divination (*nubūwa*), the

theoretical and imaginative faculties, respectively.[87] These accounts explore, explain, and

elucidate his Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception (and the historical sources for his

doctrine) but are apt to neglect adequately reflecting upon the warrant of his claims, with

the exception of a brief digression by Philippe Vallat in his 2004 book.[88] Many scholars

tend to approach the mechanisms at play within al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent

Political Deception in a cursory manner in order to approach related, but distinct

doctrines, whether it be al-Fārābī's psychology, cosmology, epistemology,

theology/philosophy of religion, theory of divination, or his broader political aims.[89] This

scholarship is not at fault; the scope of these projects is simply delimited to other topics.

However, a vacuum remains regarding how al-Fārābī justifies one of his most central

positions.

Despite the fame and frequent references to al-Fārābī's conception of religion,

scholarship has yet to be developed and devoted to exactly how al-Fārābī can justify the

warrant of the Imām's translation of demonstrative truths into images. Needless to say, as

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[87] See Ahmad1998; Fakhry 2002; Fakhry 1983, 128-130; Fakhry 2000, 45-46; Streetman 2008, 211-246; Nanji 1989; Mahdi 1996; Mahdi 2001; Lameer 1997, 609-22; Fraenkel 2008, 105-125; Black 1996. For examples of thorough accounts of al-Fārābī's prophetic doctrine without examining its warrant, see Fakhry 2002, 88-91; Fakhry 1983, 128-130; Black 1996; Lameer 1997, 609-22. For examples of accounts of al-Fārābī's doctrine of prophecy which focus primarily on the distinction between revelation and divination, see Walzer 1957, 142–148; Macy 1986; Streetman 2008, 211-246. This distinction was originally identified by E.I.J. Rosenthal in Rosenthal 1955, 164.

[88] Vallat 2004, 169-170.

[89] For psychological approaches, see López-Farjeat 2020; Ivry 2012; Daiber 2007, 99-112; Taylor 2006, 151-168; Davidson 1992; Vallat 2012. For cosmological approaches, see Janos 2012; Druart 1992, 127-148; Bonelli 2009; Gutas 1999, 208-229. For epistemological approaches, see Pines 1988; Druart 2008, 215-232; Parens 2006. For theological and religious approaches, see López-Farjeat 2012; Walker 1994; Vallat (Forthcoming). For approaches focusing on divination, see Walzer 1957, 142–148; Macy 1986; Rosenthal 1955, 164. For broader political approaches, see Najjar 1961, 57-72; Mahdi 1961, 1-24; Galston 1992; Strauss 1957; Strauss 1945; Galston 1990; O'Meara 2003; Rosenthal 1955; Mahdi 1999, 208-229.

contemporary scholarship has yet to fully address the question of *how* al-Fārābī justifies his Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception, the question of *whether* al-Fārābī succeeds in justifying his Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception has yet to be explored. Of course, these are two questions I aim to address in this project. The novelty of these questions in spite of the multitude of related research which surrounds them leaves the status of this topic in a peculiar position. While there is a seemingly endless amount of peripheral scholarship available to draw upon in support of each aspect of this project, there are no immediate corollaries in conversation with this project with which to directly engage throughout the entirety of this study. As a result, this project must be situated properly within three distinct scholarly conversations: what information beneficent political deception conveys (and more broadly the epistemic limits of human knowledge), what psychological and epistemic conditions allow the Imām to claim he has knowledge, and what concerns al-Fārābī must respond to in order to be warranted in holding his doctrine. The former two topics have an extensive library of literature; the third topic requires borrowing from objections commonly levied against Plato's Noble Lie.

5.1. The Political Dominance and Metaphysical Dominance Interpretations

Before exploring these three topics, it is helpful to note that broadly speaking, Fārābīan scholarship can be demarcated into a division between two roughhewn camps: that camp which views al-Fārābī's metaphysical projects as subservient to his political aims and that camp which views al-Fārābī's politics as issuing from his metaphysical and epistemological commitments. The former group, comprised of those who read al-Fārābī primarily through the lens of an esoteric/exoteric division, feels that al-Fārābī's

metaphysical concerns are political in the most etymologically plain sense of the term 'political'; al-Fārābī's cosmos reflects the proper construction of the polis, not the other way around.[90] While his metaphysical claims are still meaningful, they are politically meaningful, rather than actual descriptions of the universe as such.[91] The extremity of these views vary in degree, and some authors are more bald-faced than others in their claims regarding how insincere al-Fārābī is when making metaphysical commitments.[92] While these thinkers are sometimes grouped together under the heading of 'Straussians', for the sake of clarity, both because I do not see any apparent connection between holding this view regarding Fārābīan interpretation and holding to Straussianism *in toto* and in order to avoid lumping such a wide and varied collection of approaches under a monolithic label, I will call this position 'The Political Dominance Interpretation' of al-Fārābī.[93] Notably, this group is comprised by authors such as Leo Strauss, Muhsin Mahdi, Charles Butterworth, and Joshua Parens, among others.[94]

Those who tend to read al-Fārābī as more candid take al-Fārābī's metaphysical and epistemological claims as sincere in their meaning. As a result, politics arises out of a grand cosmological universe, of which humans are just a small part. While it is true that the order of the cosmos mirrors proper political governance, it is we who aspire to mirror the ordered governance of the heavens, not the heavens who are constructed by al-Fārābī as a mirror for our ideal governance.[95] Like the Political Dominance Interpretation, such

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[90] While this is never stated explicitly, it is insinuated by Butterworth's rejection of the possibility of knowing metaphysics and his critiques of the idea of theory guiding practice. See Butterworth, *SPL* 125-126; Butterworth, *PR* 22-23.

[91] Butterworth, *SPL* 125-126; Butterworth, *PR* 22-23.

[92] Mahdi 1962, xxvii; Butterworth, *SPL* 125-126; Butterworth, *PR* 22-23.

[93] For the purpose of clarity, when referencing the Political Dominance Interpretation, I will always capitalize 'Political.' If I am merely referencing politics in general, I will leave the term uncapitalized.

[94] See for Butterworth 2001, 2015; Mahdi 1962; Parens 1995; Strauss 1952.

[95] See, for example, Janos 2012, 40.

a position comes in varying degrees, and while I admit to belonging to this latter camp, I, for example, do not read al-Fārābī as entirely devoid of irony, persuasion, or the occasional obfuscation for the sake of appearances. On the whole though, this camp reads al-Fārābī as speaking plainly when he addresses the reader as a metaphysician, an epistemologist, an ethicist, and, yes, a political scientist. This group does not read al-Fārābī's cosmos as merely a component part of his politics. Politics is a human science which exists within the context of his broader metaphysics. For this reason, I will call this position 'The Metaphysical Dominance Interpretation' of al-Fārābī.[96] This group is comprised of scholars such as Dominic O'Meara, Philippe Vallat, Thérèse Anne Druart, and Damien Janos, as well as myself.[97] And while the Political Dominance Interpretation of al-Fārābī and the Metaphysical Dominance Interpretation of al-Fārābī represent two vastly distinct ways of reading al-Fārābī's texts, it should also be noted that it is possible to differ in one's approach regarding specific issues.[98]

Ultimately, the Political Dominance Interpretation of al-Fārābī and the Metaphysical Dominance Interpretation of al-Fārābī are distinguished by their approaches. Either one methodologically reads an esoteric hidden meaning behind what al-Fārābī says, or one reads that al-Fārābī explicitly writes those positions he intends the

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[96] For the purpose of clarity, when referencing the Metaphysical Dominance Interpretation, I will always capitalize 'Metaphysical.' If I am merely referencing metaphysics in general, I will leave the term uncapitalized.

[97] O'Meara 2003; Vallat 2004; Druart 1981; Druart 1992, 127-148; Janos 2012.

[98] For example, some issues lend themselves to a more esoteric reading, e.g., al-Fārābī's sincerity regarding his changing positions on the afterlife, to name one particularly apt case. See *PR* 81-83; *PS* 13.5, 16.4-8; *EI* 29. Other issues seem too integral to al-Fārābī's corpus to be taken as anything but sincere, e.g., the central role the Active Intellect plays in human access to first principles. See *PS*13.2-3; *PR* 72; *HPA* 14b. The texts themselves and al-Fārābī's doctrinal consistency amongst his many works provide the best metrics for whether any specific issue should be interpreted esoterically or sincerely. However, other issues (e.g., the historical transmission of the manuscripts, al-Fārābī's doctrinal maturation, his historical context, and the reader's own personal bias) make any interpretation perilous.

reader to adopt. I find the latter approach to be more methodologically neutral, best preserving the Fārābīan corpus's own sense of purpose. Of course, as with any thinker who proposes the use of political innuendo, there is a possibility that al-Fārābī uses esotericism at times. However, I would argue that the onus of proof lies in showing the insincerity of the explicit text, not the sincerity.[99] The sincerity is to be assumed. But given the broad and influential scope of the Political Dominance Interpretation of al-Fārābī, this is an important methodological question. However, definitively arguing for the Metaphysical Dominance Interpretation of al-Fārābī over the Political Interpretation of of al-Fārābī is far beyond the possible scope of this project, although some reasons for my preference of the Metaphysical Dominance interpretive approach can be gleaned from Chapter 3. For now, orienting my position within the landscape must suffice. It should also be noted that I will draw on the wealth of literature and insights from each interpretative position moving forward, while highlighting where there is tension.

5.2. The Content of Beneficent Political Deception

The first, and perhaps primary, place of tension in establishing al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception concerns exactly what information the symbols of religion convey (i.e., what is the content of the Imām's deception), and relatedly, what information the Imām has access to (i.e., what does the Imām know). The two general responses to this question follow the roughhewn divisions of Fārābīan

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[99] For example, Joshua Parens writes provocative scholarship responding to the absence of Book 10 of Plato's *Laws* in al-Fārābī's *Summary* of the work. See Parens 1995. But the absence can be explained more simply: al-Fārābī simply lacked access to Book 10, as al-Fārābī himself claims. See *SPL* 152. This is the approach adopted by Dimitri Gutas. See Gutas 1998a. More recently, Steven Harvey and, following him, Charles Butterworth have advised caution in over-asserting how well al-Fārābī knew the *Laws*. See Harvey 2003 and Butterworth 2015.

scholarship sketched above. The Political Dominance Interpretation does not define religion by the information that the Imām conveys, but rather the political function which religion plays in establishing the Imām as the ruler of the city. As Muhsin Mahdi explains, the "specific function assigned to revelation" is the "operation of this ruler-founder's craft", and only functions to determine the opinions and actions of the city.[100] His notion of determination is central, because the Imām does not convey knowledge to the people, but merely determines opinion, established not by demonstration, speculation, or theory, but a particular political aim of the Imām.[101] Miriam Galston, who adopts a similar view, is more subtle. While she admits that the "kind of interaction between the agent intellect and imagination may be seen as supporting a close connection between the original theoretical discoveries and the subsequent imaginative recasting of them", she denies that the establishment of religion is dictated by the truth (favoring instead political power and effectiveness), as "when one must choose, therefore, between an image that is truly fitting and one that is effective, the former consideration must bow to the latter".[102] Shlomo Pines, following the aforementioned accusation of al-Fārābī by Ibn Ṭufayl, in particular that al-Fārābī's lost *Commentary* espouses a radical skepticism which places prophecy wholly in the imagination, suggests that revelation contains no rational content.[103] Joshua Parens recognizes the central problem—how can the prophet translate universal philosophical truths into particular edicts and images—, but still casts a skeptical worry, as "the line between imagination and prudence, between mere divination and true revelation becomes hazy. The difference between imagination and prudence can

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[100] Mahdi1996, 588-589.
[101] Mahdi 1996, 589-591.
[102] Galston 1990, 45.
[103] *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* 100; Pines 1988, 95.

be elusive at times even for the philosopher".[104] The central theme which links all of these positions together, as well as the positions of Charles Butterworth and Leo Strauss mentioned above, is the skeptical lens with which metaphysics is viewed. In sum, because the Political Dominance Interpretation doubts the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, religious symbols cannot properly be a communication of that knowledge.

Whereas the Political Dominance Interpretation finds religion problematic, except as a political function, due to the uncertain source of religious knowledge, the Metaphysical Dominance Interpretation finds the translation of universal truths into particulars to be the central problematic issue. This position does not doubt al-Fārābī's commitment to metaphysics. As Damien Janos explains:

> Mahdi is undoubtedly right in pointing to the political relevance of al-Fārābī's cosmological theories. Indeed, they form the backdrop against which his prophetology and political system unfold and bear an intricate link with other aspects of his thought. But it is important to stress that it is al-Fārābī's cosmology and metaphysics that are the foundation on which politics can be developed, and not vice versa, as Mahdi would have it.[105]

Likewise, Philippe Vallat devotes an entire chapter to refuting Mahdi in *Farabi et l'école d'Alexandrie* and to establishing the centrality of al-Fārābī's metaphysics to his political philosophy.[106] Instead, the Metaphysical Dominance Interpretation recognizes that the Imām has metaphysical knowledge and that this is somehow communicated through images. When he turns to the topic of revelation, Vallat emphasizes that the Imām has access to this divine knowledge, and his revelation is not "pieuse mais factice, mais en une expression fidèle de l'ordonnance des réalités divines," a refraction of the truth.[107]

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[104] Parens 2006, 32.
[105] Janos 2012, 40.
[106] Vallat 2004, 85-102.
[107] Vallat 2004, 169.

However, as Paul E. Walker explains, the problem appears within the relationship between philosophy, which operates within the theoretical faculty, i.e., the realm of the universals and demonstration, and symbolic religion, which operates in the practical faculty and the imagination, i.e., the realm of particulars.[108] As Carlos Fraenkel points out, images taken literally are bound to be false in reference to theoretical truths.[109] Nonetheless, these facsimiles are intended to instill moral and even, as Joep Lameer notes, theoretical truths.[110] Each of these thinkers recognizes that there is metaphysical knowledge and that this is somehow communicated through revelation. However, as al-Fārābī leaves underdetermined how translation from an Imām's knowledge of universals to particular religious images could possibly occur, there is wide disagreement as to how to solve the problem of translation. Deborah Black explains translation through the imagination's mimetic abilities.[111] Herbert Davidson conjectures that the emanations of the Active Intellect empower the imagination of the Imām to achieve unique feats.[112] Vallat claims that the problem of translating from the theoretical faculty to the imagination was foreign to al-Fārābī, and the ease of an Imām translating theoretical truths into images was never in doubt.[113] Fraenkel argues that as long as one understands that religion is comprised of allegorical content, there is no conflict.[114] Lameer sees the solution to this translation problem in al-Fārābī's reliance on the *Republic*, arguing that the relationship between the images of religion and demonstrative knowledge echoes the

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[108] Walker 1994, 100.
[109] Fraenkel 2008, 115-116.
[110] Lameer 1997, 617-618.
[111] Black 1996, 187.
[112] Davidson 1992, 59-60.
[113] Vallat 2004, 169-170.
[114] Fraenkel 2008, 116.

epistemic relationship between *eikasia* and knowledge within Plato's divided line.[115] W. Craig Streetman invents a term, 'prophetic reason,' for how translation can be possible.[116] Walker rightly notes the problem by explaining that Imāms have perfected imaginations, practical faculties, and theoretical faculties and shows how *if* translation is possible, the Imām would be the person most equipped to translate, but he never shows how, *in principle*, theoretical knowledge can be translated into images without a loss of content.[117] And Dimitri Gutas, in a brief introductory treatment of the issue in the *Encyclopedia Iranica*, merely gestures toward emanation.[118] In sum, there is little agreement as to how the Imām translates knowledge of universals into particular images, though universal agreement among those espousing the Metaphysical Dominance Interpretation, including myself, that the Imām does, in fact, know and translate the truth. To claim that the Imām is warranted in his actions, one must provide a solution to this problem.

5.3. The Mechanisms of Revelation

The second obstacle to understanding al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception, particularly for the Metaphysical Dominance Interpretation, involves the exact epistemic and psychological mechanisms which are at play in order for revelation to occur. As E.I.J Rosenthal noted and Richard Walzer expanded and clarified, al-Fārābī discusses prophecy using two distinct terms, *nubūwa* ('prophecy', but in context

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[115] Lameer 1997, 614.
[116] Streetman 2008, 234.
[117] Walker 1994, 100f.
[118] Gutas 1999, 221.

'divination') and *waḥy* ('revelation').[119] While often synonymous terms within an Islamic

theological context, for al-Fārābī, *nubūwa* tends to refer to those people who receive

prophetic images directly within their imaginative faculty without the intermediary of

their rational faculty, while *waḥy* refers to prophets who intentionally translate their

knowledge into images, although al-Fārābī does not painstakingly maintain this

distinction, leaving room for ambiguity.[120] The distinction relies heavily on al-Fārābī's

psychology and epistemology. The receivers of revelation (*waḥy*) require no supernatural

or, more accurately, superlunar explanation for their certitude beyond the normal activity

of the Active Intellect upon human reason.[121] Like the philosopher, they can know what

they know through abstraction and demonstration.[122] However, the role of the Active

Intellect for the process of normal human intellection is already controversial, before

even introducing the unique case of prophecy. Herbert Davidson suggests the Active

Intellect directly emanates the first principles of science, but does not discuss the power

for abstraction.[123] Black credits the Active Intellect as an efficient cause for

abstraction.[124] Vallat argues that the emanation of first principles is itself adequate for

abstraction.[125] And Richard Taylor considers the possibility that the Active Intellect

provides both a power for abstraction and first principles (but never states explicitly if

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[119] While the terminology for these distinct categories has shifted, with Rosenthal maintaining the transliterated terms '*nawabit*' and '*mutawahhid*' for the diviners and the receivers of revelation, respectively, Walzer preferring diviners and prophets, and Macy preferring prophecy and revelation, I prefer the English 'prophecy' to remain a neutral general term for both phenomena, while 'divination' refers to *nubūwa* and 'revelation' refers to *waḥy*. See, Walzer, Richard 1957, 142–148; Macy 1986; Rosenthal 1955, 204.

[120] Macy 1986, 185. See *PS* 14.1-11 and 15.6-12.

[121] For al-Fārābī's conditions for certitude, see Black 2006, 11-46.

[122] *PS* 15.9-11; 17.2.

[123] Davidson 1992, 52-53.

[124] Black 1996, 186.

[125] Vallat 2004, 209-212.

these reduce to the same emanation).[126] None of these positions (nor al-Fārābī himself)

ever suggest that emanations from the Active Intellect ever provide the typical human

being with intelligibles other than first principles. Yet al-Fārābī claims that the Imāms

who receive revelation (*waḥy*) and the diviners who receive divination (*nubūwa*) are

given emanations directly to their rational faculties (and through them their imaginative

faculties) and their imaginative faculties, respectively.[127] While these emanations are

acknowledged by those who study al-Fārābī's psychology generally, their less than

parsimonious place in al-Fārābī's psychology and their curious epistemological status

need further examination, particularly in light of al-Fārābī's insistence that the Imām

knows with demonstrative certitude and al-Fārābī's idiosyncratic conception of certitude,

memorably explained by Deborah Black.[128]

5.4. Borrowed Critiques from Plato

Finally, moving outside the bounds of Fārābīan scholarship, the central objections

to the warrant of al-Fārābī's Imām must be devised from Plato scholarship, due to the

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[126] Taylor 2006, 164.

[127] *PS* 15.10; 14.7.

[128] For example, Davidson, after insisting upon the limited role the Active Intellect has in normal human thought, merely providing the principles of science to the human being, struggles to incorporate al-Fārābī's conception of prophecy into his model, going so far as to suggest that the Active Intellect emanates to the *imagination* the principles of science, saying, "Alfarabi does not explain the process whereby the active intellect furnishes theoretical knowledge or knowledge of distant present events and future events. As regards theoretical knowledge, we may surmise that the active intellect communicates the principles of science to the imaginative faculty, since Alfarabi has already written that it communicates them to the human intellect, whence they might proceed a step further to the imaginative faculty. But he also states that the active intellect 'gives' the imaginative faculty, and the imaginative faculty 'receives' and 'sees,' figurative images of the incorporeal intelligible beings and other supernal substances. Perhaps he means that the active intellect imparts theoretical knowledge of the supernal region to the imaginative faculty by conveying the principles of science, including 'the principles used for learning about... the heavens, the First Cause, [and] the other primary beings;' whereupon the imaginative faculty somehow sees the implications, recast in figurative images, of the scientific principles communicated to it." Davidson 1992, 60. See Black 2006, 11-46.

aforementioned vacuum in Fārābīan literature on this topic. While I will not provide a

comprehensive examination of the criticisms of Plato's doctrine, I will use Plato

scholarship to guide my critiques of al-Fārābī's position. The major objections which I

will focus upon, borrowing from R.H.S. Crossman and Karl Popper, are reactions to: 1)

the paternalistic control of information, 2) the rejection of equality, freedom, and self-

government, 3) a hereditary caste system, 4) censorship, 5) the identification of the state

with the ruling class, and 6) totalitarianism.[129] Each problem emerges at the nexus

between dishonesty and the abuse of power, but each problem raises its own unique

concerns. As previewed in Chapter 1 though, there is a vast difference between the

example of the Phoenician Story and a Noble Lie, as such. Most of these critiques are

leveled primarily at the former, but do not deeply consider the latter. That is not to say

that the latter is not itself worthy of criticism, only that insofar as al-Fārābī adopts the

Doctrine of the Noble Lie, as such, and not the Phoenician Story, he has more

philosophical room to maneuver than Plato, proper.

6. <u>Conclusion</u>

Out of the aforementioned tangle of al-Fārābī scholarship, several questions come

to the fore. First, is al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception ethically

justifiable? Second, even if it is justifiable, how does al-Fārābī systematically establish

the component mechanisms within his Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception in

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[129] See Chapter 5. While not explicitly addressed, other related concerns should be at the fore of the mind of the reader, e.g., the inherent unethical and dangerous character of deception itself, as examined by C.D.C. Reeve; the totalitarian violations which arise when a ruling class deceives the ruled class and its corollary the non-egalitarian conditions which ostensibly occur within a society when one restricts transparency; and the injustice of censorship which results in a state mandated myth or religion, as explained by Ramona Naddaff. See Reeve 1988, 208; Crossman 1959; Popper 2013; Naddaff 2002, 16-17.

order to make it so? And third, what can one glean from the way al-Fārābī builds his

ethically justifiable system which speaks to the problem of political deception more

generally? By examining al-Fārābī's cosmology, psychology, and poetics in Chapter 3, as

well as the reception of his cosmology, psychology, poetics, and politics in Chapter 4, the

first two questions will begin to be answered; the third will have to wait until the

Conclusion. And while none of these questions will be settled without a more careful

examination of al-Fārābī's epistemology and ethics, Chapter 3 will provide a clearer

framework within which these examinations may occur.

III. THE METAPHYSICAL AND COSMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR
BENEFICENT POLITICAL DECEPTION

1. <u>Introduction</u>

The crux of al-Fārābī's justification for beneficent political deception lies in his

navigation of an apparent dissonance between two strongly held principles: a) human

beings need community to fulfill their purpose (i.e. happiness for the individual and the

community, which occurs through knowledge), and b) unvarnished truth is antithetical to

the establishment of community. The tension is obvious. While the ultimate purpose of

the community is to orient its citizens toward the truth, the nature of the typical citizen

makes truth corrosive to the structure of the community.[1] Here lies the key, and the

challenge, to understanding al-Fārābī's political thought: the polis holds a dual allegiance

to both truth (*ḥaqq*) and cooperation (*taʿāwun*). However, truth and cooperation are often

antithetical to one another. What is purely said for the purpose of cooperation is, at best,

only accidental in relation to what is true, and, at worst, discordant with truth. The Imām

is the exceptional case, an individual able to harmonize the truth within the establishment

of a community.

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[1] That most citizens are unable to encounter truth at the outset of their existence is apparent for numerous
reasons, as will be discussed in detail below, including: a) that existents below the heavenly bodies
(including humans) are the terminal point for deficiency in the cosmos; b) that contrariety, materiality, and
deficiency, even within species, express themselves through a nearly infinite combination of shape,
magnitude, and disposition for individual members of said species, rendering some naturally excellent,
some naturally deficient, and most a combination of deficiency and excellence; and c) that humans, even
philosophers, require association to achieve their telos, requiring habituation, education, and material needs
(the originary Imām seems to be a notable exception). See, for example, *PR* 54; 58-70; *SA* 11; *AH* 18-19;
AH (Ar.) 23-24; *BL* 114-119. But, 'typical', here, means something particular, namely someone who lacks
the wherewithal to fulfill the full human telos, even in association, i.e., someone who is not a philosopher
and lacks the natural disposition for philosophy. As will be discussed below, in al-Fārābī's cosmos,
teleological fulfillment for embodied existents is the exception, not the rule. That the purpose of the
community is to orient citizens toward truth, rather than social harmony, given the dispositions and abilities
of the typical citizen, is challenged by Averroes. See Chapter 4, 3.4 and Taylor 2018.

The present chapter will explore the 'whys' and 'hows' of al-Fārābī's position. Why does he believe the purpose of the community is knowledge? How does one achieve knowledge for al-Fārābī? Why are most citizens incapable of happiness without constructed social knowledge? How does the Imām translate truth into images for the community? Whether or not al-Fārābī's position provides adequate justification for such deception will be dealt with in Chapter 6. The present chapter focuses on the mechanisms al-Fārābī uses to mount such a justification. And while this project is most focused on the political manifestations brought about by the dilemmatic tension between truth and cooperation, knowledge and unity, respectively, the ultimate source of this tension is more fundamental than politics for al-Fārābī. The tension rests upon the particular metaphysical, cosmological, epistemological, and psychological commitments of the mature al-Fārābī.[2]

2. **Cosmology**

For al-Fārābī, the purpose of the human person (and thus the community as a whole) rests within the teleology of the cosmos *in toto*. His teleology is not geocentric or anthropocentric, but rather stilted toward intelligibility itself, sourced in the absolute simplicity of the First Intellect, scil., God. The role of the human person is not the fulfillment of this cosmology; the perfected human person is the lowest, most inferior of all existent intellects. Nonetheless, while human beings do not play a particularly important role in his cosmology absolutely considered, human beings are unique, insofar as they are the only intellect in the cosmos to become actualized through interactions with

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[2] For the division between the mature al-Fārābī and his earlier work, see Chapter 2, 4.2.2.

material objects.[3] In other words, humans, while lowly in reference to the cosmos, are

preeminent within the sublunary world, i.e., the world of material composites.

That said, a full and precise exploration of the totality of al-Fārābī's cosmos is

beyond the scope of this project, and other instructive attempts to harmonize his various

positions on this subject have already been written.[4] For the moment, a general sketch,

with particular focus on the human's place within the cosmos, must suffice.

2.1. The First

Al-Fārābī's cosmological scheme centers around "the First Existent" (*al-mawjūd al-*

'awwal) who is "the First Cause of the existence of all the other existents".[5] As a result,

the telos of every existent, including human beings, refers back to the First. The heavens

are ranked according to their deficiency (*naqṣ*) in relation to the First (which lacks any

deficiency), and the excellent city, too, is excellent or virtuous (*fāḍila*) according to its

imitation of the First.[6] Put otherwise, the First, elsewhere referred to as God (*al-'ilāh*), is

the cause of every existent and the cause of the ranks and purposes of every existent.[7]

Thus, al-Fārābī's cosmological model is, not unexpectedly, entirely theocentric. The First

alone lacks any exterior purpose or aim (*ġaraḍ wa ġāya*), as it has no other cause

whatsoever for its existence.[8] Its existence is the most excellent (*'afḍal*) and most prior

(*'aqdam*) existence, needing nothing, and intelligizing only Itself.[9] And, as will be shown

below, all other existents derive their telos from the First, aiming to know the First,

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[3] *PR* 67-68. See also *PR* 32-33, 67-68; *BL* 115, 140; *PS* 8.4-5, 13.2-5; *EI* 12-20.
[4] Janos 2012; Druart 1992; Twetten 2016a, 159-160; Twetten 2016b, 364-369; Davidson 1992, 44-48.
[5] *PS* 1.1; "الموجود الأول هو السبب الأول لوجود سائر الموجودات كلها."
[6] *PS* 1.1, 2.2, 15.6. See also Twetten 2016b, 365f.
[7] *PR* 31; *PS* 2.2. See also Druart 1981, 36.
[8] *PS* 1.1.
[9] *PS* 1.1, 1.6.

whether directly or mediately.[10] In one sense, the aforementioned competing allegiances

within the city between cooperation and truth find their source in the nature of the First,

as to emulate the First requires emulating the First in both its oneness (*waḥda*) and its

knowing "the most excellent intelligible through the most excellent knowledge", i.e.,

Itself.[11] More properly speaking though, the competition between these allegiances is

sourced in human deficiency (*naqṣ*), which divides cooperation and knowledge into

distinct activities, whereas all the activity and substance of the First is entirely indivisible

(*ḡayr munqasim*).[12]

2.1.1. Divine Attribution

For this reason, discussing and emulating the First is problematic, as the topic

runs afoul of the famous complications surrounding divine attribution.[13] How is one to

characterize an Existent (*mawjūd*) who lacks any characteristics beyond Its substance

(*jawhar*)? How is one to define the First if It lacks a genus or a *differentia specifica*

distinct from Its own ipseity?[14] Al-Fārābī is less than helpful in this regard, lacking either

the kind of commitment to apophasis found in the texts of Pseudo-Dionysius and

Maimonides or any developed doctrine of analogy like what is found in Aquinas.[15]

Instead, al-Fārābī is inconsistent, even within the same texts. For example, as Hannah

Kasher has noted, al-Fārābī takes two distinct positions about the First within the first

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[10] See *AH* 15; *AH* (Ar.)17-18; *ES* 100, 7-13. See also Druart 1992, 140; Janos 2012, 39, 257.

[11] "يعلم أفضل معلوم بأفضل علم."; *PS* 1.6, 1.10.

[12] *PS* 1.6.

[13] See Janos 2012, 181f.

[14] See *Topics* 5.

[15] *Divine Names* 1.1-7; Corrigan and Harrington 2015; Jones 2008; Jones 2005; *GP* 1.57; Seeskin 2000, 23-65; Seeskin 2017; Pessin 2016; Buijs 1990; Buijs 2003; *ST* 1.13.1-6; Ashworth 2017; Klubertanz 1960; Mortensen 2006; Rocca 2004.

chapter of *The Perfect State*, saying both that It is "different (*mubāyin*) in its substance (*bi-jawhar*) than everything else", i.e., placing it outside the ordered rank of the cosmos, and that It is the most excellent (*'afḍal*) existent, i.e., placing It as the source of, but within, the ordered cosmos.[16] Likewise, al-Fārābī is of two minds as to whether familiar terminology can adequately describe the First in the *Political Regime*, saying, "There is no link between our own apprehension and Its apprehension, nor between our knowledge and Its knowledge. And if there is a link, it is a trifling link."[17] Here, he again simultaneously presents both the possibility that the First is entirely distinct from, i.e., transcending, the rest of the cosmos and the possibility that the First is the most preeminent and the most superior rank within the cosmos. He never clearly decides the issue.[18]

The closest he comes to a true doctrine of divine attribution occurs during his discussion of the First as 'living'(*ḥayy*), when he describes the term as predicated metaphorically (*ista'āra*).[19] However, while *yusta'āru* is a technical term, defined in al-Fārābī's *Short Commentary on De Interpretatione*, its definition leaves a great deal to be desired for the purposes of this discussion. He explains:

> A term is used metaphorically (*ista'āra*) if at the time it was first introduced it was allotted to a certain thing as its proper signifier, but as time went by another thing came to be labelled by it owing to some affinity, no matter of what kind, between it and the original (referent), though the word is not the appointed signifier of the second (referent).[20]

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[16] "سواه ما لكل بجوهره مباين وهو..."; *PS* 1.2, 1.1; Hannah Kasher 1994, 471.

[17] "وإذا كان لا نسبة لإدراكنا نحن إلى إدراكه ولا لمعلومنا إلى معلومه ، وإن كانت له نسبة فهي نسبة ما يسيرة ..."; *PR* 47; This passage is echoed almost word for word in the *PS* 1.14, the only difference being that the *PS* passage also compare our beauty and the First's beauty.

[18] This is true also for the *Arabic Plotinus*, where he likely gets the doctrine. See *Theology* I.47, VII.21, VIII.122-124, 130, 140-141, 183-186, X.1-10; *Greek Sage* 1.1-16; *Divine Knowledge* 1, 45-51, 99, 106-116, 121-128, 129-132.

[19] *PS* 1.10.

[20] *SDI* 227.

فالاسم الذى يقول على الشيء باستعارة هو أنْ يكون اسم ما دالا على ّات شيء رابتا عليه وانما من أوَّل ما
وضع فيلقب في الحين بعد الحين شيء أخر لمواصلته للأوّل بنحو ما من أنحاء المواصلة أي نحو كان من
إير أنْ يجعل راتباً للثاني دالاً على ّاته .[21]

From this, one can surmise that terms predicated of both the First and creatures reveal some affinity of some kind between the First and creatures. Whether this affinity is anything more than the relationship between Cause and caused is not clear. Moreover, whether these terms more properly signify the First or creatures depends on whether one is speaking linguistically or metaphysically, as genealogically speaking, creatures are the appointed signifier for attributes during the development of a language, i.e., as language develops, creatures are called 'one', 'living', and 'existent' first.[22] Al-Fārābī admits as much when he says, "It is not impossible that for our calling the First by these names to be subsequent to in time to our calling something else by them."[23] In linguistic terms, according to the definition of a metaphor al-Fārābī supplies in his *Short Commentary on De Interpretatione*, creatures, and not the First, are the primary referents of these terms. Yet, al-Fārābī insists at times that the First "deserves more than anything else to be called" terms like 'one', 'real', 'true', and 'living', as these terms are said "in the most prior and deserving ways" about the First.[24] Here, he seems to be speaking metaphysically. For example, when he talks about the terms 'existent' and 'one', he says, "For these two first of all signify only what makes the First substantial; then they signify the rest of the things insofar as they are made substantial from the First and are secured

and procured from it."[25] In effect, al-Fārābī is arguing that the First, as Cause, is more deserving of being credited with the attributes of creatures than creatures, despite the First's lack of attributes. And while this position is perfectly coherent when considering the issue from the standpoint of metaphysics, as every attribute is ultimately sourced in the First as the "Cause of the existence of all other existents", it moves one no closer to understanding the content of terms predicated of the absolutely simple First.[26]

There are two things one can know for sure about al-Fārābī's doctrine of divine attribution, however. First, despite the fact that al-Fārābī does allow for careful predication of terms while describing the First, any term predicated of the First only signifies Its absolutely simple substance. Al-Fārābī is, as H.A. Wolfson describes, an Antiattributist.[27] The only exceptions al-Fārābī allows are those terms which signify something outside the substance of the First, but again, do not really attribute any plurality to the First, namely relations. Thus, as he says in the *Political Regime*:

> It ought not to be presumed that the kinds of perfections signified by Its many names are many kinds into which It is divided and by all of which It is made substantial. Rather, those many names ought to signify a single substance and a single existence that is not at all divided… Of the names that signify perfection and excellence in the things around us, some signify what is in Its essence and not insofar as it is related to another thing—like being, oneness, and what is similar to that. Others signify what is in relation to something else external to it—like justice and generosity.[28]

> وليس ينبغي أن يُظنّ أنّ أنواع كمالاته التي يُدَلُّ عليها بأسمائه الكثيرة أنواع كثيرة ينقسم إليها ويتجوهر بجميعها بل ينبغي أن يُدَلّ بتلك الأسماء الكثيرة على جوهر واحد غير منقسم أصلاً... والأسماء التي تدلّ على الكمال والفضيلة في الأشياء التي لدينا، منها ما يدلّ على ما هو له في ذاته، لا من حيث هو مضاف إلى شيء آخر، مثل الموجود والواحد وأشباه ذلك. ومنها ما يدلّ على ما هو له بالإضافة إلى شيء آخر خارج عنه، مثل العدل والجوّاد.[29]

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[25] "فإن هذين إنّما يدلّان أوّلاً على ما يتجوهر به الأوّل ثم يدلّان على سائر الأشياء من جهة أنّها متجوهرة عن الأوّل وأنّها مقتبسة عن الأوّل ومتستفادة عنه."; *PR* 50. See also *The Discourse on the Pure Good* 1-8.

[26] *PS* 1.1.; "الموجود الأول هو السبب الأول لوجود سائر الموجودات كلها."

[27] Wolfson 1976, 114. See also Wolfson 1959, 79.

[28] *PR* 49. See also Wolfson 1956, 150f.

[29] *PR* 49.

The terms which are predicated of the First are predicated as a perfection of the First Itself, i.e., in virtue of its substance and essence, like the 'One', 'Existent', or, as will be discussed below, 'Intellect.'[30] Or, they are predicated as relations between the First and the ordered cosmos, like 'justice' and 'generosity', but do not properly predicate the First Itself.

The second thing which al-Fārābī makes explicit is that the problem of divine attribution itself stems from human deficiency, not the substance of the First. The difficulty issues from human beings projecting their own plurality on to what is properly speaking One. Unlike more familiar usages of the term 'one', in which 'one' is a predicate of an existent which has other predicates (e.g., one horse), when referring to the First, the term 'one' signifies the First as a singular, unified existent devoid of any predication.[31] 'One' is not a predicate of the First. Rather, the term 'One', in one sense, signifies the First qua existent. Al-Fārābī goes on to link these terms to 'intellect', 'intelligible', and 'thinking', as well as 'knowing', 'wise', 'real', 'true', 'living', 'life', 'greatness', 'majesty', 'glory', 'beauty', 'brilliance', and 'splendor'. Moreover, the First is the 'happiest' and the most 'loving' and 'loved'.[32] Yet all of these terms signify only one single referent, the First Itself. Naturally, one could object to al-Fārābī's many-in-one approach to the First as nonsensical. Something cannot be both many things and one thing at the same time (barring equivocation of the terms 'many' and 'one'). Yet, this is not al-Fārābī's claim. Instead, he argues that human beings necessarily treat, cognize, and speak of the One as many. He explains:

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[30] See Wolfson 1976, 114; Wolfson 1956, 149.

[31] PS 1.5. "Among the meanings of 'one' is [a meaning] "وهذا المعنى من معاني الواحد يساوق الموجود الأول ." consonant with the First Being." (Translation modified)

[32] PS 1.6-15.

Hence, since the First has the highest perfection of existence, it follows that what we think of it in our minds ought to have utmost perfection as well. We find, however, that this is not the case. One ought to realize that for the First it is not difficult to apprehend itself, since the First itself is of the utmost perfection. But it is difficult and hard for us to apprehend (perceive) it and to represent it to ourselves because of the weakness of our intellectual faculties, mixed as they are with matter and non-being: we are too weak to think it as it really is. For its overwhelming perfection dazzles us, and that is why we are not strong enough to represent it to ourselves perfectly (completely). Likewise, light is the first and most perfect and most luminous visible, the other visibles become visible through it, and it is the cause of the colours becoming visible. Hence our visual apprehension of any colour which is more perfect and powerful (strong) should have been more perfect. But we see that just the opposite happens. The more perfect and the more powerful a visible is, the weaker is our visual apprehension of it, and not because of its being hidden or deficient-it has, on the contrary, in itself the utmost brightness and luminosity —but because the perfection of its splendour dazzles our sight so that our eyes are bewildered. Thus are our minds in relation to the First Cause, the First Intellect and the First Living. Our thinking it is deficient, not because of any deficiency in the First, and our apprehension of it is difficult for us, not because of its substance being difficult to apprehend, but because our minds are too weak to represent it to ourselves. That is why the intelligibles within our minds are deficient. Our representation of them is of two kinds: one kind of intelligible is in itself impossible for man to represent to himself or to think of by way of perfect representation, because of the weak nature of their existence and the defects of their essences and substances. The other kind of intelligible could in itself be represented completely and as perfectly as they are, but since our minds are weak and far from the substances of these objects, it is impossible for us to represent them to ourselves completely and with all the perfection of their existence. Each of these two things is at opposite extremes, one being of the utmost perfection, the other of the utmost deficiency. Since we are mixed up with matter and since matter is the cause of our substances being remote from the First Substance, the nearer our substances draw to it, the more exact and the truer will necessarily be our apprehension of it.[33]

فلذلك كان يجب في الأول ، إذ هو في الغاية من كمال الوجود ، أن يكون المعقول منه في نفوسنا على نهاية الكمال أيضا. ونحن نجد الأمر على غير ذلك ، فينبغي أن نعلم أنه من جهته غير معتاص الادراك ، إذ كان في نهاية الكمال؛ ولكن لضعف قوى عقولنا نحن ولملابستها المادة والعدم ، يعتاص ادراكه ، ويعسر علينا تصوره ، ونضعف من أن نعقله على ما هو عليه وجوده ، فإن افراط كماله يبهرنا ، فلا نقوى على تصوره على التمام ، كما أن الضوء هو أول المبصرات وأكملها وأظهرها ، به يصير سائر المبصرات مبصرة ، وهو السبب في أن صارت الألوان مبصرة. ويجب فيها أن يكون كل ما كان أتم وأكبر ، كادراك البصر له أتم. ونحن نرى الأمر على خلاف ذلك ، فإنه كلما كان أكبر كان ابصارنا له أضعف ، ليس لأجل خفائه ونقصه ، بل هو في نفسه على غاية ما يكون من الظهور والاستنارة؛ ولكن كماله ، بما هو نور ، يبهر الأبصار ، فتحار الأبصار عنه. كذلك قياس السبب الأول والعقل الأول والحق الأول ، وعقولنا نحن. ليس نقص معقوله عندنا لنقصانه في نفسه ، ولا عسر إدراكنا له لعسره في وجوده ، لكن لضعف قوى عقولنا نحن عسر تصوره. فتكون المعقولات التي هي في أنفسنا ناقصة ، وتصورنا لها ضعيف. وهذا على ضربين

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[33] *PS* 1.11.

ضرب ممتنع من جهة ذاته أن يتصور فيعقل تصورا تاما لضعف وجوده ونقصان ذاته وجوهره ،
وضرب مبذول من جهة فهمه وتصوره على التمام وعلى أكمل ما يكون. ولكن أذهاننا وقوى عقولنا ممتنعة
، لضعفها وبعدها عن جوهر ذلك الشيء ، من أن نتصوره على التمام وعلى ما هو عليه من كمال الوجود.
وهذان الضربان كل واحد منهما هو من الآخر في الطرف الأقصى من الوجود : أحدهما في نهاية الكمال ،
والآخر في نهاية النقص. ويجب إذا كنا نحن ملتبسين بالمادة ، كانت هي السبب في أن صارت جواهرنا
جوهرا يبعد عن الجوهر الأول ، إذ كلما قربت جواهرنا منه ، كان تصورنا له أتم وأيقن وأصدق.34

Thus, al-Fārābī, following Aristotle, distinguishes between what is most knowable *for us*
and what is most knowable *in itself*.[35] There is nothing more intrinsically intelligible than
the First, but, owing to human deficiency, the First is impossible for the human intellect
to properly apprehend.[36] Instead, human persons are drawn toward knowing intelligibles
which, in themselves, are deficient, e.g., material objects.[37] While these are more
intelligible for humans, owing to their shared deficiency with humans, e.g., materiality
and plurality, they are not more intelligible in themselves than the First.[38] For this reason,
as will be discussed below, human happiness is contingent upon knowing "the most
beautiful, the most brilliant, and the most splendid objects" and requires knowledge of
intelligibles which are not tied to matter, i.e., the Separate Intellects which will be
discussed below.[39] But, human knowledge begins with what is more familiar and
knowable to us, progressing toward less deficient things, until ultimately arriving at
happiness.[40] Even human felicity is marred by our deficiency; our starting point in
plurality and materiality prevents us from achieving a higher rank, because we cognize

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[34] *PS* 1.11.

[35] *Posterior Analytics* 71b32; *Prior Analytics* 68b35–7; *Physics* 1.1, 184a16–20; *Metaphysics* 7.3, 1029b3–12; *Topics* 4, 141b2–142a12; *EI* 28.

[36] *PS* 1.6.

[37] *BL* 115.

[38] *PS* 1.6.

[39] *EI* 21-22; *PS* 1.14; "واللذة والسرور والغبطة ، إنما ينتج ويحصل أكثر بأن يدرك الأجمل والأبهى والأزين بالادراك الأتقن والأتم ." ; *PR* 54-55.

[40] *BL* 115; *AH* 1-16. *AH* (Ar.)1-20.

things that are material and plural before cognizing immaterial things and acquire our knowledge in a piecemeal fashion, rather than all at once.[41]

Perhaps, this explains why al-Fārābī lacks a fully (or clearly) explicated doctrine of divine attribution. Whereas figures like Maimonides and Aquinas have specific agenda, encouraging apophasis in order to excise conceptions of divine corporeality and developing a doctrine of analogy in order to identify God with existence, respectively, al-Fārābī remains pessimistic such projects could succeed.[42] Because, while none of these three figures are altogether very distant from one another's positions, al-Fārābī's insistence on the deficiency of both human language and thought renders such projects moot. Even the philosopher will not be able to attain *what*, *how*, *from what*, and *for what* the First is, as these distinctions are meaningless with regard to the First.[43] Instead, these inquiries begin with the Second, and the knowledge *that* the First is its Cause. And yet, as the *for what* of every being, the telos of the entire cosmos relates always back to the First, and the nature of the First remains essential in any discussion of happiness. (It is likely for this reason that al-Fārābī's political works consistently contain discussions of his cosmology, as determining the good of the city requires reference to happiness, and understanding happiness requires reference to the First.)[44]

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[41] *EI* 27-29.

[42] It should be noted that unlike Maimonides or Aquinas, al-Fārābī does not have a specific scriptural tradition which he makes reference to within his works. Put otherwise, al-Fārābī does not need to develop a robust doctrine of divine attribution to explain why the Tanakh or the Bible attribute so many predicates to God, rather, he simply desires to elucidate his reader about the substance of the First.

[43] *AH* 14f.; *AH* (Ar.)15f.

[44] E.g., *PS*, *PR*, *EI*, *AH*, *SA*, and *BR*. As Janos explains: "This structure [the structure of al-Fārābī's emanationist treatises] is not fortuitous: the microcosm of the individual human being and of human societies should ideally reflect the order and harmony of the universe, a sequence which shows the impact of cosmology on al-Fārābī's political theories. In the first part of these treatises, al-Fārābī provides a detailed description of the heavens and of the principles governing them, intertwining physical, metaphysical, and astronomical ideas. He devotes many pages to the substance of the celestial bodies and their hierarchical order, as well as to the nature and activity of the celestial souls and separate intellects.

Put another way, all knowledge is, in some trifling sense, knowledge of the First

as Cause, and all positive terms are, in some trifling sense, terms attributable to the First

as Cause. Yet, no human knows the First qua Substance, and none of these terms signify

the First qua One. Inversely, knowledge of the First qua Substance is knowledge of all

beings, as their cause.[45] This is a critical point. Because within al-Fārābī's theocentric

model of the universe, to know everything, one must simply know One Thing.[46] And to

be perfectly happy, one must simply be One Thing.[47] And to be happy is the same as

knowing.[48] Unfortunately, this is only possible for one Existent, the First Cause. Every

other being must strive for modest imitation.

2.1.2. The First as Intellect

Given the preceding caveat that any discussion of the First is consigned to

imprecision, al-Fārābī discusses the First in vivid detail, although he frequently reminds

the reader that the First is entirely indivisible (*ġayr munqasim*), despite his predication.

And while his insistence upon the First's indivisibility may seem unremarkable,

considering the importance placed on divine unicity (*tawḥīd*) by the practitioners of

Kalam (the Muʿtazilites in particular) and Islam more generally, his assertions are based

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These entities, which lie beyond the orb of the moon, are in a sense the counterpart of the beings in the sublunary realm, and their perfect harmony and order stand as a model for the ideal human life. This explains the close symmetry al-Fārābī establishes between cosmology, human psychology, and the ideal political organization." Janos 2012, 39.

[45] *Physics* 194 b17–20; *Posterior Analytics* 71 b9–11; 94 a20. In fact, al-Fārābī attributes omniscience without plurality to the First using this logic. *PS* 1.7; *PR* 45. Of course, this is not to say that the First knows particulars qua particular, as this would introduce plurality in God. Rather, he knows all existents only insofar as he knows the Cause of all existents, i.e., the only intelligible within the First's intellect is the First. Al-Ghazali takes issue with this doctrine of the philosophers (though his attack remains focused on Avicenna). See *Incoherence* 13.

[46] *PR* 34.

[47] *PS* 1.14-15.

[48] *PS* 1.14-15.

equally upon Aristotelian (and Neoplatonic) concerns.[49] For example, while he bows to

traditional Islamic rejections of God having partners or association (*shirk*), saying that no

other thing could share in the existence of the First, he relies on Aristotelian noetics,

mereology, and substrate theory to prove his point.[50] Likewise, he gainsays the idea that

"metaphysics and the science of divine unicity (*'ilm al-tawḥīd*) are one and the same" in

The Aims of Aristotle's Metaphysics, insisting that "the universal science is that which

examines something in common to all existents, like 'existence' and 'oneness'

(*waḥda*)".[51] Here, al-Fārābī foregoes use of the technical and theological term *tawḥīd*,

which applies only to God, for the term *waḥda*, which can be said of any existent,

echoing his use of the non-theological terms *waḥda* in the *Perfect State* and *wāḥid* in the

Political Regime to refer to the First.[52] This, coupled with al-Fārābī's derision for the

dogmatic nature of dialectical theology (*'ilm al-kalām*) in *The Enumeration of the*

Sciences, conspicuously reveals a glaring characteristic about al-Fārābī's philosophical

style in general and the topic of the First's oneness in particular—al-Fārābī is not

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[49] See Mayer 2016, 47. See also Leaman 2006, 651-652; Esposito 2003, "Tawhid"; Gimaret 2006, "Tawḥīd"; El-Bizri 121-140, 2008. For an explanation of the account of *tawḥīd* by al-Fārābī's Christian Student, Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, see Lizzini 2016b. For texts which aimed to reconcile the Islamic doctrine of *tawḥīd* with the Greek doctrine of divine unity, see Wakelnig 2015; Kaya 2014. For a discussion of Neoplatonic Influences, see Druart 1992, 132; Davidson 1992, 46, 121; Twetten 2016b, 364, 367; Janos 2012, 138f.

[50] *PS* 1.2-4; Fakhry 2002, 80. See also Jaques 2004, 631; Gimaret 2006, "Shirk".

[51] "قال قصدنا في هذه المقالة هو ان ندلّ على العرض الذي يشتمل عليه كتاب ارسطوطاليس المعروف بما بعد الطبيعة وعلى الأقسام الأول التي هي له اذ كثير من الناس سبق الى وهمهم ان فحوى هذا الكتاب ومضمونه هو القول في الباري سجانه وتعالى و العقل والنفس وسائر ما يناسبها وان علم ما بعد الطبيعة وعلم التوحيد وأحد بعينه... وأما العلم الكلّي فهو الذي ينظر في الشّيء العامّ لجميع الموجودات مثل الوجود والوحدة." ; *AAM* 34-35 (translation mine). See also Druart 1992, 128f; McGinnis and Reisman 2007, 78; Bertolacci 2006, 67. Druart prefers *'ilm al-tawḥīd* as 'Kalam' or 'Islamic Theology'. McGinnis and Reisman translate it as 'theology' in *Classical Arabic Philosophy*. Bertolacci, similar to my preference, translates *'ilm al-tawḥīd* as 'the science of the profession of God's oneness.'

[52] *PS* 1.5; *PR* 49. For al-Fārābī's own treatment of the terms, see *OO*. See also, Janos 2016, 101-128.

doctrinaire.[53] His insistence upon the simplicity of the First stems from philosophical, not

sectarian, concerns.[54]

That said, al-Fārābī's philosophical rationale for adopting a doctrine of divine

simplicity is situated within a historical context, both religious and philosophical, in

which divine simplicity is the prevailing view. He is not the first to present the First as

indivisible, nor is he the first to present the characteristics of existence, unicity, and

intelligibility as inextricably necessitating one another, all while denying that any of these

characteristics signify anything beyond the First's substance. (For example, the *Arabic*

Plotinus, in particular, emphasizes a similar divine Gordian knot composed of strands of

existence, unicity, and intelligibility, while still upholding divine simplicity.)[55] Both this

context and the complications raised by al-Fārābī's approach to divine attribution render

any attempt to assert a coherent Fārābīan account of the First which gives predominance

to any single characteristic moot; no individual characteristic of the First truly grounds

any other.

Mutually necessitating divine predicates—all of which signify a single substance—

make reasoning about the First impossible, as any argument must divide the First into

distinct premises. In reference to the First, first premises are identical to conclusions,

which are identical to middle terms as well. Cause, Intellect, Intelligible, One, and

Existent all signify a singular substance, and any narrative that describes the First's

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[53] *ES* 107-113.

[54] In fact, Janos even considers whether *Kitāb al-Wāḥid wa-l-waḥda* (*OO, The Book on the One and Oneness*) is both philosophical in nature, insofar as it echoes the linguistic precision and argumentation of the *Book of Letters*, and apologetic, insofar as it aims to philosophically ground al-Fārābī's broader theology, similar to Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's *Discourse on Divine Unity*. See Janos 2016, 104-105, 122. See also Lizzini 2016b.

[55] *Divine Knowledge* 224-228. Janos argues that the *Arabic Plotinus* undergirds, at least, al-Fārābī's early works. Janos 2012, 261-262. See also Adamson 2003, 113f; 129-130. See Footnotes 18 and 56 of the present chapter.

existence as necessitating Its oneness or Its oneness as necessitating Its intelligibility is doomed to failure. While such accounts are informative in one sense, they also run the risk of insinuating problematic plurality and priority, e.g., that the First's intelligibility somehow rests upon Its existence or that Its oneness somehow depends upon Its intelligibility. Yet such depictions are required, if one is to discuss the First at all. Thus, only with an admonition that one should proceed with caution and that the First is entirely indivisible in its substance can one attempt to explore al-Fārābī's description of the substance of the First. What follows is, strictly speaking, imprecise, although it is certainly not uncharacteristic of the level of precision al-Fārābī gives consideration to while predicating of the First.

In view of this, one must start with one of the predicates al-Fārābī ascribes to the First if one wants to give a cohesive narrative. But, while any narrative beginning is metaphysically arbitrary with regard to the First (as one could start with any of the characteristics al-Fārābī gives to the First—oneness, existence, cause, intelligible, etc.— and tell a cogent story as to how the other characteristics stem from this starting point), some are more hermeneutically useful for exploring al-Fārābī's cosmology. For the purpose of this project, one predicate augurs the most instructive starting point for exploration of the First, as al-Fārābī's depiction of human happiness depends on one particular predicate about the First, namely the First as Intellect.

2.1.2.1. The First as a Noetic Unity

The First as One is inextricably tied to the First as Intellect and the First as

Intelligible.[56] Al-Fārābī, following Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Λ 9, identifies the First cause

as self-thinking thought. As al-Fārābī explains:

> It [the First] is, then, actual intellect. The First is also intelligible through its
> substance; for, again, what prevents a thing from being actually intelligible and
> being intelligible through its substance is matter. It is intelligible by virtue of its
> being intellect; for the One whose {being} is intellect is intelligible by the One
> whose {being} is intellect. In order to be intelligible the First is in no need of
> another essence outside itself which would think it but it itself thinks its own
> essence. As a result of its thinking its own essence, it becomes actually thinking
> and intellect, and, as a result of its essence thinking (intelligizing) it, it becomes
> actually intelligized. In the same way, in order to be actual intellect and to be
> actually thinking, it is in no need of an essence which it would think and which it
> would acquire from the outside, but is intellect and thinking by thinking its own
> essence. For the essence which is thought is the essence which thinks, and so it is
> intellect by virtue of its being intelligized. Thus it is intellect and intelligized and
> thinking, all this being one essence and one indivisible substance-whereas man,
> for instance, is intelligible, but what is intelligible in his case is not actually
> intelligized but potentially intelligible; he becomes subsequently actually
> intelligized after the intellect has thought him. What is intelligible in the case of
> man is thus not always the subject which thinks, nor is, in his case, the intellect
> always the same as the intelligible object, nor is our intellect intelligible because it
> is intellect. We think, but not because our substance is intellect; we think with an

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[56] This doctrine can be a source of confusion given Plotinus's insistence that the Good (i.e., the First) is beyond Intellect and is not Intellect (*Enneads* V.6.4, 6.6). Rather, Intellect is below the First and is the highest hypostases of intelligible being (*Enneads* V.1.7-8, 2.1-2, 4.1-2, V.6.4, V.9.2). Given al-Fārābī's broad adoption of the Plotinian tripartite hypostases of God, Intellect, and Soul for his cosmology, one might expect intellect to begin with the Second Cause. Yet as will be discussed presently, al-Fārābī is emphatic that the First is an actual intellect as a noetic unity. This largely follows the *Arabic Plotinus* in identifying God as exemplifying the highest order of being, rather than something situated beyond being. (This is likely the source of al-Fārābī's confusion concerning whether God is the highest being within or entirely outside the cosmos, as mentioned above.) Drawing the parallels between the hypostases of Plotinus and al-Fārābī has led to some imprecision in language regarding when intellect begins in the cosmos. See Twetten 2016b, 364-65; Janos 2012, 170, 174. For example, Twetten, pointing out al-Fārābī's likely sources, the *Theology of Aristotle* and *The Sayings of the Greek Sage*, identifies Intellect, as such, as being the first effect of the First, despite the fact that Intellect, as such, precedes any effects, given that the First is Intellect, which Twetten acknowledges on the following page. Likewise, Janos also links Intellect, as such, following the *Arabic Proclus*, to multiplicity for al-Fārābī, despite acknowledging that God is actual Intellect several pages later. Rather, *another* Intellect is the effect of the First and the first example of multiplicity for al-Fārābī, namely the Second. This concern is not a pedantic one. The intelligibility of al-Fārābī's cosmos begins with its First Principle. For some particularly stark examples of the Arabic Plotinus' conception of God as being and as Intellect, see *Theology of Aristotle* I.47, VII.21, VIII.129-130, 183-186; *Treatise on Divine Knowledge* 1; *Greek* Sage 1.7. See also Taylor 1998, 241-64; Adamson 2003, 124-137. For related issues in the *Arabic Proclus*, see D'Ancona 1998, 51-97.

intellect which is not what constitutes our substance; but the First is different; the intellect, the thinker and the intelligible (and intelligized) have in its case one meaning and are one essence and one indivisible substance.[57]

فهو إذن عقل بالفعل، وهو أيضا معقول بجوهره. فإن المانع أيضا للشيء من أن يكون بالفعل معقولا هو المادة. وهو معقول من جهة ما هو عقل؛ لأن الذي هويته عقل ليس يحتاج في أن يكون معقولا إلى ذات أخرى خارجة عنه تعقله؛ بل هو بنفسه يعقل ذاته ، فيصير بما يعقل من ذاته عاقلا وعقلا بالفعل ، وبأن ذاته تعقله (يصير) معقولا بالفعل. وكذلك لا يحتاج في أن يكون عقلا بالفعل وعاقلا بالفعل إلى ذات يعقلها ويستفيدها من خارج ، بل يكون عقلا وعاقلا بأن يعقل ذاته. فإن الذات التي تعقل هي التي تعقل ، فهو عقل من جهة ما هو معقول؛ فإنه عقل وإنه معقول وإنه عاقل. هي كلها ذات واحدة وجوهر واحد غير منقسم. فإن الانسان مثلا معقول وليس المعقول منه معقولا بالفعل ، بل كان معقولا بالقوة ثم صار معقولا بالفعل بعد أن عقله العقل. فليس إذن المعقول من الانسان هو الذي يعقل ، ولا العقل منه أبدا هو المعقول ، ولا عقلنا نحن من جهة ما هو عقل هو معقول ، ونحن عاقلون لا بأن جوهرنا عقل؛ فإن ما نعقل ليس هو الذي به نعقل ليس هو الذي به تجوهرنا. فالأول ليس كذلك ، بل العقل والعاقل والمعقول فيه معنى واحد ، وذات واحدة ، وجوهر واحد غير منقسم.[58]

Here, al-Fārābī endorses the Aristotelian doctrine of noetic identity found in *De Anima* 3.5, that "actual knowledge is identical with its object."[59] Nowhere is this more conspicuous than in the substance of the First, whose Intellect (*ʿaql*), act of thinking (*ʿāqil*), and object of thought (*maʿqūl*) are all identical. The First Intellect is nothing more (or less) than Its act of thinking, Whose intention is the First Intellect Itself (qua Intelligible). And, while language breaks down with regard to the First, one could rightly say that Its unity, simplicity, and indivisibility stem from the noetic identity between Knower, Knowing, and Known, as long as one recalls that no attribute of the First is truly distinct and a cause for the First as a whole.[60] The First's being (*huwiyya*) is Intellect, and

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[57] *PS* 1.6. Translation slightly modified within the brackets ({ }). Whereas Walzer translates *huwiyya* as 'identity' (*ipseitas*), which would be its normal usage, and appropriate given the way *Taʿliqāt* and *Fuṣūṣ* use the term (dubious, perhaps Avicennian, texts traditionally and, in all likelihood, erroneously attributed to al-Fārābī, which equate *huwiyya* with *shakhṣ*, i.e., 'individual'), a more appropriate translation here would be 'being', given the use of the term by Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq to translate τὸ ὄν in the famous passage in *Metaphysics* Γ which describes that 'being' is said in many ways, as reported by Averroes in his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*. And in fact, al-Fārābī links the term *huwiyya* to being, not identity, in the *Book of Letters*. See *BL* 86; *Taʿliqāt*, 21,8; *Fuṣūṣ* 2,3; *LCM* 300f.; *EM* 38. See also Alon 2002, 497, 619; Goodman 2013, 107, 117; Wisnovsky 2018, 151; Menn 2008, 76; Endress 2002, 236-37; Arnzen 2010, 194; Shehadi 1982, 12-17, 40-41; Janos 2012, 383f.

[58] *PS* 1.6.

[59] *De Anima* 430a20-430a26; This doctrine is also Plotinian, appearing in Arabic in *Divine Knowledge* 1, 64.

[60] For this reason, one could also reverse this explanation and claim the First's unity is the basis upon which Its intellect, thinking, and intelligible are one, given the same caveats mentioned above.

Its Intellect is intelligible. As al-Fārābī explains, "It knows (*ya'lamu*) and It is what is

Known (*ma'lūm*) and It is the Knowing (*'ilm*). And it is one essence and one

substance."[61] The terms predicated of the First originate from this noetic identity.[62]

In fact, al-Fārābī identifies this perfect noetic unity as the preeminent model of

several other terms predicated of the First, like pleasure, happiness, and love. And it is

clear that the First is the source of these attributes in other creatures according to his

cosmological model. His reasoning is as follows:

1) "Pleasure (*surūr*) and delight (*ḡibṭa)* result and increase only when the most accurate apprehension concerns itself with the most beautiful, the most brilliant and the most splendid objects."[63]
2) Pleasure in apprehending these objects is coextensive with feeling delight/happiness (*iḡtabaṭa*).[64]
3) "The First is in the most excellent state of existence, its beauty surpasses the beauty of every other beautiful existent, and the same applies to its splendour and its brilliance. Further, it has all these in its substance and essence by itself and by thinking (intelligizing) its essence."[65]
4) Given 1, 2, and 3, perfect apprehension of the First is the height of pleasure and delight/happiness.
5) The First's "apprehension of its own essence is most accurate in the extreme and its knowledge of its own substance most excellent in the absolute meaning of the term, the pleasure which the First enjoys is a pleasure whose character we do not understand and whose intensity we fail to apprehend, except by analogy (*qiyās*) and by relating it to the amount of pleasure which we feel, when we have most accurately and most completely apprehended what is most perfect and most splendid on our level, either through sensing it or representing it to ourselves or through becoming aware of it intellectually."[66]

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[61] *PS* 1.7. (Translation modified);". فإنه يعلم وإنه معلوم وإنه علم. فهو ذات واحدة وجوهر واحد ."

[62] Again, only metaphysically, not temporally, speaking and not in such a way as to reify these terms into attributes. See *The Discourse on the Pure Good* Chapter 8.

[63] *PS* 1.14; "واللذة والسرور والغبطة ، إنما ينتج ويحصل أكثر بأن يدرك الأجمل والأبهى والأزين بالادراك الأتقن والأتم ." He defines wisdom in a similar way, as 'thinking the most excellent thing through the most excellent knowledge'. This, of course, is a reference to the First thinking Itself. *PS* 1.8; "وكذلك في أنه حكيم. فإن الحكمة هي أن يعقل أفضل الأشياء بأفضل علم ."

[64] *PS* 1.15; This term for 'happiness' if the Form VIII Maṣdar of *ḡ-b-ṭ* which relates to envy. It connotes enviable happiness.

[65] *PS* 1.13; "وإذ كان الأول وجوده أفضل الوجود ، فجماله فائق لجمال كل ذي الجمال ، وكذلك زينته وبهاؤه. ثم هذه كلها له في ;جوهره وذاته؛ وذلك في نفسه وبما يعقله من ذاته ." Note that even here, he insists that beauty is not merely intrinsic to the First, but intrinsic qua self-thinking-thought.

[66] *PS* 1.14; "فادراكه لذاته الادراك الأتقن في الغاية ، وعلمه بجوهره العلم الأفضل على الاطلاق ، واللذة التي يلتذ بها الأول لذة لا نفهم نحن كنهها ولا ندري مقدار عظمها الا بالقياس والاضافة إلى ما نجده من اللذة ، عند ما نكون قد أدركنا ما هو عندنا أكمل وأبهى ادراكا ،

6) Given 4 and 5, the First, alone, experiences maximal pleasure and delight/happiness by apprehending Its own essence.

7) "The more something enjoys its own essence and the greater pleasure and happiness it feels about it the more it likes (*yaḥibbu*) and loves (*ya'shaqu*) its essence."[67]

∴) Given 6 and 7, the First is not only the most pleased and the happiest, but the most loving and the most loved.

Indeed, al-Fārābī concludes his discussion of the First Itself in the *Perfect State* with precisely this motif, before turning to a discussion of the emanation of other existents. He says:

> In Its case, subject and object of affection, subject and object of pride (*mu'ajjib* and *mu'ajjab*), subject and object of love are identical… in the First's case, subject and object of love and affection are identical. It does not make any difference whether anybody likes it or not, loves it or not: it is the first object of love and the first object of affection.[68]

> والمحب منه هو المحبوب بعينه ، والمعجب منه هو المعجب منه ، والعاشق منه هو المعشوق... فأما هو فان العاشق منه هو بعينه المعشوق ، والمحب هو المحبوب ، فهو المحبوب الأول والمعشوق الأول ، أحبه غيره أو لم يحبه ، وعشقه غيره أو لم يعشقه.[69]

Here, even the notion of the First's independence, its lack of need for any other being, a point underscored repeatedly by al-Fārābī, is itself entrenched within the notion of noetic unity, as the First needs no external adoration. Al-Fārābī's cosmic account of love, pleasure, and happiness is an entirely intellectualized one. In fact, as will be discussed below, it is in emulation of the First that the Secondary Causes wish to be delighted/happy (*maḡbūṭ*) and think the First, resulting in the further continuance of al-

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" وأتقن وأتم ، إما باحساس أو تخيل أو بعلم عقلي ." ; Later in the passage, he again links this pleasure (*surūr*) to delight/happiness (*iḡtibāṭ*).

[67] *PS* 1.15; " وان كان ما يلتذ بذاته ويسر به أكثر ويغتبط به اغتباطا أعظم ، فهو يحب ذاته ويعشقها ويعجب بها أكثر ." While Walzer translates *yaḥibbu* and *ya'shaqu* as 'like' and 'love', respectively, each term properly means 'love'. Perhaps translating *yaḥibbu* as 'love' and *ya'shaqu* as 'adore' would be more appropriate.

[68] *PS* 1.15.

[69] *PS* 1.15.

Fārābī's emanation scheme.[70] And it is from the First that human beings are connected to one another through love. As al-Fārābī explains:

> The First's substance is also such that the existents, when they have issued from it in their ranks, are necessarily united and connected with one another and arranged in a way that they become one whole and are established like one thing. Some of them are connected and united by something within their substance, so that their substances to which they owe their existence produce their connection and their union; others by modes which accompany their substances, such as love (*maḥabba*) by which human beings are connected, for love (*maḥabba*) is a mode in them and not the substance to which they owe their existence. These modes of theirs are also derived from the First, because its substance is such that many existents receive from it together with their substances the modes by which they are connected with each other and united and arranged.[71]

> وجوهره أيضا جوهر ، إذا حصلت الموجودات مرتبة في مراتبها أن يأتلف ويرتبط وينتظم بعضها مع بعض ، ائتلافا وارتباطا وانتظاما تصير بها الأشياء الكثيرة جملة واحدة ، وتحصل كشيء واحد. والتي بها ترتبط هذه وتأتلف هي لبعض الأشياء في جواهرها حتى ان جواهرها التي بها وجودها هي التي بها تأتلف وترتبط. ولبعض الأشياء تكون أحوال فيها تابعة لجوهرها ، مثل المحبة التي بها يرتبط الناس ، فانها حال فيهم ، وليست هي جواهرهم التي بها وجودهم. وهذه أيضا فيها مستفادة عن الأول ، لأن في جوهر الأول أن يحصل عنه بكثير من الموجودات مع جواهرها الأحوال التي بها يرتبط بعضها مع بعض ، ويأتلف وينتظم.[72]

And while romantic and familiar love may only account for the smallest and most imperfect connection for al-Fārābī, the association of a home (*ijtimāʿ fī manzil*), the First as most loving and loved should not be viewed so narrowly, as It is also the first subject and object of pride (*muʿajjib* and *muʿajjab*).[73] The First as the initial source of unity, the love and pride in one's family, city, and nation (*umma*), is surely intended.

2.1.2.2. The First as Prime Actuality

That said, the noetic unity of the First does not simply account for the First as 'one'; even the First as 'existing' and 'true' are explained according to Its noetic unity.

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[70] *PR* 52.
[71] *PS* 2.3.
[72] *PS* 2.3.
[73] *PS* 15.2; 1.15; 18.8; *SA* 70.

Al-Fārābī consistently links being and intelligibility in his cosmology, although, as will

be discussed below, he is most transparent regarding this point in reference to the

secondary causes and human beings. Nonetheless, he is consistent in this regard: to fully

be is to either know or be known. One's ontological rank in the cosmos corresponds to

one's intelligibility.

The First, holding the highest rank in the cosmos as the cause of all other ranks, is

the First Existent insofar as it is the First Intellect and the First Intelligible.[74] In the

passage from the *Perfect State* 1.6 quoted above, al-Fārābī makes clear that the First is an

Intellect in act (*'aql b'il fi'l*), an Intelligible in substance (*ma'qūl bi-jawhara*), an

Intelligible in act (*ma'qūl b'il fi'l*), and is in no need (*lā yaḥtāju*) of any other existent due

to Its noetic unity.[75] In other words, al-Fārābī relates the actuality of the First to Its

substance as both Intellect and Intelligible, in need of no other existent because Its noetic

unity entails self-sufficiency. Of course, such an observation is unremarkable, given that

the First's noetic unity rests within a broader notion of First's indivisibility. That

existence and intelligibility are linked in the First is indubitable, not only because al-

Fārābī links existence and intelligibility more broadly within his cosmology, as will be

discussed below, but because every predicate of the First entails every other predicate.

Extrapolating too much from the relations between predicates ascribed to the First is

trivial.

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[74] Again, it is worth repeating that this statement can be reversed concerning the First, i.e., the First is the First Intellect and the First Intelligible insofar as it is the First Existent.
[75] See Section 2.1.2.1 of the present chapter.

Nonetheless, the First as Intellect and Intelligible is one of al-Fārābī's most prevalent characterizations of the First (if not the most prevalent), and it is in this vein that al-Fārābī depicts the First as the source of truth/reality (ḥaqīqa). Al-Fārābī explains:

> The same applies to its being 'real' and 'true' (ḥaqq). For real and true (al-ḥaqq) go with existence (al-wujūd), and 'reality' and 'truth' (al-ḥaqīqa) go with existence (al-wujūd). For the reality and truth of a thing is its particular existence and the most perfect state of the existence which is its lot. Further, real and true are said of the intelligible through which the intellect happens to meet an existent, so as to grasp it. It is then said of that existent that it is real and true, inasmuch as it is intelligible, and that it exists with regard to its essence and by not being related to what intelligizes (thinks) it. But now, in the case of the First, it can be said that it is real and true in both these senses at once, in that its existence is the most perfect and in that it is the intelligible by means of which he who thinks it comes into contact with the existent as it exists. In order to be real and true it is by the fact of its being intelligible in need of no other external essence which would think (intelligize) it. It also deserves more than anything else to be called real and true in both these senses at once. And its reality and truth are nothing else but its being real and true.[76]

وكذلك في أنه حق. فإن الحق يساوق الوجود ، والحقيقة قد تساوق الوجود ، فإن حقيقة الشيء هي الوجود الذي يخصه. وأكمل الوجود هو قسطه من الوجود؛ وأيضا فإن الحق قد يقال على المعقول الذي صادف به العقل الموجود حتى يطابقه. وذلك الموجود من جهة ما هو معقول ، يقال له إنه حق ، ومن جهة ذاته من غير أن يضاف إلى ما يعقله يقال إنه موجود. فالأول يقال إنه حق بالوجهين جميعا ، بأن وجوده الذي هو له أكمل الوجود ، وبأنه معقول صادف به الذي عقله الموجود على ما هو موجود. وليس يحتاج في أن يكون حقا بما هو معقول إلى ذات أخرى خارجة عنه تعقله. وأيضا أولى بما يقال عليه حق بالوجهين جميعا. وحقيقته ليست هي شيئا سوى أنه حق.[77]

This passage, along with description of the First as 'knowing' and 'wise', follows the aforementioned passage in *PS* 1.6, which establishes the First's noetic unity. As will be explored further below, al-Fārābī identifies being real/true (ḥaqq) with being an intellect or an intelligible. The First, as both Intellect and Intelligible at once, is the perfect reality/truth (ḥaqīqa) and the highest rank of existence (wujūd). Within the First, and thus

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[76] *PS* 1.9. Walzer's translation here divides the term ḥaqq into two distinct predicates, real and true, while the Arabic is a single term. The Arabic term carries both of these senses. He does likewise with the term ḥaqīqa.
[77] *PS* 1.9.

in the most primordial conception of reality, the characteristics of intelligibility and existence are coextensive.

2.1.3. The First as Primordial

Returning to the issues raised at the beginning of this chapter, two takeaways should be emphasized regarding the First. First, the First is the metaphysical ground upon which any teleological question rests. In al-Fārābī's cosmos, the city is not divorced from the First Cause, and, as will be shown, any good leadership of a city will emulate the First. Second, to emulate the First is to be a knower, an actual intellect, and to think the most beautiful, and splendid things, but it is also to emulate the unity of the First. The competition between the city's dual allegiance to both truth and cooperation is a false competition, as truth and unity, properly speaking, signify the same identical Substance. As discussed below, the dichotomy between knowing the truth and cooperating in unity is sourced in the metaphysical constitution of the sublunary world, i.e., the world of material composites, by the celestial bodies. Nonetheless, in the most primordial senses of the terms, to know, to be, to be true, to be one, and to be happy are all coextensive. It is only due to deficiency (*naqṣ*) that any political deception is required.

2.2. Secondary Causes

From the First the cosmos emanates, with each existent, from the highest rank to the lowest, aiming to emulate the First in Its unity, knowledge, and happiness. For this

reason, one can say that the First is the Cause of each individual existent and that It knows all existents, insofar as It is the cause of all existents.[78] As al-Fārābī explains:

> The First is that from which everything which exists comes into existence. It follows necessarily from the existence belonging to the First that all the other existents which do not come into existence through man's will and choice are brought into existence by the First in their various kinds of existence, some of which can be observed by sense-perception, whereas others become known by demonstration. The genesis of that which comes into existence from it takes place by way of an emanation, the existence of which is due to the existence of something else, so that the existence of something different from the First emanates from the First's existence.[79]

> والأول هو الذي عنه وجد. ومتى وجد للأول الوجود الذي هو له ، لزم ضرورة أن يوجد عنه سائر الموجودات التي وجودها لا بإرادة الانسان واختياره ، على ما هي عليه من الوجود الذي بعضه مشاهد بالحس وبعضه معلوم بالبرهان. ووجود ما يوجد عنه انما هو على جهة فيض وجوده لوجود شيء آخر ، وعلى أن وجود غيره فائض عن وجوده هو.[80]

Thus, from the very being of the First something different emanates. The First does not need to act, except insofar as it is always actuality, and no change occurs in the First by bringing about the Second.[81] Rather, the First brings about, as Cause, always and perpetually, all of the other existents in the cosmos.[82]

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[78] *PS* 1.7; *PR* 34, 45.

[79] *PS* 2.1. (Translation slightly modified)

[80] *PS* 2.1.

[81] *PS* 2.1.

[82] The nature of the First's causality is itself somewhat open to interpretation in the texts of the mature al-Fārābī, although he does clearly state in the *Fusūl Mabādi'* that the First is the "first cause for the motion of the existents" (*sabab 'awwal li-sā'ir al-mawjūdāt*), as the "first actor" (*'awwal fā'il*) for them, i.e., the efficient cause, the "end" (*ġāya*) for them, i.e., the final cause, and the "form" (*ṣūra*) for them, i.e., the formal cause. *Fusūl* "وأنّه سبب أوّل لسائر الموجودات على أنّه أوّل فاعل لها ثمّ على أنّه غاية لها ثمّ على أنّه صورة لها ."; *Mabādi'* 79. Michael Chase shows that al-Fārābī was familiar with a Porphyrian notion of an eternally dependent causality, which requires no motion on the part of the cause. Chase 2016, 256. Druart identifies the First as the agent, final, and formal cause of the Secondary Causes, following *Fuṣūl Mabādi'*. Druart 1981, 36. Twetten credits the First with the onto-poietik, i.e., efficient, and final causation of the rest of being. Twetten 2016b, 364. Janos likewise describes the First as an efficient and final cause, but also acknowledges the First's formal causality while reflecting on the *Fuṣūl Mabādi'*. Janos 2012, 189, 200, 294, 297, 331, 351, 355, 375. However, Vallat argues that the First only exerts final causality on the cosmos, reducing both formal and efficient causality into final causality within al-Fārābī's eternal cosmos, saying that al-Fārābī "equates the final cause with the efficient cause which therefore is efficient only insofar as it is final. Thus Fārābī regards the final cause as sufficient reason for the existence of its effect, which plainly reduces efficient causality to the final one." Vallat 2011, 280-81; cf. Janos 2012, 200; Twetten 2016b, 366. For the purposes of this project, the important fact is that the First is universally read

That said, while the First is the Cause of the rest of the cosmos, It causes through mediate causes. For, while al-Fārābī lacks the explicit doctrine that "from the one, insofar as it is one, comes only one" later found in Avicenna, a doctrine that the First as simple can only emanate a single existent, al-Fārābī shares a similar intuition.[83] In order to explain the plurality of the cosmos while maintaining a singular, simple cause, one needs mediate and increasingly deficient causes, as crediting the First as the direct Cause of the plurality, contrariety, and materiality of the world is unbefitting the perfection of the First. Nonetheless, every existent traces back its source to the First, as "the substance of the First is a substance from which every existent emanates, however it may be, whether perfect or deficient".[84]

2.2.1. The Ordering of Secondary Causes

From the First the Second emanates. The Second alone originates immediately from the substance of the First. The Second, like the First, is entirely incorporeal (*ġayr mutajissim*) and free from matter (*mādda*).[85] Likewise, the Second is free from the deficiencies that characterize material composites—contrariety, potentiality, instrumentality, etc.[86] And again, like the First, the Second is an intellect which thinks itself, its very essence (*ḏātihi*).[87] And again, like the First, it needs no other external thing

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to be a final cause for every existent for al-Fārābī (and thus the primordial teleological model for all existents). That said, despite Vallat's nuanced argument, there is abundant evidence (e.g., see the authors noted above) that al-Fārābī views the First as an efficient cause of the eternal cosmos (even if such a notion is an idiosyncratic efficient causality, i.e., an eternal efficient causality) and a formal cause, despite al-Fārābī's complicated relationship with the term 'form' (*ṣūra*). See note 175.

[83] *Shifā' (Metaphysics)* 9.4.5-6, 10-11, 9.5.3. See Lizzini 2016a. For al-Ghazali's and Maimonides' critique of this principle, see note 95.

[84] *PS* 2.2; "وجوهره جوهر يفيض منه كل وجود كيف كان ذلك الوجود ، كان كاملا أو ناقصا ."

[85] *PS* 1.6, 3.1; *PR* 39.

[86] *PR* 39.

[87] *PS* 3.1.

to produce another existent.[88] However, unlike the First, the Second is deficient in three ways. First, the Second's "existence follows upon the existence" of another and is "procured from something else".[89] This deficiency is shared by every existent other than the First. Second, while the Second needs nothing external to produce another existent and, like the First, is self-thinking-thought, the Second cannot attain delight/happiness (*ḡibṭa*) alone. As was discussed above, delight/happiness (*ḡibṭa*) occurs through apprehending the most splendid and beautiful intelligible, and to attain this state the Second must think something more perfect than itself, namely the First.[90] So, along with thinking itself, the Second thinks the First.[91] And while in one sense thinking the First leads to a perfection of the Second, namely it attains delight/happiness (*ḡibṭa*), it also increases its deficiency. Because, along with its existence being procured from another and its delight/happiness requiring another, the Second is deficient in a third way—the Second is the first existent within the cosmos to contain "some countenance of multiplicity" (*al-wajh kathra mā*).[92]

Whereas the First is completely indivisible and completely One, a noetic unity in which Knower, Knowing, and Known all signify the same Substance, the Second thinks something outside its substance. The First is one pure Act, an actual Intellect intellecting an actual Intelligible (*ma'qul bi-l-fi'l*), in which the Intellect is the Intelligible; the Second, too, is a noetic unity, but along with thinking itself, it thinks the First. The

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[88] *PR* 52.

[89] *PR* 40; "... وذلك أنّ جواهرها مستفادة من غيرها ، ووجودها تابع لوجود غيرها "

[90] *PR* 40, 52.

[91] *PS* 3.1.

[92] *PR* 40; "... فهي ذات كلّ واحد منها من هذا الوجه كثرة مّا "

Second contains two distinct acts: self-thought and First-thought.[93] Here is the first

instantiation within the cosmos of the problem which plagues the city—for the Second to

know the Truth requires it to increase in multiplicity. Outside of the First, truth and unity

are not coextensive.[94] That said, the dual activity of the Second begins to explain how al-

Fārābī accounts for the multiplicity of a cosmos which originates with a perfect noetic

unity as its source. While the First only emanates the Second, the Second, by thinking

both itself and the First, can produce two existents. Following Avicenna's later principle,

that from one only one is produced, the First only emanates a singular second unity, but

the relation between the Second and the First helps account for multiplicity. (Notably,

both al-Ghazali and Maimonides critique the philosophers for misunderstanding the

from-one-one principle on this particular issue, in defense of their rejection of the eternal

emanation of the cosmos.)[95]

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[93] This is evidenced by the duel production of the Second, resulting in both the production of the First Heavens and the Third. It is for this reason that al-Fārābī denies the possibility that the mover of the First Heavens (i.e., the Second) can be the "First Principle of all existing things", as it cannot be "necessarily one in all respects" if it is responsible for a duel production. He explains: "Therefore, it is a substance through two natures, only through both of which does it exist. Therefore, its existence has a principle, since whatever is divisible has a cause that makes it a substance. Therefore, the mover of the first heaven certainly cannot be the First Principle for all existing things; rather, it must [itself] have a principle, and that principle undoubtedly has a more perfect existence than it… The Principle of the mover of the first heaven—that is, the Principle by virtue of which it is a substance—is necessarily one in all respects. It is absolutely impossible for there to be an existent more perfect than It or for It to have any principle. Therefore, It is the Principle of all the principles and the First Principle of all existing things. This is the Principle that Aristotle discusses in Book *Lambda* of *Metaphysics*."; "انما يتجوهر بطبيعتين بهما وجوده فلوجوده اذن مبدا اذ كان ما ينقسم اليه هو السبب فيما يتجوهر به فاذن ليس يمكن ان يكون محرك السماء الأولى هو المبدأ الأول للموجودات كلها بل له مبدا ضرورة وذلك المبدا لا محالة اكمل وجودًا منه ... فاما مبداه الذى هو مبدا ما يتجوهر به محرك السماء الأولى فهو واحد من كل الجهات اضطر ارا وليس يمكن ان يكون موجود اكمل منه ولا ان يكون له مبدا فهو اذا مبدا المبادى كلها ومبدا اول للموجودات كلها وهذا هو العقل الذى يذكره ارسطو في حرف اللام من كتاب ما بعد الطبيعة..."; *EI* 35-36. See also, Druart 1992, 135.

[94] Of course, this instantiation is a completely different manifestation of the issue which leads to political deception being required. As will be shown below, the Secondary Substances have their own form of cooperation which is a less deficient version of the order aimed at in the virtuous city.

[95] Both al-Ghazali and Maimonides critique Aristotle and his followers for holding and then violating this "universally agreed upon" premise, arguing that such a cosmos would simply result in a series of simple intellects and could not account for the celestial bodies which contain at least two component part, i.e., matter and form. Al-Ghazali seems to originate the critique, while Maimonides develops it. According to Maimonides, the heavens, composite beings, could never come from a simple intellect if the principle holds. Maimonides bolsters his point by showing that most of the celestial bodies actually contain more

Through the intellective acts of the Second, two existents are produced. When the Second thinks itself, it produces the first heavenly body, the First Heavens, as "a result of its substantification (*mutajawhir*) of its specific essence".[96] The nature of the heavenly bodies will be discussed below. When the Second thinks the First, a Third Intellect emanates.[97] This Third shares all of the characteristics of the Second, save only that it depends upon the Second, not the First, to immediately procure its existence.[98] The Third also thinks itself and the First. When it thinks itself, the heavenly body of the fixed stars is produced.[99] When it thinks the First, the Fourth existent, which is also an Intellect, is emanated.[100] This pattern continues. Nine total existents with identical characteristics (excepting only the source of their immediate procurement of existence) follow the First.[101] Each of these existents produces a heavenly body as a result of its substantification, i.e., its thinking itself, totaling nine heavenly bodies.[102] When the Tenth

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than two component parts, e.g., Venus contains both the Sphere of Venus and the Planet Venus, each of which have both form and matter, a tenet al-Fārābī holds, meaning that the absolutely simple Eighth would have to cause the existence of five existents (i.e., the Ninth, the form of the Sphere of Venus, the matter of the Sphere of Venus, the form of the Planet Venus, and the matter of the Planet Venus). Neither al-Ghazali nor Maimonides ever address that this principle, even if implied, was never expressed by Aristotle (or al-Fārābī), nor do they address how either the bipartite intellection of the intellects (according to al-Fārābī) or the tripartite intellection of the intellects (according to Avicenna) help account for multiplicity. See *Incoherence* 3.3; *GP* II.22.

[96] *PS* 3.1; ". فما يعقل من الأول يلزم عنه وجود ثالث ، وبما هو متجوهر بذاته التي تخصه يلزم عنه وجود السماء الأولى " cf. Twetten 2016b, 365. Twetten suggests that the Secondary Causes are "'substantified' (*tajawhara*) as Intellecting the First" in reference to a passage in the *Political Regime* (*PR* 40). Whether or not there is a contention between our two readings depends on the meaning of 'as', here. Because, while it is certainly the case that the Secondary Causes are substantified *at the same time as* they think the First (i.e., perpetually), al-Fārābī does not seem to suggest that they are substantified *because* they think the First. In fact, he says the opposite; they need no other to be made substantial or for something else to come to exist from them (*PR* 52). Rather, al-Fārābī suggests two distinct acts by the Secondary Causes: 1) the act of thinking themselves (i.e., their substantification), which results in the existence of the Heavenly bodies, and, 2) the act of thinking the First (i.e., the attainment of their delight/happiness), which results in the existence of lower Secondary Causes.

[97] *PS* 3.1.

[98] *PS* 3.2; 3.10.

[99] *PS* 3.2.

[100] *PS* 3.2.

[101] *PS* 3.1-3.9.

[102] *PS* 3.1-3.9.

Intellect (the ninth existent emanated from the First) thinks the First, it emanates an

Eleventh Existent. This Eleventh Intellect differs from the prior nine Intellects, as it not

only thinks itself and the First, but all of the other preceding Intellects, also.[103] It does not

produce a heavenly body. Al-Fārābī calls this Eleventh Intellect the Active Intellect, and

it will be discussed in further detail below. This cosmological scheme is mapped out in

Figure 2.2.1.

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[103] In the *PS* 3.10, al-Fārābī discusses the Eleventh as the stage where the existents who are in their substances Intellect and Intelligible end and where the prior Sphere of the moon ends, but he only identifies the thought of the Eleventh as having two intelligibles (itself and the First), like the other Secondary Substances which follow the First. However, in *PR* 34 he clarifies that the Active Intellect intellects all of the preceding Intellects and its own essence.

Figure 2.2.1
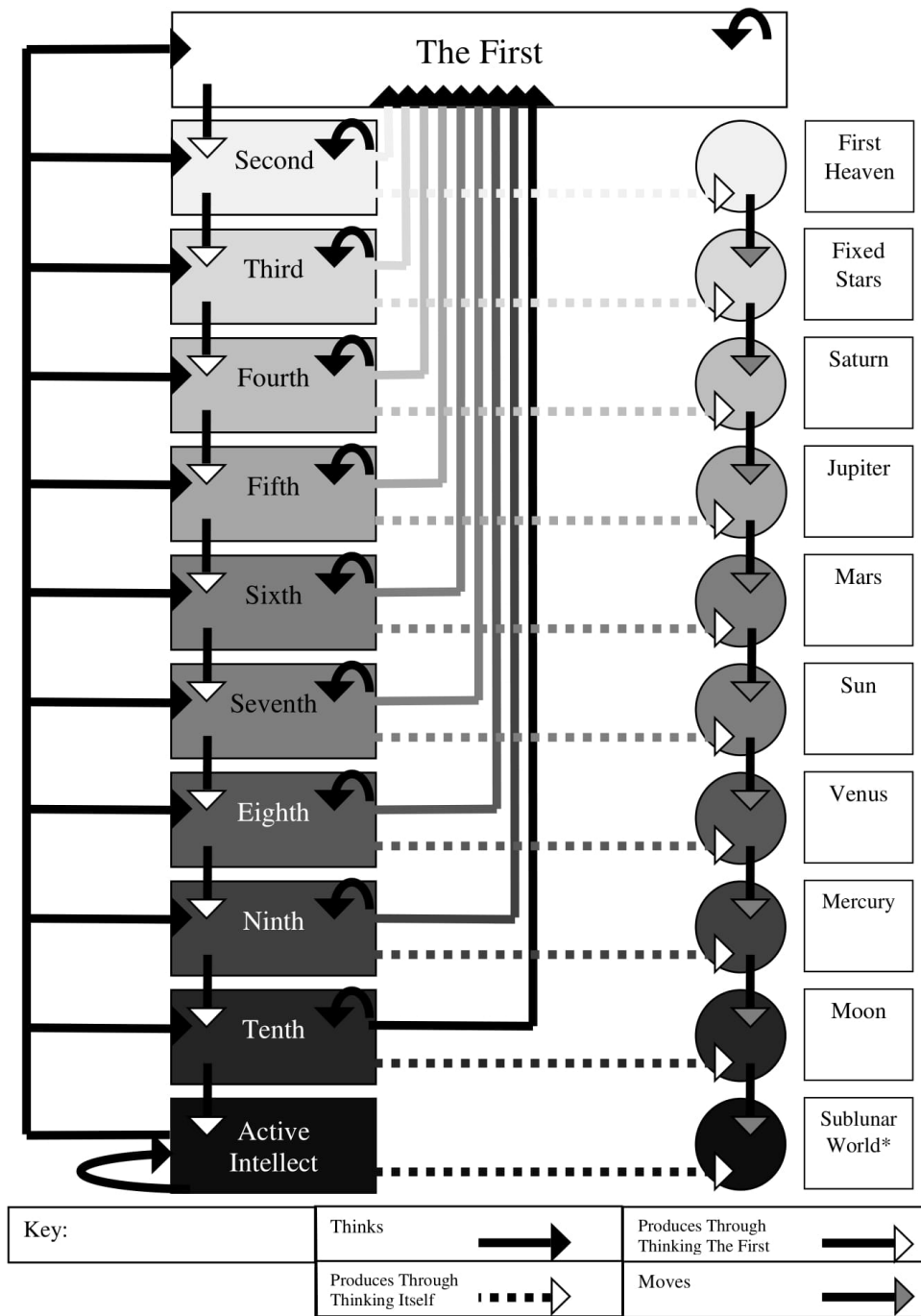
2.2.2. Extrapolations from the Secondary Causes

For the purposes of this project, three characteristics about al-Fārābī's cosmos can be extrapolated from his discussion of the Secondary Causes, the first two having been alluded to above in the discussion of the First. First, being and intelligibility are largely coextensive for al-Fārābī. Whereas this was indicated also in regard to the First, the indivisibility and noetic unity of the First renders any appraisal about the correspondence of any predicates attributed to It unclear. Coextension is difficult to determine in an absolutely indivisible existent. However, beginning with the Second (and multiplicity) language gains traction and more robust observations can be made. Al-Fārābī is clear that the eleven most ontologically prior existents in the cosmos which act as the causes for every other existent are separate things (*al-'ashyā' al-mufāraqa*) whose substances (*al-jawāhira*) exist as intellects (*'uqūl*) and intelligibles (*maqūlāt*).[104] Furthermore, it is in this capacity as intellects which think themselves that the heavenly bodies come to exist (and ultimately sublunar material composites come to exist, as will be discussed below), and it is as intellects which think the First that the intelligible cosmos is constituted. The First Intellect emanates (*yafīḍu*) the cosmos, and each proceeding rank of intellect further emanates that which follows it by thinking the First.[105] Intelligible intellects perdure as the ground for every existent. And while not every existent is itself intelligible (although, as will be discussed below, every existent exists for the sake of an intelligible existent), al-Fārābī does make clear that intelligible existents are the cause of all existents, as the most prior and least deficient existents.

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[104] *PS* 3.10.
[105] *PS* 3.1; *PR* 52.

Second, al-Fārābī's cosmology continues to depict happiness as an entirely intellectual trait. Each successive level of emanation occurs as a result of intellects lower than the First requiring the First as an intelligible to achieve delight/happiness (*ġibṭa*). As al-Fārābī explains:

> Moreover, not one of the secondary [causes] nor the active intellect is so sufficient (*yaktafī*) that, by limiting itself to intellecting its essence alone (*yaʿqalu ḏāthu waḥdha*), it attains (*yaḥṣulu*) a splendid and radiant existence or delight (*al-ġibṭa*), pleasure, and beauty. Rather, for that, it needs to intellect the essence of another more perfect and more splendid being in addition to its [own] essence (*yaʿqalu maʿa ḏāthu ḏāt mawjūd 'ākhar 'akmal minhu*). So in the essence of each of them there is, in this respect, some kind of multiplicity (*al-wajh kathra mā*). For in some respect the essence of what intellects a particular thing becomes that thing, even though it nonetheless has an essence particularly characteristic of it. It is as though the virtue of its essence does not become complete except by some kind of multiplicity assisting it. Therefore, multiplicity in what makes something be a substance becomes a defect in the existence of that thing.[106]

> ومع ذلك فإنّ الثواني والعقل الفعّال ليس واحد منها يكتفي في ان يحصل له بهاء الوجود وزينته ، ولا الغبطة والإلتذاذ والجمال بأن يقتصر على أن يعقل ذاته وحدها ، لكن يحتاج في ذلك إلى أن يعقل مع ذاته ذات موجود آخر أكمل منه وأبهى. ففي ذات كلّ واحد منها من هذا الوجه كثرة مّا ، إذ كان ما يعقل شيئاً مّا فإنّ ذاته من وجه مّا تصير ذلك الشيء على أنّ لها مع ذلك ذاتاً تخصّها. فكأنّ فضيلة ذاته لا تَّم إلّا بتعاون كثرة مّا ،فلذلك صارت الكثرة فيها يتجوهر به الشيء نقصاً في وجود ذلك الشيء .[107]

Here again, al-Fārābī uses the doctrine of noetic identity, sourced in *De Anima* 3.4 and 3.5, to explain his metaphysics. However, rather than the simple noetic unity of the First, the Secondary Causes' intellectual activity results in multiplicity. Lacking the sufficiency to attain happiness alone, the Secondary Causes think that which is more perfect than themselves. And in doing so, they 'become that thing', even though what they become is extraneous to their own substance. In other words, they share in the happiness of the First, at the expense of their own simplicity. To attain happiness, they must rely on

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[106] *PR* 40.
[107] *PR* 40.

something outside their substance; to realize happiness, the First must become an intelligible for them.

The disparity between the level of happiness attained within the Secondary Causes' own substances and the happiness attained through thinking the First is determined by each Secondary Cause's proximate relation to the First. As al-Fārābī notes:

> Then, after the first [cause], there exist the secondary [causes] and the active intellect. The secondary [causes] have rankings in existence. However, each of them also has a particular existence by which it is made substantial in its essence… Each of them intellects the first [cause] and intellects its [own] essence. Yet none of them suffices in its essence for being delighted with its essence alone. Rather, it comes to be delighted in itself through intellecting the first [cause] in addition to intellecting its essence. The superiority of the first [cause] over the excellence of its [the secondary cause's] essence is proportionate to the superiority of its delight in itself through intellecting the first [cause] over its delight in itself through intellecting its essence. Similarly, the analogy between its [the secondary cause's] pleasure in its essence through intellecting the first [cause] and its pleasure in its essence through intellecting its essence is proportionate to the increased excellence of the first [cause] over the excellence of its [the secondary cause's] essence. The same holds for its marveling at its essence and its passion for its essence. So what is first beloved and first marveled at in its soul is what it intellects of the first [cause] and, second, what it intellects of its essence. The first [cause], then, according to its relation to these as well, is the primary beloved and the primary object of passion.[108]

ثمّ من بعد الأوّل يوجد الثواني والعقل الفعّال . والثواني على مراتب في الوجود ، غير أنّ لكلّ واحد منها أيضاً وجوداً ممّا يتجوهر به في ذاته ... وكلّ واحد منها يعقل الأوّل و يعقل ذاته ، وليس في واحد منها كفاية في أن يكون مغبوطاً عند ذاته بذاته وحدها ، بل إنّما يكون مغبوطاً عند نفسه بأن يعقل الأوّل مع عقله لذاته . وبحسب فضل الأوّل على فضيلة ذاته يكون فضل اغتباطه بنفسه بأن عقل الأوّل على اغتباطه بنفسه بأن عقل ذاته . وكذلك قياس التذاذه بذاته بأن عقل الأوّل إلى التذاذه بذاته بأن عقل ذاته بحسب زيادة فضيلة الأوّل على فضيلة ذاته . وكذلك إعجابه بذاته وعشقه لذاته . فيكون المحبوب أوّلاً والمعجب أوّلاً عند نفسه هو ما يعقله من الأوّل ، وثانياً ما يعقله من ذاته . فالأوّل إذن بحسب الإضافة إلى هؤلاء أيضاً هو المحبوب الأوّل والمعشوق الأوّل .[109]

In other words, the incommensurable perfection of the First outstrips all other intelligibles qua intelligible. Presumably, there is a greater disparity between when the

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[108] *PR* 52.
[109] *PR* 52.

Ninth thinks itself versus thinking the First than when the Second thinks itself versus thinking the First, but even in the latter case, the First, lacking deficiency, is the perfect and most desirable intelligible. The First, as the most intelligible existent, is the primary source of love and happiness for the Secondary Causes and their teleological aim as well.

Third, the Secondary Causes reveal a novel model for unity within al-Fārābī's cosmos. Whereas the unity of the First is a perfect and peerless noetic unity, the Secondary Causes introduce the first example of unity amongst multiple existents. With the Secondary Causes, the universe is revealed as ordered. For, while the First cannot properly be described as ordered (being *sui generis*), it is the Cause of order. As mentioned above, al-Fārābī says:

> The First's substance is also such that the existents (*mawjūdāt*), when they have issued from it in their ranks (*murattaba fī marātibhā*), are necessarily united (*ya'talifa*) and connected (*yirtabaṭa*) with one another and arranged (*yantaẓima*) in a way that they become (*taṣīru*) one whole and are established like one thing (*bi-hā al-'ashyā' al-kaṯīra jumla wāḥida)*. Some of them are connected and united by something within their substance, so that their substances to which they owe their existence (*wujūda-hā*) produce their connection and their union; others by modes which accompany their substances, such as love by which human beings are connected, for love is a mode in them and not the substance to which they owe their existence (*wujūda-hā*). These modes of theirs are also derived from the First, because its substance is such that many existents receive from it together with their substances the modes (*'aḥwāl*) by which they are connected (*yirtabaṭa*) with each other and united and arranged.[110]

> وجوهره أيضا جوهر ، إذا حصلت الموجودات مرتبة في مراتبها أن يأتلف ويرتبط وينتظم بعضها مع بعض ، ائتلافا وارتباطا وانتظاما تصير بها الأشياء الكثيرة جملة واحدة ، وتحصل كشيء واحد. والتي بها ترتبط هذه وتأتلف هي لبعض الأشياء في جواهرها حتى ان جواهرها التي بها وجودها هي التي بها تأتلف وترتبط. ولبعض الأشياء تكون أحوال فيها تابعة لجوهرها ، مثل المحبة التي بها يرتبط الناس ، فانها حال فيهم ، وليست هي جواهرهم التي بها وجودهم. وهذه أيضا مستفادة عن الأول، لأن في جوهر الأول أن يحصل عنه بكثير من الموجودات مع جواهرها الأحوال التي بها يرتبط بعضها مع بعض ، ويأتلف وينتظم.[111]

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[110] *PS* 2.3.
[111] *PS* 2.3.

The Secondary Causes are given ranks (*marātib*) according to that which they owe their existence. By their ordering, they become, despite being multiple, unified. As al-Fārābī explains, "They become in their many things one whole (*taṣīru bi-hā al-'ashyā' al-kaṯīra jumla wāḥida*)."[112] And while each Secondary Cause is deficient, owing its existence to another as Cause, with each successive rank increasing in deficiency (*naqṣ*), they also share in the perfection of the First, both by increasing in delight/happiness (*ḡibṭa*) when intellecting the First, even while increasing their multiplicity, and by emulating the First in Its oneness through the ordering of their ranks, despite their multiplicity.

The Secondary Causes serve as a new model for the city, for, while they are less intelligible in themselves than the First, their ordering and ranking is more intelligible for us. These existents, which religion brands as 'angels' (*malā'ika*), both model the unity of the First and establish a standard for cooperation (*ta'āwun*) which is, if not attainable, at least pursuable for the city. Whereas the First exists as an impossible ideal, an entirely unattainable exemplar of happiness and unity for the city, the Secondary Causes provide an archetype to be mimicked, even as they mimic the First. In particular, they introduce the notion of order as a source of intelligibility and unity within the cosmos.

2.3. Celestial Bodies

In contrast, the celestial bodies, the spherical byproducts of the substantification (*mutajawhir*) of the Secondary Causes, introduce the notion of disorder into the cosmos. While still holding ranks, insofar as each sphere of the heavens is produced as a result of a ranked Secondary Cause's self-thought, the order that occurs between the celestial

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[112] *PS* 2.3, translation mine. See Arabic above.

bodies is accidental to the substance of the celestial bodies themselves. In other words, the ordering of the heavens supervenes upon the ordering of the Secondary Causes.[113] The celestial bodies are ranked, but uncoordinated. The motions of the heavenly spheres are teleologically unconnected to one another, as they move one another accidentally, resulting in the first instance of contrariety in the cosmos.[114]

As a result of the Second thinking itself, the existence of the First Heavens follows necessarily.[115] While the Second acts as the cause of both the First Heavens and the Third Intellect, the Third Intellect is more excellent as a result of both its substance lacking matter and its ontological origin, i.e., it is the result of the Second thinking a more Perfect Existent, namely the First, rather than a less perfect existent, namely the Second. As al-Fārābī notes:

> Other existents follow in a descending order of excellence until the most deficient is reached. The most excellent and most perfect of them is the First; among those which arise out of the First those which are neither bodies nor in bodies are altogether more excellent, and the celestial bodies come after them. The most excellent of the 'separate' (immaterial) existents is the Second;   all the others follow according to rank and order until the Eleventh is reached. The most excellent of the celestial bodies is the First Heaven, the secondary celestial bodies follow according to that rank and order until the sphere of the moon is reached. The 'separate' (immaterial) entities which come after the First are ten in number; the celestial bodies are nine altogether; and the sum total of all the superlunar entities is nineteen.[116]

> وأما الموجودات التي سلف ذكرها ، فانها تترتب أولا أفضلها ، ثم الأنقص ، فالأنقص إلى أن تنتهي إلى أنقصها. وأفضلها وأكملها الأول. فأما الأشياء الكائنة عن الأول ، فأفضلها بالجملة هي التي ليست بأجسام ولا هي من أجسام ، ومن بعدها السماوية. وأفضل المفارقة من هذه هو الثاني ، ثم سائرها على الترتيب إلى أن ينتهي إلى الحادي عشر. وأفضل السماوية هي السماء الأولى ، ثم الثانية ، ثم سائرها على الترتيب ، إلى أن ينتهي إلى التاسع وهو كرة القمر. والأشياء المفارقة التي بعد الأول هي عشرة والأجسام السماوية في الجملة تسعة ، فجميعها تسعة عشر.[117]

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[113] See Davidson 1992, 45.
[114] *PS* 7.10.
[115] *PS* 3.1.
[116] *PS* 6.2.
[117] *PS* 6.2.

Each Secondary Cause is more excellent than any of the celestial bodies insofar as each Secondary Cause lacks matter and is produced as a direct result of the intelligibility of the First.[118] The souls/forms of the celestial bodies, too, are actual intellect, as they think the First, the Secondary Cause from which each derives, and themselves, but, due to the celestial bodies' composition, i.e., their multiplicity in being composed of both form and substratum (*mawḍūʿa*), they remain "in all this much below the level of the ten [Secondary Causes]".[119]

When the nine Secondary Causes below the First and above the Active Intellect think themselves, the substances of the celestial bodies result, both their souls/forms and substrata.[120] Insofar as the celestial bodies have substrata, they belong to the same genus as the material composites found in the sublunary world.[121] These substrata "resemble the matters which serve as underlying carriers of forms (*tashbahu al-mawādd al-mawḍūʿa li-ḥaml al-ṣuwar*)", except the substratum of each celestial body can only receive the specific form appropriate to it, cannot exist without it, and lacks privation (*lā ʿadam*).[122] Due to this lack of privation, "their substrata, consequently, do not prevent their forms from thinking and from being intellect in their essences."[123] But while each soul/form of each celestial body is an actual intellect which thinks the First, its proximate Secondary Cause, and itself, it is deficient insofar as thinking itself requires thinking its substratum, which is not intellect. Thus, as al-Fārābī describes, "Not all of what it thinks of its

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[118] *PR* 41.

[119] *PS* 7.4-7.5; "إلا أنه في كل ذلك دون العشرة بكثير ."

[120] Al-Fārābī's terminology varies, preferring 'soul' (*nafs*) in the *Political Regime* and 'form' (*ṣūra*) in *Perfect State*.

[121] *PS* 7.3.

[122] *PS* 7.3; "وهذه تجانس الموجودات الهيولانية ، وذلك أن لها موضوعات تشبه المواد الموضوعة لحمل الصور وأشياء هي لها كالصور بها تتجوهر ."

[123] *PS* 7.3; "ولأن موضوعات صورها لا عدم فيها ، بوجه من الوجوه ، ولا لصورها أعدام تقابلها ، فصارت موضوعاتها لا تعوق صورها أن تعقل وأن تكون عقولا بذواتها ."

essence is intellect, because it also thinks its substratum which is not intellect… there is

then an intelligible which is not intellect…It thus thinks with an intellect which is not

identical with its entire substance."[124] In other words, the celestial bodies are divisible,

not only in their intellective acts, but as soul and body.[125]

Like the Secondary Causes, the celestial bodies attain happiness/delight

(*muḡtabiṭ*) through thinking themselves and that which is ontologically prior to

themselves. Al-Fārābī explains:

> The celestial body also feels joy (*muḡtabiṭ*) in its essence, not only by what it
> thinks of its own essence, but also by what it thinks of the First and by what it
> thinks of the essence of the 'separate' (immaterial) intellect from which it derives
> its existence; it has its love of the First in common with the 'separate' intellects,
> and its pride in itself, on account of the share in the splendour and beauty of the
> First which it acquires. But it remains in all this much below the level of the
> ten.[126]

> فهو أيضا مغتبط بذاته ليس بما يعقل من ذاته فقط ، ولكن بما يعقل من الأول ، ثم بما يعقل من ذات المفارق
> الذي عنه وجوده. ويشارك المفارق في عشقه للأول وباعجابه بنفسه بما استفاد من بهاء الأول وجماله؛ إلا
> أنه في كل ذلك دون العشرة بكثير.[127]

The soul/form of the celestial body experiences delight/happiness through thinking its

own essence, but also by having its proximate Secondary Cause and the First as

intelligibles. Idiosyncratically, al-Fārābī does not use the joy from or love of the First and

the Secondary Causes to explain heavenly motion. In fact, he never mentions 'desire' at

this stage of his cosmology.[128] Instead, the intellectual activity of the celestial bodies is

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[124] *PS* 7.4. (Translation modified); "و ليس جميع ما يعقل من ذاته عقلا لأنه يعقل موضوعه ، وموضوعه ليس بعقل ، إذ كان
ليس يعقل بموضوعه وإنما يعقل بصورته . ففيه معقول ليس بعقل — وما يعقل من صوره قهو عقل —فهو يعقل بعقل ليس هو كل ما به
تجوهره ."
[125] In fact, al-Ghazali and Maimonides critique the philosophers on this point, saying that they violate the "from one only one is produced" principle, insofar as the Second produces a divisible celestial body through a single act. See Footnote 95.
[126] *PS* 7.5.
[127] *PS* 7.5.
[128] He does describe the First as the primary object of desire for the Secondary Causes, as noted above, but never uses this terminology in regard to the celestial bodies. See *PR* 52. As Janos notes: "Indeed, he says

always already fulfilled; the soul/form of the celestial bodies always have themselves,

their proximate Secondary Causes, and the First as intelligibles.

Al-Fārābī's account originates the motion of the celestial bodies in a more

quizzical way than the reason usually ascribed to explain the motion of the heavens, i.e.,

desire.[129] Unlike the typical cosmological account which explains motion though the

intellectual activity of the celestial bodies, al-Fārābī seems to suggest that while the

souls/forms of the celestial bodies are actual intellect, this is tangential to their motions.

In fact, the motion of the celestial bodies does not seem to come about from anything

exterior to them at all. Nor is al-Fārābī's account simply reduced to the fact that it is the

very nature of the celestial bodies to be spherical and move in a circular motion, although

he does ascribe these attributes to their nature.[130] Rather, he attempts to explain motion as

a deficiency, an accident intrinsic to embodiment. For while there is a teleological

component to why the heavens move (e.g., al-Fārābī does discuss the needs of the

celestial bodies, if not their desires) and a certain kind of aim within the motions (e.g., al-

Fārābī explains, "That towards which [the celestial bodies] move can in their case not be

provided from the very outset"), it is not clear how this telos can be said to be external to

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virtually nothing about will (*irādah*), choice (*ikhtiyār*), and desire (*shawq*, *tashawwuq*), concepts that are often associated with the rational activity of the orbs, and which furthermore played a key role in medieval Arabic accounts of heavenly motion inspired by Aristotelian cosmology." Janos 2012, 132; cf. Twetten 2016b, 364.

[129] In fact, his argument is so odd and, to my knowledge, completely original within the history of philosophy, that many scholarly accounts simply insert the notion of desire into his cosmology so that it is cogent. For example, Janos, who was the first scholar to note the lack of desire in al-Fārābī's account, and Twetten, whose account of al-Fārābī's cosmology is otherwise extremely thorough and valuable, both explain the heavenly motions through desire. See Janos 2012, 118; Twetten 2016b, 364. For the possible origins for the philosophical doctrine of desire moving the heavens in the Arabic language, see *Metaphysics* Λ 1073a25f.; Theophrastus' *On First Principles* 5.1; *Theology* VIII 140-141.

[130] *PS* 7.6, 7.11. See Janos 2012, 342.

the celestial bodies themselves, except perhaps to credit the First as the First Principle of unity.[131]

On the contrary, it is an accident (*'arḍ*) which brings about motion, as place is an accident of corporality. Al-Fārābī seems to suggest that the deficiency of embodiment itself is the immediate cause of the celestial motions. He explains:

> But they differ from the immaterial existents inasmuch as that towards which they move can in their case not be provided from the very outset: it is one of the smallest and most inferior accidents (*'arḍ*) which occur in a body; for every body is in a place, and the species of the place which this body has is to be the container of a body. But a body whose place is of this species cannot be moved away as a whole from the whole of this species (of place); but this species (of place) has parts (*'ajzā'*) and the body which is in this place has parts (*'ajzā'*). Now, none of the parts of this body deserves (*'awlā*) any part of the container more than another-but each part of the body must necessarily (*yulzamu*) occupy each part of the container [successively]; nor does it deserve one part at one moment (*waqt*) and not at another, but (each part of the body must occupy) at every moment (a part of the container) perpetually (*kull waqt dā'iman*). Whenever a part of this body happens to be in a definite part of the container, it needs (*iḥtāja*) to occupy the part (of the container) which is in front of it. But it is impossible that the two parts of the container should be occupied simultaneously by that part of the body at the same moment, it must quit the part of the container in which it is and move on to the part in front of it, until it has accomplished its passage through all the parts of the container. And because the part of the container in which it was is not at one moment more worthy of it than at another, it must unceasingly (perpetually) proceed from one part of the container to the next. When it is not possible that that part of the body should belong all the time to that part of the container by being one in number, it will become one in species of that part of the container; occupying sometimes one part of the container, and sometimes not. Then that part of the body will go on (revert?) to a part of the container which is similar to the first part in species, then quit it too for some time and go on to a third part of the container, which is similar to the first part of the container. It will quit this too for some time and go on (revert?) to a fourth part of the container which is similar to the first part. It will have this motion forever.[132]

وتفارقها في أنها لم يمكن فيها أن تعطى من أول أمرها الشيء الذي إليه تتحرك. وما إليه تتحرك هو من أيسر عرض يكون في الجسم وأخسه ، وذلك أن كل جسم فهو في أين ما. ونوع الأين الذي هو لهذا الجسم هو أن يكون حول جسم ما. وما نوع أينه هذا النوع ، فليس يمكن أن تنتقل جملته عن جملة هذا النوع. ولكن لهذا النوع أجزاء ، وللجسم الذي فيه أجزاء. وليس جزء من أجزاء هذا الجسم أولى بجزء من أجزاء الحول ـ

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[131] *PS* 7.7; "وتفارقها في أنها لم يمكن فيها أن تعطى من أول أمرها الشيء الذي إليه تتحرك."

[132] *PS* 7.7.

بل كل جزء من الجسم يلزم أن يكون له كل جزء من أجزاء الحول ـ ولا أيضا أن يكون أولى به في وقت
دون وقت ، بل في كل وقت دائما. وكلما حصل جزء من هذا الجسم في جزء ما من الحول احتاج إلى أن
يكون له الجزء الذي قدامه قدامه. ولا يمكن أن يجتمع له الجزءان معا في وقت واحد؛ فيحتاج إلى أن يتخلى
من الذي هو فيه ، ويصير إلى ما هو قدامه إلى أن يستوفي كل جزء من أجزاء الحول. ولأن الجزء الذي
كان فيه ليس هو في وقت أولى به من وقت ، فيجب أن يكون له ذلك دائما. وإذا لم يمكن أن يكون ذلك الجزء
له دائما على أن يكون واحدا بالعدد ، وصار واحدا بالنوع ، بأن يوجد له حينا ولا يوجد له حينا. ثم يعود إلى
شبيهه في النوع ، ثم يتخلى عنه أيضا مدة ، ثم يعود إلى شبيهه له ثالث ، ويتخلى عنه أيضا مدة ، ثم يعود إلى
شبيه له رابع؛ وهكذا له أبدا.[133]

Al-Fārābī's reasoning seems to go something like this:

1) Place (*fī 'ayna mā*) is divisible, having parts.
2) Bodies, insofar as they occupy place, are divisible, having parts.
3) A celestial body has parts.
4) It is the nature of the celestial bodies to have a particular type of place (*naw'a al-'ayna*).
5) The particular type of place occupied by a celestial body has parts.
6) The parts of a celestial body do not belong to any particular part of the particular type of place which the celestial body occupies, but rather each part of the celestial body belongs to all parts of its particular type of place.
7) It is the nature of a celestial body to have a body of a particular shape, namely, a sphere.[134]
8) It is the nature of the particular type of place occupied by a celestial body to have a particular shape, namely a sphere.
9) All parts of a spherical celestial body cannot occupy all parts of its particular spherical type of place while keeping its shape.
10) Yet, all parts of a spherical celestial body must occupy all parts of its particular spherical type of place while keeping its shape.
11) If all parts of a spherical celestial body cannot occupy all parts of its particular spherical type of place while keeping its shape perpetually, each part of a spherical celestial body must occupy each part of its particular spherical type of place while keeping its shape, at some moments.
∴) The celestial bodies move in time.

Unfortunately, al-Fārābī does not provide much more insight than the passage above

regarding this argument.[135]

A few things can be determined, however. First, with the introduction of the

motion of the First Heavens, al-Fārābī introduces time (*waqt*) to the cosmos, following

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[133] *PS* 7.7.

[134] *PS* 7.6.

[135] A shortened version of this argument is found in the *Political Regime*, in which al-Fārābī says that the fulfillment of the celestial bodies is always in the future (*mustaqbal dā'iman*). *PR* 54.

Aristotle.[136] Because the parts of the celestial bodies are unable to be in their proper place "always at every moment" (*fī kull waqt dā'iman*), the cosmos must allow for divisible and measurable time so that each part of the celestial bodies can be in each proper place sometimes. Second, it is a deficiency of the celestial bodies which brings about motion. They are unable naturally to fulfill their natures at the outset, requiring motion to reconcile their need (i.e., for each part to be in its proper place perpetually) with their deficiency (i.e., divisible corporeality). Third, while never explicitly stated by al-Fārābī, there must be some teleological drive to the motion of the heavens, as what is many seeks the perfection of unity. For while his ingenious argument as to why each celestial body moves is void of desire for the Secondary Causes, it does require that each celestial body's nature, a substantification (*mutajawhir*) of its proximate Cause, needs to attain something which is impossible for a corporeal existent to achieve. The celestial bodies aim at a unity in which their parts are not divisible, their place in the cosmos is not divisible, and time is not divisible. Movement is a concession to their corporeality. Each part needs to be in each place at every moment, and movement is a facsimile to this state. And while this movement is not immediately caused through desire for the Secondary Causes, the natures of the celestial bodies are brought about as the substanitification (*mutajawhir*) of the Secondary Causes. So, while motion does not come about through any extrinsic desire for the Secondary Causes, the Secondary Causes, as the causes of the celestial bodies, produce within the intrinsic nature of the celestial bodies a need to be void of the multiplicity brought about by the accident of corporeality. Achieving this need is impossible, and motion results through their Sisyphean attempt at perfect unity.

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[136] *Physics* Δ.10-11; See Coope 2005.

Thus, the oneness of the First remains the final cause of their motion, even if they are not,

in fact, moved by their thinking the First as an intelligible.

2.3.1. Contrary Heavenly motions

Regarding the heavens, as has been noted by others, al-Fārābī's cosmological

structure, as a whole, follows a broadly Neoplatonic framework, in which the First acts as

a source for the Secondary Intellects which themselves are a source for the souls/forms of

the celestial bodies.[137] However, al-Fārābī innovatively merges this structure with an

Aristotelian and Ptolemaic account of the heavens, even if it is a rather spartan

astronomical account.[138] For, while his discussion is limited to the nine ranks of the

celestial bodies which are produced through the self-intellection and subsequent

substantification of the nine Secondary Causes between the First and the Active Intellect,

his discussion of the movements of the heavens contains a more elaborate and

astronomically technical account than it may seem at first glance. As Janos notes, al-

Fārābī's account of each rank of the celestial bodies is, in fact, an account of groups or

systems (*jumal*) of motions, a novel contribution to astronomy and philosophy which

allows for the eccentric, concentric, and epicyclical motions which ensure that the

practical mathematics of Ptolemaic astronomy remain predictive.[139] It is beyond the

scope of this project to give a comprehensive account of Fārābīan astronomy (if such a

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[137] Janos 2012, 31-32, 144f., 138f., 202f.; Davidson 1992, 44, 46; Davidson 1972, 121; Druart 1992, 135; Twetten 2016b, 364; Vallat 2011, 259f.; Vallat 2004, 79f. See Footnotes 55-56 of the present chapter.
[138] Although, he is clear about the theoretical limits of astronomy. See Footnote 215 below. For Ptolemy's influence on al-Fārābī's cosmological tradition, see Janos 2012, 119f., 201f.; Twetten 2016b, 407f; Rosenthal 1956, 436–456.
[139] *PS* 7.1; Janos 2012, 120f. For al-Ghazali's and Maimonides' critique of al-Fārābī's reasoning, see note 95 of the present chapter.

project is even possible), but a brief exposition of the motions of the heavens, insofar as they produce accidental motion and contrariety, is required.

The system (*jumla*) of the First Heavens is produced through the substantification of the Second Cause. It is surrounded by a spherical body, like all of the celestial bodies, and is filled with light, like all of the celestial bodies, to the point of being transparent.[140] It is the highest rank of the celestial bodies, containing only one body and moves in one very quick circular motion which affects all of the other celestial bodies.[141] The next system, the Fixed Stars, is the substantification of the Third Cause.[142] Like the First Heavens, the system of the Fixed Stars is surrounded by one spherical body, but unlike the First Heavens, it contains within it numerous other bodies (namely, the stars).[143] All of these bodies participate in the same motions, of which there are two: the motion intrinsic to the Fixed Stars and an extrinsic and accidental motion, in which they naturally participate, as they are moved by the motion of the First Heavens.[144] These bodies, produce light, rather than simply being filled with their own light to the point of transparency.[145] Below the Fixed Stars is Saturn, the substantification of the Fourth.[146] It is surrounded by a spherical body, but contains only one body.[147] It has its own motion but also takes part in the motions of the spheres above it.[148] All of the remaining celestial

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[140] PS 3.1, 7.1, 7.6; *PR* 53.

[141] *PS* 7.1; 7.6; 7.11; *PR* 55.

[142] *PS* 3.2.

[143] *PS* 7.1.

[144] *PS* 7.1.; See Note 148 below.

[145] *PS* 7.6.

[146] *PS* 3.3.

[147] *PS* 3.1.

[148] *PS* 3.1; There is some ambiguity here concerning how the motions of the celestial bodies affect those below them. While al-Fārābī clearly says that the First Heavens move all of the other spheres, he claims that this motion is natural, insofar as they all share a nature (*ṭabī'a*). Thus, none of the celestial bodies are moved by compulsion (*qasr*), as there can be no compulsion in the heavens, even if they are moved by the power (*quwwa*) of the First Heavens. It would stand to reason, that the Fixed Stars hold a similar power

bodies share these characteristics with Saturn, namely an encompassing sphere containing a single body and a multiplicity of motions.[149] Some of their parts are transparent, being perpetually filled with light, some produce light, and some acquire the light of the other celestial bodies.[150] Each celestial body has its own intrinsic speed at which it moves (e.g., the sphere of the moon moves faster than the sphere of Saturn).[151] In sum, the celestial bodies total nine in number, beginning with the First Heavens and terminating in the Sphere of the Moon.[152] And their motions are such that, while seemingly chaotic, they are measurable; the placement of the bodies contained within the surrounding spheres will predictably revert to previous states of relative placement over time.[153]

For the purposes of this project, only one aspect of the motions of the celestial bodies is germane—that the motions of the celestial bodies introduce contrariety and disorder into the cosmos. As will be seen below, contrariety and disorder brought about by the motions of the celestial bodies will ultimately serve as the impediment to perfect, truthful governance within the city, an impediment expressed through the natural deficiency of human persons. But concerning the celestial bodies themselves, while

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over Saturn, and Saturn over Jupiter, etc. This would explain the increasing multiplicity of the motions of the lower celestial bodies. However, to my knowledge, al-Fārābī never claims this, explicitly. He only explains in the *Political Regime* that they each have powers that give them distinctly different motions. That said, while there is some conjecture required here, it seems as if each higher celestial body has a power (*quwwa*) to move that which is below it, and every lower celestial body has a natural potency (*quwwa*), which is perpetually in a state of being actualized, to be moved by what is above it. Strictly speaking, there is no compulsion to this motion, as it is intrinsic to each celestial body's nature (*ṭabī'a*) to be moved by what is above it. However, the motion itself is external and accidental to the lower celestial body, as a power of the higher celestial body. *PS* 7.1, 7.11; *PR* 55.

[149] *PS* 3.1.

[150] *PS* 7.6.

[151] *PS* 7.9.

[152] *PS* 3.9-10, 7.1; *PR* 53.

[153] *PS* 7.8-7.9, 7.11; *PR* 55-56. Al-Fārābī does acknowledge that, while most of the time the relative placement of the heavens will repeat itself, there are some heavenly phenomena which are singular. *PS* 7.11.

contrariety is ultimately sourced in their deficiency (insofar as they are corporeal and in need of motion), there is no contrariety in their natures. As al-Fārābī explains:

> It follows also from their mutual relations that they sometimes come together and sometimes separate, and that they have contrary relations to one another. They also sometimes come near some bodies on the lower level and sometimes recede from them. These contrarieties follow neither from their substances nor from the accidents which are near to their substances but from their relations (i.e. accidents which are remote from their substances). For example rising and setting are two contrary relations of the celestial bodies to the level below them. Among existents the heavenly body is the first to be affected by contraries. The first things in which contrariety manifests (reveals) itself are the relations of this body to what is on the level below it and the mutual relations of the heavenly bodies. These contrarieties, it is true, are the most unimportant contrarieties, but contrariety is itself a deficiency of existence, and the celestial body is therefore affected by a deficiency of the most unimportant kind in existence… There is also a difference in their substances but there is no contrariety in it, like the difference between Mars and Jupiter, between any star and any other star and between any sphere and any other sphere. But then they are affected, as we said before, by a contrariety in their relations. Moreover, these relations change in their contrarieties which succeed one another. They quit one relation and proceed towards its contrary, and then revert to a relation which belongs to it in species—as the one quitted—but not in number. Thus the celestial bodies have relations which repeat themselves and come back, some, in a longer and some in a shorter interval, and they also have modes and relations which do not repeat themselves at all. There exist also contrary relations between a number of celestial bodies and one particular thing, as for instance that some of them are near to a thing and others are remote from the very same thing.[154]

> وانها تلحقها بإضافة بعضها إلى بعض ، بأن تجتمع أحيانا وتفترق أحيانا ، ويكون بعضها من بعض على نسب متضادة. وأيضا فإنها تقرب أحيانا من بعض ما تحتها ، وتبعد أحيانا عنه ، وتظهر أحيانا وتستر أحيانا. فتلحقها هذه المتضادات لا في جواهرها ، ولا في الأعراض التي تقرب من جواهرها ، بل في نسبها ، وذلك مثل الطلوع والغروب ، فإنهما نسبتان لها إلى ما تحتها ، متضادتان. والجسم السماوي أول الموجودات التي تلحقها أشياء متضادة. وأول الأشياء التي يكون فيها تضادّ هي نسب هذا الجسم إلى ما تحته ، ونسب بعضها إلى بعض. وهذه المتضادات هي أخس المتضادات؛ والتضاد نقص في الوجود. فالجسم السمائي يلحقه النقص في أخس الأشياء التي شأنها أن توجد...). وبينها أيضا تباين في جواهرها من غير تضاد ، مثل مباينة زحل للمشتري ، وكل كوكب لكل كوكب ، وكل كرة لكل كرة. ثم يلحقها ، كما قلنا ، تضاد في نسبها ، وان تتبدل تلك النسب ومتضاداتها وتتعاقب عليها ، فتتخلى من نسبة ما وتصير إلى ضدها ، ثم تعود إلى ما كانت تخلت منه بالنوع لا بالعدد ، فيكون لها نسب تتكرر ، ويعود بعضها في مدة أطول وبعضها في مدة أقصر؛ وأحوال ونسب تتكرر أصلا. ويلحقها أن يكون لجماعة منها نسب إلى شيء واحد متضادة ، مثل أن يكون بعضها قريبا من شيء ، وبعضها بعيدا من ذلك الشيء بعينه.[155]

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[154] *PS* 7.9-11.
[155] *PS* 7.9-11.

Al-Fārābī's reasoning here is rather simple. All of the celestial bodies have particular accidents (defined magnitudes, shapes, etc.).[156] They also have particular motions intrinsic to them. But while the upper celestial bodies move the lower celestial bodies, these movements are not coordinated.[157] Each celestial body moves according to its own nature, being affected by the celestial bodies above it, but also moving independently. This independent motion changes the relative positioning of the heavens, without reference to any sort of stability or orderliness. At one moment, bodies can be near to one another; at another moment, they are far from one another. And while this does not introduce contrariety into the nature of the celestial bodies as such, it does introduce contrariety into the cosmos, insofar as there is contrariety between the relative positioning of the celestial bodies. As a result, contrariety is brought about in those things which are caused through the relations between the celestial bodies, namely the material existents residing below the Sphere of the Moon.

2.3.2. Extrapolations from the Celestial Bodies

Al-Fārābī's exposition of the celestial bodies both reinforces many of the aspects of the cosmos already revealed through an examination of the First and the Secondary Causes and introduces a new class of existent into the cosmos. Regarding the former, the celestial bodies are yet another typical example of existents within an ordered, systematically ranked cosmos whose telos is purely intelligible. Like the Secondary Causes, the celestial bodies are ranked, even if incidentally, and like the Secondary

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[156] *PR* 54.
[157] See Note 148 above.

Causes, the celestial bodies find their delight/happiness in thinking that which is more intelligible than themselves.

But regarding their novel instantiations, they reveal several new phenomena within the cosmos. Their substrate represents the first instance of something not intelligible in itself, being only intelligible as a principle of the composite. Their perpetual motion is occasioned through their inevitable deficiency; they are the first example of any existents whose deficiency sets limitations on the attainment of their needs. In other words, they have a frustrated telos, needing to be perpetually in place, but being consigned to be in place only successively, through motion.[158] And their relations are the first occurrence of contrariety within the cosmos. While they themselves are actual intellects and in a perpetual state of happiness and while not themselves exceedingly deficient, multiple, or at all having contrariety, they are the superlunar agents of deficiency, multiplicity, and contrariety, and they establish the obstacles to happiness within the city.

2.4. Extrapolations from al-Fārābī's Cosmos

All told, al-Fārābī establishes two distinct superlunary principles within his cosmos to explain the character of the sublunar world, i.e., the world of material composites which is occupied by humankind.[159] The first, a series of noetic unities, the Secondary Causes, is a principle for intelligibility. Through them, he reveals the telos of all existents, namely to be known and to know. Like the superlunar world, the sublunar world will be ordered according to this telos. And, as will be discussed below, the lowest

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[158] See Janos 2012, 118.
[159] A visualization of these principles can be found in Figure 3.1.

level of these Intellects providentially helps the sublunar world, particularly humankind, to achieve this telos of knowing and being known.[160] But the celestial bodies act as the second principle for the sublunar world. And, whereas the Intellects act upon the world in such a way as to bring about happiness, the celestial bodies pass on their deficiencies. These deficiencies (e.g., corporeality, contrariety, and a frustrated teleology) ultimately obstruct some humans from even the possibility of obtaining the kind of knowledge which is the telos of the human life and, thus, also the possibility of reaching individual happiness. These humans, who comprise the majority of citizens within the city, are ultimately the source of the political complications which plague proper governance. They are the reason that beneficent deception is necessary. It is the Imām who ultimately bridges the gap between true knowledge and deficiency, by giving deficient images that are near to the truth. He expresses the intelligibility of the Intellects through the deficient language of that which comes from the celestial bodies. However, a fuller account of this will have to wait.

3. <u>The Sublunar World</u>

Al-Fārābī's cosmos continues to be ranked and ordered below the Sphere of the Moon. For, while the highest ranks of the causes of the material world are not principles that are in bodies or were ever in bodies, the lower ranks are themselves in bodies.[161] The former, the First, the Secondary Causes, and the Active Intellect, are all immaterial noetic unities.[162] The latter, soul (*nafs*), form (*ṣūra*), and matter (*mādda*), exist exclusively

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[160] *PR* 32.
[161] *PR* 31; *EI* 20.
[162] *PR* 31.

within bodies.[163] This hierarchy of principles— the First, the Secondary Causes, the

Active Intellect, soul, form, and matter— follows the patterns already established,

namely beginning with what 'cannot possibly not exist' and continuing to 'what can

possibly not exist', but possibly exists.[164] These rankings correspond to the intelligibility

of things, insofar as all of those existents which 'cannot possibly not exist' are intelligible

in themselves (e.g., the First, the Secondary Causes, the Active Intellect, and the souls of

the celestial bodies), whereas those things which 'can possibly not exist', but can

possibly exist, are only potentially intelligible (e.g., the souls of animals, the forms of

elements, and matter as a principle).[165]

From these principles, different kinds of bodies arise. These too are ranked, both

according to their subservience to one another, their complexity, and their

intelligibility.[166] The celestial bodies are the highest rank of body (and the only rank

which 'cannot possibly not exist'), their souls being actual intellect.[167] The bodies of the

rational animal, i.e., humankind, follow, insofar as their souls are potentially intellect.[168]

The bodies of the non-rational animals are next, having a ruling imaginative faculty (or,

in the lowest cases, only a sense-perceptive faculty) in their souls which takes the place

of the rational faculty.[169] Then, plants are ranked, albeit al-Fārābī never specifically

mentions for what reason they have this rank, other than their distance from prime matter

and usefulness to the higher ranks (although, one could presume that the nutritive soul is

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[163] *PR* 31, 36-37.
[164] *PR* 31, 56-57. See Note 185 below for Arabic.
[165] *PR* 34-35; *PS* 13.1-2; *EI* 16.
[166] *PR* 31, 38, 62, 84; *PS* 6.1, 9.3.
[167] *PR* 31, 34, 41, 53; *PS* 3.1-9, 7.3.
[168] *PR* 31-34; *PS* 4.2, 6.1, 13.1-2; *EI* 12-15.
[169] *PR* 33, 38, 62, 67-68; *PS* 6.1; 6.4.

a distinguishing factor, here).[170] Then, minerals follow.[171] Finally, the elements are ranked

as the lowest possible body.[172] (Prime matter, while the lowest existent, does not actually

exist independently, being only a principle for composites.)[173] The final two ranks of

bodies, minerals and elements, lack souls to delineate their ranks, but are accorded their

respective positions because the elements are closer to matter and assist the minerals

materially, servilely, and instrumentally.[174]

So, al-Fārābī structures the sublunary world in such a way that the highest ranks

are identified by their intelligibility and the lowest ranks are identified by being closest to

matter, with soul and form functioning as intermediary principles.[175] The telos of the

sublunary world is expressed exclusively through the highest rank of sublunary existents,

i.e., human beings, insofar as humans are able to become actual intellects.[176] In this

capacity, many of the lower ranked existents assist humans, and humans assist no other

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[170] *PR* 31, 38, 58, 62, 67; *PS* 6.1; 6.4.

[171] *PR* 31, 38, 62, 67; *PS* 6.1; 6.4.

[172] *PR* 31, 38, 58, 62, 67, 84; *PS* 4.3, 6.1-2.

[173] *PR* 36, 58.

[174] *PR* 58, 61, 67-68; *PS* 6.1-4. Al-Fārābī seems to suggest that the elements attain embodiment through the reception of a kind of form which necessitates its contrary. In other words, the elements are essentially contrary. He does not give a clear argument for this. His argument for ranking bodies according to the assistance they give others is clearer. The elements serve as the material for every other body, they perform services for the other bodies, e.g., air to breathe, and they are used instrumentally, e.g., fire to warm. Each lower ranked existent typically serves the higher ranks, with the rational animal serving none (except accidentally). Al-Fārābī does provide some exceptions. For example, minerals serve the elements as an instrument when a mountain brings forth water. And some animals, namely poisonous ones like the viper, serve the elements, by nullifying the bodies of animals back into the elements, despite the fact that this is not for their own nutritional benefit.

[175] What exactly al-Fārābī means by the term 'form' (*ṣūra*) is a problematic issue. At times, he insists that forms (*ṣuwar*) are only those things which occur in matter (*mādda*), e.g., *PR* 37-38. Other times, 'forms' can be immaterial, e.g., *PR* 58; EI 13-16, 24, 27, 29. Often, it is a functional term, simply meaning the rank which acts upon a lower rank, and even the Active Intellect and the First are 'forms', e.g., *EI* 22, 24; *PR* 58; *SA* 79. This usage seems to come from Alexander of Aphrodisias. See Alexander's *CDA*, 7, 21-8, 13. (Al-Fārābī uses a similar argument as that which is found in *EI* 22, while avoiding the confusion of the term *ṣūra*, at *PS* 15.8.) Sometimes 'forms' or 'quasi-forms' (*ka-l-ṣuwar*) are synonymous with 'soul' (*nafs*) (although, soul is likely a particular kind of form in these cases), e.g., *PS* 7.3; *PR* 32, 63. Likewise, at times form is compared to a power, particularly vision, e.g., *PR* 37. Unfortunately, deciding this issue is beyond the scope of this dissertation, if, in fact, al-Fārābī is even consistent enough to decide it. For a partial solution, see Note 198 of the present chapter.

[176] *PR* 32, 34-35; *PS* 13.5-7.

existents (except accidentally).[177] This is true from the outset and is due to the respective forms of the existents.[178] As al-Fārābī explains:

> Possible existents have rankings. The lowest in ranking is what has no definite existence, not in either one of the two contraries—and that is primary material. The ones in the second ranking are what attain existence through the contraries they attain in primary material—namely, the elements. When these come to be an existent through particular forms, through attaining the forms they attain the possibility that other opposite existents also come to exist. They thus become material for other forms so that when they also attain those forms, there arises for them through the secondary forms the possibility that other opposite existents also come to exist through other contrary forms. Thus those also become material for other forms so that when they also attain those [forms], there arises for them through those forms the possibility that other opposite existents also come to exist. They thus become material for [yet] other forms. And they go on like this until they terminate at forms such that the existents attained through them cannot be material for other forms. Thus, the forms of those existents are forms for every form preceding them. These final ones are the most venerable of the possible existents. And primary material is the vilest of the possible existents. The ones intermediate between these two are also in rankings; and whatever is closer to primary material is more vile, while whatever is closer to the form of forms (ṣura al-ṣuwar) is more venerable. So the existence of primary material is [such] that it is always for something else and has no existence at all for its own sake. Therefore, if that for whose sake it is created were not to exist, it would not exist either. Thus if one of these forms were not to exist, it would not exist either. Therefore, it is not possible for primary material to exist separate from a form at any moment at all. Now the existents (mawjūdat) whose form is the form of forms (ṣura al-ṣuwar) are always for their own sake. It is not possible that through their forms they be formed so as to be for the sake of something else—I mean, that through them something else be made substantial and that they be materials for something else.[179]

والموجودات الممكنة على مراتب : فأدناها مرتبة ما لم يكن له وجود محصّل ولا بواحد من الضدّين ، وتلك هي المادّة الأولى . والتي في المرتبة الثانية ما حصلت لها وجودات بالأضداد التي تحصل في المادّة الأولى—وهي الأسطقسات. وهذه إذا حصلت موجودة بصور مّا ، حصل لها بحصول صورها إمكان أن توجد وجودات أخر متقابلة أيضاً ، فتصير موادّ لصور أخر . حتى إذا حصلت لها أيضاً تلك الصور ، حدث لها بالصور الثواني إمكان أن توجد أيضاً وجودات أخر متقابلة بصور متضادّة أخر . فتصير تلك أيضاً موادّ لصور أخر ، حتي إذا حصلت لها تلك أيضاً ، حدث لها بتلك الصور إمكان أن توجد أيضاً وجودات أخر متقابلة ، فتصير موادّ لصور أخر . ولا تزال هكذا إلى أن تنتهي إلى صور لا يمكن أن تكون الموجودات المتحصلة بتلك الصور موادّ لصور أخر . فتكون صور تلك الموجودات صوراً لكلّ صورة تقدّمت قبلها . وهذه الأخيرة أشرف الموجودات الممكنة . والمادّة الأولى أخسّ الموجودات الممكنة . والمتوسطات بينها أيضاً على مراتب وكلّ ما كان أقرب إلى المادّة الأولى كان أخسّ . وكلّ ما كان أقرب إلى صورة الصور

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[177] *PR* 63-68.
[178] *PR* 63.
[179] *PR* 58-59. (Translation slightly modified.)

كان أشرف . فالمادّة الأولى وجودها هو أن تكون لغيرها أبداً وليس لها وجود لأخل ذاتها أصلاً . فلذلك إذا
لم يوجد ذلك الذي هي مفطورة لأجله ، لم توجد هي أيضاً . ولهذا إذا لم توجد صورة من هذه الصور ، لم
توجد هي أيضاً . فلذلك لا يمكن أن توجد المادّة الأولى مفارقة لصورة ما في وقت أصلاً . وأمّا الموجودات
التي صورّها صورة الصور ، فهي لأجل ذاتها أبداً و لا يمكن أن تكون بصورها مفطورة لأجل غيرها——
أعني ليتجوهر بها شيء آخر وأن تكون موادّ لشيء آخر . ¹⁸⁰

Thus, only the existent with the highest form, the 'form of forms' (ṣura al-ṣuwar), has an

entirely independent telos. It exists for its own sake. This form, which is the 'form of

forms', is never explicitly identified by al-Fārābī, but it can only refer to one thing,

hearkening back to *De Anima* 3.8 where Aristotle uses the same terminology to refer to

the intellect.[181] Intellect is the delineating factor which identifies a sublunar existent as

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[180] *PR* 58-59.

[181] Aristotle identifies intellect (νους) as the 'form of forms' (εἶδος ειδών) within the soul (*De Anima* 432a1-a3) but adds no more specific context for the phrase. Themistius, in his *De Anima Paraphrase*, identifies the 'form of forms' (εἶδος ειδών) in two different ways. First, he identifies it with the Productive Intellect (νοῦς ποιητικός). And in a later passage, he identifies the soul (ψῡχή), namely the rational soul, with the 'form of forms' (εἶδος ειδών). He never resolves the issue. See *De Anima Paraphrase*, 100, 30-35; 115, 29. Ishāq ibn Hunayn's translation of this text is still extent. In it, he translates εἶδος ειδών to ṣura al-ṣuwar ('form of forms'), νοῦς ποιητικός to 'aql al-faʿʿāl (Active Intellect), and ψῡχή to nafs (soul). See *De Anima Paraphrase (Ar.)*, 182, 211. Alexander of Aphrodisias uses the phrase 'form of forms' (εἶδος ειδών), but the phrase's meaning is unclear. He seems to suggest that the 'form of forms' is a form which unifies several kinds of bodies in order that they become one superior body, similar to al-Fārābī's functional use of the term 'form' mentioned in Footnote 175 above. And in this regard, Alexander's influence on al-Fārābī is apparent. But Alexander also identifies the 'form of forms' with the 'perfection of perfections' (τελειότης τελειότήτων). And while he later identifies the highest perfection as the part of the soul which is rational (λογῐκόν) [*CDA* 29, 22-24], he uses the term 'perfection' too frequently and in too many contexts, often linked with actuality itself (ἐντελέχειᾰ) [*CDA* 17, 12-13], to know what he means. Either, the 'form of forms' is simply any form which unifies multiple independent substances within a single substance (i.e., the perfection of some other perfections), or the 'form of forms' is the intellect, the part of the rational animal which unifies the abstracted forms of all other substances (i.e., the perfection of all other perfections) [*CDA* 89, 21-91,6]. Unfortunately, he never uses the phrase again, and Ishāq ibn Hunayn's translation of the text is no longer extant. A contemporary of al-Fārābī's, Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī, who, at least, dwelled in Baghdad at the same time as al-Fārābī between the years of 939 and 942 C.E. and studied under al-Fārābī's student Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, also used the terminology of 'form of forms' (ṣura al-ṣuwar) in his treatise *On the Specific Perfection of the Human Species*. He identifies the 'form of forms' as the Intellect, and he credits this doctrine to Aristotle. He also equates the 'forms of forms' with the 'power of powers' (quwwa al-quwan). *On the Specific Perfection of the Human Species*, 220-221. See also Kraemer 1986, 1-2, 24-25, 300. All told, while the specific meaning behind al-Fārābī's usage is unclear, it can be surmised that he is either referencing the intellect of the rational animal, following an amalgamation of Themistius' second usage of the phrase and the second interpretation of Alexander's usage, or the Active Intellect, following Themistius' first usage. The existents (mawjūdat) whose form is the 'form of forms' is clear, insofar as they are the only sublunary existent who are always for their own sakes, namely humans. And it is clear that he is referring to the intellect here, given the historical context of the phrase and the distinguishing accident that makes the rational animal distinct from other creatures. However, at times he describes the fully actualized intellect of the human being, the acquired intellect, as a substrate for the Active Intellect, and he

existing for its own sake. Thus, the sublunar world is ranked, like the superlunar world, according to the deficiency of its ranks. The highest existent is that which can become actual intellect, i.e., humans, and the lowest, i.e., matter, is that which does not properly exist at all, but only serves as a principle of bodies which themselves serve as both intelligibles for and materials, servants, and instruments of the existents who have intellect.

This is a fascinating quirk of al-Fārābī's cosmos; many existents lack any innate ability to fulfill their telos at the outset. (This echoes al-Fārābī's introduction of the concept of a frustrated telos with the celestial bodies, who lack that toward which they move from the outset and whose teleological fulfillment is always achieved only in the future.)[182] Rather than a cosmos in which every existent has its own defined telos and the ability to fulfill that telos, instead, it is the nature of the generosity (*jūd*) of the First, in al-Fārābī's cosmos, to give existence to all possible existents, regardless of their deficiency. As he explains in the *Perfect State*:

> The substance of the First is a substance from which every existent emanates, however it may be, whether perfect or deficient. But the substance of the First is also such that all the existents, when they emanate from it, are arranged in an order of rank, and that every existent gets its allotted share and rank of existence from it. It starts with the most perfect existent and is followed by something a little less perfect than it. Afterwards it is followed successively by more and more deficient existents until the final stage of being is reached beyond which no existence whatsoever is possible, so that the existents come to an end at the stage beyond which nothing exists at all, or rather, beyond which there is that which

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describes both the acquired intellect as a form for the actual intellect and the actual intellect as a form for the potential intellect. See *PS*15.8; *EI* 22. This is all in spite of the fact that al-Fārābī denies the possibility in the *Political Regime* that any form can exist independently from matter, explicitly denying that the intellect is a form (unless one uses the term homonymously). *PR* 58-59. It seems that in the passage above, he is using the term homonymously, following the tradition. And while the exact reference of 'form of forms' remains opaque, it is clear that it references some intellect which acts as a form (to use the term homonymously) for the rational animal.; cf. Vallat 2011, 280. Here, Vallat reads the passage from the *Fuṣūl Mabādi'*, referenced in Note 82, as meaning the 'form of forms' rather than simply the formal cause of the cosmos, along with *PS* 2.2-3, contra Druart, Janos, and my presentation here.
[182] *PR* 54; *PS* 7.7.

cannot possibly exist. Inasmuch as the substance of the First is a substance from which all the existents emanate, while it does not neglect any existence beneath its existence, it is generous, and its generosity (*jūd*) is in its substance; and inasmuch as all the existents receive their order of rank from it, and each existent receives from the First its allotted share of existence in accordance with its rank, the First is just, and its justice is in its substance.[183]

وجوهره جوهر يفيض منه كل وجود كيف كان ذلك الوجود ، كان كاملا أو ناقصا. وجوهره أيضا جوهر ، إذا فاضت منه الموجودات كلها بترتيب مراتبها ، حصل عنه لكل موجود قسطه الذي له من الوجود ومرتبته منه. فيبتدئ من أكملها وجودا ثم يتلوه ما هو أنقص منه قليلا ، ثم لا يزال بعد ذلك يتلو الأنقص إلى أن ينتهي إلى الموجود الذي إن تخطى عنه إلى ما دونه تخطى إلى ما لم يمكن أن يوجد أصلا ، فتنقطع الموجودات من الوجود. وبان جوهره جوهرا تفيض منه الموجودات من غير أن يخص بوجود دون وجوده. فهو جواد ، ووجوده هو في جوهره ، ويترتب عنه الموجودات ، ويتحصل لكل موجود قسطه من الوجود بحسب رتبته عنه. فهو عدل ، وعدالته في جوهره ، وليس ذلك لشيء خارج عن جوهره.[184]

This is echoed in the *Political Regime*, where he says:

Since the existence of the possible is one of the two modes of the existent, and possible existence is one of the two modes of existence, the first cause—whose existence is in its substance—does not emanate (*'afāḍa*) existence only to what cannot not exist; rather, it emanates existence to what can not exist, so that there remains no mode of existence it has not given.[185]

فلمّا كان الممكن وجوده هو أحد نحوَي الموجود الممكن أحد نحوي الوجود ، فإنّ السبب الأوّل الذي وجوده في جوهره ليس إنما أفاض بوجود ما لا يمكن أن لا يوجد فقط بل بوجود ما يمكن أن لا يوجد حتي لا يبقى شيء من أنحاء الوجود إلاّ أعطاه.[186]

This generosity of the First results in the most fecund of all possible worlds. Whether or not the most fecund of all possible worlds, including every deficient form of existence, is tantamount to the best of all possible worlds is a question which falls outside the purview of this project. That said, al-Fārābī can only be understood in light of this fecundity, because to judge, for example, the use of beneficent political deception within the context of a cosmos whose existents are teleologically sufficient, rather than teleologically deficient, would be to judge a straw man, i.e., assuming al-Fārābī's political prescriptions

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[183] *PS* 2.2.
[184] *PS* 2.2.
[185] *PR* 57.
[186] *PR* 57.

are faulty by appealing to a notion that every existent is capable of achieving its telos (and, in the case of humans, individual happiness) is not a critique of his politics at all, but rather his metaphysics.[187] For al-Fārābī, the sublunar world is an inherently deficient portion of the cosmos, with relatively few of its existents fulfilling their telos. The existents below the moon are comprised of two principles of possibility, matter, which is possibly all substances below the moon, and form, which is definite but may be at one moment and not be at another.[188] For a thing to achieve its telos is an outcome which is merely possible, not guaranteed.

As a result of the deficiency of sublunary existents, they require external movers. As al-Fārābī explains, in a rich passage of the *Political Regime*:

> The existents beneath the heavenly bodies are at the terminal point of defectiveness with respect to existence. That is because at the outset they were not given everything by which they are made completely substantial. Rather, they were given only their substances in remote potentiality, not in actuality. For they were given only their primary material. Therefore, they are always striving toward the form by which they are made substantial. And primary material is potentially all of the substances that are beneath the heavens. Insofar as they are potentially substances, they move so as to attain substance in actuality. Then—due to their posteriority, backwardness, and vile existence—it obtains that they are unable in and of themselves to be aroused and to strive toward becoming perfected except by an external mover. Their external mover is the heavenly body and its parts, then the active intellect. For both of these perfect the existence of the things that are beneath the heavenly body. Such is the substance, nature, and action of the heavenly body that from it results first of all the existence of primary material. Then, after that, it gives primary material all that is in its nature, possibility, and disposition to accept from the forms, whatever they may be. By its nature and substance, the active intellect is prepared to look into everything the heavenly body makes ready and gives. Thus it wants to make whatever accepts transcendence and separation from material in some particular way transcend material and privation so that it will come to be in a ranking closer to it. That is, so that potential intelligibles become actual intelligibles and an intellect that was a potential intellect thereby gets to be an actual intellect. It is not possible for anything other than a human being to come to be like

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[187] And of course, as mentioned in Chapter 2, this project aims to provide a descriptive account of the assumed premises for al-Fārābī's Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception, not one which assesses their validity.
[188] *PR* 54, 57.

that. So this is the ultimate happiness that is the most excellent perfection it is possible for a human being to obtain. Through these two is perfected the existence of the things that remain subsequent and that—to be drawn out into existence— need the modes such as to draw them out into existence and the modes such as to continue their existence.[189]

وأمّا الموجودات التي دون الأجسام السماويّة فإنّها في نهاية النقص في الوجود . وذلك أنها لم تعط من أوّل الأمر جميع ما تتجوهر به على التمام ، بل إنّما أعطيت جواهرها التي لها بالقوّة البعيدة فقط لا بالفعل إذ كانت إنّما أعطيت مادّتها الأولى فقط . ولذلك هي أبداً ساعية إلى ما تتجوهر به من الصورة . فالمادّة الأولى هي بالقوّة جميع الجواهر التي تحت السماء ؛ فمن جهة ما هي جواهر بالقوّة تتحرّك إلى أن تحصل جواهر بالفعل. ثمّ بلغ من تأخرها وتخلّفها وخساسة وجودها أن صارت لا يمكنها أن تنهض وتسعى من تلقاء أنفسها الى استكمالاتها إلّا بمحرّك من خارج . ومحرّك كها من خارج هو الجسم السماويّ وأجزاؤه ثم العقل الفعّال . فإنّ هذين جميعاً يكمّلان وجود الأشياء التي تحت الجسم السماويّ . والجسم السماويّ فإنّ جوهره وطبيعته وفعله أن يلزم عنه أوّلاً وجود المادّة الأولى . ثم من بعد ذلك يعطي المادّة الأولى كل ما في طبيعتها وإمكانها واستعدادها أن تقبل من الصور كائنة ما كانت. والعقل الفعّال معدّ بطبيعته وجوهره أن ينظر في كلّ ما وطّأه الجسم السماويّ وأعطاه . فأيّ شيء منه قبل بوجه ما التخلّص من المادّة ومفارقها ، رام تخليصه من المادّة ومن / العدم فيصير في أقرب مرتبة اليه . وذلك أن تصير المعقولات التي هي بالقوّة معقولات بالفعل . فمن ذلك تحصل العقل الذي كان عقلاً بالقوّة عقلاً بالفعل . وليس يمكن أن يصير كذلك شيء سوى الإنسان ؛ فهذه السعادة القصوى التي هي افضل ما يمكن الإنسان أن يبلغه من الكمال . فعن هذين يكمل وجود الأشياء التي بقيت متأخرة واحتيج إلى إخراجها إلى الوجود بالوجوه التي شأنها أن تخرج إلى الوجود بها ، وبالوجوه التي شأنها أن يدوم وجودها بها . [190]

Along with reinforcing what has already been mentioned, that the sublunar world is the most deficient domain of the cosmos and that this deficiency hinders teleological fulfillment for sublunary existents, this passage introduces several new dimensions to the teleological account of the world below the moon. First, he introduces the two external movers which aid sublunary existents in fulfilling their telos: the celestial bodies and the Active Intellect. These will be discussed shortly. Second, he again establishes the cosmological priority of immateriality and intelligibility, and he defines human happiness through the human person becoming actual intellect.

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[189] *PR* 54-55.
[190] *PR* 54-55.

3.1. The Effects of the Celestial Bodies on Material Composites

Within al-Fārābī's political works, the composition of the material world is entirely constituted through the nature and activity of the celestial bodies.[191] Both matter and contrary forms (*al-ṣuwar al-muḍādda*) come about through their natures and motions. As he explains in the *Perfect State*:

> There follows then by necessity (a) from the nature which is common to the celestial bodies the existence of prime matter (*al-mādda al-'ūlā*) which is common to everything below them; (b) from the difference of their substances the existence of many bodies which differ in substance; (c) from the contrariety of their relations the existence of the forms which are contrary to one another (*al-ṣuwar al-muḍādda*); (d) from the alternating contrary relations in them and their succession, the alternating of the contrary forms which prime matter receives in succession; (e) from the occurrence of contrary and mutually incompatible relations of a number of celestial bodies to one particular thing at one and the same moment the mixture and blending of things which have contrary forms. It also follows by necessity (a) that from the classes of these different mixtures many species of bodies arise; (b) that from those of their relations which repeat themselves and come back things arise whose existence repeats itself and comes back—some of them after a short interval, others after a long one—and that from those of their relations and modes which do not repeat themselves but arise (only once) in a given time, without having been before and without going to arise (again) in future, things (arise) which arise once and never repeat themselves.[192]

> فيلزم عن الطبيعة المشتركة التي لها ، وجود المادة الأولى المشتركة لكل ما تحتها ؛ وعن اختلاف جواهرها ، وجود أجسام كثيرة مختلفة الجواهر؛ وعن تضاد نسبها واضافاتها ، وجود الصور المتضادة ؛ وعن تبدل متضادات النسب عليها وتعاقبها ، تبدل الصور المتضادة على المادة الأولى وتعاقبها؛ وعن حصول نسب متضادة واضافات متعاندة إلى ذات واحدة في وقت واحد من جماعة أجسام فيها اختلاط في الأشياء ذات الصور المتضادة وامتزاجاتها؛ وأن يحدث عن أصناف تلك الامتزاجات المختلفة ، أنواع كثيرة من الأجسام؛ ويحدث عن إضافاتها التي تكرر وتعود ، الأشياء التي يتكرر وجودها ويعود بعضها في مدة أقصر وبعضها في مدة أطول؛ وعن ما لا يتكرر من اضافاتها وأحوالها ، بل إنما تحدث في وقت ما من غير أن تكون قد كانت فيما سلف ، ومن غير أن تحدث فيما بعد الأشياء التي تحدث ولا تتكرر أصلاً.[193]

One must be careful when reading this passage to remember that al-Fārābī is primarily discussing principles which actually exist only within substances and within the context

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[191] The *Epistle on the Intellect* has a slightly different cosmological story. See Note 198, below, for further detail.
[192] *PS* 8.1.
[193] *PS* 8.1.

of an eternal cosmos. In other words, prime matter (*al-mādda al-'ūlā*) does not exist

independently from form (*ṣūra*), nor have either material forms or matter ever existed

except as component principles of bodies.[194] They are the two principles of possibility for

possible existents, matter being possibly all forms and material form always existing as

something, but possibly existing or not existing.[195] As al-Fārābī says:

> Opposite existents come to be only through contrary forms (*al-ṣuwar al-muḍādda*). When something attains one of the two contraries, that is its definite existence (*taḥṣīl*). What makes it possible for it to exist according to two contrary existences is material. So through material the existence it comes to have is indefinite, whereas through form its existence comes to be definite. Thus, it has two existences: a definite existence through one thing and an indefinite existence through another thing. Therefore, its existence by dint of its material is at one time to be like this and at another time like that; whereas by dint of its form, it exists like this, alone, without its opposite. Thus, it necessarily results that both existences are given — that is, at one moment according to this and at another moment according to its opposite.[196]

وموجودات المتقابلة إنّما تكون بالصور المتضادّة . وحصول الشيء على أحد المتضادّين هو وجوده على
التحصيل . والذي به يمكن أن يوجد الوجودين المتضادّين هو المادّة . فبالمادّة يكون وجوده الذي يكون له
على غير تحصيل و بالصورة يكون وجوده المحصّل . فله وجودان : وجود محصّل بشيء مّا ووجود غير
محصّل بشيء آخر . فلذلك وجوده بحقّ مادّته أن يكون مرّة هذا ومرّة ذلك ، وبحقّ صورته أن يوجد هذا
وحده دون مقابله . فلذلك يلزم ضرورة أن يعطى الوجودين جميعاً ، و ذلك بحسب حق هذا حيناً و بحسب
مقابله حيناً .[197]

The form is that through which matter is defined, its acquisition or achievement (*taḥṣīl*).

Matter is that in which contrary forms successively come to be. But both of these

principles come from the celestial bodies.[198]

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[194] *PR* 36, 58.

[195] *PR* 56-57.

[196] *PR* 57.

[197] *PR* 57.

[198] Al-Fārābī is somewhat inconsistent between works concerning his cosmology. Largely, as mentioned in Chapter 2, this can be explained by dividing up his corpus into an early phase which adopts creation in time as a doctrine and a later phase which adopts an eternal emanationist account of the cosmos (i.e., what I have called the mature al-Fārābī). But there are still works which do not fit neatly into either category, namely his commentaries. Regarding the cosmological composition of the sublunar world in particular, al-Fārābī's *Epistle on the Intellect* presents a distinct emanation scheme compared with his other later works, specifically the *Perfect State* and the *Political Regime*. In the *Epistle on the Intellect*, al-Fārābī credits the Active Intellect, rather than the celestial bodies, with the emanation of sublunar forms. This difference between the texts has been used by others, along with some shifts in al-Fārābī's terminology, to distance *EI*

Returning to the rich passage from *PS* 8.1 quoted above, one can see that al-Fārābī credits the composition of sublunar bodies entirely to the celestial bodies. His account is unfortunately rather meager here, and largely unsupplemented excepting only a parallel passage from *PR* in which he says:

> The heavenly bodies are many, and they move in many sorts of circular motions around the earth. The power of the first heaven, which is one, attaches to all of them. Therefore, they all move with the motion of the first heaven. And they have other powers that make them distinct and in which their motions are different. So, from the power in which the whole of the heavenly body shares, there results the existence of primary material common to everything beneath the heavens. And from the things that make them distinct, there results the existence of the many different forms in primary material.[199]

والأجسام السماويّة كثيرة وهي تتحرّك باستدارة حول الأرض أصنافاً من الحركات كثيرة . ويلحق جميعها قوّة السماء الأولى وهي واحدة. فلذلك تتحرّك كلّها بحركة السماء الأولى ولها قوى أخر تتباين فيها وتختلف بها حركاتها . فالقوّة التي تشترك فيها جملة الجسم السماويّ يلزم عنها وجود المادّة الأولى المشتركة لجيع ما تحت السماء . ويلزم عن الأشياء التي تتباين بها وجود الصور الكثيرة المختلفة في المادّة الأولى .[200]

Thus, between these two accounts, al-Fārābī reveals that the entire sublunar world is an effect of the celestial bodies' motions. *PS* explains that prime matter comes about through

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from the accounts found in *PR* and *PS*. See Davidson 1992, 47; Druart 1981, 35; Janos 2012, 179; Taylor 2006, 152; Finnegan 1957, 136. These authors give good reason for readers to treat the *Epistle on the Intellect* with care, and they are right that some change in doctrine occurs between the *Epistle on the Intellect* and al-Fārābī's political works. But whereas the aforementioned scholars suggest that *EI* should be viewed as espousing an entirely distinct, if still similar, cosmological model, there is good reason to read *EI* as containing an unrefined, but compatible, version of al-Fārābī's mature emanation scheme. Namely, because al-Fārābī has a terminological shift concerning the term 'form' (*ṣūra*) in which al-Fārābī bundles together two homonymous definitions of 'form' in the *Epistle on the Intellect*, i.e., form as a definitional principle for material composites and form as an intelligible, he erroneously seems to suggest that the Active Intellect emanates the former definition of form, while once he recognizes the distinction between these homonymous definitions in his later works, he only places the latter definition of form under the Active Intellect's purview. In other words, al-Fārābī places intelligibility under the providence of the Active Intellect and materiality under the providence of the Celestial bodies across his works. See *EI* 32-33. That said, al-Fārābī's mature political works are clear that only the Celestial Bodies constitute the material world. Further study is warranted. For the purposes of the current project, the presentation of al-Fārābī's sublunar model will follow that which is explicitly presented in his political works, though passages from *EI* will be used for context. In what follows, I will, however, take care to delineate between these homonymous definitions when referencing form as definitional principle for material by referring to 'material forms' or 'contrary forms', simply to prevent this confusion and that which is referred to in Note 175. See also Note 208.

[199] *PR* 55.
[200] *PR* 55.

"the nature which is common to the celestial bodies", while the *PR* reveals what this nature is, namely the power bestowed on all of the celestial bodies through the motion of the First Heavens.[201] Contrary forms (*al-ṣuwar al-muḍādda*) are brought about through the contrariety between the relations of the heavens, insofar as each celestial body shares in the motion which occurs above it while also having its own distinct motion.[202] Put simply, the sublunar world is just a mixture (*ikhtilāṭ*), an effect of the disarray of the relations between heavenly motions, a mixture whose cause brings about the emergence of substance always with the promise of its destruction, insofar as forms in the sublunar world always have a contrary, being sourced in contrariety. Because of the complexity of the motions of the heavens, complex bodies arise. As al-Fārābī explains, the motions of the heavens bring about the bodies of the elements, and the mixing of the elements brings about more complex bodies (with the rational animal being the highest rank of sublunar body).[203]

This results in a dissonant teleological picture. On the one hand, the motions of the celestial bodies generate a sublunar world which maximizes possible existence, propagating substance as an expression of their ultimate origin in the First and their proximate origin as the substantification of the Secondary Causes. On the other hand, the generation of substances within the sublunar world does not occur as an expression of the celestial bodies, per se, but the contrariety of their motions; the mixture (*ikhtilāṭ*) is accidental to the celestial bodies themselves. The sublunar world reflects both the ordered ranks of the cosmos and the contrariety between the motions of the heavens.

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[201] *PS* 8.1.; *PR* 55.
[202] *PS* 8.1.; *PR* 55.
[203] *PR* 58.

Reflecting on one of the analogies used by al-Fārābī, borrowed from Book I of the *Physics*, illustrates this point.[204] He says:

> Form is the bodily substance in a body, like the shape of a bed in a bed. And material is like the wood of a bed. So form is that by which embodied substance becomes actual substance, and material is that by which it comes to be potential substance. For a bed is a potential bed insofar as it is wood, and it becomes an actual bed when its shape is attained in the wood. Form is constituted in material, and material is a subject to carry forms. For forms are not constituted in themselves, but need to exist in a subject; and material is their subject. The existence of material is only for the sake of the forms… Therefore, when forms do not exist, the existence of material is in vain. And nothing in natural existents is in vain (*bāṭil*).[205]

> والصورة هي في الجسم الجوهر الجسمانيّ ، مثل السريك في السرير ، والمادّة مثل جشب السرير .
> فالصورة هي التي بها يصير الجوهر المتجسّم جوهراً بالفعل ، والمادّة هي التي بها يكون جوهراً بالقوّة .
> فإنّ السرير هو سرير بالقوّة من جهة ما هو خشب ، ويصير سريراً بالفعل متى حصل شكله في الخشب .
> والصورة قوامها بالمادّة ، والمادّة موضوعة لحصل الصور . فإنّ الصور ليس لها قوام بذواتها وهي
> محتاجة إلى أن تكون موجودة في موضوع ، وموضوعها المادّة . والمادّة إنما وجودها لأجل ألصور ...
> فلذلك متى لم توجد الصور ، كان وجود المادّة بالطلاً ، وليس في الموجودات الطبيعيّة شيء باطل . [206]

This analogy informs the reader about al-Fārābī's worldview in several, perhaps not unexpected, ways: first, form functions as the determinate principle for sublunar composites; second, material form requires a substrate; third, form and matter naturally depend upon one another; and, fourth, natural existents (and the principles which actualize natural existents) are teleologically necessitated. (This final point is a corollary to al-Fārābī's insistence that the cosmos is the most fecund of all possible worlds.) Little about this analogy is novel to the discussion above about the sublunar world, except the ill-fitting analogy itself, in which he follows Aristotle in comparing natural substances to beds. This is notable, because beds are artifacts.[207] As such, they imply an artisan. And

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[204] *Physics* I 191a9-191a12. See also *Physics* II 192b12-23, 193a13-16.
[205] *PR* 36-37.
[206] *PR* 36-37.
[207] Aristotle famously limits his analogy by designating the bed as disanalogous to natural substances insofar as it is a product of art. *Physics* II 192b12-23. See also *Physics* II 193b7-193b12. Obviously, al-Fārābī is aware of this distinction, and he mentions that beds are not natural, but produced by art, when he uses this analogy in other contexts (e.g., *BL* 99-100). However, he does not limit the analogy here.

while this aspect of the analogy would hold if al-Fārābī's cosmology had a demiurgic principle like Plato's *Timaeus* or a *dator formarum* (*wāhib al-ṣuwar*) like Avicenna's cosmology, as has been shown, al-Fārābī's mature cosmology does not provide an artisanal principle which imbues sublunar composites with intrinsic intelligibility.[208] Put otherwise, the generation of sublunar existents within al-Fārābī's cosmos is dissimilar to the generation of a bed, in which an artisan intentionally imposes a shape into the wood, although al-Fārābī's sublunar existents do have both shape and substrate. Rather, the origination of sublunar composites is more akin to putting numerous pieces of wood and nails (or rather the elements of which wood and iron are composed) into a giant cement mixer, with the vigorous motion of the mixer producing a bed.

This is perhaps the oddest characteristic of al-Fārābī's cosmological model, namely, that an entirely unintentional and unintelligible process, whose principles are matter produced through the motion of the First Heavens which is required by the deficiency of embodiment and forms produced through the contrariety between the motions of the rest of the heavens, causes existents who are themselves able to be made intelligible and intended by intellects.[209] (Although, the process of rendering the sublunar world intelligible requires the help of another existent, the Active Intellect, as will be discussed below.) Put simply, al-Fārābī's model produces the same bed as the artisan without working from a blueprint. Instead, the blueprint, i.e., the intelligibility of the existent, is rendered after the bed has already been produced by the mixture. The sublunar

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[208] Al-Fārābī does seem to have the Active Intellect act as the *dator formarum* in his *Epistle on the Intellect*, although it is unclear in what sense these forms given by the Active Intellect to the sublunar world are anything above and beyond mere intelligibility, given that it only acts upon that which matter has made ready. *EI* 29, 32-33; See Notes 175 and 198. See also *Timaeus* 28af.; *Shifā' (Metaphysics)* 9.5.3; *Najāt* (Ar.) 317. For Avicenna's implicit critique of al-Fārābī's lack of a *dator formarum*, see Davidson 1992, 78-79.

[209] *PR* 34-35.

world is intelligible, but its intelligibility is extrinsic rather than intrinsic to the existents within it. The intelligibility of existents is made actual only *after* they are already actualized as substances. This process is modelled in Figure 3.1, which will be expanded upon in more detail later.

Figure 3.1
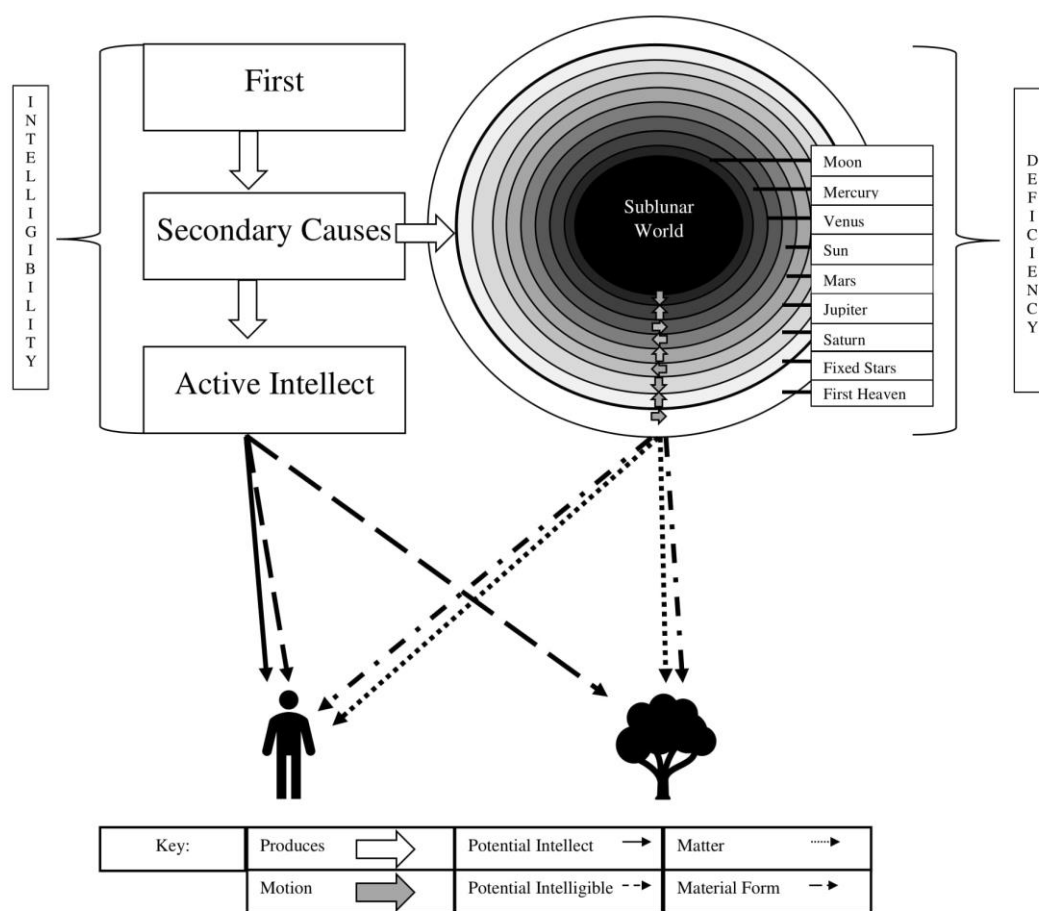
As can be seen in Figure 3.1, human beings, as material composites, are not immune to the foibles and imperfections brought about by the contrariety and deficiency

which are the consequence of heavenly motions. In short, like the entire sublunar world,

human beings are naturally deficient. Humans, even as the only sublunar existents

capable of happiness, need external help in order to fulfill their teleological purpose. It is

no wonder, then, that human communities are themselves marred by deficiency.

3.1.1. The Effects of the Celestial Bodies on the *Umma*

Properly speaking, there is no account of human society prior to the influence of

the Active Intellect, which bestows upon the human person the power for abstraction and

the first principles which ground human intellection.[210] The Active Intellect is ever

present, and the human soul is disposed toward knowledge even prior to the development

of language.[211] But thematically speaking, it is useful for the purposes of this project to

divide up human societies into those societies unduly influenced by the celestial bodies,

i.e., those societies lacking demonstrative science or those ruled by "corrupt religion"

(*milla fāsida*), and those societies which are governed according to demonstrative

science, i.e., those societies whose rulers are philosophers and whose religion is "true

religion" (*milla ṣaḥīḥa*). For this reason, this section will proceed to account for the role

of the celestial bodies on societies, particularly those who lack true religion (*milla

ṣaḥīḥa*) even though, once speaking about any human persons, the influence of the Active

Intellect is felt (even if the fruition of the Active Intellect's effects is only realized within

societies ruled by philosophy).

The character of any nation (*umma*) is determined by its relation to the celestial

bodies for al-Fārābī. That said, a large caveat should be made concerning the

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[210] *PS* 13.3; *EI* 24-25; *PR* 35-36, 71-72. See Section 3.2.1.
[211] *BL* 114-115, 135. See Orwin 217, 71.

incommensurate role of the celestial bodies upon individual nations, namely the role of any individual human's volition, which appears to be a first principle for al-Fārābī and the only factor preventing him from adopting an entirely deterministic metaphysics.[212]

Still, concerning societies writ large, the celestial bodies are the primary influence of traits. As al-Fārābī explains:

> One nation is distinguished from another by two natural things—natural temperaments and natural states of character—and by a third, conventional, thing having some basis in natural things, namely, the tongue — I mean, the language through which expression comes about. And among nations, some are large and some small. The first natural cause for the difference in nations with respect to these objects are [various] things. One of them is the difference in the parts of the heavenly bodies that face them with respect to the first sphere, then with respect to the sphere of the fixed stars. Then, there is the difference in the positions of the inclined spheres from parts of the earth and what occurs in those parts because of the spheres' proximity or distance. Following that is the difference in the parts of the earth that are the dwelling-places of the nations. For, from the outset, this difference follows from the difference in the parts of the first sphere facing them, then the difference in the fixed stars facing them, and then the difference in the positions of the inclined spheres with respect to them. From the difference in the parts of the earth follows the difference in the vapors that arise from the earth. Because every vapor is generated from a soil, it resembles that soil. Following from the difference in the vapors is the difference in air and the difference in water, due to the water in every country coming into being from the vapors that are beneath the soil of that country. And the air in each country is mixed with the vapor that rises up to it from the soil. Likewise, from the difference in the sphere of the fixed stars facing it, in the first sphere, and in the positions of the inclined spheres follows the difference in air and in water. From these follow the difference in plants and the difference in the species of nonrational animals; thus, the nutriments of the nations differ. Following from the difference in their nutriments is the difference in the materials and crops from which come to be the people who succeed those who pass away. Following from that is the difference in temperaments and in natural states of character. Moreover, the difference in the parts of the heavens that face their heads is also a cause for the difference in temperaments and states of character in a way other than what was mentioned. Likewise, the difference in air is also a cause for the difference in temperaments and states of character in a way other than what was mentioned. Then from the mutual help of these differences and their being mixed arise different minglings according to which the temperaments of nations and their states of character

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[212] *PS* 2.1; *PR* 47; *LDI* 83-84, 92-93; *LDI* (Ar.) 89-90, 98; *SDI* 246; *SDI* (Ar.) 82. See also Druart 1997, 417. What exactly al-Fārābī means by will (*'irāda*) and choice (*ikhtiyār*), especially in relation to deliberation and reason, is a topic requiring further study. See *PS* 13.4, 18.4; *PR* 72. See also Note 215.

differ. In this way and according to this manner there is a consonance of these natures, a tying of some to others, and rankings of them. And this is the extent reached by the heavenly bodies in perfecting them. Now it is not up to the heavenly bodies to give the other perfections that remain; rather, that is up to the active intellect. To no species other than the human being is it possible for the active intellect to give the remaining perfections.[213]

والأمّة تتميّز عن الأمّة بشيئين طبيعيّين : بالخِلَق الطبيعيّة والشِيم الطبيعيّة ، وبشيء ثالث وضعيّ وله مدخل مّا في الأشياء الطبيعيّة وهو اللسان أعني اللغة التي بها تكون العبارة . فمن الأمم ما هي كبار ومنها ما هي صغار . والسبب الطبيعيّ الأوّل في اختلاف الأمم في هذه الأمور أشياء أحدها اختلاف أجزاء الأجسام السماويّة التي تسامتهم من الكرة الأولى ، ثم من كرة الكواكن الثابتة ، ثم اختلاف أوضاع الأكر المائلة من أجزاء الأرض وما يعرض لها من القرب والبعد .ويتبع ذلك اختلاف أجزاء الأرض التي هي مساكن الأمم . فإن هذا الإختلاف إنما يتبع من أوّل الأمر إختلاف ما يُسامتها من أجزاء الكرة الأولى ، ثم اختلاف ما يُسامتها من الكواكبه الثابتة ، ثم اختلاف أوضاع الأكر المائلة منها. ويتبع اختلاف أجزاء الأرض اختلاف البخارات التي تتصاعد من الأرض . و كلّ بخار حادث من أرض فإنّه يكون مثاكلاً لتلك الأرض . ويتبع اختلاف البخار اختلاف الهواء واختلاف المياه من قِبَل أنّ المياه في كلّ بلد إنّما تتكوّن من البخار هت التي تحت أرض ذلك البلد . وهواء كل بلد مختلط بالبخار الذي يتصاعد إليه من الأرض . وكذلك يتبع أيضاً اختلاف ما يسامّها من كرة الكواكب الثابتة واختلاف الكرة الأولى واختلاف أوضاع الأكر المائلة اختلاف الهواء واختلاف المياه . ويتبع هذه اختلاف النبات واختلاف أنواع الحيون غير / الناطق ، فتختلف أغذية الأمم . و يتبع اختلاف أغذيتها اختلاف الموادّ والزرع التي منها يتكوّن الناس الذين يخلفون الماضين . ويتبع ذلك اختلاف الخِلَق واختلاف الشِيم الطبيعيّة . وأيضاً فإنّ اختلاف ما يسامت رؤوسهم من أخزاء السماء يكون أيضاً سبباً لاختلاف الخِلق والشِيم بغير الجهة التي ذكرت . وكذلك اختلاف الهواء أيضاً يكون سبباً لاختلاف الخِلق والشِيم بغير الجهة التي ذكرت . ثم يحدث من تعاون هذه الإختلافات واختلاطها امتزاجات مختلفة تختلف بها خِلَق الأمم وشيمهم . فعلى هذه الجهة وبهذا النحو ائتلاف هذه الطبيعيّات وارتبات بعضها ببعض ومراتبُها ، وإلى هذا المقدار تبلغ الأجسام السماويّة في تكميل هذه . فما يبقى بعد ذلك من الكمالات الأخر فليس من شأن الأجسام السماويّة أن تعطيَه بل ذلك من شأن العقل الفعّال . وليس من هذه نوع يمكن أن يعطيَه العقل الفعّال الكمالات الباقية سوع الإنسان .[214]

Here, al-Fārābī gives an entirely naturalistic account of the difference between one nation (*umma*) and another. (The development of language will be addressed below.) Namely, climatological differences explain the differences in peoples.[215] He explains the effects of the celestial bodies on the soil, vapors, water, plants, and thus the nutrients taken in by people within a particular clime. However, in other texts, he is clearer about the causes of these differences in effects. For example, the position of the sun affects the heat of a

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[213] *PR* 70-71.

[214] *PR* 70-71.

[215] Both Druart and Janos have done extensive research on this topic, both insofar as the celestial bodies influence nations and insofar as al-Fārābī accepts astronomical causality while rejecting astrological influence on human choice. See Druart 1981, 36-38; Druart 1978, 44-45, 47; Janos 2012, 45f., 117f. See also Orwin 2017, 45f.

place, as the scattering of the sun's rays through the air induces warmth, and the position

of the moon affects the tides, soaking the soil and creating lush growth (and fattened

animals).[216] All told, different regions of the earth are affected according to their locations

in relation to the heavenly bodies, and the mixture which brings about sublunar existents

is affected both by the motions of the celestial bodies themselves (e.g., when the

placement of the moon affects the tides) and by the motions of their luminous emissions

which themselves carry heat (e.g., when the sun shines on a particular location).[217]

Differences in place result in differences in clime, which result in differences in soil,

vapors, vegetation, and wildlife. Altogether, this results in differences in nutriments

which result in differences in temperaments and states of character between peoples of

different regions.[218] As a result, al-Fārābī establishes that nations are distinct not

according to culture, but according to nature. (In fact, the character of a nation's culture is

fixed through natural causes.)[219] Whether or not nations are the preeminent mode of

association (*ijtimāʿ*) for al-Fārābī is matter of great debate, but it is clear that nations are

the only cosmologically determined association, insofar as they correspond to the

physical location of a people and are made manifest by natural causes like diet.[220]

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[216] *PAS* 109-110.

[217] See Druart 1981, 36f.

[218] As has been noted by Joshua Parens, al-Fārābī never expands upon the distinction between temperaments/innate dispositions (*khilaq*) and characters/dispositions (*shiyam*), although Parens suggests the possibility that the former is "more narrowly physical in meaning" while the latter is "more psychological or moral in meaning". For the purposes of this project, it is enough to assume that both the physical and psychological characteristics of an *umma* are established through heavenly motions. See Parens 2006, 88f.

[219] *PR* 70-71; *BL* 114. See also Orwin 2017, 46; Parens 2006, 88f.

[220] Al-Fārābī makes a distinction between imperfect associations (e.g., villages, city quarters, streets, and households) and perfect associations (international communities, nations, and cities). He describes the international community as the greatest (*ʿuẓmā*) perfect association, but it is unclear whether he simply means this in terms of size. He describes the city as the first (*ʾawwal*) example of the most perfect association, but it is unclear if he means genealogically or in terms of value. He describes the nation as the complete or perfect association (*kāmil*), though in the context, he is not comparing it with international

3.1.1.1. Human Association

That human beings require association (*ijtimāʿ*) at all is both a practical and

metaphysical concern. As al-Fārābī explains:

> In order to preserve himself and to attain his highest perfections every human being
> is by his very nature in need of many things which he cannot provide all by himself;
> he is indeed in need of people who each supply him with some particular need of
> his. Everybody finds himself in the same relation to everybody in this respect.
> Therefore man cannot attain the perfection, for the sake of which his inborn nature
> (*al-fiṭra al-ṭabīʿiyya*) has been given to him, unless many (societies of) people who
> co-operate (*mutaʿāwinīn*) come together who each supply everybody else with some
> particular need of his, so that as a result of the contribution of the whole community
> all the things are brought together which everybody needs in order to preserve
> himself and to attain perfection.[221]

> وكل واحد من الناس مفطور على أنه محتاج ، في قوامه ، وفي أن يبلغ أفضل كمالاته ، إلى أشياء كثيرة لا
> يمكنه أن يقوم بها كلها هو وحده ، بل يحتاج إلى قوم يقوم له كل واحد منهم بشيء مما يحتاج إليه. وكل واحد
> من كل واحد بهذه الحال. فلذلك لا يمكن أن يكون الانسان ينال الكمال ، الذي لأجله جعلت الفطرة الطبيعية ، الا
> باجتماعات جماعة كثيرة متعاونين ، يقوم كل واحد لكل واحد ببعض ما يحتاج إليه في قوامه؛ فيجتمع ، مما
> يقوم به جملة الجماعة لكل واحد ، جميع ما يحتاج إليه في قوامه وفي أن يبلغ الكمال. [222]

The practical benefits of living in association (*ijtimāʿ*) with cooperation (*taʿāwun*) are

obvious; together, human beings are better able to attain their needs and preserve

themselves. In this respect, humans are no different than any number of species of plants

and animals that require association for survival and perfection.[223] But, as was mentioned

above, al-Fārābī makes special note of the teleological foundation for human

associations. In association, humans imitate the First in Its unity.

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associations and may simply be indicating that nations are not component parts of a greater whole (like, for example, a city is part of a nation). While not a trivial issue for understanding al-Fārābī's political philosophy as a whole, it is not particularly germane for the topic of political deception and need not be settled here. See *PS* 15.1-3; *PR* 69-70. See also Mahdi 2001, 140. Mahdi here, within the context of a discussion on war, notes the difference between al-Fārābī and both Plato and Aristotle concerning the absolute priority of the city. See also Orwin 2017, 39f. Orwin treats this issue with great care, noting the issues surrounding al-Fārābī's access to Aristotle's *Politics*, and is persuasive that "political cooperation in its highest sense is possible in a community of any size" for al-Fārābī [cf. Mahdi (2001, 143) and Galston (1990, 151f.), who both privilege the city, and Naṣṣar (1983, 37) and Pines (1975, 156), who both privilege the international community.]

[221] *PS* 15.1; See also *PR* 69.

[222] *PS* 15.1

[223] *PR* 69.

Al-Fārābī highlights the teleological importance of unity for human beings in a variety of ways. As noted, human connections are metaphysically grounded in imitation of the First's noetic unity as the first subject and object of love.[224] This is a common theme for al-Fārābī, who not only grounds love generally in the imitation of the First, but credits it as the bond which unifies a nation and as that which keeps the parts of the city in concert, preserving justice.[225] (This model is particularly stark in comparison with his depiction and critique of the democratic city, whose inhabitants love dwelling in this kind of city, a kind of city which may produce a small amount of virtue but also produces vice. But unlike an association truly bound by love, the democratic city is rife with multiplicity and should be viewed as many cities coinciding in the same place, not one city.)[226] Al-Fārābī's model of the excellent city follows the unity exemplified through the rankings of the superlunar cosmos, in which the king relates to the city as the First relates to all other existents.[227] The consonance between the parts of the city aims to reflect the unity of the ranks of the heavens.[228]

This depiction of unity as a central theme of human association is perhaps best seen through al-Fārābī's depiction of the literal end of human existence, i.e., the afterlife. While admittedly inconsistent on the topic, al-Fārābī's depiction of the hereafter for human beings leans heavily on the concepts of unity and love.[229] In both the *Perfect State*

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[224] *PS* 1.15, 2.3; *PR* 47, 52.
[225] *PS* 18.8; *SA* 70.
[226] *PR* 99-101; *PS* 18.18.
[227] *PS* 15.6; *PR* 83-84.
[228] *PS* 2.3.
[229] For his various positions, see *PR* 81-83; *PS* 13.5, 16.4-11; *EI* 31. In the *Political Regime*, al-Fārābī suggests that the inhabitants of ignorant cities simply cease to exist after death, their soul being nullified with their bodies. In the *Perfect State*, he seems to affirm this view, comparing the death of the ignorant to the death of cattle, beasts of prey, vipers, whose bodies simply degrade. However, he adds the category of the wicked whose rational faculty is in conflict with their bad dispositions; this group experiences distress

and the *Political Regime*, al-Fārābī depicts the felicity of the afterlife as being communal.

As he explains:

> When one generation passes away, their bodies cease to exist and their souls are released and become happy and when other people succeed them in their ranks, these people take their place and perform their actions. When this generation passes away as well and is released [from matter], they occupy in their turn the same ranks in felicity as those who passed away before, and each joins those who resemble him in species, quantity and quality. And since they are not bodies their association (*ijtimāʿ*), whatever number it were to reach, would never get them into each other's way, since they are not in space at all, and they do not meet and join mutually in the same way as bodies do. The more similar separate souls grow in number and join each other—in the way that one intelligible joins another intelligible (*maʿqūl bi-maʿqūl*)—the more increases the self-enjoyment of each of them. Whenever any member of a later generation joins them, the enjoyment of the new arrival increases when he meets those departed before him, and the joys of the departed increase when the new arrivals join them, because each soul thinks (*taʿaqalu*) its own essence (*dāthā*) and thinks (*taʿaqalu*) the like of its own essence (*mitl dāthā*) many times, and thus the quality of what it thinks increases. The increase which is taking place when the departed souls meet each other is comparable to the increase in the ability of the art of writing, when the scribe steadily applies himself to the acts of writing: the successive meetings of the souls and the increase of each soul in its quality correspond to the successive repetitions of the acts of the scribe and the resulting increase in his ability and the standard of his writing. But since the number of these souls which meet each other is infinite, the increase of the powers and joys of each of them is infinite in the eternal course of time. All this is true of every generation which passes away.[230]

فإذا مضت طائفة فبطلت أبدانها ، وخلصت أنفسها وسعدت؛ فخلفهم ناس آخرون في مرتبتهم بعدهم ، قاموا مقامهم وفعلوا أفعالهم. فإذا مضت هذه أيضا وخلصت صاروا أيضا في السعادة إلى مراتب أولئك الماضين ، واتصل كل واحد بشبيهه في النوع والكمية والكيفية. ولأنها كانت ليست بأجسام صار اجتماعها ، ولو بلغ ما بلغ ، غير مضيّق بعضها على بعض مكانها ، إذ كانت ليست في أمكنة أصلا ، فتلاقيها واتصال بعضها ببعض ليس على النحو الذي توجد عليه الأجسام . وكلما كثرت الأنفس المتشابهة المفارقة ، واتصل بعضها ببعض ، وذلك على جهة اتصال معقول بمعقول ، كان التذاذ كل واحد منها أزيد شديدا. وكلما لحق بهم من بعدهم ، زاد التذاذ من لحق الآن بمصادفة الماضين ، وزادت لذّات الماضين باتصال اللاحقين بهم ، لأن كل واحدة تعقل ذاتها وتعقل مثل ذاتها مرارا كثيرة ، فتزداد كيفية ما يعقل؛ ويكون تزايد ما تلاقى هنك شبيها بتزايد قوة صناعة الكتابة بمداومة الكاتب على أفعال الكتابة. ويقوم تلا حق بعض ببعض في تزايد كل واحد ، مقام ترادف أفعال الكاتب التي بها تتزايد كتابته قوة وفضيلة. ولأن المتلاحقين (هم) إلى غير نهاية ، يكون تزايد قوى كل واحد ولذّاته على غابر الزمان إلى غير نهاية . وتلك حال كل طائفة مضت.[231]

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when freed from matter for eternity, and this is defined as the opposite of felicity. The *Epistle on the Intellect* simply acknowledges that through intellection humans can achieve their ultimate perfection as the acquired intellect, and he defines this as the afterlife. This passage mirrors *PS* 13.5. There are also reports that al-Fārābī rejected the possibility of the afterlife entirely in his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*. For a discussion of this issue, see Chapter 2, 4.2.3.

[230] *PS* 16.4; See also *PR* 82.

[231] *PS* 16.4.

After the inhabitants of the excellent city die, their bodies are nullified, but their souls experience happiness together, not in the sense of place (*makān*), but by thinking each other's essences insofar as there is similarity between them. Put otherwise, the afterlife is not individual felicity, but the felicity of forming a noetic unity with others, to the degree that al-Fārābī describes the community as "like one soul" (*ka-nafs wāḥida*), becoming a noetic unity not dissimilar to the way the Secondary Causes form a noetic unity with the First.[232] (In fact, as will be discussed below, human felicity is ranked as being similar to the state of the existence of the Active Intellect.)[233]

All told, despite largely arising, as do all sublunar existents, as an accident of the contrary relations between the heavens brought about through the deficiency of motion, humans, like all existents, bear the teleological compulsion of their ultimate origin, the unity of the First. The aim of unity is achieved through cooperation and association. And this aim, while certainly aided by intellect, is not bestowed upon humans through the activity of the Active Intellect alone. Al-Fārābī clearly credits love, longing, friendship, and trust to the appetitive faculty, whose origination is brought about through the same mixture as all other sublunar existents, embedded in each human's natural character (*al-fiṭra al-ṭabīʿiyya*).[234]

3.1.1.2. Language and the Origins of Rhetoric and Poetry

That said, much of the character of any nation is incidental, reflecting the proximate cause of a nation's character, namely the contrariety brought about by

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[232] *PS* 16.1.
[233] *PS* 13.5; *EI* 27, 31.
[234] *PR* 33.

heavenly motions. For example, al-Fārābī credits language development initially to incidental agreement (*ittifāq*) and subsequently to convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*) and legislation (*sharīʿa*).[235] As he describes:

> That is how the letters of that nation and the expressions arising from those letters first originate. They originate first among some group or another. It so happens that one of them uses a sound or expression to indicate something when addressing someone else and the hearer memorizes it. Then the hearer uses the same expression when addressing the first inventor of that expression. In this case, the first hearer will have followed the example [of the inventor] and will have fallen in with it, in such a way that they will have agreed upon that expression and acted in concert. They then use it to address others until it spreads through a certain group. [236]

> فهكذا تحدث أوّلا حروف تلك الأمّة وألفاظها الكائنة عن تلك الحروف . ويكون ذلك أوّلا ممّن اتّفق منهم . فيتّفق أن يستعمل الواحد منهم تصوينا أو أو لفظة في الدلالة على شيء مّا عندما يخاطب غيره فيحفظ السمع ذلك ، فيستعمل السامع ذلك بعينه عندما يخاطب المنشئ الأوّل لتلك اللفظة ، ويكون السامع الأوّل قد احتذى بذلك فيقع به ، فيكونون قد اصطلحا وتواطئا على تلك اللفظة ، فيخاطبان بها غيرهما إلى أن تشيع عند جماعة . [237]

From here, speech becomes a matter of convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*) until it is dictated by legislation (*sharīʿa*).[238] Put simply, speech is determined by chance, promulgated by convention, and, finally, codified by grammatical rules into a language. This process results in a language which is particular to an individual nation, even though, following Aristotle, al-Fārābī holds that the traces in the soul, which are likeness to that which is outside the soul, are universal, common to every association.[239]

While the initial utterances of a language are somewhat arbitrary, hinging upon agreement, a nation's linguistic development is still influenced by the specific location of the nation, and, thus, the mixture which gives each nation its particular character.

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[235] *BL* 120; *LDI* 12; *LDI (Ar.)* 27. See also Orwin 2017, 48f.
[236] *BL* 120.
[237] *BL* 120.
[238] *BL* 120; *LDI* 12; *LDI (Ar.)* 27.
[239] *LDI* 10-13; *LDI (Ar.)* 24-28; *De Interpretatione* 16a6-8. See also my discussion of this passage in Oschman 2018.

Different nations have different constitutions of their organs, and, as a result, one nation's tongues and mouths will be predisposed to certain placements of their tongues within their mouths, thus producing different sounds when rapping inhaled air than when compared to another nation.[240] The beginnings of human speech are dictated both by natural disposition and chance. And insofar as one considers only the most rudimentary notion of language (e.g., language as utterances signifying traces in the soul which are likenesses to that which is outside the soul, built upon incidental agreement within the context of national temperament, insofar as it is determined by that nation's incidental relation to the celestial bodies), this poses no problem for proper signification or the establishment of a proper association. At first glance, the aimless origin of language does not pose a political problem.

However, human beings do have a teleological aim, and language, even the structure of language, affects a human being's ability to properly pursue this aim. Because, while the linguistic sciences do not themselves produce knowledge, language is the mechanism by which a way toward knowledge is found.[241] The first art to form, rhetorical science, is based upon language and unexamined opinion, influenced by the natural character of a nation.[242] The development of associations requires speeches, after all.[243] Shortly after rhetoric, humans, who seek order in all things, develop the art of poetry, establishing the rhythm and harmony of language.[244] Through these arts, an association conveys its history, establishes linguistic habit (*'āda*) and ways of thinking,

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[240] *BL* 117-118.
[241] At least, al-Fārābī credits this opinion to Plato. See *PP* 7.
[242] *BL* 129.
[243] *BL* 129.
[244] *BL* 129.

and establishes its symbolism.[245] These linguistic arts help determine the quality of any

human association in two main ways. First, the rhetorical science is used to develop

dialectic and distinguish it from sophistical argumentation, and dialectic is used to

develop the science of demonstration.[246] Thus, the quality of rhetoric, explicitly built

upon a nation's natural character (*fiṭra*), dictates whether demonstrative philosophy will

develop.[247] Second, prior to the development of philosophy or true religion (*milla*

ṣaḥīḥa), language establishes the symbols of a nation.[248]

This latter effect of language is no paltry component to the quality of human

associations; rhetoric, poetry, and the images used by a people greatly influence the

demeanor and moral development of a people. (It is no wonder then that al-Fārābī

compares the importance of the establishment of language to the establishment of civic

laws.)[249] As will be discussed below, rhetoric and poetry are that through which someone

with demonstrative knowledge is able to communicate theoretical truths (or near-truths)

to the masses.[250] And the founding Imām is limited in this process by the symbols already

present within the language of his people, using "those symbols which are best known to

[the people of the city]".[251] In other words, the communication of philosophy is

constrained by the quality of a nation's language.

However, the character of a nation's language does not simply affect the

communication of knowledge, but also its attainment. Poetry can supply a kind of

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[245] *BL* 130, 133, 138.

[246] *BL* 141, 142.

[247] Of course, human voluntary action, as well as international cross-contamination, complicate this model. *BL* 146.

[248] *BL* 114.

[249] *LDI* 12; *LDI* (Ar.) 27; See also Orwin 2017, 49.

[250] *BL* 143.

[251] وتحاكى هذه الأشياء لكل أمة ولأهل كل مدينة بالمثالات التي عندهم الأعرف فالأعرف. ; *PS* 17.2.

knowledge and shapes culture.[252] It has the force of analogy and can cause associations

between disparate notions within the soul.[253] It has the power to cultivate human

character, whether for good or ill.[254] And in the developing nation (or the soul of the

philosopher beginning her studies), linguistic imagery, rhetoric, and poetry, can be the

difference between attaining knowledge or falling into error.[255]

In a little referenced treatise on the proper ordering of philosophical study, *The*
Epistle on What Should Come Before Learning Philosophy, al-Fārābī talks about the

importance of moral character *prior to* studying philosophy, i.e., prior to having

demonstrations about ethics. In a fascinating passage, to my knowledge first noted by

T.A. Druart, al-Fārābī considers a variety of possible curricula for the student of

philosophy (e.g., those curricula laid out by Plato, Theophrastus, Boethus of Sidon, and

Andronicus).[256] He considers whether geometry, physics, or logic should precede

philosophy. The relevant passage, however, occurs when considering the position of

Theophrastus. He says:

> And as for Theophrastus, he shows that one begins [one's studies prior to
> philosophy] with the 'science of developing moral character' (*'islāh al-'ahlāq*)
> and that one who does not develop the moral character of his soul cannot possibly
> learn true science. And the evidence of this is that Plato says that he who is not
> [already] blamelessly pure, he does not approach blamelessly purity, and
> Hippocrates, where he says that bodies which are not pure are increasingly
> nourished with evil.[257]

> و اما آل اثوفرسطس فيرون ان يبدأ بعلم اصلاح الاخلاق وذلك ان من لم يصلح اخلاق نفسه لم يمكنه ان
> يتعلم علما صحيحا والشاهد على ذلك افلاطن في قوله ان من لم يكن نقيّا زكيّا فلا يدنو من نقيّ زكيّ وبقراط
> حيث يقول ان الابدان التي ليست بنقيّة كلما غذوتها زدْتها شرّا ... [258]

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[252] *PP* 7.

[253] *CP* 274; *CP* (Ar.) 267-268; *TP* 107.

[254] *PP* 7.

[255] E.g., *PS* 17.4-6.

[256] See Druart 1997, 409-10. For a discussion of the work as a whole and its reliance on the commentaries of the Alexandrian School, see Grignaschi 1968, 175-210.

[257] *ELP* 52. (Translation Mine.)

[258] *ELP* 52.

When deciding between all of the alternatives, he acknowledges the value of studying

each discipline (e.g., geometry, physics, moral development, and logic), but again re-

emphasizes Theophrastus' position, and notes the role of both proper speech and action.

He says:

> And none of these beliefs [i.e., the beliefs of Plato, Theophrastus, Boethus of Sidon, or Andronicus] should be discarded, and it is necessary, prior to the study of the science of philosophy, to develop the moral character of the appetitive soul, so that there is desire for virtue only, which is in truth virtue (not that which is mistaken for it, like pleasure or love of conquest). And this occurs through the development of moral character, not only through speech, but through deeds also. Then, after that, one develops the rational soul, so that it is protected on the path for truth and is safe from error and from falling into falsehood. And this occurs through the fulfillment of the science of demonstration. And a 'demonstrative proof' (*burhān*) is fashioned from two [sciences], from geometry and logic, as those [sciences] which are necessary to understand first. From the science of geometry [one understands] the amount of what needs to be fulfilled in a geometrical proof, then [one understands] what is fulfilled after that through the science of logic.[259]

> وليس ينبغى ان يُرذل واحد من هذه الاراء وذلك انه ينبغى قبل الدرس لعلم الفلسفة ان تصلح اخلاق النفس الشهوانية كيما يكون الشهوة للفضيلة فقط التي هي بالحقيقة فضيلة لا التي تتوّهم انها كذلك اعنى اللذّة والمحبّة الغلبة . وذلك يكون بالصلاح الاخلاق لا بالقول فقط لكن بالافعال أيضا ثم يصلح بعد ذلك النفس الناطقة كيما تقهم منها طريق للحقّ التي يؤمن معها الغلط والوقوع في الباطل وذلك يكون بالارتياض في علم البرهان ، والبرهان على ضربين منه هندسى و منه منطقى و كذلك ينبغي ان يوخذ أولا من علم الهندسة مقدار ما يحتاج في الارتياض في البراهين الهندسية ثم يرتاض بعد ذلك في علم المنتق . [260]

This passage, while not addressing the effects of poetry and rhetoric directly, reveals the

power that poetry and rhetoric can have, given their influence on a people group prior to

philosophy. If language develops character and character development is required before

the proper study of philosophy can even begin, then the quality of a nation's language

plays a pivotal role in the quality of a nation's moral (and thus scientific) development. In

truth, insofar as human happiness is achieved through knowledge, knowledge through

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[259] *ELP* 54. (Translation Mine.)
[260] *ELP* 54.

philosophy, philosophy through proper moral development, proper moral development

through language, and language through chance agreement and national character, human

happiness is de facto determined, in large part, by a nation's incidental relative position to

the heavens.[261]

    This is perhaps best exemplified in those nations where philosophy does not take

root, which are ruled by corrupt religion (*milla fāsida*). Al-Fārābī is clear that the

rhetorical method is that which is used to develop the dialectical method (which is itself

used to develop demonstration); whether rhetoric develops into demonstration depends

on the quality of the speech, human desire for knowledge, and the nation's natural

character (*fiṭra*).[262] As he says:

> If a religion is dependent upon a philosophy that has been perfected after all the
> syllogistic arts have been distinguished from one another, in the manner and order
> that we have claimed, the religion will be a valid one with the greatest excellence.
> However, if the philosophy has not yet become demonstrative, certain, and endowed
> with the greatest excellence, and if its opinions continue to be verified using
> rhetorical, dialectical, or sophistical methods, it is not impossible that all or most of
> it might contain false opinions unawares. This would be an uncertain or dubious
> philosophy. If a religion that depends upon this philosophy is founded some time
> thereafter, it will contain many false opinions. Then, if many of these false opinions
> are taken and their similes are put in their place – as religion does with those things
> that are difficult or difficult to conceive for the multitude – these opinions will be
> yet further from the truth. It will be a corrupt religion, and they will be unaware of
> its corruption. It will be even more corrupt if a lawgiver arrives afterwards and does
> not take his religion's opinions from the philosophy that happens to exist in his
> times, but takes them instead from the opinions contained in the first religion, which
> he takes to be true. He will then acquire it, adopt its similes, and teach them to the
> multitude. If yet another lawgiver arrives after him and is dependent upon the
> second lawgiver, he will be yet more corrupt. A valid religion only occurs in a
> nation in the first way mentioned; a corrupt religion occurs among them in the
> second way. In either case, religion originates only after philosophy, either certain
> philosophy, which is true philosophy, or uncertain philosophy, which is assumed to

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[261] That al-Fārābī's world is not entirely determined by the motion of the heavens is implied by his
commitment to human will and choice. See *PS* 2.1.
[262] *BL* 140-142, 146.

be philosophy though it is not in reality. This is the case when it originates among them from their own genius, natures, and souls.[263]

فإذا كانت الملّة تابعة للفلسفة التي كملت بعد أن تميّزت الصنائع القياسيّة بعضها عن بعض على الجهة والترتيب الذي اقتضينا كانت ملّة صحيحة في غاية الجودة. فأمّا إذا كانت الفلسفة لم تصر بعد برهانيّة يقينيّة في غاية الجودة، بل كانت بعد تُصحَّح آراؤها بالخطبيّة أو الجدليّة أو السوفسطائيّة، لم يمتنع أن تقع فيها كلّها أو في جلّها أو في أ كثرها آراء كلّها كاذبة لم يُشعَر بها، وكانت فلسفة مظنونة أو مموّهة. فإذا أُنشئت ملّة مّا بعد ذلك تابعة لتلك الفلسفة، وقعت فيها آراء كاذبة كثيرة. فإذا أُخذ أيضا كثير من تلك الآراء الكاذبة وأُخذت مثالاتها مكانها، على ما هو شأن الملّة فيما عسر وعسر تصوّره على الجمهور، كانت تلك أبعد الحقّ أ كثر وكانت ملّة فاسدة ولا يُشعَر فسادها. وأشدّ من تلك فسادا أن يأتي بعد ذلك واضع نواميس فلا يأخذ الآراء في ملّته من الفلسفة التي يتّفق أن تكون في زمانه بل يأخذ الآراء الموضوعة في الملّة الأولى على أنّها هي الحقّ، فيحصلها ويأخذ مثالاتها ويعلّمها الجمهور، وإن جاء بعده واضع نواميس آخر فيتبع هذا الثاني، كان أشدّ فسادا. فالملّة الصحيحة إنّما تحصل في الأمّة متى ما كان حصولها فيهم على الجهة الأولى، والملّة الفاسدة تحصل فيهم متى كان حصولها على الجهة الثانية. إلاّ أنّ الملّة على الجهتين إنّما تحدث بعد الفلسفة، إمّا بعد الفلسفة اليقينيّة التي هي الفلسفة في الحقيقة وأمّا بعد الفلسفة المظنونة التي يُظَنّ بها أنّها فلسفة من غير أن تكون فلسفة في الحقيقة، وذلك متى كان حدوثها فيهم عن قرائحهم وفِطَرهم ومن أنفسهم .[264]

This passage helps explain al-Fārābī's quizzical claim, made in multiple places, that "philosophy precedes religion in time" or that "religion, when man-made, is subsequent to philosophy in time."[265] All man-made (ju'alat 'insāniyya) religion follows philosophy; not all religion follows true philosophy (al-falsafa fī al- ḥaqīqa).[266] As a result, not all religion is true religion (milla ṣaḥīḥa). Any religion that follows a philosophy based upon rhetoric, dialectic, and sophistry— insofar as the establishment of these lower sciences never resulted in the establishment of demonstrative philosophy, either because of the natural character of the nation or because of some other chance or natural flaw in the development of the nation's sciences—is a corrupt religion (milla fāsida). Such a

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[263] *BL* 147.

[264] *BL* 147.

[265] *AH* 41; *AH* (Ar.) 56.; "والفلسفة تتقدم بالزمان الملة ."; Book of Letters 108; والملّة إذا جُعلت إنسانية فهي متأخّرة بالزمان; "عن الفلسفة... (Translations mine.) See also Galston 1990, 45; Butterworth and Pangle 2001, x; Mahdi 2001, 6.

[266] Al-Fārābī never seems to discuss any religion that is not man-made, so it is unclear why he makes this distinction. Two possible reasons come to mind. Either, he restricts this passage to 'man-made' religion to magnanimously leave open the possibility that Islam is not man-made, or he is distinguishing between religions constructed by the Imām and those that are Revealed-as-Determined through emanation, as I will discuss below. Unfortunately, there is little textual evidence available to settle this issue. See Section 3.2.1.2 of the present chapter.

religion is based upon opinion and not certain philosophy (*al-falsafa al-yaqīnīa*).[267] And the failure or success of a nation's religion depends upon that nation's natural character (*fiṭra*), as determined by that nation's relative position to the celestial bodies.

3.1.2. Extrapolations from the Influence of the Celestial Bodies on Human Beings

All told, the celestial bodies have an outsized influence on human happiness, the character of human associations, and the need for beneficent political deception, because, even though, as revealed in the passage from the *Political Regime* quoted above, the sublunar world requires two external movers, the celestial bodies and the Active Intellect, the Active Intellect is evenhanded in its effects on the sublunar world, acting on everything and anything it finds ready, as will be discussed below.[268] The celestial bodies are the source of contrariety in the world and its entropic character. They account for the deficiency of sublunar existents, e.g., sickness, death, blemishes, imperfections, even while fulfilling the fecundity promised by the nature of the First, insofar as the celestial bodies actualize the substance of all possible existents. And while they ensure that all possible existents exist, they also happen to ensure that many of these existents (including the majority of human existents) are incapable of fulfilling their telos, much like the celestial bodies themselves are unable to achieve their embodied telos at the outset, requiring motion. The sublunar world, as constituted by the celestial bodies, is simply a mixture resulting in every possible existent, not every perfect existent.

Of course, the imperfection and the deficiency of the sublunar world is true for every kind of sublunar existent, including humans and human associations. Many humans

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[267] The relationship between certitude (*yaqīn*) and religion will be explored more in Chapter 6.
[268] *PR* 54-55; *EI* 32-33.

are incapable of philosophy. Many nations are, due to their relative position to the celestial bodies, the beneficiaries of suboptimal natural characters and, as a result, lack certain philosophy or true religion. But the fecundity resulting from the celestial bodies also touches upon human beings. The mixture of the sublunar world results in many nations each with a distinct natural character (*fiṭra*), some of which produce true philosophy (*al-falsafa fī al-ḥaqīqa*) and true religion (*milla ṣaḥīḥa*). Part of the natural character (*fiṭra*) bestowed upon human beings is the need for unity through association (*ijtimāʿ*). But this unity needs to be brought about within associations set within a deficient sublunar world. And as will be shown below, it is this deficiency which justifies and necessitates the use of beneficent political deception.

3.2. The Effects of the Active Intellect on the Sublunar World

Whereas the celestial bodies account for the constitution of sublunar existents, the Active Intellect, the Eleventh Intellect (the Tenth Secondary Cause), is the second superlunar principle which acts as an external mover of sublunar existents, bringing about their teleological fulfillment, as long as they are capable of fulfillment. Returning to the passage from the *Political Regime* quoted above, al-Fārābī explains:

> By its nature and substance, the active intellect is prepared to look into everything the heavenly body makes ready and gives. Thus it wants to make whatever accepts transcendence and separation from material in some particular way transcend material and privation so that it will come to be in a ranking closer to it. That is, so that potential intelligibles become actual intelligibles and an intellect that was a potential intellect thereby gets to be an actual intellect. It is not possible for anything other than a human being to come to be like that. So this is the ultimate happiness that is the most excellent perfection it is possible for a human being to obtain. Through these two is perfected the existence of the things that remain subsequent and that—to be drawn out into existence—need the modes

such as to draw them out into existence and the modes such as to continue their existence.[269]

والعقل الفعّال معدّ بطبيعته وجوهره أن ينظر في كلّ ما وطّأه الجسم السماويّ وأعطاه . فأيّ شيء منه قبل بوجه ما التخلّص من المادّة ومفارقها ، رام تخليصه من المادّة ومن / العدم فيصير في أقرب مرتبة اليه . وذلك أن تصير المعقولات التي هي بالقوّة معقولات بالفعل . فمن ذلك تحصل العقل الذي كان عقلاً بالقوّة عقلاً بالفعل . وليس يمكن أن يصير كذلك شيء سوى الإنسان ؛ فهذه السعادة القصوى التي هي افضل ما يمكن الإنسان أن يبلغه من الكمال . فعن هذين يكمل وجود الأشياء التي بقيت متأخرة واحتيج إلى إخراجها إلى الوجود بالوجوه التي شأنها أن تخرج إلى الوجود بها ، وبالوجوه التي شأنها أن يدوم وجودها بها . [270]

And while the Active Intellect affects the sublunar world in several more curious ways, as will be discussed below, this passage sums up the activity of the Active Intellect quite nicely: the Active Intellect renders the sublunar world intelligible.[271] The perfections it gives are given to human beings alone but have a dual effect.[272] Namely, through giving a certain faculty to human beings by which they can strive for their own perfection, humans are able to become actual intellect through abstracting potential intelligibles, causing them to become actual intelligibles.[273]

That another superlunary principle apart from the motions of the heavens is required as a cause for the sublunar world is borne out by al-Fārābī's cosmology, insofar as there are no other instances of an intelligible existent deriving its existence from a cause which is itself unintelligible. If the aim of the material world is to transcend matter, it must have an immaterial cause; if the aim of the material world is to be rendered intelligible, it must have an intelligible cause. Thus, drawing upon Aristotle's notion of a 'productive intellect' (νους ποιητικός) in *De Anima* 3.5, as well as interpretations of Aristotle's doctrine in Alexander, Themistius, and the *Theology of Aristotle*, al-Fārābī makes his Eleventh Intellect the custodian of the sublunar world, that which imbues

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[269] *PR* 54-55.
[270] *PR* 54-55.
[271] *PR* 54-55, 71; *EI* 32-33; *PS* 13.1-2.
[272] *PR* 71.
[273] *PR* 54-55, 71; *EI* 32-33; *PS* 13.1-2.

human beings with an intellectual power (*quwwa*).[274] The Active Intellect, which al-Fārābī ascribes with the epithets traditionally ascribed to Gabriel the angel, empowers human beings with that which is required for them to attain happiness.[275]

3.2.1. The Active Intellect as the Cause of Human Intellectual Powers

There is a great deal of excellent literature exploring al-Fārābī's psychological model, and, as a result, a full accounting of his position and the nuances of it between various works is not necessary here.[276] That said, as human happiness is attained through the power given by the Active Intellect, even if its attainment is a result of human striving, a brief synopsis of al-Fārābī's psychology is called for.[277] Like al-Kindī before him, al-Fārābī's psychological model arises from an established commentary tradition, which, after its origination in Aristotle, is filtered for al-Fārābī through the commentaries of Alexander and, in all likelihood, Themistius.[278] And, again, like al-Kindī, al-Fārābī

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[274] *CDA* 108,16-109,4; *De Anima Paraphrase* 98,12-104,13; *Theology* 105-6; See also Davidson 1992, 21, 25-26, 50, 121. Here and elsewhere, I read, with Davidson, that al-Fārābī is familiar with Themistius' *De Anima Paraphrase*. See Note 278.

[275] *PR* 32; *Qur'ān* 26:193; 2:87; 2:253; 5:113; See Butterworth 2015, 30n.

[276] Davidson 1992, 44-73; Davidson 1972, 109-178; Finnegan 1957, 131-152; Geoffroy 2002, 191–231; López-Farjeat 2018; Mahdi 2001, 153-159; Taylor 2006, 151-168; Vallat 2004, 208-213 ; Martini Bonadeo 2013, 70-77; Walzer 1974, 423–436; Oschman 2018.

[277] *PR* 71.

[278] Here I read, with Davidson, that al-Fārābī had access to Themistius' *De Anima Paraphrase*. See Davidson 1992, 51f. The evidence for this is threefold. First, as discussed in Note 181, while al-Fārābī is influenced by Alexander's conception of the meaning of the phrase 'form of forms', he clearly links this phrase specifically with intellect (rather than perfection), like Themistius. In isolation, this small divergence from Alexander could, of course, just be the result of a different reading of Aristotle, but (in conjunction with the other Themistian elements of al-Fārābī's thought) gives credence to the idea that al-Fārābī was weighing distinct commentary voices. Second, al-Fārābī relies heavily on the famous analogy of an impression (*naqsh*) or an imprint (*rasm*) from a stamp being formed into wax or clay to describe intellection. See *EI* 40; *PS* 13.1. The analogy, of course, is sourced in Aristotle's discussion of perception in *De Anima* 2.12, and both Alexander and Themistius use it to explain both perception and imagination. See *CDA* 68, 4-21; 70, 5-14; 72, 5-13; *De Anima Paraphrase* 56, 39f.; 59, 10-30; 77, 28-30; 92,4f. However, it is Themistius who applies this analogy to the intellect, describing the potential intellect as 'matter' which encounters the imprints of perception through the power of the productive intellect. See *De Anima Paraphrase* 98, 35f. Third, al-Fārābī's claim that the Active Intellect provides the first intelligibles

adopts a model which divides the component mechanisms of human intellection into four distinct species of intellect: a potential intellect (*'aql bi-l-quwwa*), an actual intellect (*'aql bi-l- fi'l*) , the acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafāḍ*), and the superlunary Eleventh Intellect, the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa''āl*).[279] But whereas al-Kindī adopts a model which relies heavily upon the beneficence of that intellect which is in act perpetually (*bi-l-fi'l 'abadan*), i.e., the Active Intellect, for the acquisition of forms, al-Fārābī's model only situates the Active Intellect at the origination of human intellective power.[280] The culmination of human intellection, and the acquisition of universals, occurs through interaction with the material world.

Al-Fārābī credits the Active Intellect with giving human beings a power by which they can gain knowledge through interactions with the world, abstracting the intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt*) from that which is prepared by the celestial bodies (i.e., material composites).

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which are common to all human beings echoes a similar conjecture by Themistius. See *PS* 13.3; *PR* 71-72; *De Anima Paraphrase* 103, 36f. For the availability of these texts in Arabic, see D'Ancona 2017.

[279] *PS* 13.1-2; *EI* 12-30; *PR* 35-36. This mirrors *De Anima* 3.5, where Aristotle requires "a matter which is potentially all particulars" and "a cause which is productive" (i.e., what al-Fārābī would call the potential and Active intellects, respectively) for intellection to occur. See also *CDA* 106, 19f.; *De Anima Paraphrase* 97, 34f. See also Oschman 2018; Taylor 2006, 151-68; Vallat 2004, 209f.; López-Farjeat 2020. Regarding al-Kindī, the role the Active Intellect plays diverges from al-Fārābī's account. What al-Kindī calls "the first intellect" (*al-'aql al-'awwal*) or the intellect which is "in act perpetually" (*bi-l-fi'l 'abadan*) does not only give a power by which to abstract (*intaza'a*) the intelligible form from material objects, but rather, acts as a "benefactor" (*ṣāra mufīdan*) of forms to the soul. Also, both the actual intellect and the acquired intellect, which al-Kindī calls either "the second" (*al-thānī*) or "the emerging" (*al-nātī*) intellect, depending on one's interpretation of an unvoweled manuscript, also differ. *Treatise on the Intellect*, 122-23. For the development of classical philosophical psychology in the Muslim world, see Ivry 2012.

[280] The exact contours of this doctrine are disputed, both because al-Fārābī is opaque on some issues and because al-Fārābī is inconsistent between works. In the case of the former, he is unclear whether the Active Intellect bestows on human beings both the power for abstraction and universally known first principles (as two distinct entities) or whether the bestowal of first principles is in fact what he means when he says that the Active Intellect gives humans a power (i.e., the power is, itself, indistinguishable from being endowed with the primary first principles common to all human beings). See *PS* 13.1-3; *PR* 35-36, 71-72; *EI* 24-27. Concerning the latter, he changes vocabulary as to what occurs during the interaction between intellects and intelligibles, saying that humans 'abstract' (*intaza'a*) intelligibles in *EI* and that they transfer (*naqala*) intelligibles in *PS*. See *EI* 13; *PS* 13.2. Furthermore, al-Fārābī changes how he describes what is abstracted/transferred, naming them both forms (*ṣuwar*) in *EI* and imprints (*rusūm*) in *PS*. See *EI* 13; *PS* 13.2. See also Janos 2012, 179; Taylor 2006, 154-156; Vallat 2004, 209f.; Oschman 2018.

This assists both human beings and other sublunar existents to transcend matter by helping them become actual intellect (*'aql bi-l- fi'l*), in the case of humankind, and actual intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt bi-l-fi'l*), in the case of other sublunar existents, whereas they were, respectively, potential intellect (*'aql bi-l-fi'l*) and potential intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt bi-l-quwwa*) prior to the act of abstraction (*intaza'a*).[281] For any non-human sublunar existent, becoming an intelligible for a human being is the only way that it is able to "transcend material and privation so that it will come to be in a ranking closer" to the Active Intellect.[282] This, along with assisting the rational animal, seems to be the highest possible teleological fulfillment for all non-human sublunar existents.[283]

However, for human beings, neither the status of being an actual intelligible or even an actual intellect suffices for their teleological fulfillment, although it is the first step. Using the famous Sun Analogy, again rooted in *De Anima* 3.5, where Aristotle describes the 'productive intellect' (νους ποιητικός) as having "a sort of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential colours into actual colours," al-Fārābī compares the Active Intellect to the sun. He says:

> After [the ruling faculty of sense (i.e. the common sense)] the imprints of the various kinds of intelligibles which are impressed on the rational faculty remain to be discussed. The intelligibles which are such as to be impressed on the rational faculty are (a) those which are in their very substances actually intellects and actually intelligible (intelligized) — namely the immaterial things — and (b) those which are not actually intelligible through their very substance — such as stones, plants and, in general, everything which is itself body or is in a material

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[281] *EI* 15-18; *PR* 35-36; *PS* 13.1-2, 15.9.

[282] "والعقل الفعّال معدّ بطبيعته وجوهره أن ينظر في كلّ ما وطّأه الجسم السماويّ وأعطاه. فأيّ شيء منه قبل بوجه ما التخلّص من المادّة 54-55 *PR*; ومفارقها ، رام تخليصه من المادّة و من العدم فيصير في أقرب مرتبة اليه ."

[283] *PR* 67-68. Al-Fārābī is unclear as to what sense material existents themselves play a role in abstraction. In *EI*, the abstracted content is itself the form of the sublunar existent, but al-Fārābī is clear that actual intelligibles have a distinct existence from the forms which are in matter, lacking place, time, and other accidents. *EI* 16-17. In other words, what is abstracted is distinct from the material form. This issue is even more unclear in the mature al-Fārābī where the intellect does not abstract (*intaza'a*) forms (*ṣuwar*) from matters, but instead transfers (*naqala*) imprints (*rusūm*). *PS* 13.1-2. Al-Fārābī never further explains the metaphysical relationship between these imprints and the sublunar existents, themselves.

body and matter itself, and everything which owes its substance to matter-for these are neither actually intellects nor actually intelligible. But the human intellect which arises in man by nature from the very outset is a disposition in matter prepared to receive the imprints of the intelligibles, being itself potentially intellect [and 'material intellect'] and being also potentially intelligible. The other things which are in matter or are matter or have matter are neither actually nor potentially intellects. They are, however, potentially intelligible and can possibly become actually intelligible, but their substances lack the wherewithal to be actually intelligized of their own accord. Again, neither the rational faculty nor what is provided in man by nature has the wherewithal to become of itself intellect in actuality. To become intellect in actuality it needs something else which transfers it from potentiality to actuality, and it becomes actually intellect only when the intelligibles arise in it. The potential intelligibles become actual intelligibles when they happen to be intelligized by the intellect in actuality, but they are in need of something else which transfers them from potentiality to a state in which [the intellect] can make them actual. The agent which transfers them from potentiality to actuality is an existent. Its essence is an actual intellect of a particular kind and is separate from matter. It is that intellect which provides the 'material intellect' which is only potentially intellect with something like the light which the sun provides to the sight of the eye, since its relation to the 'material intellect' is like the relation of the sun to the sight of the eye. For eyesight is a faculty and a disposition in matter and is, before it sees, potentially sight, and the colours are potentially seeable and visible before they are seen. But neither is the faculty of sight in the eye itself sufficiently qualified to become actually sight nor are the colours themselves sufficiently qualified to become actually seen and viewed. It is the sun which gives light to the sight of the eye, joining the two, and which gives light to the colours, joining it to them. Thus sight becomes through the light which it acquires from the sun actually seeing and actually sight, and the colours become through that light actually seen and viewed after having been potentially seeable and visible. In the same way this 'intellect in actuality' conveys to the 'material intellect' something which it imprints on it, which is in relation to the 'material intellect' the same as light in relation to sight. Sight sees, through light itself, the light which is the cause of its ability to see and the sun which is the cause of light, and by this very light it sees the things which are potentially seeable and visible so that they become actually seen and viewed. In the same way the 'material intellect' becomes aware of that very thing which corresponds to the light in the case of sight, and through it comes to know the 'intellect in actuality' which is the cause of having that thing imprinted on the 'material intellect'; and through it the things which were potentially intelligible become actually intelligible, and the 'material intellect' in its turn becomes actually intellect after having been potentially intellect. The action of this 'separate' intellect upon the 'material intellect' is similar to the action of the sun upon the sight of the eye. It is therefore called 'Active Intellect' ranking tenth among the 'separate' things below the First Cause which have been mentioned, whereas the 'material intellect' is called 'Passive Intellect'. When, then, that thing which corresponds to light in the case of sight arises in the rational faculty from

the 'Active Intellect', intelligibles arise at the same time in the rational faculty from the sensibles which are preserved in the faculty of representation.[284]

ويبقى بعد ذلك أن ترتسم في الناطقة رسوم أصناف المعقولات والمعقولات التي شأنها أن ترتسم في القوة الناطقة ، منها المعقولات التي هي في جواهرها عقول بالفعل ومعقولات بالفعل : وهي الأشياء البريئة من المادة؛ ومنها المعقولات التي ليست بجواهرها معقولة بالفعل ، مثل الحجارة والنبات ، وبالجملة كل ما هو جسم أو في جسم ذي مادة ، والمادة نفسها وكل شيء قوامه بها. فان هذه ليست عقلا بالفعل ولا معقولات بالفعل. وأما العقل الانساني الذي يحصل له بالطبع في أول أمره ، فانه هيئة ما في مادة معدة لأن تقبل رسوم المعقولات : فهي بالقوة عقل وعقل هيولاني ، وهي أيضا بالقوة معقولة. وسائر الأشياء التي في مادة ، أو هي مادة أو ذوات مادة ، فليست هي عقلاً لا بالفعل ولا بالقوة ، ولكنها معقولات بالقوة ويمكن أن تصير معقولات بالفعل. وليس في جواهرها كفاية في أن تصير من تلقاء أنفسها معقولات بالفعل. ولا أيضا في القوة الناطقة ، ولا فيما أعطي الطبع كفاية في أن تصير من تلقاء نفسها عقلا بالفعل ، بل تحتاج أن تصير عقلا بالفعل إلى شيء آخر ينقلها من القوة إلى الفعل وإنما تصير عقلا بالفعل إذا حصلت فيها المعقولات . وتصير المعقولات التي بالقوة معقولات بالفعل إذا حصلت معقولة للعقل بالفعل. وهي تحتاج إلى شيء آخر ينقلها من القوة إلى أن يصيّرها بالفعل. والفاعل الذي ينقلها من القوة إلى الفعل هو ذات ما ، جوهره عقل ما بالفعل ، ومفارق للمادة. فان ذلك العقل يعطي العقل الهيولاني ، الذي هو بالقوة عقل ، شيئا ما بمنزلة الضوء الذي تعطيه الشمس البصر. لأن منزلته من العقل الهيولاني منزلة الشمس من البصر. فان البصر هو قوة وهيئة ما في مادة ، وهو من قبل أن يبصر فيه بصر بالقوة ، والألوان من قبل أن تبصر مبصرة مرئية بالقوة. وليس في جوهر القوة الباصرة التي في العين كفاية في أن يصير بصرا بالفعل ، ولا في جوهر الألوان كفاية في أن تصير مرئية مبصرة بالفعل. فان الشمس تعطي البصر ضوءا يضاء به ، وتعطي الألوان ضوءا تضاء بها ، فيصير البصر ، بالضوء الذي استفاده من الشمس ، مبصرا بالفعل وبصيرا بالفعل؛ وتصير الألوان ، بذلك الضوء ، مبصرة مرئية بالفعل بعد أن كانت مبصرة مرئية بالقوة. كذلك هذا العقل الذي بالفعل يفيد العقل الهيولاني شيئا ما يرسمه فيه. فمنزلة ذلك الشيء من العقل الهيولاني منزلة الضوء من البصر. وكما أن البصر بالضوء نفسه يبصر الضوء الذي هو سبب ابصاره ، ويبصر الشمس التي هي سبب الضوء به بعينه ، ويبصر الأشياء التي هي بالقوة مبصرة فتصير مبصرة بالفعل ، كذلك العقل الهيولاني فانه بذلك الشيء الذي منزلته منه منزلة الضوء من البصر ، يعقل ذلك الشيء نفسه ، وبه يعقل العقل الهيولاني العقل بالفعل الذي هو سبب ارتسام ذلك الشيء في العقل الهيولاني ، وبه تصير الأشياء التي كانت معقولة بالقوة معقولة بالفعل ، ويصير هو أيضا عقلا بالفعل بعد أن كان عقلا بالقوة. وفعل هذا العقل المفارق في العقل الهيولاني شبيه فعل الشمس في البصر ، فلذلك سمي العقل الفعّال. ومرتبته من الأشياء المفارقة التي ذكرت من دون السبب الأول المرتبة العاشرة. ويسمى العقل الهيولاني العقل المنفعل. وإذا حصل في القوة الناطقة عن العقل الفعّال ذلك الشيء الذي منزلته منها منزلة الضوء من البصر ، حصلت حينئذ عن المحسوسات التي هي محفوظة في القوة المتخيلة معقولات في القوة الناطقة؛ وتلك هي المعقولات الأولى التي هي مشتركة لجميع الناس ، مثل أن الكل أعظم من الجزء ، وأن المقادير المساوية للشيء الواحد متساوية . المعقولات الأول المشتركة ثلاثة أصناف : صنف أوائل للهندسة العلمية ، وصنف أوائل يوقف بها على الجميل والقبيح مما شأنه أن يعمله الانسان ، وصنف أوائل تستعمل في أن يعلم بها أحوال الموجودات التي ليس شأنها أن يفعلها الانسان ومباديها ومراتبها ، مثل السماوات والسبب الأول وسائر المبادي الأخر ، وما شأنها أن يحدث عن تلك المبادي .[285]

Al-Fārābī, thus, divides the cosmos up into three categories: 1) actual intellects and

intelligibles which are intelligible in themselves, e.g., the First and the Secondary Causes;

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[284] *PS* 13.1-2. See also *EI* 26-27; *PR* 35-36.
[285] *PS* 13.1-2.

2) potential intelligibles which are not intelligible in themselves, e.g., any sublunar existent in a body; and 3) a unique subset of the second category, intelligibles which are not intelligible in themselves but can become both actually intelligible and actually intellect through the activity of an external mover. An individual of this third type, i.e., a human being, can only become an actual intellect when a) an external mover acts upon her, and b) she encounters a potential intelligible which is prepared to become an actual intelligible for her, rendering her potential intellect an actual intellect in the process. (Insofar as the actual intelligible forms a noetic unity with the actual intellect, they are metaphysically indistinct from one another.)[286] Thus, due to a power bestowed upon it from an external mover, the potential intellect is able to abstract (*intaza'a*) the forms from matters or transfer (*naqala*) the imprints (*rusūm*) from sensibles (*maḥsūsāt*).[287] Al-Fārābī seems to accept that this abstraction/transference happens reliably and infallibly, as he never suggests any corrective process, like the methodic experience (*tajriba*) proposed by Avicenna, according to Jon Mcginnis' reading, or the "Active Principle Model" of abstraction which Therese Cory suggests is embraced by Aquinas, both of which view abstraction as an asymptotic natural process, not an unimpeachable *fait accompli*.[288] For al-Fārābī, when a potential intellect encounters a potential intelligible, the potential intelligible is abstracted, eventuating in an actual intelligible and an actual intellect.

The Active Intellect is the external mover which confers the power of abstraction to the potential intellect, however, the exact minutiae of this process are unclear.

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[286] Al-Fārābī uses the analogy of an imprint (the intelligible) forming an impression into a piece of wax (the intellect), insofar as the shape of the imprint becomes the form of the wax, leaving no distinction between them. *EI* 13-15. For the antecedents of al-Fārābī's analogy in Aristotle, Alexander, and Themistius, see Note 278.

[287] For some possible reasons for this change in terminology, see Notes 198, 278, and 280.

[288] McGinnis 2010, 146; Cory 2015, 607-646.

Following the Sun Analogy above, Davidson and López-Farjeat have suggested that the

Active Intellect has a fourfold effect, affecting i) the potential intellect to render it actual

and ii) the potential intelligible to render it actual, while revealing iii) the activity of the

Active Intellect itself, rendering it knowable to the human intellect and iv) the source of

the activity (i.e., the Active Intellect), rendering it knowable to the human intellect.[289] The

analogy of light implies that the Active Intellect acts upon both the potential intellect and

the potential intelligible (or renders some sort of medium transparent, removing an

impediment to the powers of both the intellect and the intelligible to know and be known,

respectively, just as light renders air transparent to allow for vision). However, al-Fārābī's

mature psychology seems to indicate that the Active Intellect only acts directly upon the

human intellect.[290] In other words, all four effects are brought about by a single act upon

the human intellect, with the Active Intellect being a proximate cause for the actual

intellect, but only a distal cause for actual intelligibles, even though the effect happens

simultaneously. That said, al-Fārābī's position is not entirely obvious, and whether the

Active Intellect acts upon both potential intellects and potential intelligibles or only upon

potential intellects (and through their given-power subsequently upon intelligibles)

remains underdetermined.[291] (Figure 3.1, above, pictorially shows a synthesis of these

two positions for the sake of simplicity.) In either case, though, one thing is clear: the

Active Intellect is the cause of sublunar intelligibility, and thus, sublunar teleological

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[289] Davidson 1992, 50-51; López-Farjeat 2020. Davidson sources this reading in an amalgamation of
Alexander's and Themistius's doctrines, perhaps from an unknown predecessor. See Davidson 1992, 50.
[290] For example, the *Political Regime* denies that the Active Intellect bestows any perfections to any being
other than human beings. *PR* 71. Meanwhile, the *Perfect State* seems to indicate that the Active Intellect
transfers intelligibles from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality, but is unclear as to whether it does
this as a proximate cause or a cause which works *through* the human intellect. *PS* 13.2. The *Epistle on the
Intellect* clearly portrays the Active Intellect as the proximate cause of potential intelligibles. *EI* 25-30. For
al-Fārābī's conception of light, see *HPA* 35-41. See also Martini Bonadeo and Endress 2008.
[291] *PR* 71; *PS* 13.2; *EI* 25-30.

fulfillment. It is the proximate cause of human intellection and happiness, and either the proximate or distal cause of the intelligibility of non-human sublunar existents.

But before turning to the Active Intellect's role in the realization of human happiness, one more cosmological feature of al-Fārābī's model should be reiterated. While the Active Intellect is the principle by which the existents of the sublunar world achieve whatever teleological fulfillment is feasible according to their rank and operates as the cause of sublunar intelligibility, the Active Intellect acts always and only on sublunar beings whose hylomorphic existence originated entirely from the motions of the heavens. Put otherwise, while the Active Intellect ought to be credited with the constitution of sublunar intelligible existents qua intelligible, the celestial bodies are the cause of sublunar existents qua existents. The Active Intellect's agency is limited to that which the "heavenly body makes ready and gives", and even in the *Epistle on the Intellect*, whose distinct cosmology labels the Active Intellect as a *dator formarum*, the causal force of the Active Intellect is limited to that which the celestial bodies have prepared, made ready, and from which they have removed all obstacles from the recipient of its activity.[292] While the Active Intellect allows for the possibility of sublunar teleological fulfillment, the scope of its influence is determined by the heavens.[293]

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[292] *PR* 54-55; *EI* 33. The only caveat to the influence of the heavens is the role that individual human voluntary action plays in preparing oneself for happiness and removing obstacles from one's habits which may prevent happiness (although, even concerning human will, the heavens influence the original matter of both nations and persons). See *PS* 13.6; PR 72-73.

[293] *PR* 72-73.

3.2.1.1. Human Happiness

Knowledge through abstraction, alone, does not entail felicity. A human's achievement of the state of 'actual intellect' is not the end of the human life. For while knowledge must begin with an interaction with the material world, the end of human life is to transcend material deficiencies in order that a human being, through the activity of the Active Intellect, "becomes an intellect in his essence after having not been like that and an intelligible in his essence after having not been like that. And he becomes divine after having been material. This is the function of the active intellect, and for this it is called the active intellect".[294] This trope, the Neoplatonic conception of the procession and return, found repeatedly in the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Theology of Aristotle*, brings both al-Fārābī's cosmological and psychological models to completion.[295] Because, while human happiness is not the pinnacle of his cosmological model, it is the culmination of it, insofar as human transcendence from matter brings a close to the two effluences which ultimately proceed from the First, e.g., the intelligible chain of Intellects and the deficiency brought about by the motions of the Celestial Bodies. Humans alone are able to evince the intelligibility of the sublunar world by transcending their material origins.

To do so, to be happy, is tantamount to becoming the acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafāḍ*).[296] The reasoning is simple. Recall that, for al-Fārābī, "pleasure (*surūr*) and delight (*ḡibṭa)* result and increase only when the most accurate apprehension concerns itself with the most beautiful, the most brilliant and the most splendid objects."[297]

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[294] *PR* 36; " فيصير عقلاً بذاته بعد أن لم يكن كذلك ، ومعقولاً بذته بعد أن لم يكن كذلك ، ويصير إلهيّاً بعد أن كان هيولانيّا . فهذا هو فعل العقل الفعّال ، ولهذا سمّي العقل الفعّال ."

[295] *Theology* I. 21-26; *Theology* II.1-6; *Theology* IV.1-4; *Theology* VIII.159-164.

[296] *EI* 20-22, 31; *PS* 13.5; PR 36.

[297] *PS* 1.14; "واللذة والسرور والغبطة ، إنما ينتج ويحصل أكثر بأن يدرك الأجمل والأبهى والأزين بالادراك الأتقن والأتم ."

However, knowledge through abstraction, knowledge of paltry material things, cannot comprise the fulfillment of human intellection. To know only the sublunar world, to remain at the level of the actual intellect, to know only through encounters with matter, this is not knowledge of brilliant and splendid objects. Happiness occurs through knowledge of immaterial beings.[298]

For al-Fārābī, this requires a two-fold intellective act. First, one abstracts from matter. The content of this act, the first intention, is content abstracted from the deficient world, even though, through the process of abstraction the actual intelligible the intellect receives no longer possesses many of the deficiencies that the potential intelligible possessed while it was enmattered.[299] Nonetheless, the object of the apprehension is the enmattered existent. However, once the human intellect apprehends the actual intelligible qua intelligible, i.e., once it reflects upon the content of abstraction qua abstracted, the content of the intellection functions as a second intention, i.e., the intellect is thinking, not about objects in the world, but thoughts (even if these thoughts are themselves about material objects).[300] As al-Fārābī explains:

> It is clear that when it intellects itself, inasmuch as it is itself an actual intellect, there does not come to be in it from whatever it intellects of itself any existing thing whose existence in itself would be different from its existence as an actual intelligible. Instead, it will have intellected of itself an existing thing whose existence as an intelligible is its very own existence as such. Thus, this intellect becomes an actual intelligible, even though prior to being intellected it was not a potential intelligible but was in fact an actual intelligible... [This] is different from the way in which these things themselves were intellected initially; for they were intellected initially due to being extracted from the matters in which they existed and as potential intelligibles.[301]

He defines wisdom in a similar way, as 'thinking the most excellent thing through the most excellent knowledge'. This, of course, is a reference to the First thinking Itself. *PS* 1.8;

"وكذلك في أنه حكيم. فإن الحكمة هي أن يعقل أفضل الأشياء بأفضل علم ."

[298] For a similar doctrine in Aquinas, see *Summa Theologiae, Prima Secundae* 3.6-8.
[299] E.g., accidents related to time, place, quantity, etc. See *EI* 16-17.
[300] For a discussion about al-Fārābī, the constitution of the intellect, and intentionality, see Oschman 2018.
[301] *EI* 19.

وبين انه اذا عقل ذاته من حيث ذاته عقل بالفعل لم يحصل له مما عقل من ذاته شيء موجود وجوده في ذاته
غير وجوده و هو معقول بالفعل بل يكون قد عقل من ذاته موجودا ما وجوده و هو معقول هو وخوده في
ذاته فاذا تصير هذه الذات معقولة بالفعل وان لم تكن فيما قبل ان تعقل معقولة بالقوة بل كانت معقولة بالفعل
هذه الأشياء بأعيانها أولا فأنها عقلت أولا على انها انتزعت عن موادها التي كان فيها وجودها وعلى انها ...
كانت معقولات بالقوة . 302

Al-Fārābī designates this state of self-intellection, a state which no longer relies on material interactions at all, the acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafāḍ*).[303]

Two further features concerning the acquired intellect should be noted before turning to its status as the teleological fulfillment of the human person. First, al-Fārābī discusses the acquired intellect as both an act, i.e., the act of forming a second intention about a particular intelligible, and a rank, i.e., the teleological standing achieved by a human intellect which no longer needs material objects.[304] He never clearly distinguishes between the act and the rank, the former being that by which one achieves the latter. Nonetheless, conceptually the distinction is obvious. For example, holding a single second intention about the concept 'dog' is not the same as having attained an intellectual status which no longer requires material interactions. When al-Fārābī defines happiness as synonymous with the acquired intellect, he surely means the latter.[305]

Second, the intelligible content of the acquired intellect is not only second intentions of material objects; through acting as an efficient cause for human thought, the Active Intellect reveals itself and becomes an intelligible for the acquired intellect. As al-Fārābī explains, "By means of that thing [which is given by the Active Intellect], the rational soul intellects the active intellect..."[306] As a necessary causal precondition for the

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[302] *EI* 19.
[303] *EI* 20; *PS* 15.8-11.
[304] *EI* 19-20, 27-31; *PS* 13.5; *PR* 35-36.
[305] E.g., see *PS* 15.8-11.
[306] *PR* 35- 36; "... فبذلك الشيء تعقل النفس الناطقة العقل الفعّال "

activity of human thought, the Active Intellect is knowable to human beings.[307] That said, knowledge of the Active Intellect, or any of the other Secondary Causes, is not obtained through abstraction (given that these existents need not be abstracted from matter, having never been enmattered).[308] And as a result, first and second intentions do not apply in the same way to them as objects of thought, insofar as "their existence as something intellected a second time is the same existence they had before this [acquired] intellect [began to] intellect".[309] In other words, to think the Active Intellect, the Secondary Causes, or the First is to have them, qua existents, as one's intelligible content. (This mirrors the noetic unity and delight achieved by the Secondary Causes when thinking the First, as noted in section 2.2.). This noetic unity between the Active Intellect as object of thought and the acquired intellect as thinker of the Active Intellect is what is meant in al-Fārābī's famous discussion concerning the conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) of the Active Intellect and the acquired intellect, insofar as they are united (*muttaḥida*).[310]

All told, thinking the Separate Substances (including thinking one's own intellect qua separated from matter and intelligibles of material things qua separated from matter) is what al-Fārābī means by happiness (*saʿāda*).[311] This noetic unity between thinker and thought, especially insofar as these thoughts are of higher, more perfect intelligibles (e.g., the Active Intellect and the Secondary Causes), is the telos of the human person and the

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[307] See Note 289.
[308] *EI* 20.
[309] *EI* 21; ." فيصير وجودها من حيث هي معقولة عقلا ثانيا هو وجودها الذى كان لها من قبل تعقل هذا العقل "
[310] *PR* 79; *PS* 15.11. See Davidson 1992, 53-58.
[311] In *AH*, al-Fārābī does conceptually distinguish between earthly happiness (*al-saʿāda al-dunyā fī al-ḥayāh al-ʾawlā*) and ultimate happiness (*al-saʿāda al-quṣwā fī al-ḥayāh al-ʾukhrā*), as will be discussed below. See *AH* 2; *AH* (Ar.)1. See also Germann 2018; Galston 1990, 55-94.

means by which human beings can transcend materiality. And, at least at times, al-Fārābī

suggests this can occur in both this life and the next.[312] As al-Fārābī explains:

> And at that point [when the actual intellect intellects its own essence as intellect in
> actuality], it comes to be a substance that is intellected in that it is an intelligible
> insofar as it intellects. And, at that point, what intellects, what is intellected, and
> intellect come to be a single thing itself in it. Through this, it becomes such as to
> be in the rank of the active intellect. And when a human being obtains this rank,
> his happiness is perfected.[313]

<div dir="rtl">

ويكون حينئذ جوهراً يعقل بان يكون معقولاً من جهة ما يعقل . فيكون حينئذ العاقل والمعقول والعقل فيه
شيئاً واحداً بعينا . فبهذا يصير في رتبة العقل الفعّال . وهذا الرتبة إذا بلغها الإنسان كملت سعادة . [314]

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This passage is echoed in numerous places. In *EI*, he describes the acquired intellect as

either belonging to the same species (*naw'*) or as similar to the species of the Active

Intellect.[315] Any difference between the Active Intellect and the acquired intellect is only

due to the order (*tartīb*) by which humans know intelligibles (i.e., humans begin with

material things and move toward the First, while the Active Intellect knows the First

initially).[316] He describes the acquired intellect as the ultimate happiness (*al-sa'āda al-*

quṣwā) and the afterlife (*al-ḥayāh al-'ukhrā*).[317] In *SA*, he explains that wisdom is to aim

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[312] E.g. ,in *SA*, al-Fārābī describes the theoretical intellect as capable of separation from matter in this life. *SA* 81. However, in *BR*, he appears to say the opposite, i.e., that happiness is only possible in the afterlife. *BR* 11. See also Germann 2018. Understanding al-Fārābī's conception of the afterlife is fraught with difficulty, given his shifting doctrines. In *EI*, he describes the afterlife as entirely theoretical, having identified it with achieving the status of the acquired intellect. In *PR*, he conjectures that only the virtuous citizens of the good city live on after corporeal death (the vicious having been nullified with their bodies). Those that experience the afterlife are joined in neighborly communion with those of like virtuous rank, and through intellection and noetic unity, increase in pleasure with each additional member of their community. In *PS*, he adopts a similar doctrine to *PR* for the virtuous, but additionally adopts a similar structure for the vicious which mirrors his model for the virtuous. All humans persist after death. Rather than being nullified, each successive vicious soul increases the distress felt by the community of vicious souls, again by noetic unity. See *EI* 29; *PR* 81-83; *PS* 16.4-8. Notably, all three of these models have a noetic component. Unfortunately, more detail is not possible within the scope of this project, though further study is warranted. Additionally, some accounts of the now lost *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* suggest that al-Fārābī dismissed the possibility of an afterlife *in toto*. See Chapter 2, 4.2.3 and Chapter 3, 3.1.1.1 for more detail.
[313] *PR* 35.
[314] *PR* 35.
[315] *EI* 27, 25.
[316] *EI* 27.
[317] *EI* 31.

toward happiness in truth (*al-saʿāda fī al-ḥaqīqa*) and identifies true happiness with knowledge of the First Cause.[318] In *PS*, the Imām who has attained the status of the acquired intellect and united with the Active Intellect is described as the most perfect rank (*ʾakmal marātib*) of humanity and having the highest degree of happiness (*ʾaʿlā darjāt al-saʿāda*).[319] And in *PR*, he describes the human who has become the acquired intellect as divine (*ʾilāhiyy*) after having been material (*hayūlāniyy*).[320]

Thus, al-Fārābī's conception of happiness is an intelligible one, as is his depiction of the teleological fulfillment of the sublunar world. Sublunar existents are the lowest existents in the cosmos due to their deficiency, and this is expressed most acutely in their need for an external cause to help them become intelligible.[321] As al-Fārābī explains, returning to the passage quoted above:

> By its nature and substance, the active intellect is prepared to look into everything the heavenly body makes ready and gives. Thus it wants to make whatever accepts transcendence and separation from material in some particular way transcend material and privation so that it will come to be in a ranking closer to it. That is, so that potential intelligibles become actual intelligibles and an intellect that was a potential intellect thereby gets to be an actual intellect. It is not possible for anything other than a human being to come to be like that. So this is the ultimate happiness that is the most excellent perfection it is possible for a human being to obtain. Through these two is perfected the existence of the things that remain subsequent and that—to be drawn out into existence—need the modes such as to draw them out into existence and the modes such as to continue their existence.[322]

> والعقل الفعّال معدّ بطبيعته وجوهره أن ينظر في كلّ ما وطّأه الجسم السماويّ وأعطاه . فأيّ شيء منه قبل بوجه ما التخلّص من المادّة ومفارقها ، رام تخليصه من المادّة ومن / العدم فيصير في أقرب مرتبة اليه . وذلك أن تصير المعقولات التي هي بالقوّة معقولات بالفعل . فمن ذلك تحصل العقل الذي كان عقلاً بالقوّة عقلاً بالفعل . وليس يمكن أن يصير كذلك شيء سوى الإنسان ؛ فهذه السعادة القصوى التي هي افضل ما يمكن الإنسان أن يبلغه من الكمال . فعن هذين يكمل وجود الأشياء التي بقيت متأخرة واحتيج إلى إخراجها إلى الوجود بالوجوه التي شأنها أن تخرج إلى الوجود بها ، وبالوجوه التي شأنها أن يدوم وجودها بها .[323]

[318] *SA* 53.
[319] *PS* 15.11.
[320] *PR* 36.
[321] *PR* 54.
[322] *PR* 54-55.
[323] *PR* 54-55.

Through the activity of the Active Intellect, and subsequently the activity of human beings, the sublunar world is rendered intelligible and (some) human persons are able to become immaterial.[324] Those humans that are able to accomplish this, in imitation of the First, experience the delight and happiness associated with thinking the most beautiful, splendid, and brilliant objects.

3.2.1.1.1. Practical Dimensions of Human Happiness

That said, one nuance about al-Fārābī's conception of happiness should be mentioned. While most of al-Fārābī's texts define happiness through knowing the most perfect intelligibles, i.e., becoming the acquired intellect, he does sometimes define happiness as a matter of practical virtue and civic fulfillment.[325] For this reason, though most scholars define happiness for al-Fārābī through the attainment of knowledge, there are places where he acknowledges that it has a political dimension.[326] The best discussion of this dispute occurs in Miriam Galston's *Politics and Excellence*, where she identifies three distinct possible positions: 1) happiness is theoretical, 2) happiness is practical, 3) happiness is irreducibly both theoretical and practical.[327] She is right to adopt the third position, highlighting that happiness for al-Fārābī is defined, in part, through

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[324] *PS* 13.5, 15.9-11.

[325] *AH* 2; *AH* (Ar.)1. See also *NE* 10.7.

[326] See, for example, Davidson 1992, 56, 62, 70; Ivry 2012; López-Farjeat 2020; Taylor 2006, 157; Germann 2018; Janos 2012, 398, 402; as well as, De Boer 1967, 120-122, 124-126; Fakhry 1983, 123; Najjar 1958, 96, 100-102; and Strauss 1945, 366-371, 378-381, as noted by Galston. For alternative readings, see, as noted by Galston, Berman 1961, 53-61; Pines 1963, Ixxxvi; as well as, Butterworth and Pangle 2001, ixf. Aristotle also seems to suggest there is a distinct civic form of happiness in *NE* 10.7-9.

[327] Galston 1990, 55-94. She identifies three of al-Fārābī's works (*EI*, *PS*, and portions of *PR*) as endorsing the first position, as well as *SA* 28, which credits this position to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (she does not address *SA* 53). While placing the *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* and a portion of *PR* into the second position. The third position is best represented by *AH*.

governance.[328] One aspect of al-Fārābī's position that can be revealed here, while examining his cosmology *in toto*, is the relationship between the practical aims of governance, i.e., unity, and the theoretical aims of philosophy, i.e., truth. (Recall that the distinction between cooperation, i.e., unity, and truth is only prompted by human deficiency. In the origination of the cosmos, i.e., in the First, unity and truth are identical).

The central conundrum is whether civic and moral virtues, i.e., the traits that allow for cooperation, are constitutive for happiness as independent components for happiness along with theoretical virtues, i.e., becoming the acquired intellect, or as instrumental to theoretical virtues. Are civic and moral virtues only prerequisites for happiness or are they distinctive constituent parts of happiness? Galston argues that both practical and theoretical virtues are constitutive for a comprehensive view of happiness, which is irreducible to either the theoretical or the practical dimension. As she explains:

> Although there are indications to the contrary, on balance it appears that Alfarabi views governance, and not merely political philosophy or political science, as a constitutive part of happiness. This insight appears to be what underlies the Farabian dictum that "philosopher," "supreme ruler," "king," "lawgiver," and "imam" comprise one idea. This interpretation of Alfarabi's teaching makes sense of Alfarabi's assertion that the two parts of philosophy have one end, even though theoretical and practical philosophy are presented as having different ends. And it resolves the difficulty that one can know what happiness is and fail to do it, even though knowledge of what happiness is presupposes theoretical perfection, or most of it.[329]

Her argument hinges on several passages from *PS* and *PR* which suggest that it is possible to know happiness without aiming toward happiness and boils down to her claim that for al-Fārābī "both theoretical and practical perfection are sought for their own sakes,

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[328] Galston 1990, 92-94.
[329] Galston 1990, 92-94.

with neither being sought for the sake of the other".[330] Attaining the level of the acquired intellect is not alone enough for happiness. Her argument is straightforward and lucid: if one can know happiness, as al-Fārābī claims, and not be happy, then happiness is not reducible to knowledge. That said, her additional claim, that practical perfection is not instrumental to theoretical perfection and is sought for its own sake seems incongruous with al-Fārābī's broader psychological and cosmological model.

A closer examination of the text in question, especially in context of the preceding passage, will highlight the issue. Al-Fārābī writes, prior to his assertion that some individuals with knowledge of happiness do not obtain happiness:

> Felicity means that the human soul reaches a degree of perfection in (its) existence where it is in no need of 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. But its rank is beneath the rank of the Active Intellect. That aim is achieved only by certain voluntary actions, some of which are mental and others bodily actions, and not by indiscriminate actions but by defined and determined actions which arise out of definite and determined dispositions and habits, since there are voluntary actions which are an obstacle to felicity. Felicity is the good which is pursued for its own sake and it is never at any time pursued for obtaining something else through it, and there is nothing greater beyond it for man to obtain. The voluntary actions which help in attaining felicity are the good actions; and the dispositions and habits from which these actions proceed are the 'virtues' (faḍā'il), these being goods not for their own sake but goods for the sake of felicity only. But the actions which are an obstacle to felicity are the bad things, namely the evil actions, and the dispositions and habits from which these actions arise are defects, vices and base qualities.[331]

وحصول المعقولات الأولى للانسان هو استكماله الأول. وهذه المعقولات إنما جعلت له ليستعملها في أن يصير إلى استكماله الأخير . وذلك هو السعادة. وهي أن تصير نفس الانسان من الكمال في الوجود إلى حيث لا تحتاج في قوامها إلى مادة ، وذلك أن تصير في جملة الأشياء البريئة عن الأجسام ، وفي جملة الجواهر المفارقة للمواد ، وأن تبقى على تلك الحال دائما أبدا. إلا أن رتبتها تكون دون رتبة العقل الفعّال . وإنما تبلغ ذلك بأفعال ما ارادية ، بعضها أفعال فكرية ، وبعضها أفعال بدنية ، وليست بأي أفعال اتفقت ، بل بأفعال ما محدودة مقدرة تحصل عن هيئات ما وملكات ما مقدّرة محدودة. وذلك أن من الأفعال الارادية ما يعوق عن السعادة. والسعادة هي الخير المطلوب لذاته ، وليست تطلب أصلا ولا في وقت من الأوقات لينال بها شيء آخر ، وليس وراءها شيء آخر يمكن أن يناله الانسان أعظم منها . والأفعال الارادية التي تنفع في بلوغ السعادة هي الأفعال الجميلة. والهيئات والملكات التي تصدر عنها هذه الأفعال هي الفضائل. وهذه

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[330] Galston 1990, 94; *PS* 13.7; *PR* 73-74.
[331] *PS* 13.5-6.

خيرات هي لا لأجل ذواتها بل انما هي خيرات لأجل السعادة. والأفعال التي تعوق عن السعادة هي الشرور ، وهي الأفعال القبيحة. والهيئات والملكات التي عنها تكون هذه الأفعال هي النقائص والرذائل والخسائس [332].

Here, al-Fārābī makes some definitive assertions about the role that the practical dimensions of human life play in achieving happiness, and the proceeding passage should be read in this context given its placement only several lines later. First, happiness is the state of immateriality achieved by becoming the acquired intellect, cosmologically ranked immediately below the Active Intellect. Second, the virtues are sought, not for their own sake, but for the sake of felicity (qua immateriality). Third, despite happiness being defined as a theoretical accomplishment, it is an aim which is achieved only through voluntary action, insofar as there are voluntary obstacles to happiness which must be avoided. In short, happiness is theoretical but can be thwarted by improper habits and desires, so proper habits and desires, while outside the theoretical domain, remain for the sake of theoretical felicity.

Returning to the passage in question, al-Fārābī's stance becomes clearer. Al-Fārābī explains:

> When this felicity becomes known through theoretical reason and is set up as an aim and desired by the appetitive faculty, and when the deliberative faculty discovers what ought to be done in order to attain that with the assistance of the faculty of representation and the senses, and when those actions are performed by the instruments of the appetitive faculty, the actions of man will be all good and noble. But when felicity remains unknown, or becomes known without being set up as an aim which is desired, and something else different from it is set up as an aim and desired by the appetitive faculty, and the deliberative faculty has discovered what ought to be done in order to attain it with the assistance of the faculty of representation and the senses, and when those actions are performed by the instruments of the appetitive faculty, the actions of man will all be ignoble.[333]

فإذا علمت بالقوة النظرية السعادة ونضبت غاية وتشوقت بالنزوعية واستنبطت بالقوة المرويّة ما ينبغي أن تعمل حتى تنال بمعاونة المتخيلة والحواس على ذلك ، ثم فعلت بآلات القوة النزوعية تلك الأفعال ، كانت

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[332] *PS* 13.5-6.
[333] *PS* 13.7.

أفعال الانسان كلها خيرات وجميلة. فإذا لم تعلم السعادة ، أو علمت ولم تنصب غاية بتشوّق ، بل نصبت
الغاية شيئا آخر سواها وتشوّقت بالنزوعية واستنبطت بالقوة المروية ما ينبغي أن تعمل حتى تنال الحواس
والمتخيلة ، ثم فعلت تلك الأفعال بآلات القوة النزوعية ، كانت أفعال ذلك الانسان كلها غير جميلة [334].

Within this context, and especially within the context of the preceding discussion of how

al-Fārābī's cosmology brings about the sublunar world, it becomes apparent, despite

Galston's observations, that the practical dimensions of human life can be constitutive of

happiness as an irreducible component of happiness while also an instrumental good for

theoretical perfection. It is true that theoretical, intellectual perfection alone is not enough

for happiness, but this is because human beings, composed as they are through a mixture

of matter and contrary forms brought about through the contrary motions of the heavens

(which are themselves caused by the deficiency of embodiment), are not purely intellect.

Happiness, irreducibly, has a practical component because living human beings,

irreducibly, have, along with intellects, bodies. And while these bodies, when well-

ordered, are ruled by the rational faculty, they are composed of numerous deficient

faculties, the appetitive and representative faculties chief among them, that need

unification through habituation toward virtue.[335] And while practical virtue alone cannot

be sufficient for happiness, at least in this life, neither is the acquired intellect alone

sufficient to rule the whole human being without proper education, habituation, and

will.[336] Like the celestial souls, whose intellectual perfection is marred by their thinking

their substratum (*mawḍūʿa*) which is itself teleologically stifled by the condition of

embodiment, human beings do not transcend bodily needs even if they transcend thinking

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[334] *PS* 13.7.

[335] *PS* 10.1-9

[336] The aforementioned passages in *PS* and *PR* regarding the afterlife for the citizens of the virtuous city leave open the possibility of ultimate felicity for virtuous, but theoretically unperfected, citizens. See Chapter 2, 4.2.3, Chapter 3, 3.1.1.1, and Note 311.

in a material way.[337] However, a well-ordered body, even if still a deficiency, is preferable

to the alternative and necessary for happiness, just as the circular motions of the heavens,

while deficient, are preferable to stillness or disordered motion. Practical virtue is

irreducibly constitutive of happiness, but only insofar as practical vice is an obstacle

toward theoretical perfection.

Moreover, while Galston raises her challenge with the most difficult case, namely,

justifying practical virtue for the individual who has already obtained theoretical

perfection, the role of practical virtue as instrumental for achieving the state of the

acquired intellect is more apparent. Recall that for al-Fārābī, the development of moral

character ought to precede the study of philosophy; the philosophical life is concomitant

with habituation toward virtue.[338] In addition, the most important of these virtues (*faḍā'il*)

is the deliberative virtue (*al-quwwa al-fikrīa*), which governs practical matters, and the

most important form of deliberation is the political deliberative virtue (*al-quwwa al-fikrīa*

al-madaniyya), which governs practical matters for whole cities and nations.[339] Al-

Fārābī's account of happiness cannot be reduced to a solipsistic account; he has no model

like Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzan* which posits a human in isolation reaching his own

felicity on the merit of his perfection alone.[340] As al-Fārābī explains:

> Indeed man arrives at the ultimate perfection (whereby he attains that which
> renders him truly substantial) only when he labors with these principles toward
> achieving this perfection. Moreover, he cannot labor toward this perfection except
> by exploiting a large number of natural beings and until he manipulates them to
> render them useful to him for arriving at the ultimate perfection he should
> achieve. Furthermore, it will become evident to him in this science that each man

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[337] See Section 2.3.
[338] See Section 3.1.1.2.
[339] *AH* 20f.; *AH* (Ar.) 26f.This distinction between the theoretical and practical faculties is echoed in *SA* 33, where al-Fārābī discusses the theoretical rational part (*al-juz' al-nāṭiq al-naẓariyy*) and the deliberative rational part (*al-juz' al-nāṭiq al-fikriyya*) of the soul, whose virtues are wisdom (*ḥikma*) and prudence (*ta'aqqul*), respectively.
[340] See *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzan*. See also Chapter 4, 3.2.

achieves only a portion of that perfection, and what he achieves of this portion varies in its extent, for an isolated individual cannot achieve all the perfections by himself and without the aid of many other individuals. It is the innate disposition (*fiṭra*) of every man to join another human being or other men in the labor he ought to perform: this is the condition of every single man. Therefore, to achieve what he can of that perfection, every man needs to stay in the neighborhood of others and associate with them.[341]

وذلك أن الإنسان إنما يصير إلى الكمال الأقصى الذي له ما يتجوهر به في الحقيقة إذا سعى عن هذه المبادئء نحو بلوغ هذا الكمال وليس يمكنه أن يسعى نحوه إلا باستعمال أشياء كثيرة من الموجودات الطبيعية وإلى أن يفعل فيها أفعالاً تصير بها تلك الطبيعيات نافقة له في أن يبلغ الكمال الأقصى الذي سبيله أن يناله . ويتبين له مع ذلك في هذا العلم أن كل إنسان إنما ينال من ذلك الكمال قسطاً ما وإن ما يبلغه من ذلك القسط كان أزيد أو أنقص إذ جميع الكمالات ليس يمكن أن يبلغها وحده بانفراده دون معاونة ناس كثيرين له. وإن فطرة كل إنسان أن يكون مرتبطاً فيما ينبغي أن يسعى له بإنسان أو ناس غيره وكل إنسان من الناس بهذه الحال. وإنه كذلك يحتاج كل إنسان فيما له أن يبلغ من هذا الكمال إلى مجاورة ناس آخرين واجتماعه معهم .[342]

Prior to becoming acquired intellect, the human being is human qua sublunar existent; she requires association and requires the moral development which allows philosophical study to proceed.[343] It is part of her natural character (*fiṭra*). Put simply, while happiness is purely intellectual for al-Fārābī, political association and practical moral development are necessary, irreducible preconditions for intellectual happiness.

3.2.1.2. The Revealed-as-Determined Model

Before finally turning to the culmination of al-Fārābī's model for beneficent political deception in light of his cosmology, namely, both how beneficent political deception comes about and the role political deception plays in the development of the community, one final idiosyncratic feature of the Active Intellect, as found in the *Perfect*

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[341] *AH* 14.
[342] *AH* (Ar.) 15-16.
[343] How the originary Imām is able to transcend his circumstances by achieving happiness and legislating, despite his birth into a city of nation which has yet to establish true religion (*milla ṣaḥīḥa*) is something al-Fārābī never addresses, although a gradual developmental account could perhaps be reconstructed from his thoughts in *BL* 140-147.

State, should be noted. Whereas elsewhere al-Fārābī only credits the Active Intellect for the bestowal of intellectual powers to human beings, thereby consigning the establishment of religious images to the Imām through an act of invention or construction (*ikhtaraʿa*), in *PS*, religious images are given, through emanation (*fayḍ*), to the Imām's representative faculty (*quwwa al- mutakhayyila*) through the mediation (*tawassaṭa*) of the Active Intellect and the acquired intellect by God.[344] This doctrine of religion as revelation (*waḥy*), as opposed to religion as construction, is mirrored elsewhere in *PS* by an elaborate model to justify the existence of divination (*nubuwwa*), as I will discuss below.[345] This model, henceforth called the 'Revealed-as-Determined' model, stands in sharp contrast to the titular 'Construction of Social Knowledge' model discussed below, which is more representative of al-Fārābī's thought.[346] That said, as will be seen in Chapter 4, the Revealed-as-Determined model gains parlance with later thinkers, with Maimonides even constructing an amalgamation between the two approaches.[347]

At *PS* 15.10, al-Fārābī introduces that it is God, not the Imām, who bestows religious images on a nation (although the Active Intellect, acquired intellect, and representative faculty mitigate their reception). He explains:

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[344] *PS* 15.10.

[345] The English terminology for these distinct categories has shifted, partially due to al-Fārābī's idiosyncratic usage. *Nubuwwa* literally means prophecy, for example in the Qur'anic epithet (Qur'an 33:40), traditionally attributed to Muḥammad, "Seal of the Prophets" (*khātam an-nabīyīn*). However, al-Fārābī's usage of this term as purely imaginative, as will be discussed below, surely does not fit Muḥammad or the other major Abrahamic prophets, who more closely resemble al-Fārābī's Imām, who is a recipient of *waḥy* (literally, inspiration or revelation). Thus, al-Fārābī's usage of the terms diverges with their literal meaning, leading to some scholars preferring more textually appropriate translations while others prefer precision. For example, Rosenthal maintains the transliterated terms '*nawabit*' and '*mutawahhid*' for the diviners and the receivers of revelation, respectively, Walzer prefers diviners and prophets, and Macy prefers prophecy and revelation. I prefer the English 'prophecy' to remain a neutral general term for both phenomena, while 'divination' refers to *nubuwwa* and 'revelation' refers to *waḥy*. This will be the terminology I adopt moving forward. See Rosenthal 1955, 204; Walzer 1957, 142–148; Macy 1986.

[346] Al-Fārābī himself distinguishes between these two models in the *Book of Religion*. See *BR* 44.

[347] See Chapter 4, 3.3.

When this occurs in both parts of his rational faculty, namely the theoretical and the practical rational faculties, and also in his representative faculty, then it is this man who receives Divine Revelation (*yūḥī*) , and God Almighty grants him Revelation through the mediation (*tawassaṭa*) of the Active Intellect, so that the emanation from God Almighty to the Active Intellect is passed on to his Passive Intellect through the mediation of the Acquired Intellect, and then to the faculty of representation. Thus he is, through the emanation from the Active Intellect to his Passive Intellect, a wise man and a philosopher and an accomplished thinker who employs an intellect of divine quality, and through the emanation from the Active Intellect to his faculty of representation a visionary prophet (*al-mutakhayyila nabiyyan*): who warns of things to come and tells of particular things which exist at present.[348]

وإذا حصل ذلك في كلا جزئي قوته الناطقة ، وهما النظرية والعملية ، ثم في قوته المتخيّلة ، كان هذا الانسان هو الذي يوحى إليه. فيكون الله ، عز وجل ، يوحي إليه بتوسّط العقل الفعّال ، فيكون ما يفيض من الله ، تبارك وتعالى ، إلى العقل الفعّال يفيضه العقل الفعّال إلى عقله المنفعل بتوسّط العقل المستفاد ، ثم إلى قوته المتخيّلة. فيكون بما يفيض منه إلى عقله المنفعل حكيما فيلسوفا ومتعقلا على التمام وبما يفيض منه إلى قوته المتخيّلة نبيا منذرا بما سيكون ومخبرا بما هو الآن (عن) الجزئيات ، بوجود يعقل فيه الإلهي . [349]

Here, God (i.e., the First) emanates something, through the chain of Secondary Causes (even if not stated explicitly here), to the imaginative faculty, using the Active Intellect and the perfected acquired intellect as intermediaries. The result of this emanation upon the human person is two-fold: first, the rational faculty is perfected and the recipient receives revelation (*waḥy*); second, the perfected imaginative faculty of the recipient receives images, what al-Fārābī calls prophecy or, more accurately in context, divination (*nubuwwa*). The former is identified as nothing more (or less) than the state of being a wise person (*ḥakīm*) or philosopher (*faylasūf*). The latter hearkens back to al-Fārābī's previous discussion of divination (*nubuwwa*).

At *PS* 14.7, al-Fārābī introduces a peculiar activity of the Active Intellect upon the sublunar world, especially given his otherwise economical account of the role the Active Intellect plays. He explains that sometimes the Active Intellect provides intelligibles

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[348] *PS* 15.10.
[349] *PS* 15.10.

directly to the representative faculty of individuals, whether they have perfected rational faculties or not, and calls this divination (*nubuwwa*). He explains:

> Since it has been made clear that the Active Intellect is the cause of the potential intelligibles becoming actual and of the potential intellect becoming actual; and that it is the rational faculty which is made to become actually intellect; and that there are two forms (species) of the rational faculty, theoretical and practical, and that the function of practical reason is to direct action towards present and future particulars, and that of theoretical reason to become aware of the intelligibles which cannot be translated into action; and since the faculty of representation is closely connected with the two forms (species) of the rational faculty —for what the rational faculty obtains from the Active Intellect (which is to it as light is to sight) emanates sometimes from the Active Intellect to the faculty of representation —it follows that the Active Intellect acts in some way upon the faculty of representation as well, by providing it sometimes with the intelligibles whose proper place is in theoretical reason, and sometimes with particulars in the form of sensibles whose proper place is in practical reason. It receives the intelligibles by imitating them with those sensibles which it puts together, and receives the particulars, which are usually produced by practical reason through deliberation, sometimes by representing them as they are and sometimes by imitating them with other sensibles. Some of those particulars are present, and some arise in the future, but all of them reach the faculty of representation without the intervention of deliberation. It is for this reason that such things can also be present in the faculty of representation without having been discovered by deliberation, and so true visions will arise from the particulars which the Active Intellect gives to the faculty of representation in dreams. But divinations concerning things divine will arise from the intelligibles provided by the Active Intellect, which it receives by taking their imitations (*muḥākāt*) instead.[350]

والعقل الفعّال ، لما كان هو السبب في أن تصير به المعقولات التي هي بالقوة معقولات بالفعل ، وأن يصير ما هو عقل بالقوة عقلا بالفعل ، وكان ما سبيله أن يصير عقلا بالفعل هي القوة الناطقة ، وكانت الناطقة ضربين : ضربا نظريا وضربا عمليا ، وكانت العملية هي التي شأنها أن تفعل الجزئيات الحاضرة والمستقبلة ، والنظرية هي التي شأنها أن تعقل المعقولات التي شأنها أن تعلم ، وكانت القوة المتخيلة مواصلة لضربي القوة الناطقة ، فان الذي تنال القوة الناطقة عن العقل الفعّال ـ وهو الشيء الذي منزلته الضياء من البصر ـ قد يفيض منه على القوة المتخيلة. فيكون للعقل الفعّال في القوة المتخيلة فعل ما ، تعطيه أحيانا المعقولات التي شأنها أن تحصل في الناطقة النظرية ، وأحيانا الجزئيات المحسوسات التي شأنها أن تحصل في الناطقة العملية ، فتقبل (القوة المتخيلة) المعقولات بما يحاكيها من المحسوسات التي تركبها هي. وتقبل الجزئيات أحيانا بأن تتخيلها كما هي ، وأحيانا بأن تحاكيها بمحسوسات أخر ، وهذه هي التي شأن الناطقة العملية أن تعملها بالروية. فمنها حاضرة ، ومنها كائنة في المستقبل. إلا أن ما يحصل للقوة المتخيلة من هذه كلها ، بلا توسط روية. فلذلك يحصل في هذه الأشياء بعد أن يستنبط بالرويّة. فيكون ما يعطيه العقل الفعّال للقوة المتخيلة من الجزئيات ، بالمنامات والرؤيات الصادقة؛ وبما يعطيها من المعقولات التي تقبلها بأن يأخذ محاكاتها مكانها بالكهانات على الأشياء الإلهية .[351]

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[350] *PS* 14.7.
[351] *PS* 14.7.

This passage is likely in conversation with the Arabic *Parva Naturalia*, particularly *On Divination in Sleep* as likely translated and edited by the al-Kindī circle, which represents a significant departure from Aristotle's text.[352] Whereas Aristotle describes the predictive accuracy of dreams as "mere coincidences", that such dreams "are not sent from God", that these kind of dreams are experienced in inferior persons, and that the dreamers' success in these matters are "like that of persons who play at dice", the only extent copy of the Arabic *On Divination in Sleep* takes the predictive power of dreams very seriously, insisting that they come, not from the human acquired intellect, but the Universal Intellect, influencing al-Fārābī's passage above.[353] That said, this position is peculiar for al-Fārābī. While he does link the imagination closely to the rational faculty, giving some justification for his contention that the Active Intellect can act directly upon the faculty of representation, insofar as the imagination is ruled by the rational faculty and the imagination can imitate the intelligibles given to it by the rational faculty, two aspects of this passage are hard to reconcile with his broader philosophy, beyond its aforementioned inflationary description of the activities of the Active Intellect.[354] First, while the faculty of representation serves as the intermediary between intellect and sensation, is ruled by the rational faculty, and is capable of receiving intelligibles from the rational faculty (as images), al-Fārābī does not inextricably link thought and representation. Unlike Aristotle in *De Anima* 3.3, who suggests that thought, in part, depends upon imagination, al-Fārābī

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[352] Daiber 1997, 36f.; Hansberger 2014, 302; Hansberger 2008, 71f.; Streetman 2008, 213f. Al-Fārābī seems to have known the work, referencing it in the *Philosophy of Aristotle*. See *PA* 120-121.

[353] *On Divination in Sleep* 1-2; *On Divination in Sleep* (Ar.) 41R, 5-11. See Hansberger 2006, 145f. See also López-Farjeat 2020; Streetman 2008, 213f.; Hansberger 2008, 73-76.

[354] See *PS* 10.5, 10.9, 14.4. See also López-Farjeat 2020; Kemal 2003, 40f.; Streetman 2008, 220f.; Davidson 1992, 58f.; Walzer 1957, 144f.

makes no such claim.[355] For, while it is parsimonious with al-Fārābī's broader psychology (beyond the idiosyncratic aspects of the Active Intellect providing intelligibles to the human person directly) to suggest that that which supplies the intellect with intelligibles also supplies images (*muḥākāt*) to the representative faculty (insofar as the former can be translated into the latter), there is no obvious reason to assume a similar psychological model for translation sans the acquired intellect as a mediator. Put simply, despite al-Fārābī's conjecture that from his psychological model it follows that the Active Intellect can act directly on the imagination, this remains nebulous. Secondly, the outcomes of divination, e.g., knowledge of present particulars (*al-ḥāḍira al-juzay'āt*) and future particulars (*al-mustaqbal al-juzay'āt*), seem discordant with al-Fārābī's other commitments, e.g., the Active Intellect's ignorance of particulars and the logical indeterminacy of future events.[356] This passage, the only place where al-Fārābī adopts divination as philosophically defensible, remains enigmatic and worthy of study, despite the plethora of literature already devoted to the topic.[357]

Yet, al-Fārābī's model for divination raises some important aspects about the way that intelligibles (*ma'qulāt*) and images (*muḥākāt*) relate to one another, for both the Revealed-as-Determined and the Construction of Social Knowledge models of religion.

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[355] Kemal, relying on al-Fārābī's commitment to an Aristotelian method, contends that he does, but provides no proof text beyond the texts of Aristotle. Kemal 2003, 40f. And al-Fārābī is careful to distinguish between thought and images in *LDI*. See *LDI* 10-11; *LDI* (Ar.) 24.

[356] Regarding the first case, al-Fārābī is clear in numerous places that the acquired intellect is similar to the rank of Active Intellect insofar as it has knowledge of universals and is free from matter. The only intelligibles al-Fārābī ever describes the Active Intellect as thinking are other Separated Substances. In short, it is unclear how the Active Intellect could provide the imagination with any kind of particular, given that the Active Intellect does not itself know particulars. See Section 3.2.1.1; *PS* 3.10; *PR* 34; and Note 103. Regarding the second case, al-Fārābī seems to deny the determinacy of future events as a result of the inherent contingency of human will and choice. See *PS* 2.1; *LDI* 83-96; *LDI* (Ar. 89-100). See also Adamson 2006; cf. Terkan 2004; Marmura 1985; Rescher 1963.

[357] See, for example, López-Farjeat 2020; Streetman 2008; Davidson 1992, 58f.; Walzer 1957.

First, these images which represent sensibles and intelligibles, even divine things (*al-'ashyā' al-'ilāhiyya*), are received without deliberation; the images received arise in the representative faculty prior to understanding their meaning.[358] And, in the case of individuals who lack a perfected rational faculty, but have a perfected representative faculty, these images can appear without understanding.[359] Second, these images are assembled according to the limitations of the representative faculty which receives them, beings themselves imitations of what is provided by the Active Intellect, but comprised of sensibles which are already present in the representative faculty.[360] The capacity of an individual's representative faculty limits the images it is able to represent, and, in the case of intelligibles, it simply imitates them with the most appropriate sensibles available.[361] And third, the appropriateness of an imitation is based upon the correspondence between the excellence (*'afḍal*) of the sensibles (*maḥsūsāt*) and the excellence (*'afḍal*) of the intelligibles (*ma'qulāt*).[362] Put otherwise, as there is a universal aesthetic ranking for intelligibles (with the First being the most beautiful, excellent, and perfect), there is a universal aesthetic ranking for sensibles.[363] And the most perfect intelligibles should be represented by the most perfect (*'akmal*), excellent (*'afḍal*), and good (*ḥasana*) things.[364] Likewise, defective (*nāqiṣa*) intelligibles should be represented by the most defective (*'anqas*) and most base (*'akass*) sensibles.[365] And, analogous to the happiness and delight

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[358] In al-Fārābī's works on poetry, he stipulates that the best poetry occurs spontaneously. This passage likely hearkens back to this view. See *CP* 277; *CP* (Ar.) 271.

[359] *PS* 14.9-11.

[360] *PS* 14.1-7. For the various level of a perfected representative faculty, see *PS* 14.9-11.

[361] *PS* 14.4.

[362] *PS* 14.6.

[363] While the aesthetic ranking for sensibles clearly allows for some variability between nations, it is clearly also grounded, in its general schema, in human nature.

[364] *PS* 14.6.

[365] *PS* 14.6.

which occurs through thinking the most perfect intelligibles, representing the most

perfect intelligibles in the imagination brings about wonderful and great pleasure (*laḏḏa*

'ajīb 'aẓīm).[366] So, while a perfect imaginative faculty could represent a beautiful

intelligible with any number of beautiful images, it would be amiss and erroneous to

represent a beautiful intelligible with a base image and vice versa. (For example, al-

Fārābī uses the illustration of appropriately representing the base concept of matter

variously with the base images of water, abyss, or darkness, using the myths of the

Timaeus as a model for this kind of representation.)[367] This accounts for the possible

plurality of true religions, while still having a means by which to appraise the

appropriateness of religious representation. It also explains why certain religious images

can be more appropriate for specific nations, but still universally fitting, insofar as the

Imām can represent philosophical truths in a variety of appropriate ways.

In this context, returning to the Revealed-as-Determined Model, what al-Fārābī

calls revelation (*waḥy*), the doctrine in the aforementioned passage at *PS* 15.10 is made

clearer. Regarding the representative faculty, both the recipient of divination (*nubuwwa*)

and the recipient of revelation (*waḥy*) possess a perfected imagination. And in both cases,

the Active Intellect acts upon the representative faculty, generating sensible images of

intelligibles (although for the recipient of revelation, the acquired intellect mediates this

process). Neither the diviner nor the recipient of revelation invents the images; they are

revealed to their imaginations as determined (*muqaddara*) by God (through the mediation

of the Active Intellect).[368] But whereas the diviner receives images and images only, not

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[366] *PS* 14.9.
[367] *AH* 41; *AH* (Ar.) 56.
[368] *BR* 44.

understanding the images, the recipient of revelation is a wise person (*ḥakīm*) and a philosopher (*faylasūf*). He understands the intelligibles which inspire the images, even if he receives the images without deliberation. He receives the images first and understands them after reflection. The diviner receives the images entirely without understanding.

3.2.2. Extrapolations from the Role of the Active Intellect

On the whole, the Active Intellect effects providence (*'ināya*) over the sublunar world and especially human beings, being the trustworthy (*al-amīn*) and holy spirit (*rūh al-qudus*).[369] While limited in its activity by that which the celestial bodies prepare, the teleological fulfillment of human beings as actual intellects and non-human sublunar existents as actual intelligibles is only possible through its activity. That said, this is a significant limitation; humans, as embodied, need both a well-ordered community and good luck to even be in a state upon which the Active Intellect can fully act.[370] For this reason, at least in *PS*, the Active Intellect emanates intelligibles directly to the imaginative faculty of perfected individuals, revealing determined images by which they can set up a well-ordered community. In other words, in *PS*, the Active Intellect helps foster human felicity by fostering wise rule. However, in other places in al-Fārābī's corpus, the providence of the Active Intellect is limited to the powers for intellection, and it is the responsibility of the philosopher, the Imām, to legislate by creating images which foster cooperation and give citizens a semblance of the truth.

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[369] *PR* 32. See also Qur'ān 16:102, 26:193.
[370] See *NE* 1.10.

4. <u>The Imām and Beneficent Political Deception</u>

In Chapter 2, Figure 2.1.1.1, a model of beneficent political deception was presented which showed why the Imām of the city must resort to beneficent deception, rather than truth, to legislate and educate the denizens of his city. Namely, beneficent deception is a means by which to impose order on what is naturally disordered. In this chapter, it has been shown why human society has a tendency toward disorder, specifically that at the level of sublunar existence deficiency has an outsized effect on sublunar existents. Only the providence of the Active Intellect offers the hope of teleological fulfillment through intelligibility. The model can now be updated to look as such:

Figure 4
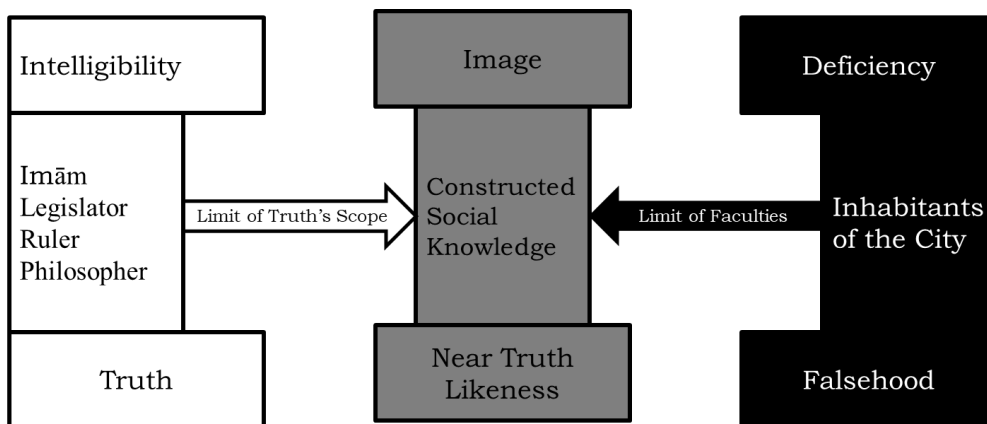
But whereas it has been explained a) how the cosmos originates in unity and truth via the First, b) how the intelligibility and order of the cosmos is accounted for in the emulation of the First by the Secondary Causes, c) how deficiency originates in the cosmos through the motions of the heavens, d) how this deficiency constitutes the existence of the existents of the sublunar world, and e) how the Active Intellect, despite the deficiency of

its charge, acts upon the sublunar world, rendering it intelligible, the actual mechanisms by which beneficent political deception imposes order on what it naturally disordered have yet to be discussed.

4.1. The Imām as Translator

Recall that for al-Fārābī, beneficent political deception is a mechanism by which the founding ruler of a city, the Imām, creates images, expressed through language as a kind of new vernacular, in order to express universal truths demonstrated through philosophy to those without philosophical talents or skills, a vernacular composed of these selfsame images and laws which are justified through these images, a vernacular called religion (*milla*).[371] Al-Fārābī envisions a healthy polis as a city ruled by a wise man who is simultaneously a philosopher, a visionary prophet, and the owner of a perfected representative faculty. This Imām, understanding that many citizens are themselves unable to encounter truth directly through science and demonstration, is charged, nonetheless, with communicating truth to his citizenry. Thus, this Imām must somehow translate philosophical truths to those who cannot themselves assess the validity of demonstrations, via his perfected intellect and representative faculty, in order to rouse citizens' imaginations by well-chosen words. In this function, the Imām must be a philosopher qua poet, who establishes laws, myths, and images which are, strictly speaking, not true, but are nonetheless similitudes of the truth. He must translate demonstrable truths into the imagery of religion, and, when the Imām does so, al-Fārābī insists that the former can be known through the latter.

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[371] Al-Fārābī calls these justifications jurisprudence (*fiqh*). *ES* 107; *BR* 50. See also *PS* 15.13; *SA* 58; *BL* 109-112; *PR* 80-81.

Unfortunately, al-Fārābī never clearly explicates how demonstrable truths, i.e., propositional truths, can be translated faithfully into the symbols and laws of religious imagery.[372] In some ways, his account is lacking specificity. For all his discussion of the Imām, he never devotes any texts about how this translation, a translation from proposition to image, from universal to particular, from immaterial to material, occurs, other than pointing to the perfection of the Imām's representative faculty, as discussed above.[373] He never explains how intelligibles can be appropriately translated into sensible images, instead simply gesturing to some common characteristics of excellence and perfection held by both the intelligibles and sensibles.

4.1.1. Revealed as Determined versus Construction of Social Knowledge

In other ways, his account is overabundant. As mentioned previously, *PS* adopts the Revealed-as-Determined Model, a model for the origin of religion, also mentioned in *BR*, which credits the genesis of the images of religion to the activity of the Active Intellect.[374] In *AH,* al-Fārābī adopts the Construction of Social Knowledge model, emphasizing that the Imām deliberately translates the demonstrations of philosophy into the images consumed by the multitude, describing him as inventing (*ikhtaraʿa*) the images.[375] He does not mention emanation (*fayḍ*) at all in this context.[376] This seems to

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[372] A full account of this process must, thus, turn to his poetics, as discussed below.

[373] See Sections 3.1.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.1.2.

[374] *PS* 15.10. *BR* suggests that both the Revealed-as-Determined model and the Construction of Social Knowledge model are viable, perhaps even both occurrent in distinct nations. *BR* 44.

[375] *AH* 44; *AH* (Ar.) 61. Incidentally, this fits nicely with his claim elsewhere that theoretical and practical philosophy, i.e., universal knowledge, was perfected and completed with Aristotle, relegating revelation to the skills of first, philosophy, and then, poetry, not to any additional divine inspiration. See *BL* 143. See also Fraenkel 2008, 115f.

[376] There is some question as to which of these models produces the more aesthetically affective result, given that al-Fārābī claims that the most piercing poetry occurs off-the-cuff, having not been written down, insinuating that a deliberative process is inferior to natural inspiration. *CP* 277; *CP* (Ar.) 271.

be the model adopted in *BL* also, which describes religion as something established as human (*'insāniyya*).[377] And *PR* merely discusses the need for a king to establish laws and images, focusing on the images themselves, not the translation process.[378] In *BR*, aside from the aforementioned passage which distinguishes between the Revealed-as-Determined model and the Construction of Social Knowledge model for the origination of religion, he again focuses primarily on the images and the laws themselves, not the translation from philosophy into images and laws. And, as he does elsewhere, he focuses on the proper procedure for following a religion after the first ruler dies without determining all proper courses of human action.[379] The places where al-Fārābī is most clear about the role of symbols and imagery are in his texts on poetry, but here revelation and religion are not discussed. Instead, poetry is analyzed, described as both, strictly speaking, false (*kaḏba*) and as a kind of syllogism (*sulujismus*) which causes the hearer to imagine a proposition which is like the truth.[380] He even describes these poetic syllogisms as having the power of analogy (*quwwa qiyās*), a term which carries a juridical connotation, as analogy (*qiyas*) is the method used by certain schools of Islamic Jurisprudence to extrapolate from existing laws contained within the Qur'ān and Sunnah in order to apply this analogical reasoning to novel scenarios.[381] All told, establishing a

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[377] *BL* 108.

[378] *PR* 85-86. In fact, when discussing revelation (*waḥy*), *PR* seems to equate the reception of revelation with achieving the status of the acquired intellect (i.e., complete knowledge), which is itself equated with happiness, which is itself equated with self-rule, which is itself equated with rulership over a city, with no reference to the representative faculty. In other words, he reduces revelation to philosophical knowledge, and it is the ruler's duty to form images because he has knowledge, not because he has a perfected representative faculty. *PR* 80.

[379] *BR* 47-50. See also *ES* 107; *PS* 15.13; *SA* 58; *BL* 109-112; *PR* 80-81.

[380] *CP* 274; *CP* (Ar.) 267-68.

[381] *CP* 274; *CP* (Ar.) 267-68.

definitive Fārābīan position for the origin of religious images is impossible, given the scattered and dissonant variations of his discussion of the topic.

But largely speaking, his texts on this issue can be grouped into 3 positions: a) texts which support the Revealed-as-Determined model, b) texts which support the Construction of Social Knowledge model, and c) neutral texts. (*BR*, while clearly in the neutral category, explicitly supports both of the other models as viable possibilities and even suggests that they represent two distinct phenomena, not competing models.)[382] But, while it would be a mistake to collapse the distinction between these two models, it is also a mistake to read them as radically distinct. While these texts differ as to whether the Active Intellect, through the mediation of the acquired intellect, or the acquired intellect alone, provide intelligibles to the representative faculty which translates these intelligibles into sensible images, both models rely upon the same fundamental psychological and linguistic presumptions about the relationship between the intellect and the imagination and intelligibles and sensible images, respectively. As al-Fārābī explains in *PR*, which does not explicitly espouse the Revealed-as-Determined model, insofar as the Active Intellect is essential for human psychology, giving the Imām the principle for intellection as well as a faculty for seizing definitions and knowing happiness, "it is possible due to this to say that the first cause is what brings about revelation to this human being by the intermediary of the Active Intellect."[383] Needless to say, this chapter will not establish a definitive reading of al-Fārābī's model for beneficent political deception regarding the translation of intelligibles into sensible images, although the

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[382] *BR* 44.

[383] *PR* 80; "ولأنّ العقل الفعّال فائض عن وجود السبب الأوّل فقد يمكن لأجل ذلك أن يقال إنّ السبب الأول هو الموحى إلى هذا الإنسان بتوسط العقل الفعّال."

Construction of Social Knowledge model is certainly the more prevalent model in his texts and will be the focus henceforward.[384] His texts are simply unclear about the issue.

4.1.2. Markers of Translation

However, what is clear is that a sort of translation occurs, starting with certain truths and ending in images (although, to my knowledge, he never uses the term 'translation' himself). It is essential for the Fārābīan project that what occurs is a translation, not a mere deceit, not a Noble Lie (at least as exemplified by the Phoenician Tale). Because, while al-Fārābī clearly draws on Plato for his doctrine (who he reads more charitably on this issue than perhaps Plato deserves), and while al-Fārābī's Imām is the "more austere and less pleasure-giving poet and storyteller" described in *Republic 3,* "one who would imitate the speech of a decent person and who would tell his stories in accordance with the patterns… laid down", al-Fārābī's conception of religion does not parallel the Phoenician Story of the *Republic*.[385] Unlike the Phoenician Tale which famously establishes a class system of gold, silver, and bronze citizens and is intended to deceive the citizenry in order to maintain the established hierarchical order, al-Fārābī's religion is itself a form of education. What makes it a translation, a beneficent deception, rather than a mere lie, is that it can be translated back. Proper translations are not unidirectional. This is vital, not only for the ethical justifiability of al-Fārābī's own project, but for the justification of those who adopt al-Fārābī's insight: e.g., Avicenna,

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[384] The Construction of Social Knowledge model is also the more pertinent for the question of political deception. Because, while both models involve deception, i.e., they require the Imām to characterize false images as being true, while knowing that they are not the truth, the Revealed-as-Determined model does not have the Imām initiate the deception. The image is revealed to him, not invented out of whole cloth by him.

[385] *Republic* 398b. For a discussion of the Phoenician Story, see Chapter 1, Section 2.1.

Averroes, Maimonides, and even Ibn Ṭufayl, who is otherwise distrustful of anything al-Fārābī has to say on religion (or, frankly, philosophy outside of logic).[386] Like al-Fārābī, these thinkers view religion as an imagistic translation of the truths of philosophy (though they vary, like al-Fārābī's texts, as to whether the translation is revealed *to* the prophet or invented *by* the prophet, e.g., Ibn Ṭufayl and Avicenna hold the former position, though in distinct manners, Averroes the latter, and Maimonides adopts an amalgamation between the two).[387] It is doubly vital for the Latin reception of al-Fārābī's insight, as the critique of Averroes, as well as Latin Averroists like Siger of Brabant, particularly that they had adopted a doctrine of some sort of 'double truth', are a misunderstanding of al-Fārābī's doctrine (as mediated by Averroes).[388] If philosophy and religion do not express the selfsame truth, if it is not a translation, then the Latin critiques are warranted.[389]

Having laid out some of the broader issues at play, let us now focus on exactly how and why al-Fārābī's translation project occurs, and more importantly, how the Imām's translation from philosophy to religion prompts a corresponding translation in some citizens, going from religion back to philosophy. Al-Fārābī explains in *AH:*

> Once the images (*makhīla*) representing the theoretical things *(al-'ashīā' al-naẓariyya)* demonstrated in the theoretical sciences are produced in the souls of the multitude (*fī nufūs al-jamāhīr*) and they are made to assent (*al-taṣdīq*) to their images, and once the practical things (together with the conditions of the possibility of their existence) take hold of their souls and dominate them so that they are unable to resolve to do anything else, then the theoretical and practical things (*al-'ashīā' al-naẓariyya wa al-'amaliyyā*) are realized (*qad ḥaṣalat*). Now these things are philosophy (*falsafa*) when they are in the soul of the legislator (*fī*

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[386] For these thinkers' reception of the Fārābīan Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception, see Chapter 4, 3. For Ibn Ṭufayl's critique of al-Fārābī, see *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzan*, 13-14.

[387] See Chapter 4, 3.

[388] See Chapter 4, 3.4.2. For discussions of the doctrine of double truth, see Taylor 2007, 39f.; Gilson 1938; Gilson 1955; P.F. Mandonnet 1911; A. Maurer 1995; Bianchi 2008; 2017.

[389] The most famous of these critiques can be found in the *Condemnation of 1277* by Bishop Stephen Tempier, where he indirectly accuses the Latin Averroists of endorsing both the distinct truths of philosophy and the distinct truths of scripture "as if there are two opposite truths" (*quasi sint due contrarie veritates*). See Piché (ed.) 1990. See also Zedler 1967.

nafs wāḍiʿ al-nawāmīs). They the religion (*milla*) when they are in the souls of the multitude (*fī nufūs al-jamāhīr*). For when the legislator knows these things (*fī ʿilm wāḍiʿ al-nawāmīs*), they are evident to him by sure insight (*baṣīra yaqīnīa*), whereas what is established in the souls of the multitude (*fī nufūs al-jamāhīr*) is through an image (*mutakhayyl*) and a persuasive argument (*ʾiqnāʿ*). Although it is the legislator who also represents (*yatakhayyalu*) these things (*hāḏihi al-ʾashīāʾ*) through images, neither the images (*mutakhayylāt*) nor the persuasive arguments (*muqannaʿāt*) are intended for himself. As far as he is concerned, they are certain (*balla yaqīnīa li-hu*). He is the one who invents (*ikhtaraʿa*) the images (*mutakhayylāt*) and the persuasive arguments (*muqannaʿāt*), but not for the sake of establishing these things in his own soul (*al-ʾashīāʾ fī nafs*) as a religion for himself (*malaka li-hu*). No, the images (*mutakhayyl*) and the persuasive arguments (*ʾiqnāʿ*) are intended for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, these things are certain (*yaqin*). They are a religion for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, they are philosophy (*falsafa*). Such, then, is true philosophy (*al-falsafa bi-l-ḥaqīqa*) and the true philosopher (*al-faylasūf bi-l-ḥaqīqa*).[390]

و متى حصلتْ [هذه] الأشياء النظرية التي تبرهنت في العلوم النظرية مخيلة في نفوس الجمهور، وأوقع التصديق بما تخيّل منها وحصلتْ الأشياء العملية بشرائطها التي بها وجودها ممكنة في نفوسهم واستولتْ عليها، وصارتْ عزائمهم لا تنهضم نحو فعل شيءٍ آخر غيرها؛ فقد حصلتْ الأشياء النظرية والعملية تلك، وهذه بأعيانها إذا كانت في نفس واضع النواميس فهي فلسفة، إذا كانت في نفوس الجمهور فهي ملة. وذلك أنّ الذي يُبيّن هذه في علم واضع النواميس بصيرة يقينية، والتي تمكّن في نفوس الجمهور متخيّلٌ وإقناع، على أنّ واضع النواميس يتخيّل أيضاً هذه الأشياء، ليست المتخيلات له، ولا المقنعات فيه؛ بل يقينية له، وهو الذي اخترع المتخيلات والمقنعات لا ليمكّن بها تلك الأشياء في نفسه على أنّها ملكةٌ له، ‹إنما› على انّها متخيل وإقناع لغيره ويقين له،وعلى أنها ‹مِلّة› وله هو فلسفة. فهذه هي الفلسفة بالحقيقة والفيلسوف بالحقيقة.[391]

Here al-Fārābī lays out the basic structure for translation from demonstrable truths to images, beginning with the nature of the Imām's knowledge and proceeding to the nature of the reception of the images within the souls of the multitude (*fī nufūs al-jamāhīr*). The Imam knows all that can be known through the demonstrative science (*burhan*), both theoretical and practical. And these things are certain (*yaqīn*), as he has had a certain insight (*baṣīra yaqīnīa*). Certitude (*yaqīn*) is a technical term for al-Fārābī, having very particular epistemological conditions (at least insofar as it is absolute), namely 1) belief, 2) agreement between the belief and the external world, 3) knowledge of the

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[390] *AH* 44.
[391] *AH* (Ar.) 61.

correspondence between the belief and the external world, 4) that the untruth of the

aforementioned correspondence is impossible, 5) that the truth of this belief is timeless,

and 6) the essentiality of the truth of this belief.[392] While al-Fārābī does not say here that

the Imām's certainty is absolute, his emphasis of *yaqīn* in the passage should be read as

an emphasis of the Imām's demonstrative knowledge (which he also discusses) and the

nature of this knowledge: universal, immaterial, and propositional. Moreover, his

insistence that the images the Imām invents are not necessary for his own soul, not

required as what Butterworth translates as 'a religion for himself' (*malaka li-hu*), but

should be more literally read as 'a disposition for himself', means that no new knowledge

is created through the process of this translation (contra the Revealed-as-Determined

model, in which the Active Intellect provides something to the Imām). The Imām has a

perfected intellect through the normal process of empirical knowledge, abstraction, and

demonstration, the selfsame knowledge that any philosopher could have.

This excerpt is preceded in *AH* by a similar passage, where al-Fārābī emphasizes

the responsibility the Imām has to provide some semblance of truth to those who could

not otherwise attain it. He says:

> When the theoretical sciences are isolated and their possessor does not have the
> faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of others, they are defective philosophy.
> To be a truly perfect philosopher (*al-faylasūf al-kāmil*) one has to possess both the
> theoretical sciences and the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of all others
> according to their capacity. Were one to consider the case of the true philosopher,
> he would find no difference between him and the supreme ruler. For he who
> possesses the faculty for exploiting what is comprised by the theoretical matters
> for the benefit of all others possesses the faculty for making such matters
> intelligible as well as for bringing into actual existence those of them that depend
> on the will. The greater his power to do the latter, the more perfect is his
> philosophy. Therefore he who is truly perfect possesses with sure insight (*baṣīra
> yaqīnīa*), first, the theoretical virtues, and subsequently the practical. Moreover,
> he possesses the capacity for bringing them about in nations and cities in the

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[392] *CC* 97. See Black 2006. See also Chapter 6.

manner and the measure possible with reference to each. Since it is impossible for him to possess the faculty for bringing them about except by employing certain demonstrations (*barāhīn yaqīnīa*), persuasive methods, as well as methods that represent things through images, and this either with the consent of others or by compulsion, it follows that the true philosopher is himself the supreme ruler. Every instruction is composed of two things: (a) making what is being studied comprehensible and causing its idea to be established in the soul and (b) causing others to assent (*taṣdīq*) to what is comprehended and established in the soul. There are two ways of making a thing comprehensible: first, by causing its essence to be perceived by the intellect, and second, by causing it to be imagined (*yatakhayyala*) through the similitude (*mithāl*) that imitates it. Assent (*taṣdīq*), too, is brought about by one of two methods, either the method of certain demonstration or the method of persuasion (*'iqnā'*). Now when one acquires knowledge of the beings or receives instruction in them, if he perceives their ideas themselves with his intellect, and his assent (*taṣdīq*) to them is by means of certain demonstration, then the science that comprises these cognitions is philosophy. But if they are known by imagining them through similitudes (*mithālāt*) that imitate them, and assent (*taṣdīq*) to what is imagined of them is caused by persuasive methods, then the ancients call what comprises these cognitions religion (*milla*). And if those intelligibles themselves are adopted, and persuasive methods are used, then the religion comprising them is called popular, generally accepted, and external philosophy. Therefore, according to the ancients, religion is an imitation of philosophy. Both comprise the same subjects and both give an account of the ultimate principles of the beings. For both supply knowledge about the first principle and cause of the beings, and both give an account of the ultimate end for the sake of which man is made—that is, supreme happiness (*al-saʿāda al-quṣwā*)—and the ultimate end of every one of the other beings. In everything of which philosophy gives an account based on intellectual perception or conception, religion gives an account based on imagination. In everything demonstrated by philosophy, religion employs persuasion. Philosophy gives an account of the ultimate principles (that is, the essence of the first principle and the essences of the incorporeal second principles), as they are perceived by the intellect. Religion sets forth their images by means of similitudes of them taken from corporeal principles and imitates them by their likenesses among political offices. It imitates the divine acts by means of the functions of political offices. It imitates the actions of natural powers and principles by their likenesses among the faculties, states, and arts that have to do with the will, just as Plato does in the *Timaeus*. It imitates the intelligibles by their likenesses among the sensibles: for instance, some imitate matter by *abyss* or *darkness* or *water*, and *nothingness* by *darkness*. It imitates the classes of supreme happiness—that is, the ends of the acts of the human virtues—by their likenesses among the goods that are believed to be the ends. It imitates the classes of true happiness by means of the ones that are believed to be happiness. It imitates the ranks of the beings by their likenesses among spatial and temporal ranks. And it attempts to bring the similitudes of these things as close as possible to their essences. Also, in everything of which philosophy gives an account that is demonstrative and

certain, religion gives an account based on persuasive arguments. Finally, philosophy is prior to religion in time.[393]

وأذا انفردت العلوم النظرية، ثم لم يكن لمن حصلتْ له، قوة على استعمالها في غيره كانت فلسفة باقصة. والفيلسوف الكامل على الإطلاق هو أنْ تحصل له العلوم النظرية، و تكون له قوة على استعمالها في كل مَنْ سواه بالوجه الممكن فيه. وإذه تومل أمر الفيلسوف على الإطلاق لم يكن بينه وبين الرئيس الأول فرق، وذلك أنّ الذي له قوة على استعمال ما تحتوي عليه النظرية في كل مَنْ سواه ‹أ› هل هو أن تكون له القوة على إيجادها معقولة و على إيجاد الإرادية منها بالفعل. وكلمّا/كانت قوته على هذه أعظم كان أكمل فلسفة؛ فيكون الكامل على الإطلاق هو الذي حصلت له الفضائل النظرية أولاً، ثم العملية ببصيرةٍ يقينيةٍ. ثم أن تكون له قدرة على إيجادها جميعاً/في الأمم والمدن بالوجه والمقدار الممكنين في كل واحد منهم. ولما كان لا يمكن أن تكون له قوة على إيجادها إلا بستعمال براهين يقينيةٍ و بطرق إقناعية وبطرق تخييلية؛ إما طوعاً أو كرهاً صار الفيلسوف على الإطلاق هو الرئيس الأول. وإذاً [كان] كل تعليم فهو يلتئم بشيئين؛ بتفهيم ذلك الشيء الذي يُتعلم وإقامة معناه في النفس، ثم ‹ب› إيقاع التصديق بما فهم وأقيم معناه في النفس. وتفهيم الشيء على ضربين: أحدهما أنْ تعقل ذاته، والثاني بأن يُتخيل بمثاله الذي يحاكيه. وإيقاع التصديق يكون بأحد طريقين: إمّا بطريق البرهان اليقيني، وإمّا بطريق الإقناع. ومتى حصل علم الموجودات أو تعلمتْ؛ فإنْ عُقِلَتْ معانيها أنفسها وأوقع التصديق بها عن البراهين اليقينية؛ كان العلم المشتمل على تلك المعلومات فلسفة. ومتى علمتْ بأن تخيلتْ بمثالاتها التي تحاكيها، وحَصَلَ التصديق بما خُيّل منها عن الطرق الإقناعية، كان المشتمل على تلك المعلومات تسمية القدماء مِلّة. وإذغ أخذتْ تلك المعلومات أنفسها واستعمل فيها الطرق الإقناعية سُميثْ الملكة المشتملة عليها الفلسفة الذائعة المشهورة البرانية. فالمِلة محاكية للفلسفة عندهم وهما يشتملان على موضوعات بأعيانها، وكلتاهما تعطيان المبادىء القصوى للموجودات. فإنهما تعطيان علم البدأ الأول والسبب الأول للموجودات، وتعطيان الغاية القصوى التي لأجلها كوّن الإنسان وهي السعادة القصوى، والغاية القصوى في كل واحدٍ من الموجودات الأخر. وكل ما تعطيه الفلسفة من هذه/معقولاً أو متصوراً؛ فإن المِلّة تعطيه متخيلاً، وكل ما تبرهنه الفلسفة من هذه فإنّ المِلّة تقبع. فإن الفلسفة تعطي ذات المبدأ الأول وذات المبادىء الثواني غير الجسمانية التي هي المبدىء القصوى معقولات، والمِلّة تخيلها بمثالاتها المأخوذة من المبادىء الجسمانية وتحاكيها بنظائرها من المبادىء المدنية، وتحاكي الأفعال الإلهية بأفعال المبادىء المدنية، وتحاكي أفعال القوى والمبادىء الطبيعية بنظائرها من القوى والملكات والصناعات الإرادية؛ كما يفعل ذلك أفلاطن في طيماوس. وتحاكي المعقولات منها بنظائرها من المحسوسات مثل مَنْ حاكى المادة بالهاوية/أو الظلمة، أو الماء و العدم بالظلمة. و تحاكي أصناف الصناعات القصوى، التي هي غايات أفعال الفضائل الإنسانية، بنظائرها من الخيرات التي يظن أنّها هي الغايات. وتحاكي السعادات، التّي ‹هي› في القيقة سعادات، بالتي يظن أنها سعادات. وتحاكي مراتب الموجود في الوجود بنظائرها من المراتب المكانية والمراتب الزمانية، وتتحرى أنْ تقرب الحاكية لها من ذواتها. وكل ما تعطي الفلسفة فيه البراهين اليقينية، فإنّ المِلّة تعطي فيه الإقناعات، والفلسفة تتقدم بالزمان المِلّة.[394]

The philosopher has sure insight (*baṣīra yaqīnīa*) through certain demonstrations (*barāhīn yaqīnīa*), i.e., he has everything required for individual happiness, and yet, he is not a perfect philosopher (*al-faylasūf al-kāmil*) unless he uses this insight to benefit others, even those incapable of philosophy. He does so through two methods: demonstration, for those capable of philosophy, and persuasion (*'iqnāʿ*), for those

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[393] *AH* 39-41.
[394] *AH* (Ar.) 55-56.

incapable. The ultimate goal of this demonstration and persuasion is assent (*taṣdīq*), even if, in the case of the latter, the assent it merely to similitudes (*mithālāt*) of the truth.[395] Even if the philosopher's charges are unable to encounter the truth qua intelligible, they can encounter it qua image, even in the case of ultimate happiness (*al-saʿāda al-quṣwā*), which is itself obtained through intelligibility. This method of imitation and persuasion is called religion (*milla*).

The philosopher is only a true philosopher (*al-faylasūf bi-l-ḥaqīqa*) insofar his perfected representative faculty, his poetic skill, allows him to return to the multitudes with images and laws which serve as similitudes of demonstrable truths.[396] These images are variously labeled in different passages as a *makhīla* or *mutakhayyl* (an image or fantasia), a *muḥakī* (a similitude), or as *mithālat* (likenesses) of the truth.[397] Al-Fārābī does not clarify how religious imagery could possibly be a similitude or likeness of a demonstrable truth, only that religion becomes a disposition (*malaka*) for the multitude, something he echoes when he discusses the compulsion (*al-ʾikrāh*) brought about by religious law which structures the character of the citizenry.[398] The basic legislative picture is one in which the Imām, who has an ordered soul brings order, cooperation, and unity through compulsion and images. Even though these images are strictly speaking false (as is all poetry, as will be discussed shortly), they are near the truth (*mithālāt qarība*) and like the truth, which is beneficial to those who would otherwise believe

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[395] See Black 1990, 181f.
[396] *AH* 44; *AH* (Ar.) 61
[397] *AH* 41, 44; *AH* (Ar.) 56, 61; *CP* 267; *CP (Ar.)* 273; *PS* 14.2; *PS* 17.2-4; *PR* 85.
[398] *AH* 31-32; *AH* (Ar.) 47-48.

falsehoods, creating a kind of ordered-disorder, which imitates the order of the cosmos

(even though it lacks the inherent intelligibility and the necessity of the cosmos).[399]

That images are required is determined by the nature of human beings.[400]

Humanity is divided into just two broad groups of people: those with philosophical

ability and those without. As al-Fārābī explains in *PR*:

> Now a human being either forms a concept (*ya'qilu*) of the principles of the
> existents, their rankings, happiness, and the rulership of the virtuous cities and
> intellects them or imagines (*yatakhayyalu*) them. To form a concept of them is to
> have their essences sketched in the human soul as they exist in truth (*al-ḥaqīqa*).
> To imagine them is to have their images (*khayālāt*), their likenesses (*mithālat*),
> and the objects representing them (*'umūr tuḥākīhā*) sketched (*tartasamu*) in the
> human soul. That is similar to what is possible with objects that are seen-for
> example, a human being. Either we see him himself, we see a statue of him, we
> see an image of him in water, or we see an image of his statue in water or in other
> mirrors. Now our seeing him resembles the intellect's forming a concept of the
> principles of the existents, happiness, and the rest. And our seeing a human being
> in water or our seeing a statue of him resembles imagination. For our seeing a
> statue of him or our seeing him in a mirror is our seeing what represents him.
> Similarly, our imagining those things is in truth our forming a concept of what
> represents them, not our forming a concept of them in themselves. Most people
> have no ability (*qudra*), either by innate character (*fiṭra*) or by custom (*'āda*), to
> understand and form a concept of those things. For those people, an image ought
> to be made, by means of things that represent them, of how the principles, their
> rankings, the active intellect, and the first ruler come about. While their meanings
> and essences are one and immutable, the things by which they are represented are
> many and different. Some are closer to what is represented and others more
> distant. That is just as it is with visible things. For the image of a human being
> seen in water is closer to the human being in truth than the image of the statue of a
> human being seen in water. Therefore it is possible to represent these things to
> one group and one nation by objects other than those by which they are
> represented to another group and another nation. Thus it may be possible for the
> religions of virtuous nations and virtuous cities to differ even if they all pursue the
> very same happiness. For religion is a sketch of these things or of their images in
> the soul. Since it is difficult for the public to understand these things in
> themselves and the way they exist, instructing them about these things is sought
> by other ways-and those are the ways of representation. So these things are
> represented to each group or nation by things of which they are more cognizant.
> And it may be possible that what one of them is more cognizant of is not what
> another is more cognizant of. Most people who pursue happiness pursue what is

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[399] *PS* 15.1, 15.6, 17.2.
[400] *PS* 17.2-4; *PR* 85.

imagined, not what they form a concept of. Similarly, the principles such as to be accepted, imitated, extolled, and exalted are accepted by most people as they imagine them, not as they form a concept of them. Those who pursue happiness as they form a concept of it and accept the principles as they form a concept of them are the wise, whereas those in whose souls these things are found as they are imagined and who accept them and pursue them as though they are like that are the faithful.[401]

ومبادئ الموجودات ومراتبها والسعادة ورئاسة المدن الفضلة إما أن يتصورها الإنسان ويعقلها وإما أن يتخيلها . وتصورها هو أن ترتسم في نفس الإنسان ذواكها كما هي موجودة في الحقيقة. وتخيلها هو أن ترتسم في نفس الإنسان خيالاتها ا ومثالاتها وأمور تحاكيها . وذلك شبيه ما يمكن في الأشياء المرئية كالإنسان مثلا بأن نراه هو نفسه أو نرى تمثاله في الماء أو نرى خيال تمثاله في الماء أو في سائر المرايا. فإن رؤيتنا له تشبه تصور العقل لمبادئ الموجودات وللسعادة ولما سوى ذلك . ورؤيتنا للإنسان في الماء أو رؤيتنا تمثاله تشبه التخيل، لأن رؤيتنا تمثاله أو رؤيتنا له في المرآة هو رؤيتنا لما يحاكيه. كذلك تخيلنا لتلك هو في الحقيقة تصورنا لما يحاكيها لا تصورها في أنفسها . وأكثر الناس لا قدرة لهم إما بالفطرة وإما بالعادة على تفهم تلك وتصورها. فأولئك ينبغي أن تخيل إليهم مبادئ الموجودات ومراتبها والعقل الفعال والرئاسة الأولى كيف تكون بأشياء تحاكيها . ومعاني تلك وذواتها هي واحدة لا تتبدل . وأما ما تحاكى بها فأشياء كثيرة مختلفة بعضها أقرب إلى المحاكاة وبعضها أبعد. كما يكون ذلك في المبصرات فإن خيال الإنسان المرئي في الماء هو أقرب إلى الإنسان في الحقيقة من خيال تمثال الإنسان المرئي في الماء . ولذلك أمكن أن تحاكى هذه الأشياء لكل طائفة ولكل أمة بغير الأمور التي تحاكى بها للطائفة الأخرى أو للأمة الأخرى . فلذلك قد يمكن أن تكون أمم فاضلة ومدن فاضلة تختلف مللهم وإن كانوا كلهم يؤمنون سعادة واحدة بعينها . فإن الملة هي رسوم هذه أو رسوم خيالاتها في النفوس . فإن الجمهور لما عسر عليهم تفهم هذه الأشياء أنفسها وعلى ما هي عليه من الوجود التمس تعليمهم لها بوجوه أخر وتلك هي وجوه المحاكاة. فتحاكى هذه الأشياء لكل طائفة أو أمة بالأشياء التي هي أعرف عندهم. وقد يمكن أن يكون الأعراف عند كل واحد منهم غير الأعراف عند الآخر . وأكثر الناس الذين يؤمنون السعادة إنما يؤمنونها متخيلة لا متصورة . وكذلك المبادئ التي سبيلها أن تتقبل ويقتدى بها وتعظم وتجل إنما يتقبلها أكثر الناس وهي متخيلة عندهم لا متصورة . والذين يؤمنون السعادة متصورة ويتقبلون المبادئ وهي متصورة هم الحكماء . والذين توجد هذه الأشياء في نفوسهم متخيلة ويتقبلونها ويؤمنونها على أنها كذلك هم المؤمنون . [402]

Unsurprisingly, given the cosmological model discussed above, most citizens are too deficient (*naqṣ*) to think (*ya'qilu*) the principle causes and aims of the cosmos as intelligibles. Most human beings are incapable of thinking at the level of second intentionality which is required to attain happiness, lacking both the natural disposition (*fiṭra*) and habit (*'āda*) for philosophical thought. Thus, a placeholder is required. This explains why the Imām needs no religion, needing no placeholder insofar as he thinks the

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[401] *PR* 85. Echoes of *Republic* 509e-510a are found in al-Fārābī's account of the human itself, the image of a human in a statue, and the reflection of a human in the water.
[402] *PR* 85.

truth without the mediation of images.[403] But most people need images. (In *PR*, al-Fārābī even specifies that people capable of knowledge in one science may need images to understand another science.)[404] *PS* further subdivides the ranks of human capabilities, noting that there are those who need no images (e.g., the Imām), those who need images (e.g., the masses), and a third group which knows the intelligibles directly, but only insofar as they are provided by the philosophers. He explains:

> Now these things can be known in two ways, either by being impressed on their souls as they really are or by being impressed on them through affinity and symbolic representation. In that case symbols arise in man's minds, which reproduce them by imitation. The philosophers in the city are those who know these things through strict demonstrations and their own insight; those who are close to the philosophers know them as they really are through the insight of the philosophers, following them, assenting to their views and trusting them. But others know them through symbols which reproduce them by imitation, because neither nature nor habit has provided their minds with the gift to understand them as they are. Both are kinds of knowledge, but the knowledge of the philosophers is undoubtedly more excellent. Some of those who know them through symbols which reproduce them know them through symbols which are near to them, and some through symbols slightly more remote, and some through symbols which are even more remote than these, and some through symbols which are very remote indeed. Now, these things are reproduced by imitation for each nation and for the people of each city through those symbols which are best known to them. But what is best known often varies among nations, either most of it or part of it. Hence these things are expressed for each nation in symbols other than those used for another nation. Therefore it is possible that excellent nations and excellent cities exist whose religions differ, although they all have as their goal one and the same felicity and the very same aims. When these things thus held in common are known through strict demonstrations, no ground for disagreement by argument can be found in them, neither by introducing sophistic fallacies nor by somebody's lack of understanding: for then the point disputed would not be the thing itself but his wrong notion of it. But when they are known through symbols which reproduce them by imitation, grounds for objection may be found in these symbols, in some less, in others more, and grounds for objection will be more easily seen in some and less in others. It is not impossible that among those who know these things through such symbols, there is someone who puts his finger on the grounds for objection to those symbols and holds that they are inadequate and false. There are different kinds of these people: first those who seek the right path. When one of them rejects anything as false, he will be lifted towards a better

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[403] *AH* 44; *AH* (Ar.) 61.
[404] *PR* 77.

symbol which is nearer to the truth and is not open to that objection; and if he is satisfied with it, he will be left where he is. When that better symbol is also rejected by him as false, he will be lifted to another rank, and if he is then satisfied with it, he will be left where he is. Whenever a symbol of a given standard is rejected by him as false, he will be lifted to a higher rank, but when he rejects all the symbols as false and has the strength and gift to understand the truth, he will be made to know the truth and will be placed into the class of those who take the philosophers as their authorities. If he is not yet satisfied with that and desires to acquire philosophical wisdom and has himself the strength and gift for it, he will be made to know it.[405]

وهذه الأشياء تعرف بأحد وجهين: إما أن ترتسم في نفوسهم كما هي موجودة، وإما أن ترتسم فيها بالمناسبة والتمثيل، وذلك أن يحصل في نفوسهم مثالاتها التي تحاكيها. فحكماء المدينة الفاضلة هم الذين يعرفون هذه ببراهين وببصائر أنفسهم. ومن يلي الحكماء يعرفون هذه على ما هي عليه موجودة ببصائر الحكماء اتباعا لهم وتصديقا لهم وثقة بهم. والباقون منهم يعرفون بالمثالات التي تحاكيها، لأنهم لا هيئة في أذهانهم لتفهمها على ما هي موجودة إما بالطبع وإما بالعادة وكلتاهما معرفتان. إلا أن التي للحكيم أفضل لا محالة؛ والذين يعرفونها بالمثالات التي تحاكيها، بعضهم يعرفونها بمثالات قريبة منها، وبعضهم بمثالات أبعد قليلا، وبعضهم بمثالات أبعد من تلك، وبعضهم بمثالات بعيدة جدا. وتحاكي هذه الأشياء لكل أمة ولأهل كل مدينة بالمثالات التي عندهم الأعرف فالأعرف، وربما اختلف عند الأمم أما أكثرة وأما بعضه، فتحاكي هذه لكل أمة بغير الأمور التي تحاكي بها الأمة الأخرى. فلذلك يمكن أن يكون أمم فاضلة ومدن فاضلة تختلف متلهم، وهذه الأشياء المشتركة، إذا كانت معلومة فهم كلهم يؤمون سعادة واحدة ومقاصد واحدة بأعيانها. ببراهينها، لم يمكن أن يكون فيها موضع عناد بقول أصلا، لا على جهة المغالطة ولا عند من يسوء فهمه لها، فحينئذ يكون للمعاند، لا "حقيقة" الأمر في نفسه، ولكن ما فهمه هو من الباطل في الأمر. فإما إذا كانت معلومة بمثالاتها التي تحاكيها، فإن مثالاتها قد تكون فيها مواضع للعناد، وبعضها يكون فيه مواضع العناد أقل، وبعضها يكون فيها مواضع العناد أكثر، وبعضها يكون فيه مواضع العناد أظهر، وبعضها يكون فيه أخفى. ولا يمتنع أن يكون في الذين عرفوا تلك الأشياء بالمثالات المحاكية، من يقف على مواضع العناد في وهؤلاء شيء ما رفع إلى مثال آخر أقرب إلى الحق، لا يكون فيه ذلك العناد، تلك المثالات ويتوقف عنده. فإن قنع به ترك، وإن تزيف عنده ذلك أيضا رفع إلى مرتبة أخرى، فإن فنع به ترك. وإن تزيف عنده مثال في مرتبة ما رفع فوقه، فإن تزيفت عنده المثالات كلها وكانت فيه فيه نية للوقوف على الحق عرف الحق، وجعل في مرتبة المقلدين للحكماء؛ فإن لم يقنع بذلك وتشوق إلى الحكمة، وكان في نيته ذلك، علمها.[406]

The first division in this passage is between those who know things "by being impressed

on their souls as they really are or by being impressed on them through affinity and

symbolic representation". The first group has knowledge, the latter has merely the

opinions of religion. The category of those that know things as they really are is then

further divided between those who know through their own insights, i.e., philosophers

who know through demonstration (*burhan*) and are capable of certitude (*yaqīn*), and

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[405] *PS* 17.2-4.
[406] *PS* 17.2-4.

those who know through assent (*taṣdīq*) to the philosophers. Between those that know

through demonstration and, one assumes, those who assent to those who know through

demonstration, no dissonance or disagreement is possible. However, for those who know

through images, disagreement remains. Because even the best images in the best cities

are still only near the truth and are still, strictly speaking, false; objections can be made to

them.

Al-Fārābī further notes that some people will recognize the falsity of religious

images and divides those who are clever enough to object to the inadequacy of religious

imagery into three groups: those who, due to the inadequacy of symbols, stop looking for

truth all-together; those who use the inadequacy of symbols to achieve a base aim, like

wealth, pleasure, or honor, using sophistic tricks to reject any symbols which stand as an

obstacle to their desires; and last, those who, recognizing one symbol as false, abandon it

for another one which is nearer to the truth, until they abandon this symbol also. Within

this final group, it is possible that someone will eventually tire of all symbols, and assent

to philosophical knowledge. Of all the citizens, philosophy is only truly translated for this

group. The philosophers and those who assent to their authority need no images. Religion

for those that assent without examining the images of religion is not truly a translation of

philosophy, but a compulsion which leads them to a virtuous and pseudo-ordered life.

However, for this final group, they use the images like a Wittgensteinian ladder. As

quoted in Chapter 2, Wittgenstein explains at the end of the *Tractatus* that:

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who
> understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used
> them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the
> ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then
> he will see the world aright.[407]

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[407] *Tractatus* 6.54.

Simply replace "propositions" in this passage with "*mithālāt*" and one sees the Fārābīan

model for religion. Here, al-Fārābī's project becomes a true translation project, in which

the Imām not only translates philosophy into religion, but the citizen can in turn translate

the images of religion back into philosophy. And insofar as this occurs, it stands as

evidence that the Imām's images really are near likenesses of the truth, that they really

represent demonstrative knowledge. In short, it is evidence that religion is a translation of

philosophy, a beneficent deception, not an outright lie.[408] And while religion serves other

functions, namely, as a means by which to encourage cooperation and a means by which

to maximize possible teleological fulfillment in the deficient citizenry (even if this

fulfillment does not qualify as happiness), the pedagogical role of these images lies at the

heart of any justification for beneficent political deception.

4.1.3. The Poetic Syllogism

While al-Fārābī is clear in his political works that some kind of translation occurs,

translating intelligibles to sensible images for the establishment of a nation's religion,

these works are silent as to the internal mechanisms by which this process happens.[409] Put

simply, he explains that the Imām represents intelligibles through religious images (or

variously that these images are represented in his imaginative faculty by the Active

Intellect), but he does not explain how intelligibles can be represented by images as such.

The only places he discusses the topic with precision are in his works on poetry, where he

introduces the notion of the poetic syllogism.

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[408] The pedagogical nature of al-Fārābī's model and the importance of translatability to its justification will be further addressed in the Conclusion.
[409] See Black 1990, 209f.

Al-Fārābī clearly has his poetics in mind while discussing the Imām. He says in

his *Canons of Poetry*:

> Of false statements (*al-kāḏiba*), some register in the mind (*ḏihn*) of the hearer the
> object (*al-shay'*) referred to, taking the place of a direct statement, while others
> register in his mind an imitation (*al-muḥākī*) of the object (*li-l-shay'*): these last
> are poetical statements (*al-'aqāwīl al-shi'riyya*).[410]

> والكاذبة منها ما يوقع في ذهن السامعين الشىء المبر عنه بدل القول ومنها ما يوقع فيه المحاكى للشىء
> وهذه هى الأقاويل الشعريّة.[411]

And he says later:

> Now let no man suppose that the terms "sophistry" (*al-maḡlaṭ*) and "imitation"
> (*al-muḥākī*) are identical: on the contrary, they differ in several respects. To begin
> with, their purposes (*ḡaraḍa*) are different: the sophist (*al-maḡlaṭ*) deludes his
> hearer into supposing that he is listening to a contrary proposition (*naqīḍ al-
> shay'*), so that he imagines that what is is not (*al-mawjūd ḡayru mawjūd*), and
> what is not is (*ḡayru al-mawjūd mawjūd*); the imitator, however, causes his hearer
> to imagine, not a contrary (*naqīḍ*), but a like proposition (*shabīh*)… This analysis
> proves that the poetical statement is one which is neither demonstrative (*al-
> burhāniyya*), nor argumentative (*jadaliyya*), nor rhetorical (*khiṭābiyya*), nor
> sophistical: yet for all that it belongs to a kind of syllogism (*sulujismus*), or rather
> post-syllogism (*yatba' sulujismus*) [by "post-syllogism" I mean a deduction,
> image, intuition, or the like, something 'which has the same force as an analogy
> (*quwwa qiyās*)].[412]

> ولا يظنّ ظانّ أنّ المغلط والمحاكى قول وهحد وذلك أنهما مختلفن بوجه منها انّ غرض المغلط غير غرض
> المحاكى اذ المغلط هو الذى يغلط السامع الى نقيض الشىء حتي يوهمه أنّ الموجد غير موجود وأنّ غير
> الموجد موجد فأمّا المحاكى للشىء فليس يوهم النقيض لكن الشبيه...وقد تبيّن من هذه القسمة أنّ القول
> الشعرئ هو الذى ليس بالبرهانيّة ولا الجدليّة ولا الخطابيّة ولا المغالطيّة و هو مع ذلك يرجع الى نوع من
> أنواع السولوجسموس أو ما يتبع السولوجسموس وأعنى بقولى ما يتبعه الاستقراء والمثال والفراسة وما
> أشبهها ممّا قوّته قوّة قياس.[413]

Thus, the goal of the poetry is not the image itself, but a proposition caused by the image,

which is like, but not identical to a true proposition.[414] This mechanism of poetry, the

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[410] *CP* 273.

[411] *CP* (Ar.) 267.

[412] *CP* 274

[413] *CP* (Ar.) 267-268.

[414] See López-Farjeat 2000, 100f. However, here López-Farjeat claims that poetic discourse does not
necessitate the enunciation of its truth or falsity, despite al-Fārābī's characterization of poetic statements as

poetic syllogism, holds the power of analogy (*quwwa qiyas*), and, while not strictly speaking true, does not, like sophistry, try to claim that 'what is is not' or 'what is not is'. Instead, beginning with what is strictly speaking false, poetry tries to show that 'what is is', even though it begins with an image which 'is not'. While the premises of the 'post-syllogisms' of poetry are false, the conclusion drawn by good poetry is true or near the truth.[415] And these conclusions, on the whole, are relational, insofar as the poet manufactures a resemblance between two seemingly unlike objects, by showing, first, the resemblance between A and B and, second, the resemblance between B and C, even if A and C seemingly differ.[416] The skillful poet can convincingly establish a link between two very remote and disparate images. In the case of the Imām, he can successfully map out images which correspond to the premises and the conclusion of a demonstration, and, through intermediary images which serve as middle terms for the analogy, establish assent (*taṣdīq*) to the conclusion in the soul of the listener.

When a poetic syllogism begins with beautiful and desirable images and links them through simile to a conclusion, the conclusion takes on the characteristic of desirability in the soul of the listener. The same is true for loathsome images which repel the listener from a conclusion. As Al-Fārābī explains in his *Treatise on Poetry*, these poetic syllogisms are useful in order to cause the listener to associate a loathsome image with what is loathsome in reality (without an argument) and to associate a beautiful

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false. What is clear is that the Imām, who presents the image *as true*, rather than as poetry, is surely involved in deception.

[415] Al-Fārābī uses the example of mistaken sensible images which convey truth as an analogy to the results of a poetic syllogism, for example, when someone resting upon a boat feels that their body is moving as their relation changes to the bank of the river. While strictly speaking, this is a false sensation, it also conveys something true about the world, namely, changing relative position between oneself and the bank. See *CP* 274. *CP* (Ar.) 267-68.

[416] *CP* 278. *CP* (Ar.) 272. See López-Farjeat 2000, 112-113; Kemal 2003, 56f., 105-106; Black 1990, 209f.

image with what is desirable, impelling "the listener towards doing that thing which has been imagined to him in a certain matter (either making him seek it or avoid it, withdraw from it or detest it, or any other action of harm or charity) regardless of whether what has been imaginatively made to appear is true or not."[417] This passage echoes another passage from his categorization of poetry in *ES*, where al-Fārābī explains that the imagination has an outsized effect on human action, given humankind's tendency to privilege imagination over wisdom, giving poetry profound influence over human behavior.[418] The poet can make that which would otherwise appear undesirable desirable.

The importance of this for the Imām is obvious. For those who merely assent to religion through compulsion and benefit from the order and character building that religious laws and images provide, the aimed for effect is clear. For example, imagine both a philosopher and someone who holds only to the opinions of religion engaged in business dealings. The philosopher believes the propositions: "human beings cannot complete their necessary affairs nor gain their most excellent state except by coming together" and 'the excellent city is filled with "co-operation to acquire felicity."'[419] The religious observer believes the proposition: 'thieves burn in physical hellfire'. Both the philosopher and the observer engage in orderly business and cooperation because each

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[417] As Al-Fārābī continues, he says: "The purpose thus of statements that make imaginable (*mukhayyila*) is to impel the listener towards doing that thing which has been imagined (*khuyyil*) to him in a certain matter (either making him seek it or avoid it, withdraw from it or detest it, or any other action of harm or charity) regardless of whether what has been imaginatively made to appear (*yukhayyal*) is true or not." *TP* 107.

[418] *ES* 83. See Black 1990, 196f.

[419] *PR* 69; "والإنسان من الأنواع التي لا يمكن أن يتم لها الضروري من أمورها ولا تنال الأفضل من أحوالها إلا باجتماع جماعات منها"
"فالخير الأفضل والكمال الأقصى انما ينال أولا بالمدينة ، لا باجتماع الذي هو أنقص منها." *PS* 15.3; كثيرة في مسكن واحد. ولما كان
شأن الخير في الحقيقة أن يكون ينال بالاختيار والارادة ، وكذلك الشرور انما تكون بالارادة والاختيار ، أمكن أن تجعل المدينة للتعاون على
بلوغ بعض الغايات التي هي شرور؛ فلذلك كل مدينة يمكن أن ينال بها السعادة. فالمدينة التي يقصد بالاجتماع فيها التعاون على الأشياء التي
تنال بها السعادة في الحقيقة ، هي المدينة الفاضلة. والاجتماع الذي به يتعاون على نيل السعادة هو الاجتماع الفاضل. والأمة التي تتعاون
مدنها كلها على ما تنال به السعادة هي الأمة الفاضلة. وكذلك المعمورة الفاضلة ، انما تكون إذا كانت الأمم التي فيها تتعاون على بلوغ
السعادة ."

holds a proposition which results in the practical action of not stealing from one another. Both the philosophical arguments in favor of cooperation and the image of hellfire create an aversion to theft in the soul of the listener (although their effectiveness differs according the character of the listener). While distinct, the propositions formed by the demonstration and the poetic syllogism are not contrary. Even though, of course, there are nearer images which could more faithfully reflect the true proposition for why one should not steal than hellfire (e.g., a poetic syllogism which links civic cooperation to nobility).

The sparse examples al-Fārābī gives of religious poetic syllogisms give some indications about how true religion should function. Linking matter to the abyss creates an aversion to materialism in the soul of the listener.[420] Linking the Active Intellect with the attributes traditionally ascribed to Gabriel creates an affinity in the soul to the providence of immaterial existents.[421] Along with the compulsion (*al-'ikrāh*) toward virtue brought about by religious law, which assures civic order and a worldly facsimile of happiness, poetic syllogisms, involving the highest and lowest intelligibles bring common citizens closer to theoretical virtue (even if this virtue is confined to the theoretical and practical analogues in the representative faculty). Matter should be avoided; immateriality is desirable. And, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, this model of poetic syllogisms in conjunction with compulsion gets adopted by al-Fārābī's successors. One particular example by Maimonides is illustrative: his account of the Sabbath.

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[420] *AH* 41; *AH* (Ar.) 56.
[421] *PR* 32; *Qur'ān* 26:193; 2:87; 2:253; 5:113; See Butterworth 2015, 30n.

For Maimonides, the images which undergird the Sabbath commandment have both theoretical and practical benefits inspired by philosophical truths. Maimonides explains:

> Perhaps it has already become clear to you what is the cause of the Law's establishing the Sabbath so firmly and ordaining *death by stoning* for breaking it...You know from what I have said that opinions do not last unless they are accompanied by actions that strengthen them, make them generally known, and perpetuate them among the multitude. For this reason we are ordered by the Law to exalt (*taʿẓīm*) this day, in order that the principle of the creation of the world in time be established and universally known in the world through the fact that all people refrain from working on one and the same day. If it is asked: What is the cause of this?, the answer is: *For in six days the Lord made*. For this commandment two different causes are given, corresponding to two different effects. In the first Decalogue, the cause for exalting the Sabbath is stated as follows: *For in six days the Lord made, and so on*. In *Deuteronomy*, on the other hand, it is said: *And thou shalt remember that thou wast a slave in Egypt. Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day*. This is correct. For the effect, according to the first statement, is to regard that day as noble and exalted. As it says: *Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it*. This is the effect consequent upon the cause stated in the words: *For in six days, and so on*. However, the order given us by the Law with regard to it and the commandment ordaining us in particular to keep it are an effect consequent upon the cause that we had been slaves in Egypt where we did not work according to our free choice and when we wished and where we had not the power to refrain from working. Therefore we have been commanded inactivity and rest so that we should conjoin the two things: the belief in a true opinion— namely, the creation of the world in time, which, at the first go and with the slightest of speculations, shows that the deity exists and the memory of the benefit God bestowed upon us by giving us rest *from under the burdens of the Egyptians*. Accordingly the Sabbath is, as it were, of universal benefit, both with reference to a true speculative opinion and to the well-being of the state of the body.[422]

The Sabbath obligation has two parts: one must remember the Sabbath and keep it. In remembering the Sabbath, the Kiddush prayer must be said over the wine, as Maimonides

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[422] *GP* II.31.

explains in a passage of the *Mishneh Torah*, on "Shabbat".[423] This is itself in reference to

the *Talmud* which mandates that the Kiddush and Havdalah, the 'sanctifying' prayer and

the prayer of 'distinction', respectively, which mark the beginning and end of the

Sabbath, must occur, as traditionally set down by the Great Assembly.[424] In *GP* II.31,

Maimonides highlights the two remembrances noted in the Kiddush prayer—creation and

Pesach—noting that remembering each cause of the Sabbath brings out a different effect

in the participant. In the former, one reflects on the theoretical foundation of Judaism,

namely the existence of the Deity and his causal relationship to the world. In the latter,

one reflects on and attends to the needs of the body. The former ensures the health of the

intellect; the latter ensures the health of the body. Meanwhile, the compulsion to keep the

Sabbath ensures that, even for those unable to benefit from the images themselves, a

tangible good is gained, namely rest. Here, one can readily see the poetic syllogism and

legislation as al-Fārābī envisions them. Images, the story of the seven days of creation

and the story of the plague of the death of the firstborns passing over the Jewish

households in the land of Egypt, lead to legislation, the keeping and remembering of the

Sabbath through the saying of the Kiddush prayer. This legislation helps perfect the

multitudes who follow the law, all while pointing to the deeper philosophical meaning of

God's causality and existence and the physical needs of the body. Neither Genesis nor

Exodus give demonstrations for God's causality or providence, but their imagery links

the day of rest to God's causality and providence through analogy. The common adherent

of Judaism need not know why one *should* rest or reflect on the Sabbath; the images

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[423] *Mishneh Torah*, Sefer Zemanim, Shabbat 29.
[424] *Talmud*, Shabbat 119b; Berakot 33a.

themselves, in conjunction with compulsion, dictate that one *does* rest on the Sabbath.
And, as a result, the community receives practical and theoretical benefits.

4.2. The Imām as Expressing Order through Disorder

In al-Fārābī's cosmos, every existent aims at emulating the First. And teleological
fulfillment is measured according to one's ability to emulate the First. But the First is
simultaneously perfectly one and perfectly intelligible, something impossible to emulate
for any other existent. For some existents, like the Secondary Causes, who have minimal
deficiency, their teleological task is straightforward: think the First and be part of an
ordered whole of Separate Intellects. For others, like the elements, minerals, and non-
rational animals, there is no possibility of individual teleological fulfillment, only the
possibility to contribute to the teleological fulfillment of others, namely human beings.
But for some human beings, teleological fulfillment is possible, but only through both
cooperation, which requires worldly community, and philosophy, which requires worldly
detachment. Both of these aims are derived from the First, even though in the sublunar
world these aims are discrete and usually divergent.[425]

Good rule requires that the Imām establish a city that enables each human being,
however deficient they happen to be, to maximize their happiness. But due to the
deficiency of the sublunar world, most humans, like most sublunar existents, are
incapable of individual happiness; their highest teleological fulfillment comes through
being in community with the elite who are capable of intellectual happiness.[426] The
virtuous city (*al-madīna al-fāḍila*) is one which simultaneously allows for a) the

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[425] *PS* 1.14, 2.3, 15.6.
[426] For potential ethical issues with this worldview, see Chapter 5.

philosopher to be intellectually happy, b) the average citizen to be as close to happiness as her nature allows, c) the citizen capable of philosophy but ignorant of philosophy to be educated, and d) all three groups of people to cooperate to maintain order. Achieving this aim is impossible both through philosophy alone and in the absence of philosophy. A city which relies on philosophy alone would fail to motivate its citizens to cooperate; most people require, according to al-Fārābī, something other than philosophy and truth to motivate their actions. A city lacking philosophy could not cooperate; the proper ordering of the city requires knowledge of the proper ordering of the heavens and the ultimate aim of the human person.[427] Thus, the nature of al-Fārābī's cosmos requires that the Imām both order the city in accordance with what is known through philosophy while motivating citizens to uphold this order through something distinct from the truths of philosophy. He must express truth at the level of deficiency. He must render what is more intelligible in itself into what is more intelligible for deficient human beings. The picture looks like this:

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[427] *PS* 1.14, 2.3, 15.6.

Figure 4.2.
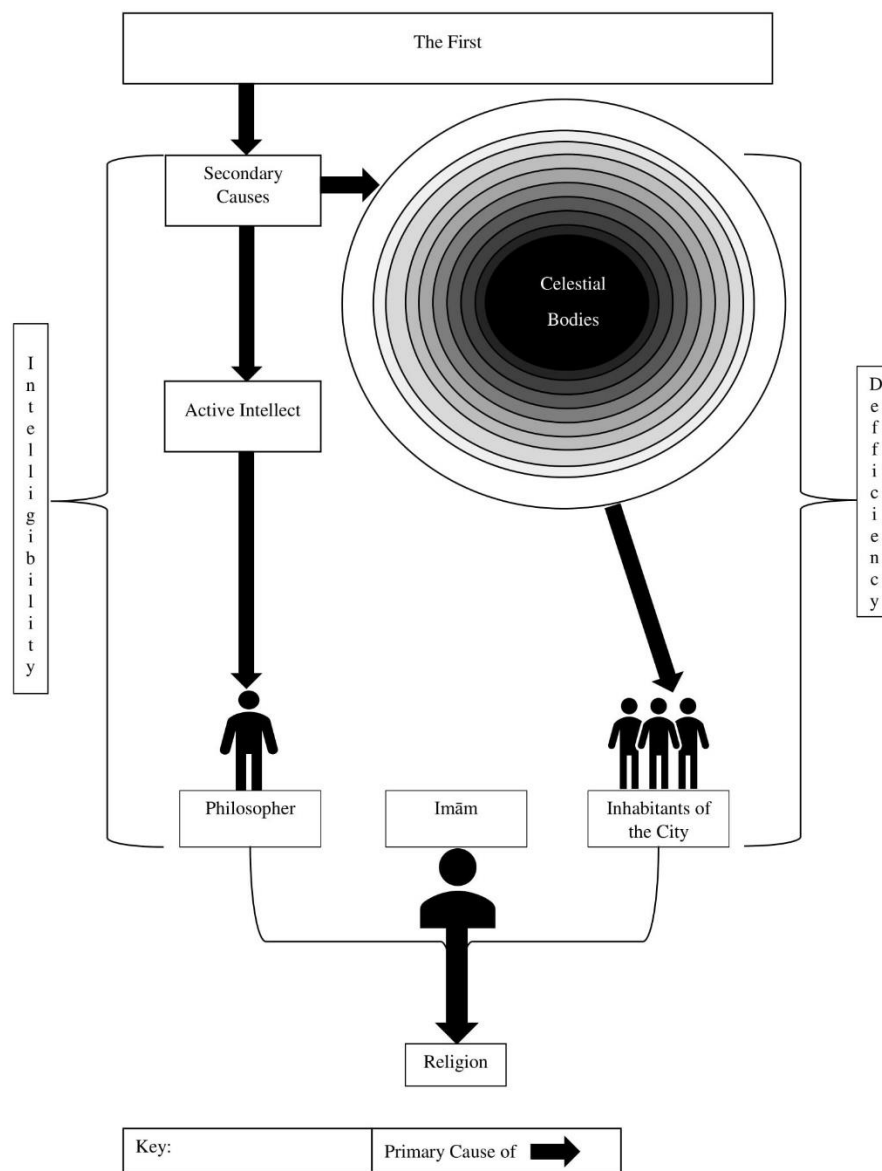
As can be seen in Figure 4.2., al-Fārābī's Imām functions as the mediator between intelligibility and deficiency. The Construction of Social Knowledge, the Imām's beneficent political deception, is necessitated by the very structure of al-Fārābī's cosmos and the nature of human beings. Insofar as both truth and cooperation are required for any chance at human happiness, religion, as an imagistic expression of philosophical truth, is

required to convey as much of philosophy as can be conveyed while also maintaining civic order.

5. <u>Conclusion</u>

In this chapter, a possible justification for al-Fārābī's model of beneficent political deception was raised, insofar as political deception is necessitated by the teleology of al-Fārābī's cosmos. Furthermore, the precise factors which necessitate beneficent political deception (e.g., intelligibility and deficiency, truth and cooperation, etc.) were explored, while also modeling what justified political deception looks like for al-Fārābī (e.g., the Construction of Social Knowledge model). Several topics still need exploration: Is al-Fārābī's justification sufficient? Is it philosophically cogent? And what does his model reveal about the problem of political deception writ large? For now, these questions must wait, as Chapter 4 will further delve into al-Fārābī's model by, first, exploring the historical context in which his model arose and, second, surveying its reception in later medieval thought.

IV. AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S BENEFICENT POLITICAL DECEPTION IN CONTEXT

1. **Introduction**

Chapter 3 examined the cosmological foundations for al-Fārābī's model for the Construction of Social Knowledge. Likewise, it presented a particular reading of al-Fārābī's texts as found throughout his political works. That said, as mentioned in Chapter 2, there are other viable readings of al-Fārābī concerning the relationship between religion and the truth. For this reason, Chapter 4 will bolster the description of al-Fārābī as found in Chapter 3 by exploring both the historical context out of which his position developed as well as the reception of his model. By exploring the context out of which al-Fārābī's notion of religion as an imaginative expression of philosophy arose and the reception of al-Fārābī's position by his successors, further credence regarding the relationship between his cosmology and the need for religion will be shown. In particular, al-Fārābī established a groundwork for demonstrative knowledge to take precedence over religion, and his successors read him this way. For, while the primary concern here is the relationship between al-Fārābī's model for the Construction of Social Knowledge and beneficent political deception, the primary debate in 10th century Baghdad centered around the principle source of truth, whether it be revelation or philosophy. Only by appreciating al-Fārābī's conciliation between revealed truth and philosophy (as well as the defense of his approach by his receptors) can one fully understand the context out of which al-Fārābī's model arises. In particular, it highlights two things. First, for al-Fārābī, philosophy is measured as superior to religion, at least concerning the acquisition of truth. Second, al-Fārābī denies that knowledge of truth is feasible for most people.

2. **Abbasid Baghdad**

Long before the Condemnation of 1277 highlighted the growing tension in the Latin West brought about by the famed "recovery of Aristotle" and the increasing influence of both Aristotle and his Muslim commentators upon the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris— a tension between the authority of faith and the authority of reason—, Greek philosophy had already undergone intense monotheistic scrutiny in the *Dār al-Islām* ("the lands under Muslim rule").[1] In the 9th century, al-Kindī (d. ~870), the earliest Muslim adopter of Greek philosophy, *falsafa,* of any note, and overseer of the famed 'Kindī Circle', which systematically translated Greek philosophy into Arabic for the first time, attempted to initially sidestep the issue by consigning reason and revelation to two separate and distinct domains.[2] As al-Kindī explains in his *On First Philosophy*, "Of the human arts (*al-ṣinā'āt al-'insāniyya*), the highest in rank and the noblest in degree is the art of philosophy, which is defined as the knowledge of things as they are in truth, insofar as it is possible for man (*yaqdaru ṭāqa al-'insān*)."[3] Thus, philosophy is relegated to the domain of the purely human, leaving room for revelation as something beyond mere human faculties. (Still, he does elsewhere try to harmonize philosophy and revealed religion more directly, using logic to refute the idea of the Christian trinity, as preserved by Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, Greek cosmology to defend a specific reading of an *'āya* of

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[1] See Piché (ed.) 1990; Thijssen 1997; Thijssen 1998; Thijssen 2003; Bianchi, 1990; Bianchi 1998; Wippel 1977; Wippel 1995a; Wippel 1995b.

[2] See Adamson 2005, 46f.; Adamson, 2007, 42f.; Adamson 2015; Atiyeh 1985, 17-19; Druart 1993, 333-34; Endress 1997; Khaliq 1969; Sabra 1993.

[3] *OFP* 9 (translation slightly modified). This distinction is likely an echo of *Republic* 500c-d, in which Socrates claims that "the philosopher, by consorting with what is ordered and divine and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can". See also Note 43 of the present chapter.

the Qur'ān about the heavens, and Aristotelian psychology to explain prophetic dreams.)[4]

Nonetheless, this harmonization was not widely received, and, by the 10th century, Greek

philosophy and logic were still viewed as foreign to Muslim theology and Arabic culture.

Two public debates in the early 10th century illustrate this point clearly. The first,

which will be discussed in more depth below, took place around 920 between the famed

iconoclast, Platonist, and 'freethinker' (*zindīq*) Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-

Rāzī (d. 925) and the Isma'ili missionary Abū Ḥātim Ahmad ibn Hamdan al-Rāzī (d.

935).[5] This debate, transmitted to us through Abū Ḥātim's own account, focuses largely

on Abū Ḥātim's rebuttal of al-Rāzī's critiques of the prophets, specifically the claim that

God would allow no special revelation given the preeminence and universality of reason.

One of Abū Ḥātim's central defenses of prophetic revelation centers around a *tu quoque*

fallacy: philosophers (and thus philosophy) lack credibility because philosophers are as

divergent from one another as the heretics (and more so than the believers), each

philosopher having his own set of doctrines.[6] (As a side note, it is no wonder that, within

the context of this milieu, al-Rāzī wrote a treatise defending his ethics, both lived and

theoretical, within the context of their compatibility with the life of Socrates, and al-

Fārābī wrote a work harmonizing the positions of Plato and Aristotle.)[7] On a macro level,

Abū Ḥātim discusses philosophy as if it is one set of doctrines amongst many sets (e.g.,

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[4] *Against the Trinity* 123-127; *On the Prostration of the Outermost Body* 177-179; *On Sleep and Dreams* 303-304. See Adamson 2007, 40f., 138f.

[5] See Khalidi 2012, xv; Stroumsa 1999, 7. For the sake of clarity, given the fact that both these thinkers hail from Rayy, I will refer to Abū Bakr al-Rāzī simply as 'al-Rāzī' and refer to Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī as 'Abū Ḥātim'.

[6] *PoP* 96f.

[7] See *The Book of the Philosophical Life*; *HPA*.

Islam, Christianity, Manichaeism, etc.), in effect, just another religion in which followers

adhere to the teachings of a founding philosopher through imitation.[8]

This theme is echoed in a debate which took place in 932 between Abū Bishr

Mattā ibn Yūnus (d. 940), al-Fārābī's Nestorian Christian teacher, and the grammarian

Abu Saʿid al-Sirāfi (d. 979) regarding the distinction between logic and grammar. While

we again only have a seemingly unreliable account of the debate from Abū Ḥayyān al-

Tawḥīdī (d. 1023), the protégé of Abū Salaymān al-Sijistānī (d. 1000) and a known

imaginative exaggerator (and even forger), using al-Sirāfi as his ultimate authority, Abū

Bishr appears to have fared poorly in his claim that "logic investigates meaning (*al-

maʿnā*), whereas grammar investigates expression (*al-lafaẓa*)", falling prey to al-Sirāfi's

grammatic trickery.[9] The debate resulted in logic being viewed as simply another

grammar, the grammar of the Greeks. As al-Sirāfi asks:

> If Logic be the invention of a Greek made in the Greek language and according to
> Greek conventions, and according to the descriptions and symbols which Greeks
> understood, whence does it follow that the Turks, Indians, Persians, and Arabs
> should attend to it, and make it umpire to decide for them or against them, and
> judge between them, so that they must accept what it attests and repudiate what it
> disapproves?[10]

In short, these debates show that *falsafa* was viewed in the early 10th century, not as a

universal syllogistic method giving structure to natural reason, but rather as a culturally

determined set of comprehensive doctrines particular to the pagan Greeks. These debates

were not about specific philosophical doctrines, but, instead, they focused on the merit of

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[8] *PoP* 25f.

[9] *Enjoyment and Sociability* 114 (translation mine). Margoliouth's translation reads: "Logic enquires into the sense, whereas Grammar enquires into the sound." Margoliouth 1905, 116. See also Abed 1991, xvi; Street 2015; Kraemer 1986, 32f.; 141f; López-Farjeat 2018, 21-26.

[10] *Enjoyment and Sociability* 110; Translation Margoliouth, 113.

both *falsafa* and reason, itself. They questioned whether philosophy as a method was, in fact, universal or even pertinent to the culture of the *Dār al-Islām*.

It is within this context that al-Fārābī advocated for the preeminence of natural reason over the symbols of religion, his advocacy as much a defense of reason as a sly political maneuver or a provocation of religion (at least religion as construed by either the more liberal Mu'tazilites or the traditionalist Ḥanbalites, both of whose influence grew in Abbasid Baghdad). His defense of the preeminence of reason as the sole source for truth, even while fashioning a place for religion as a Construction of Social Knowledge, was not the only attempt in Abbasid Baghdad to address the competition between faith and reason as the sole source of truth. Some, like al-Kindī tried to ameliorate the tension between these two potential sources of truth. The Ikhwān al-safā', a clandestine group of encyclopedists based in Baṣra roughly contemporary to al-Fārābī, took a similar tact to al-Kindī, though their amelioration holds a distinctly cosmopolitan flair, as will be discussed below. The aforementioned Abu Bakr al-Rāzī was far less conciliatory. Special revelation was not only inferior to philosophy, but contrary to God's justice and the egalitarian universality of reason. At best, religious leaders were tricksters and jackasses (*tiyūs*, literally 'a billygoat'), and, at worst, the prophets were inspired by evil spirits.[11] Compared to Abu Bakr al-Rāzī, al-Fārābī was no less radical in his subsumption of revelation under the rule of philosophy, but like the Ikhwān al-safā' and unlike al-Rāzī, he created a role for religion as a poetic, symbolic expression of truth. Revelation certainly has no privileged claim to the truth in comparison to philosophy (contra al-Kindī and, in places, the Ikhwān al-safā'), but it serves a function as an imagistic

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[11] *PoP* 25. See Ḥusrau 1939, 178; al-Bīrūnī 1936, 2-3; Ruska 1922, 30; Stroumsa 1999, 105-106.

translation of philosophy for those incapable of following the intricacies of demonstration (contra al-Rāzī). Both al-Rāzī and al-Fārābī hold natural reason to be the highest possible fulfillment of the human person. Both reject the authority of revealed religion over philosophy. Both were roundly criticized for their views on prophecy, even amongst fellow philosophers: Maimonides claims that al-Rāzī is "merely a physician" and not a philosopher; even al-Fārābī, according to Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʻa, wrote a refutation of al-Rāzī called *The Book of the Response to al-Rāzī on Divine Science* which is no longer extent; while Ibn Ṭufayl claims that, other than his work on logic, al-Fārābī 's philosophical works are "full of doubts".[12] Yet al-Fārābī allows a place in his city for the founding Imām, and in doing so avoids criticism of the Prophet himself and the Qurʼān, even while subsuming revelation under philosophy. It is no wonder then that al-Fārābī, and not al-Rāzī, avoided being labeled an iconoclast, heretic (*mulḥid*), and a *zindiq*, even while staking out an unabashedly rationalist position distinct from the likes of al-Kindī and the Ikhwān al-safāʼ.[13]

2.1. Al-Kindī and the Compatibility between Philosophy and Prophecy

While the Abbasid Caliphate was not the first Muslim foray into scholarship beyond the topics of jurisprudence and theology—e.g., the founding Umayyad Caliph, Muʻāwiyah (d. 680), reportedly had an impressive library in Damascus and the sixth Umayyad Caliph, al-Walid (d. 715), chartered a position in his court for a curator of books (*ṣāḥib al-maṣāḥif*) which reputedly included both secular and Qurʼānic works—, it

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[12] See *Maimonides' Letter to Ibn Tibbon* 378; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʻa 1882, 608; *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, 100. See also Harvey 1992, 56-57; Stroumsa 1999, 92, 188-189.
[13] See, e.g., *PoP* 80. See also Stroumsa 1999, 7f.

marks the earliest fulsome Muslim exploration into Greek philosophy.[14] There is

evidence of 'houses of wisdom' (*buyūt al-ḥikma*) under both the founder of Baghdad, al-

Manṣūr (d. 775), and the fifth Abbasid Caliph, Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 809), but it was under

the patronage of Hārūn al-Rashīd's son, al-Ma'mūn (d. 833), that Greek philosophy (and

scholarship in general) truly flourished.[15] Whether or not al-Ma'mūn's patronage

manifested institutionally through the establishment of a school, the 'house of wisdom'

(*bayt al-ḥikma*), or simply through multiple personal patronages (which grew in the

telling into the famous 'house of wisdom') is contested in scholarship.[16] However, what

can be clearly stated is that under al-Ma'mūn translations of Greek philosophy into

Arabic, of which there had been some previous attempts, became a priority for the Caliph

himself.[17]

As the story goes, as reported by Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995) in his catalogue *al-Fihrist*,

al-Ma'mūn was visited by Aristotle in a dream. Ibn al-Nadīm relates:

> One of the reasons for [the translation of books on philosophy] was that al-
> Ma'mūn saw in a dream the likeness of a man white in color, with a ruddy
> complexion, broad forehead, joined eyebrows, bald head, bloodshot eyes, and
> good qualities sitting on his bed. Al-Ma'mūn related, "It was as though I was in

[14] Khalili 2010, 70; Wilkins 2015, 299. Some Pseudo-Aristotelian letters, purportedly written by Aristotle for Alexander the Great concerning governance and warfare, were translated under the rule of the later Umayyad Caliph Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik (d. 743), not to be confused with al-Walid's father, 'Abd al-Malik (d. 705), as commissioned by his secretary. These letters would later form the core for the famous Latin *Secreta Secretorum* (*Sirr al-Asrar*). See Grignaschi 1965-66; Grignaschi 1976; D'Ancona 2017; Badawī 1987, 11; Gutas 2006, 96f.
[15] Khalili 2010, 69-70; Hodgson 1974a, 298; Gutas 1998b., 53f.; D'Ancona 2017.
[16] Gutas convincingly argues that reports of the *bayt al-ḥikma* as an institution are overblown, given the term's origination as a Sasanian designation for a library, i.e., the *bayt al-ḥikma* was not a school, but rather an impressive royal library. (This explanation also helpfully elucidates why we lack records about the school's founding, as well as the references to the *bayt al-ḥikma* as being attributed to numerous Caliphs—although Gutas credits this to a confusion around the Arabic preposition *li-* as both denoting ownership, the common usage, but also relation, meaning that references to 'the house of wisdom of (*li-*) al-Ma'mūn, for example, denotes the period of the *bayt al-ḥikma*, i.e., *li-* denotes, not the establishment of the *bayt al-ḥikma*, but its present patronage. However, if Gutas is right and the *bayt al-ḥikma* was simply a royal library, not an institution, then there is no oddity about ownership being given to successive Caliphs.) See Gutas 1998b., 53f.; D'Ancona 2017. Cf. Khalili 2010, 69f.; Hodgson 1974a, 298; Eche 1967, 9f.; Balty-Guesdon 1992, 131f.
[17] D'Ancona 2017; D'Ancona 2005, 20f.; D'Ancona 2010, 872f.; Endress 1997; Gutas 1998b., 75f.

front of him, filled with fear of him. Then I said, 'Who are you?' He replied, 'I am *Aristotle*.' Then I was delighted with him and said, 'Oh sage, may I ask you a question?' He said, 'Ask it.' Then I asked, 'What is good (*ḥusn*)?' He replied, 'What is good in the mind.' I said again, 'Then what is next?' He answered, 'What is good in the law (*al-sharī'a*).' I said, 'Then what next?' He replied, 'What is good with the public.' I said, 'Then what more?' He answered, 'More? There is no more.'"... This dream was one of the most definite reasons for the output of books.[18]

For our purposes, it matters little whether this tale is authentic or apocryphal; whether al-Ma'mūn really dreamt of Aristotle or was simply the kind of ruler to which such a tale could be credibly ascribed amounts to the same thing: al-Ma'mūn patronized philosophy with a fervor fitting of someone directed by Aristotle, himself.[19] The story tells us something important about the reputation of al-Ma'mūn's court: there was nothing contradictory about Aristotle, a pagan Greek, explaining goodness, including the goodness (*ḥusn*) of the law (*al-sharī'a*), to the Caliph, even the Caliph who instituted the *miḥna* against religious leaders to establish himself as the supreme authority on religious matters. Under al-Ma'mūn's rule, there was no dispute between Aristotle and Islam.

Unsurprisingly, al-Kindī, who would rise to prominence under both al-Ma'mūn and his half-brother al-Mu'taṣim (d. 842), directed little of his attention to the issue of whether revelation or philosophy held preeminence.[20] Whether due to his patrons' disinterest, his own personal disinterest, or a shared assumption with the general milieu of the court about the obvious compatibility between reason and revelation, al-Kindī's

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[18] *Fihrist* 583-584; *Fihrist* (Ar.) 243.

[19] As Gutas notes, the motivations for al-Ma'mūn's patronage of Greek learning was more likely due to *realpolitik* concerns than a dream encounter with Aristotle, as his policies were more a continuation (even if an escalation) of his predecessors than a radical new course. And, given his well-orchestrated propaganda campaign to paint Baghdad, not Byzantium, as the true inheritors of the Greek legacy, a tale about a dream blessing by Aristotle as well as his uncharacteristic cooperation with the rival Constantinople in order to receive Greek texts take on a savvy political flavor. See Gutas 1998b., 83f. See also Khaliq 1969, 30.

[20] For al-Kindī's relationship to the court, see Adamson 2007, 4f. For one example of how al-Kindī's philosophy might have been affected by the politics of his day, see Adamson 2007, 101f.

writings address the issue directly in only one place, to my knowledge. In a fascinating

passage of his *Letter on the Quantity of Aristotle's Books and What is Required for the

Attainment of Philosophy*, al-Kindī uses prophetic knowledge as a foil for the kind of

knowledge obtained through philosophy and the human sciences (*al-'alūm al-'insāniyya*).

After enumerating Aristotle's works, he explains that philosophy is a methodic,

arduous process, saying:

> This then is the enumeration of his books, of which—as we have said before—the
> perfected philosopher (*al-faylasūf al-tāmm*) ought to acquire knowledge, after
> knowledge of the propaedeutics (*'ilm al-riyāḍāt*), which I have already defined by
> name. For if someone lacks knowledge of the propaedeutics (*'ilm al-riyāḍāt*),
> which are arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and harmonics, then even lifelong
> study will not allow him to complete his knowledge of any of these [more
> advanced topics].[21]

Thus, philosophical knowledge is, first and foremost, a process of mastering humanly

knowable sciences, each science relying on the propaedeutic sciences which undergird it.

According to al-Kindī, these higher sciences are known only through the study of

"substance and the predicates belonging to substance", namely quantity and quality.[22] But

even these higher sciences, including the knowledge of stable, unceasing secondary

substances, are human sciences (*al-'alūm al-'insāniyya*), requiring the propaedeutics,

sensation, and knowledge of primary substances. Thus, they pale in comparison to divine

science (*'ilm al-'ilāhī*), which requires no method, effort, study, or time to attain.[23] This

divine science is specific to the prophets (*rusul*).[24]

The exact content of divine science, according to al-Kindī, is difficult to ascertain.

He clearly identifies philosophy and the human sciences as being of a lower rank

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[21] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 369-370. Translation slightly edited.
[22] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 370.
[23] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 372.
[24] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 372-373.

(*martaba*) than divine science, but it is unclear whether this is due to the way prophets

obtain knowledge, the way they convey knowledge, or that their knowledge has superior

content. As al-Kindī notes:

> If one reflects upon the answers given by the prophets to questions about hidden
> and true topics (*al-'umūr al-khafiyya al-ḥaqqiya*), which the philosopher aims
> (*qaṣada*) to answer using his own method (*ḥīla*), which he has come to know
> through long practice of inquiry and training, one will find that he [sc. the
> philosopher] does not provide [an answer] similar to them [the prophets' answers]
> in brevity, clarity, unerringness, and comprehensiveness. This was, for instance,
> the case when the Prophet, the blessing and peace of God be upon him, answered
> the questions of the idolaters. The answer was made known to him by Him who
> knows all things, and has neither beginning nor end, but is forever eternal. They
> spoke to him arrogantly, believing that he would not have an answer to their
> question directed at him (blessings of God be upon him): 'O Muḥammad, who
> will revive the bones, when they are decayed?'[25]

Here, al-Kindī clearly distinguishes between philosophy and prophecy regarding method

(*ḥīla*) —insofar as the philosophers are bound by the systematic and arduous process laid

out earlier in al-Kindī's letter, while the prophets obtain their knowledge "only through

the will (*'irāda*)" of God—and conveyance.[26] Even if the philosophers and prophets

share the same knowledge, the prophets are able to provide an answer (*jawāb*) more

briefly, clearly, unerringly, and comprehensively. Less clear is *whether* the philosophers

and the prophets share the same knowledge or the prophets have *sui generis* knowledge

of hidden and true topics (*al-'umūr al-khafiyya al-ḥaqqiya*). The above passage can be

read as suggesting either that the prophets have knowledge of hidden topics which is

unobtainable to the human science or that they have knowledge of hidden topics which is

obtainable to philosophers *only* though their philosophical method (*ḥīla*). Although, the

philosopher clearly aims (*qaṣada*) at the same knowledge as the prophet, whether he

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[25] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 373. For discussions of this passage, see Adamson 2007, 43-45; Khaliq
1969, 33.
[26] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 373.

obtains this knowledge is unclear. The answer to this question is muddled by his only

example of prophetic knowledge, noted at the end of the quote above: knowledge of the

cause of resurrection.[27]

Taking each of these distinctions between philosophy and prophecy in turn, it is

clear how the method (*ḥīla*) of the philosophers is distinct from the prophets' lack of

method. Whereas the philosopher requires the propaedeutics and the lower sciences to

attain knowledge about secondary substances, the prophets needs no preliminary

knowledge for what they know, insofar as knowledge is bestowed upon them by God.

Rather, God is responsible for any preparatory work, by purifying (*taṭhīr*) the prophet's

soul without recourse to study (*ṭalab*) or time (*zamān*).[28] And, in fact, it is the prophets'

independence from any method which distinguishes them from the rest of humankind; it

is a sign (*'āya*) of prophethood. As al-Kindī explains:

> This knowledge is specific (*khāṣṣa*) to the prophets, may God's blessings be upon
> them, and not to [the rest of] mankind. It is one of their marvelous unique
> properties, that is, one of the signs (*'āyāt*) which they bear that distinguish
> (*fāṣila*) them from the rest of mankind, since there is no path (*sabīl*), for anyone
> other than the prophets, to the momentous knowledge of the true secondary
> substances, or to knowledge of the primary sensible substances and their
> accidents, without study (*ṭalab*) and the methods (*ḥiyal*) of logic and mathematics,
> as we have mentioned, and in time (*zamān*).[29]

Here, again, al-Kindī insinuates that the prophets have a particular or specific (*khāṣṣa*)

kind of knowledge, only to later confusingly suggest that the prophets' knowledge is the

same as that of the philosophers, namely, knowledge of secondary substances. He is

again ambiguous as to whether both the content and method of knowing are distinct

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[27] This question comes from the Qur'ān 36:78-79.
[28] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 373.
[29] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 373.

between the philosophers and prophets or only the method is distinct, as will be examined

shortly.

The second distinction between the prophets and philosophers, namely the ability

to convey truth to others, is similarly straightforward, although also entangled in

ambiguities about whether the content or the method is the source of the dissimilarity. As

noted above, al-Kindī credits the prophets with skill for "brevity, clarity, unerringness,

and comprehensiveness" which far outstrip the philosopher.[30] And, were al-Kindī's

position to focus exclusively upon the prophets' ability to communicate, his position

would not be all that dissimilar to al-Fārābī's position. As he explains, following his

example of prophetic knowledge, knowledge of the cause of resurrection:

> What man could use human philosophy to compose in so few letters as are used in
> these verses, what God, the great and exalted, clearly composed in them for His
> prophet, may God bless him and give him salvation, showing that the bones are
> revived after they decayed, and that He has the power to create the like of the
> heavens and earth, and that something comes to be from its contrary. Tongues
> (*'alsin*) which speak confusedly are too weak for such a task; the limits of
> mankind fall short of it, and it is veiled (*ḥajaba*) from [our] partial intellects (*al-
> 'uqūl al-juz'iyya*).[31]

Again, al-Kindī conflates process and content here. Are the prophets distinct from the

philosophers because they are able to convey their knowledge more eruditely? Or are

they truly more knowledgeable? Is this distinction in the tongue or the intellect?

While no definitive claims can be made, al-Kindī's example of prophetic

knowledge suggests that prophets have access to at least some content distinct from the

philosophers. An examination of his full treatment of the topic of resurrection is

unnecessary here, but the fact that he chooses resurrection, a topic outside the bounds of

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[30] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 373.
[31] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 376.

Aristotelian science, as the exemplar case of prophetic knowledge is telling.[32] Raised as

Muḥammad's response to an objection from idolaters who doubted the possibility of

resurrection, the argument in its simplest form reduces to this: since God created

everything that is (including bones) from a state of non-being according to His will, the

state of non-being which occurs in decayed bones is not an impediment to God's causal

power.[33] The Prophet's argument, which relies upon, in al-Kindī's explanation, an appeal

to more mundane examples of generation, is not in discordance with Aristotelian

causality (or at least al-Kindī's own reading of Aristotelianism which allows for creation

in time).[34] That said, it also relies upon knowledge separate and distinct from what is

obtainable through the methods of philosophy; philosophy could never provide any

indication (*dalīl*) of a future occurrence which is dependent upon God's will (*'irāda*), as

al-Kindī describes the issue of resurrection.[35]

Thus, al-Kindī seems to hold that, while the philosophers aim (*qaṣada*) at the

same knowledge as the prophets, they do not always obtain it. When they do obtain it,

they do so only through an arduous method and are less adept at communicating it. For

this reason, while praiseworthy of philosophy, particularly philosophy which concerns

itself with knowledge of God as the First Cause, he is wary about theoretical knowledge

(*naẓar*) which is not in conformity with the message of the prophets.[36] As he explains:

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[32] See Khaliq 1969, 33; cf. Adamson 2007, 43-45. Here, Khaliq argues that the example of resurrection indicates *sui generis* mental content obtained by the prophets, whereas Adamson reduces the difference between philosophy and prophecy to a matter of method and communication. The text is ambiguous, but the example of resurrection lends itself to Khaliq's reading.
[33] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 373f. See Qur'ān 36:78-79.
[34] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 374. See also *On the True Agent* 182-183; *OFP* 30f.; *On the Quiddity of What Cannot be Infinite*; *On the Oneness of God and the Finiteness of the Body of the World*; *Al-Kindi's Epistle to 'Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Khurāsānī Explaining the Finiteness of the Body of the World*; Adamson 2015; Adamson 2003; Staley 1989, 359-364.
[35] *Quantity of Aristotle's Books* 374-75.
[36] *OFP* 9-11, 14-15.

By knowing the things in their true nature, one knows divinity, oneness, virtue, and, in general everything beneficial and how to obtain it, and how to stay away from, and protect oneself against, all harm. The way to acquire all these is what the true prophets brought from God, great be His praise. For the true prophets (may God's blessings be upon them) brought the assurance that God alone is divine, and made [us] adhere to the virtues that are pleasing to Him, whilst forsaking the vices that are essentially opposed to the virtues and preferring the latter [to the former].[37]

Philosophy is noble, but it does not supersede the authority of the Qur'ān. Rather, the knowledge of the prophets helps to distinguish between noble philosophy and base speculation.

All told, al-Kindī seems to view philosophy and prophecy as distinct, complimentary ways to obtain the truth. And while both the method and communication of philosophy remain inferior to prophecy, the contents of both the most noble philosophy and prophecy seem to be largely, if not entirely, the same (e.g., the Secondary Substances and God). That said, al-Kindī clearly gives prophecy authority over philosophy, even if at times suggesting that philosophy or the acquisition of truth is useful for the interpretation of religion.[38] Philosophy and prophecy are compatible, if unequal, partners.

This model befits someone whom sympathized with al-Ma'mūn's dream, but it did not become the dominant view in Abbasid Baghdad. The *miḥna*, initiated by al-Ma'mūn to centralize religious authority with the Caliph, failed under al-Mutawakkil (d. 861) and with it al-Ma'mūn's vision of a universal understanding of Islam, including his vision of Islam's compatibility with philosophy. Rather than destabilizing the religious authority of the elite religious scholars (*'ulamā'*), the *miḥna* appears to have strengthened

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[37] *OFP* 16.

[38] For example, *OFP* 15-16. See also Footnote 3 of the present chapter.

their influence, particularly the traditionalist Ibn Ḥanbal, who had suffered imprisonment, flogging, and exile during the *miḥna*, only to return to Baghdad a popular hero under al-Mutawakkil.[39] By the time of the 10th century, sectarian debates flourished, and with them came divergent views about the value of philosophy.

2.2. Al-Rāzī and the Injustice of Prophetic Knowledge

Amongst the philosophers, one is hard pressed to find someone less conciliatory to prophetic knowledge (and al-Kindī's position) than the early 10th century physician Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī. Unfortunately, due to the polemical character of his philosophical works, very few of al-Rāzī's texts are extent beyond his medical writings. In fact, at least according to al-ʿĀmirī (d. 992), only his proficiency in medicine provided him with a reputation as having wisdom (*ḥikma*) at all, rather than a reputation for ignorant blathering (*haḏayān*).[40] Regardless, whether due to his preeminence as a physician or his usefulness as a foil to more doctrinaire authors, several of his texts have survived, although one must reconstruct many of his positions through the accounts of historians and his detractors, of which there were, fortunately for us, many, e.g., Maimonides, al-Bīrūnī, Ibn Hazm, Nāsiri Ḥusrau, Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī, and the aforementioned Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī.[41]

Of the texts by al-Rāzī we do have, he is effusive in his praise of reason. For example, in the opening of the *Spiritual Physick*, he says:

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[39] Zaman 1971, 106f.

[40] *Kitāb al-Amad ʿalā l-abad'* 74-75. Maimonides also describes al-Rāzī's theological notions as blatherings (*haḏayānāt*). *Guide* 3.12.

[41] Both al-Rāzī's writings and references to his thought by his medieval detractors have been helpfully compiled by Paul Kraus. For his medieval detractors, see Kraus 1939, 164-190. See also Stroumsa 1999, 88f.

The Creator (Exalted be His name) gave and bestowed upon us Reason (*al-'aql*) to the end that we might thereby attain and achieve every advantage (*manāfi'*) that lies within the nature of such as us to attain and achieve, in this world and the next. It is God's greatest blessing (*ni'am*) to us, and there is nothing that surpasses it in procuring our advantage and profit… By Reason we reach all that raises us up, and sweetens and beautifies our life, and through it we obtain our purpose (*buġya*) and desire (*murād*)… By Reason we have comprehended matters obscure and remote, things that were secret and hidden from us… by it we have achieved even the knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of the Almighty, our Creator, the most majestic of all that we have sought to reach and our most profitable attainment… Since this is its worth (*miqdār*) and place (*maḥall*), its value (*khaṭar*) and significance (*jalāla*), it behooves us not to bring it down from its high rank (*rutba*) or in any way degrade it, neither to make it governed seeing that it is governor (*ḥākim*), or controlled seeing that it is controller (*zimām*), or the subject seeing that it is sovereign (*matbu'*)…[42]

Here reason takes on the privilege and responsibilities normally afforded religion: reason is the source of any advantage (*manfa'a*) we might find in the next life; reason, not the Prophet nor a Sacred text, is God's greatest blessing (*ni'am*); reason is our purpose and ought to be our chief desire (*murād*); reason reveals God; and reason alone should be the governor (*ḥākim*) of our lives. In his *Book of the Philosophic Life*, he echoes these claims: since we are all servants of God, who is Himself a Knower, those of us who are the most learned are closest to Him. He explains, "Philosophy is making oneself similar to God, may He be glorified and magnified, to the extent possible for a human being (*bi-qadr fī ṭāqa al-'insān*)."[43] In this work, he again insists that it is through the acquisition of knowledge and justice that we become praiseworthy after death, because God "loves us

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[42] *Spiritual Physick* 20; *Spiritual Physick (Ar.)* 17-18.

[43] *The Book of the Philosophic Life* 108. Al-Rāzī shares this definition of philosophy with al-Kindī. See Note 3. Both of them likely derive this definition from Plato's *Republic*, although only al-Rāzī explicitly credits this belief to both himself and other philosophers (*falāsifa*). Along with Plato, he may be relying on the authority of al-Kindī's own definition here. That said, while the Arabic construction of the definition of philosophy by both authors is almost identical, having only cosmetic differences, the broader commitments of al-Rāzī and al-Kindī render the meaning of the words distinct. Whereas al-Kindī establishes limits to reason only to introduce humans who transcend the limits of reason, i.e., the prophets, via the divine science (*'ilm al-'ilāhī*), al-Rāzī establishes the limits of reason as a limit for all human beings.

to be knowledgeable (*'ilm*) and just" and he detests "injustice and ignorance (*jahl*) on our part."[44]

Of course, al-Rāzī was not the first or last *faylasūf* to praise reason; as effusive as he is, he is not unique in this regard. Rather, he is unique insofar as he established a clear polemic between reason and revealed religion, as he views the latter as corrosive to the former. As Abū Ḥātim relates al-Rāzī's claims from their debate:

> Those who adhere to religious laws received their religion through imitation (*taqlid*). They forbade rational investigation (*naẓar*) of religious principles and were very strict in this regard. They transmitted from their leaders traditions that require them to abandon rational inquiry as a matter of religious belief… Among these traditions related from ancestors are the following: 'Debating religious questions with affectation is unbelief (*kufr*);' 'Whoever subjects his religious belief to analogical reasoning will be forever confused;' Do not reflect upon God but, rather, upon His creation;' 'Predestination is a mystery of God…' When people who argue thus are asked for proof of what they say, they grow wild and angry and declare licit the blood of whoever questions them in this manner, forbidding rational investigation and urging their opponents to be killed. For this reason, the truth is buried very deep and falls totally silent.[45]

Put simply, unreflective assent to or imitation (*taqlid*) of religion stifles the human life, insofar as religion discourages rational speculation (*naẓar*) (at least according to Abū Ḥātim's depiction of al-Rāzī, who views religion as little else than unreflective assent).

It is on precisely these grounds—that adherence to religion precludes the use of reason and thus the fulfillment of humankind's God-given purpose—that, as al-Bīrūnī and Nāsiri Ḥusrau relate, al-Rāzī considers the possibility that revelation is actually caused by evil spirits (posing as angels) intent to sow discord, confusion, and war.[46] Abū

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[44] *The Book of the Philosophic Life* 101.

[45] *PoP* 24. Here, al-Rāzī's reference to the declaration of unbelief (*kufr*) is likely a reference to puritanical and dogmatic Kharijite sect, who were known for denouncing doctrinal opponents as unbelievers (*kāfirūna*), although the terminology does appear in both the Qur'ān (Qur'ān 74:10) and a famous hadith as reported by Bukhārī. See Bukhārī 1997, 77-78; Bella Vida 1997, 1074-77; Bjorkman 1997, 407-09.

[46] See Ḥusrau 1939, 178; al-Bīrūnī 1936, 2-3; Ruska 1922, 30; Stroumsa 105-106.

Ḥātim's account gives a different causal story for the evils of religion, although it is equally provocative: it is humankind's feeblemindedness (combined with the passage of time and religious leaders' deceptive tricks) which has created the customs of religion. As he credits al-Rāzī as saying:

> They are able to act thus because of long force of habit in their belief, the passage of days, and the customs of mankind who are deceived by the imposing beards of these jackasses (*tiyūs*) who sit in the front row of assemblies, tearing their throats out with their lies (*akāḏīb*) and their superstitious fairy tales (*khurāfāt*) and their 'so-and-so told me on the authority of so-and-so,' all of it untrue (*zūr*) and slander (*buhtān*)… What deceived (*ḡarra*) mankind is the length of the beards of these jackasses (*tiyūs*) and the white clothes worn by their followers, who are feeble-minded men, women, and children, as well as the passage of time, until this has become nature (*ṭabʿ*) and custom (*ʿāda*).[47]

Al-Rāzī does not mince words. While one can rightfully ascribe the term beneficent deception to al-Fārābī's views of religion, given its historical roots in Plato, he is too respectful to use the term himself. Al-Rāzī embraces the language of deception to describe religion, depicting the customs of religion as being built upon lies (*akāḏīb*), superstitious fairy tales (*khurāfāt*), untruth (*zūr*), and slander (*buhtān*). The prophets have deceived (*ḡarra*) religious adherents through the appearance of wisdom—dramatic clothing, imposing assemblies, and sagacious beards (like billygoats)—, but anyone who escapes the feeble-mindedness brought about by religious custom ought to recognize that God would not be so miserly in his bestowal of wisdom. God's love of justice demands a more egalitarian way to obtain the truth. Revealed religion is antithetical to God's purposes, and must, in actuality, have been brought about by demons or tricksters.

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[47] *PoP* 25. Translation slightly modified.

Al-Rāzī was famously committed to egalitarianism, both practically and theoretically.[48] He described the virtuous life simply: "it consists in treating all men justly (*bi-'l-'adl*)."[49] Unsurprisingly, he described God as meting out rationality equally and justly. Rationality is "simple (*qarīb*) and universal (*shāmil*), and may readily be observed on all hands, and in fact every child is accustomed to it and is brought up accordingly."[50] And while the philosophical life is hard and laborious (and while he admits that living the philosophical life can be made harder by one's natural temperament), he indicates that only unwillingness to seek knowledge and habituate self-control ever prevents anyone from becoming a philosopher.[51] Only choosing not to engage in rational investigation prevents the philosophical life, as had anyone "devoted his energies to what I [al-Rāzī] have devoted mine and sought what I seek, he would have reached the same rank as I".[52]

With this conception of justice in mind, al-Rāzī's critique of special revelation becomes even clearer. As he objects to Abū Ḥātim:

> It would have been more worthy (*'awlā*) of the wisdom of the Wise One—more worthy also of the mercy of the Merciful— for Him to have inspired (*yali*) all His creatures with the knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of what is to their benefit (*manāfi'*) as well as their harm (*maḍārr*) in this world and the next. He would not have privileged (*yufaḍḍilu*) some over others; and there would be no cause for quarrel and no dispute among them, leading to their destruction. This would have been more protective of them than to cause some to act as guides for others.[53]

It is not in line with God's character to choose prophets, nor to choose specific people groups for the benefits of revelation. Access to the truth ought to be universal, not special. Moreover, al-Rāzī did not find that religion encouraged virtue: the Manicheans

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[48] For example, Ibn al-Nadīm reports that al-Rāzī treated the poor free-of-charge in his work as a physician, even bringing them rations, despite his fame. See *Fihrist* 702; *Fihrist* (Ar.) 299.
[49] *Spiritual Physick* 101; *Spiritual Physick* (Ar.) 91.
[50] *Spiritual Physick* 23; *Spiritual Physick* (Ar.) 21. Translation slightly modified.
[51] *Spiritual Physick* 23; *Spiritual Physick* (Ar.) 21.
[52] *PoP* 2.
[53] *PoP* 1.

acted unjustly toward those outside their belief system; the Khurramites permitted

deception for their cause; the Ismāʿīlī's allowed for concealment (*kitmān*); and Jesus,

Moses, Muhammad, Mani, and Zoroaster all contradicted one another about fundamental

truths.[54] For al-Rāzī, special revelation lacks merit on the grounds of its usefulness, its

fairness, and its truthfulness.

Yet, al-Rāzī does not object to the mythology of religion *per se*; he was, after all,

a devoted Platonist, reader of the *Timaeus*, and constructor of myth himself.[55] Rather, he

objects to the notion that religion has privileged information not universally accessible to

any rational creature. He denies that the knowledge of the prophets is exceptional, nor

does he spare the Qu'rān or Muḥammad from critique. As he explains to Abū Ḥātim in

two related passages:

> You claim that the miracle exists and is manifest—namely, the Qu'rān. You also
> say that whoever denies this should bring forth something similar... We can bring
> you a thousand like it.[56]

And:

> We would be obliged to adduce a thousand examples like it from the speech of
> men of eloquence and high style, prose rhymers, and poets (*shuʿarāʾ*). All of these
> examples would be more fluent in phrasing, more concise in meaning, more
> eloquent in both substance and form, and more elegant as rhymed prose.[57]

According to al-Rāzī, the Qu'rān should only be afforded the respect of poetry, and poor

poetry at that—this despite the Qu'rān's repeated insistence that it is not a work of

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[54] *Spiritual Physick* 101; *Spiritual Physick* (Ar.) 91; Stroumsa 98; *PoP* 50.
[55] For example, al-Rāzī presents a theodicy to justify the inferior state of the soul's corporeality, by relying on a myth. In the story, God, while able to prevent the soul from becoming incarnated, is like a wise father whose child desires to play in a garden full of thorns and stinging creatures. Rather than preventing his child from entering the garden, the father allows his child to enter, only to be stung and learn his lesson. Thus, God allows for embodiment in order to prevent the soul from existing in a state of perpetual desire for embodiment. *PoP* 18-19. See Goodman 1975, 25-38.
[56] *PoP* 140.
[57] *PoP* 167.

poetry, nor is Muḥammad a poet.[58] Instead, al-Rāzī finds works of philosophy, like the

Almagest, more worthy of veneration.[59] Given his stridence, perhaps it is no surprise that

al-Rāzī's philosophical works were, for the most part, rejected, destroyed, or ignored.

2.3. Al-Fārābī as Coopting Religion

While it would be disingenuous to describe al-Fārābī's views about the

relationship between philosophy and religion as a direct response to either al-Kindī or al-

Rāzī (although, he seems to have been familiar with the thought of both, having been

likely influenced by the former and having reportedly written a rebuttal of the latter),

their thought provides helpful context for his model.[60] While more insistent about the

preeminence of reason than al-Kindī, al-Fārābī also recognizes the value of religion to

communicate what would otherwise be hidden truths.[61] At places, he acknowledges that

individuals can obtain insight without the arduous process of scientific inquiry (e.g.,

through divination and seizing upon the definitions of things).[62] And, like al-Kindī, he

holds no qualms regarding the unequal distribution of the abilities by which human

beings acquire knowledge.[63] While less caustic in tone than al-Rāzī, al-Fārābī also

delimits the authority of revealed religion.[64] He asserts the preeminence of reason as the

purpose of the human life.[65] He claims that the ruler of the city ought to rule according to

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[58] Qu'rān 69:40-41; 37:36-37; 36:39.
[59] *PoP* 168.
[60] See Janos 2012, 30f., 203f.; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʻa 1882, 608.
[61] *PS* 15.11.
[62] *PS* 14.7; *PR* 79. See also Chapter 3, 3.2.1.2 and 4.1.1. For Avicenna's engagement with al-Fārābī on this issue, see Chapter 4, 3.1.
[63] *PR* 74, 77-78.
[64] *AH* 44; *AH* (Ar.) 61.
[65] *PR* 74; *PS* 15.8-10.

philosophy, not according to special revelation.[66] He agrees with al-Rāzī that the aim of

religion is, in fact, to compel adherents into imitation, not the use of their reason

(although they disagree about the morality of this aim).[67] And like al-Rāzī, he relegates

Muḥammad to the role of poet (though not by name).[68] But unlike al-Kindī, al-Fārābī

does not espouse the priority of revealed religion. Unlike al-Rāzī, he does not reject

religion outright. Rather, he coopts its authority, identifying revelation with a specific

expression of philosophy, and, in doing so, positions philosophy as the preeminent

expression of the human person, achievable only by a few.

Against these two models, al-Fārābī's own philosophical commitments are

highlighted. Rather than integrating philosophy into religious life or distinguishing

between philosophy and religious life, al-Fārābī coopts religion for use by philosophers.

This choice, which, while conciliatory toward religion compared to al-Rāzī, is not

conciliatory *per se*, highlights both the supremacy of philosophy over revealed religion

and the supremacy of philosophers over religious adherents. Put simply, the preeminence

of natural reason is conspicuous in al-Fārābī's writings, as is his insistence that

knowledge is unobtainable for most people. His need to subsume religion under

philosophy insists that there is a standard for truth which measures religion as inferior to

philosophy. His need to coopt religion insists that the superiority of philosophy is not

reachable by everyone. If he lacks commitment to the former, why insist that

philosophers do not require religion?[69] Why insist that religious rulers must, themselves,

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[66] *AH* 44; *AH* (Ar.) 61.
[67] *AH* 41; *AH* (Ar.) 56.
[68] See Chapter 3, 4.1.3.
[69] *AH* 41, 44; *AH* (Ar.) 56, 61.

be philosophers?[70] If he lacks commitment to the latter, why not, like al-Rāzī, reject the usefulness of special revelation altogether?

As discussed in Chapter 3, al-Fārābī's universe (or at least his sublunar universe) is a pessimistic one. Unlike al-Kindī, al-Fārābī's God does not bestow knowledge upon people by purifying (*taṭhīr*) their souls according to His will (*'irāda*).[71] Unlike al-Rāzī, al-Fārābī's God does not mete out justice, ensuring that every human is able to lead a happy, philosophic life.[72] For al-Fārābī, philosophy is both the aim of the human life and entirely inaccessible to most human lives. It is only within this context that the concession of religion becomes justifiable. It is only within this context, i.e., when the preeminent truth of philosophy is only sporadically attainable, that beneficent deception becomes 'the next best' thing, as discussed in Chapter 1. A full accounting of the importance of these two commitments held by al-Fārābī which help to justify the Construction of Social Knowledge—that philosophers have the preeminent form of human knowledge, while many lack the wherewithal to know—will have to wait to be more fully addressed. That said, the consistency with which al-Fārābī's successors recognize these twin commitments, i.e., the preeminence of philosophical knowledge and the deficiency of most human knowers, as integral to his model (and subsequently theirs) indicates that they also read al-Fārābī as endorsing the pessimistic worldview explored in Chapter 3, also.

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[70] *AH* 41-44; *AH* (Ar.) 56-61.; *PS* 15.10; *PR* 78-80.
[71] Al-Fārābī does give the First Cause credit for revelation, insofar as it is the ultimate cause of the other existents which bring about religion. But it only acts upon the Imām through the mediation of the Secondary Causes. *PR* 80.
[72] *PR* 74, 77-78.

2.4. The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'

Before turning to the reception of al-Fārābī's thought by thinkers who could

rightly be described as adopters of Fārābīan political philosophy, generally, and the

Construction of Social Knowledge, specifically, one final set of contemporaries of al-

Fārābī should be noted: the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'. A full account of the relationship between

al-Fārābī and the Ikhwān would require addressing a series of issues too vast to even

enumerate here, let alone explore —the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's unknown identity, the unknown

terminus a quo and *terminus ad quem* of their writings, the heterogeneity of their

doctrines, and their quizzical relationship with philosophy and Islamic theology,

specifically Ismā'īlī theology, chief among them. But while the complexities of these

issues necessitate further explanation, the Ikhwān, even in simple terms, provide another

model of the relationship between philosophy and revelation which serves as a useful foil

in contradistinction with al-Fārābī's own model. After all, along with being

contemporaries of al-Fārābī, the Ikhwān, perhaps more than any other thinkers prior to

the turn of the 11th century, find common cause with al-Fārābī in viewing revelation as a

political issue. As the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā explain in their 22nd epistle:

> Religion and the State are inseparable twin brothers. Neither can survive without
> the other. But religion is the elder. The state is the younger brother, the follower.
> A state cannot do without a religion for its people to live by; and religion needs a
> king to command the people to uphold his institutions, freely or by force.[73]

Within this framework, like in al-Fārābī's own, political authority is susceptible to the

familiar nexus of complications surrounding the epistemological and sociological

authority of revelation, while revelation manifests itself in the political sphere. But, while

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[73] *Epistle 22*, 303; *Epistle 22* (Ar.), 264.

the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' adopt a model as political and pluralistic as al-Fārābī's own, they still

regard special revelation as holding a uniquely authoritative epistemological category.

It should be noted that the Ikhwān are methodologically eclectic, intentionally so.

They are simultaneously Neoplatonic philosophers, Muslim theologians (possibly

Ismāʿīlī), magicians, astrologers, and critics.[74] Nor do they see any tension in their

multifarious methodological approaches. For example, in their famous *Epistle 22*, a story

in which non-human animals sue human beings before the King of the Jinn for

humanity's poor treatment of non-human animals, the idyllic hero of the story, the only

interlocutor to successfully explain what makes human beings superior to non-human

animals, thus justifying human treatment of non-human animals during the fictional court

case, is described as "Persian by breeding, Arabian by faith, a *ḥanīf* by confession, Iraqi

in culture, Hebrew in lore, Christian in manner, Damascene in devotion, Greek in

science, Indian in discernment, Sufi in intimations, regal in character, masterful in

thought, and divine in awareness".[75] Only someone who has mastered the best qualities

of multifarious methods from numerous nations and religions can resolve the argument of

the work. A diverse, and at times inconsistent, method is a feature, not a bug of their

thought. As they say in the beginning of *Epistle 45* and elsewhere:

> In general, our brothers, may God help them, should not reject any branch of
> knowledge, nor turn their backs on any of the books of the Ancients, nor cling
> fanatically to a single school (*maḏhab*). This is because our belief system and
> school (*maḏhab*) embraces all schools (*maḏāhib*) and branches of knowledge.[76]

The practical result of this approach is that the Ikhwān often conflate or confuse the roles

of religion, politics, and the imagination. Put crudely, while al-Fārābī carefully fits

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[74] See, for example, the discussions in Netton 1980; 1982, 1f., 95f.; Callataÿ 2008; Baffioni 2008.

[75] *Epistle 22*, 313-14; *Epistle 22* (Ar.), 278.

[76] *Epistle 45*, 115; *Epistle 45* (Ar.), 41-42.

together the societal roles of philosophy, metaphysics, rulership, religion, and political

imagination into a well-constructed model, like pieces in a carefully planned puzzle, the

Ikhwān take those same pieces and sand down their edges. While this has the benefit of

making the pieces fit together, it also renders them less distinguishable from one

another.[77]

In fairness to the Ikhwān, though, comparing the precision of a single author like

al-Fārābī, who has inconsistencies of his own, to an encyclopedic collection of works by

a clandestine association of numerous authors is uncharitable.[78] Al-Fārābī and the Ikhwān

were rough contemporaries, with al-Fārābī's death placed in 950/951 C.E. and the

Ikhwān having a *terminus a quo* from between 873 C.E. and 961 C.E. and a *terminus ad*

quem around 986 C.E.[79] And while they lived geographically near one another, with al-

Fārābī spending his adult life in Abbasid Baghdad, before eventually moving to

Damascus, the Ikhwān reportedly living under the Būyid regents in Basra. Providing

much more information of note is difficult, with rather sparse reliable biographical

accounts the nature of the Ikhwān's association.[80] The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's name, literally

'the brethren of purity' (purity being the aim of the human life and the key to knowledge,

happiness, and the afterlife), is pseudonymous, given their idiosyncratic doctrines and

status as *persona non grata* within the Abbasid milieu (although al-Tawḥidi does provide

a list of purported members in his *Book of Enjoyment and Sociability*).[81] One more thing

can be said, namely that the Ikhwān read al-Fārābī, or at least some of the Ikhwān read

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[77] See Netton 1982, 4-8; Baffioni 1998; 2000; 2008; 2011; Daftary 2008, xviii.
[78] Netton 1982, 3-4; Daftary 2008, xvf.; Bizri 2008, 1f.
[79] Bizri 2008, 3.
[80] Netton 1982, 1f.; Daftary 2008, xvf.; Bizri 2008, 1f.; Stern 1946.
[81] The credit for first describing the Ikhwān as *persona non grata* belongs to Bizri 2008, 5. See *Book of Enjoyment and Sociability* 4-5.

al-Fārābī, given some deep parallels between their cosmological models, a passage which

implicitly critiques al-Fārābī's rejection of astrology, their shared emphasis on the

development of a "perfect state" (*al-madīna al-fāḍila*) and the Law-giver (*wāḍiʿ al-*

sharīʿa/*wāḍiʿ al-nawāmīs*), and a large uncited quotation of al-Fārābī by the Ikhwān,

heretofore, to my knowledge, not noted elsewhere in any secondary literature.[82]

Philosophically, the Ikhwān share many commitments with al-Fārābī, the relevant

of which, for the sake of time, I will simply list here:

1) Like al-Fārābī, the Ikhwān hold philosophy and demonstration in high esteem.

   But whereas for al-Fārābī, demonstration is the only method by which to

   obtain certainty (*yaqīn*), for the Ikhwān, revelation is the shorter, straighter

   path to certainty of belief and happiness.[83] Revelation avoids the difficulties

   brought about through discussion, arguments, and finding sound analogy

   (*qiyās ṣaḥīḥ*).[84] The Ikhwān are concerned about the philosophically inclined

   falling into errors through engaging in futile debate, particularly the errors of

   denying the creation of the world, a precondition and cause of happiness for

   the Ikhwān, and the immortality of the soul.[85] Interestingly, they hold the view

   that, by definition, "wise men" (*ḥukamāʾ*) believe in creation, insofar as the

   innovation of the world is part of knowing the true nature of things, and claim

   that the Greek philosophers endorsed creation in pre-eternity by placing God's

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[82] See Carmela Baffioni 1998, 3f.; Callataÿ 2011, 90. See also *Epistles 33* and *36*. *Epistle 47*, 129 contains a large, nearly word for word quotation of *PS* 15.12, in which al-Fārābī describes the sovereign as having 12 qualities: 1) health and strength; 2) the ability to apprehend speech; 3) a good memory; 4) a keen mind; 5) fine diction; 6) a passion for learning; 7) a fondness for truth; 8) temperance; 9) pride; 10) disinterest in money; 11) a fondness for justice; and 12) bravery and conviction.
[83] *Epistle 43*, 29; *Epistle 43* (Ar.), 5-6.
[84] *Epistle 43*, 32; *Epistle 43* (Ar.), 8-9.
[85] *Epistle 44*, 107; *Epistle 44* (Ar.), 36; *Epistle 39*, 168; *Epistle 39* (Ar.), 340-341.

creative act prior to the motions of the heavens, even while critiquing the Ash'arite occasionalists, who adopt a very robust notion of creation, as pretenders to philosophy.[86] Still, the Ikhwān are concerned about "apostates (*murtāḍīn*) by means of the philosophical sciences".[87] Nonetheless, despite the Ikhwān's occasional reticence, philosophy plays a central role for the human attainment of happiness. But whereas al-Fārābī identifies happiness in this life and the next through the development of the human intellect through the acquisition of intelligibles, particularly those intelligibles which are not and never were in matter, e.g., the First and Secondary Causes, which, once acquired, allow one to become an acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafāḍ*), the Ikhwān identify becoming a wise, old philosopher as the last stage in life for the 'pure' prior to eternal happiness.[88] (Elsewhere, they identify happiness with purity alone, without any intellectual qualifications mentioned).[89]

2) Like al-Fārābī, the Ikhwān identify religion as the primary tool by which a ruler can habituate a citizenry to virtue.[90]

3) Like al-Fārābī, the Ikhwān view humanity as fundamentally flawed, though al-Fārābī credits this deficiency (*naqṣ*) to the sublunar world's origination through the contrary motions of the heavens, while the Ikhwān credit human impurity to embodiment, insofar as the soul must use the body during its

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[86] *Epistle 45*, 127; *Epistle 45* (Ar.), 50. *Epistle 40*, 181, 198; *Epistle 40* (Ar.), 346, 356.
[87] *Epistle 47*, 137.
[88] See Chapter 3, 3.2.1.1; *Epistle 14*, 151; *Epistle 14* (Ar.), 448-449.
[89] *Epistle 43*, 32; *Epistle 43* (Ar.), 8-9.
[90] *Epistle 44*, 73-74; *Epistle 44* (Ar.) 14-15; *Epistle 52a*, 149-150; *Epistle 52a* (Ar.), 306-307.

preparatory purification, which, once completed, allows the soul to leave the body.[91]

4) And like al-Fārābī, the Ikhwān think that human beings require cooperation (*ta'āwun*) or help (*mu'āwana*) from one another in order to achieve happiness.[92]

These four doctrines are held by both al-Fārābī and the Ikhwān: the essential role philosophy plays in human happiness, the value of religion to habituate people toward virtue, the fundamental deficiency of human persons, and the necessity of cooperation for human happiness.

But whereas al-Fārābī orders philosophy and religion by identifying religion as the imagistic expression of philosophy, the Ikhwān conflate philosophy and revelation in their effort to harmonize them, ultimately collapsing all humanly knowable truth into the domain of a single faculty of thought (*al-quwwa al-mufakira*) which includes both reason and imagination. All knowledge ends up being built upon analogy (*qiyās*), allusion (*'ashāra*), and indication (*dilāl*).[93] While the Ikhwān privilege the prophets (largely, for the same reason al-Kindī does —they require no propaedeutic science which might lead them into error), both philosophy and religion reflect an analogy which exists in reality, the analogy between the individual human soul and the cosmos, as well as the analogy between human actors and the Creator. This analogy, the famous Neoplatonic analogy between the microanthropos (the human) and the macroanthropos (the cosmos), is the

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[91] *Epistle 35*, 133-1344; *Epistle 35* (Ar.), 246-247.
[92] *Epistle 40*, 229; *Epistle 40* (Ar.), 375-376. See also Chapter 3, 3.1.1.1.
[93] See *Epistle 43*, 32; *Epistle 43* (Ar.), 8-9; *Epistle 35*, 132-133; *Epistle 35* (Ar.), 245-246.

foundation of, not just the Ikhwān's cosmology, but their epistemology.[94] Using the

human soul as an analogue for the cosmos must be the starting point for all true

knowledge.[95] The truth of creation is evident in the human soul.[96] And the Ikhwān warn

that philosophy is a dangerous method, precisely and only because philosophers might

begin with the wrong analogy, not the human soul (beginning, instead, for example, with

sensation).[97]

Once philosophy is founded upon the proper analogy, the Ikhwān equate

philosophers with the spiritually learned, those who properly orient human life and

pronounce truth (descriptions they also give the prophets), and describe logic as a

spiritual discipline, even identifying it with revelation (*al-waḥy*).[98] They identify

philosophers/the wise, as the successors to the prophets, indicating that only they, also,

can determine the specificities (*ma'ālim*) of religion.[99] And they explain that only those

who follow the prophets and the philosophers obtain happiness—they are less pessimistic

than al-Fārābī in this regard.[100] In effect, by defining philosophy in an odd way (the

philosophers are, after all, viewed as creationists, believers in the immortality of the

individual human soul, believers that the human soul is inscribed with its

macroanthropotic character by God, and the successors to the prophets who look into and

specify the exterior and interior meaning of religion, according to the Ikhwān), the

Ikhwān adopt a Fārābīan model of political imagination, but harmonize religion and

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[94] See *Epistle 26*; *Epistle 34*; Maukola, 2009. Al-Fārābī, too, has a macroanthropotic-microanthropotic view of the self, the city, and God. See *PS* 15.5-6.
[95] *Epistle 34*, 83-89; *Epistle 34*, (Ar.) 212-217; *Epistle 43*, 37, 39; *Epistle 43* (Ar.), 11-12.
[96] *Epistle 39*, 160-161; *Epistle 39* (Ar.) 336; *Epistle 40*, 182; *Epistle 40* (Ar.), 347.
[97] *Epistle 43*, 37, 39; *Epistle 43* (Ar.), 11-12.
[98] *Epistle 10*, 67; *Epistle 10* (Ar.) 391-392; *Epistle 40*, 179; *Epistle 40* (Ar.), 345.
[99] *Epistle 40*, 183; *Epistle 40* (Ar.), 347.
[100] *Epistle 39*, 169; *Epistle 39* (Ar.), 341.

philosophy by placing both revelation and reason into the same epistemic category as one another, both being founded on analogy. In other words, both religion *and* philosophy are expressions of political imagination. They even both occur in the same faculty of the soul. As they explain:

> Know that the contemplative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mufakira*) has many actions in which the actions of the rest of the faculties are subsumed... As for what actions are particular to it, they are contemplation, reflection, imagination (*al-taṣawwur*), expression (*al-iʿtibār*), compounding and analysis, joining together, and the drawing of analogies (*al-qiyās*). It also does physiognomy, auguries, soothsaying, suggestion, inspiration, receiving revelation (*al-waḥy*), imagining dreams, and the evaluation of these... Receiving revelation is understanding the giving of laws (*wāḍiʿ al-nawāmīs*) and recording the divine books and the concealed interpretations (*al-taʾwīlāt al-maknūna*) of them that none may touch except those purified...[101]

Put simply, reason, imagination, revelation, analogy, and expression are all housed in a muddled faculty which produces multiple methods by which to encounter the truth. As a result, there must be multiple methods by which a teacher must express the truth. (This lines up with what the Ikhwān describe above concerning method.)

That their account of religion as political imagination is basically Fārābīan is clear. They describe the Qurʾān, as well as the Holy Books of the other monotheistic religions, as providing indications (*ʾadilla*) of the truth, not the truth itself.[102] The truth of religion is masked in allusions (*ʾashāra*), symbols (*rumūz*), and secrets (*ʾasrār*), which, when taken too literally (e.g., stories of Adam, Iblīs, the Tree of Life, etc.) lead to error.[103] But unlike al-Fārābī, these truths are not anchored to philosophy (or even the

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[101] *Epistle 35*, 132-133; *Epistle 35* (Ar.) 245-246. Depending on the manuscript, the Ikhwān place the imagination (*wahm*) in either the sentient soul (*nafs ḥassī*) or the animal soul. See the discussion by Baffioni in *Epistle 41*, 327.

[102] *Epistle 40*, 190; *Epistle 40* (Ar.), 351; *Epistle 43*, 36; *Epistle 43* (Ar.), 10; *Epistle 44*, 82; *Epistle 44* (Ar.), 19; cf. *Epistle 45*, 129; *Epistle 45* (Ar.), 52.

[103] *Epistle 43*, 34-35; *Epistle 43* (Ar.), 9-10.

certainty of revelation). Even the Law-giver never goes beyond the epistemic status of

opinion and belief, even when he feels certain:

> These opinions (*'ārā'*) are in the soul of the Law-giver (*wāḍi' al-sharīa*), and he
> conceived (*taṣawwara*) of them in his thought (*fikr*) as if (*ka'annahu*) seen with
> certainty (*yaqīn*), without doubt. He calls upon his people, he who was sent to
> them, and strives to inform (*'inbā'*) them about what he believes (*i'taqada*) in an
> explanation to individual members of his people in secret (*sirr*) and by
> declaration, not symbolically and not in a hidden way. Then, he alludes to [his
> beliefs] and symbolizes (*yarmuzu*) them with common expressions (*'alfāẓ*) and a
> possible meaning (*ma'ānī*) for an interpretation that the public will understand
> and their souls will accept.[104]

In the Ikhwān's model, philosophy and religion are both reduced to a semblance of

authority; they are useful pedagogically, but imperfect. They lead to happiness but are

simply one method among many. As they explain:

> Some portion [of people] only accept what is proclaimed by the utterances of the
> poet. [There is] a portion who only accept story and rumor. Some portion only
> accept by argumentation and debate. And some are satisfied by imitation and
> submit to convention.[105]

Different methods are required, none having authority over one another. So, while only

religion, for the Ikhwān, properly relies upon political imagination (in the sense of *wahm*,

of producing images), both religion and philosophy function politically as methods which

unify people and bring them toward happiness. They are both housed in the same faculty,

rely on analogy, and can be rightfully described as political speech.

Viewed in purely political terms, the Ikhwān's model, at least on a basic level,

achieves many of the same goals as al-Fārābī's own, by accounting for the esoteric and

exoteric aspects of religious images, reconciling Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy

with religion, and providing an explanation for the variance of monotheistic religious

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[104] *Epistle 47*, 132.
[105] *Epistle 28*, 19.

expression in the world (after all, the importance of truth is that it is built upon the analogy of the macroanthropos). Unlike al-Kindī, the Ikhwān do not place the truth of religion at the level of certain knowledge, but rather at the level of opinion (*ra'y*), which is seen by the Law-giver as if it (*ka'annahu*) is certain. The Ikhwān are not skeptics — some knowledge is naturally innate (*ṭabī'iyy ġarīziyy*) and some is inscribed on the human soul, like knowledge of the macroanthropotic character of the universe. However, they do not indemnify the rectitude of religious images against critique and analysis. Both religion and philosophy are built, after all, on analogy. Unlike al-Rāzī and al-Fārābī, they do not privilege philosophy over religion. Rather, they restrict epistemic certainty to very few arenas and embrace the quixotic and pluralistic approaches toward knowledge that human beings manifest. Their "belief system and school (*maḏhab*) embraces all schools (*maḏāhib*) and branches of knowledge."[106]

2.5. Al-Fārābī in Context

In the context of these thinkers, one can readily see how typical al-Fārābī's thought is for his time. While groundbreaking in the execution and care he takes to establish a comprehensive, architectonic, and unified theory of state, religion, and metaphysics, his solution is just one amongst many attempts to explore the issue. Moreover, in the alternative models proposed by his predecessors and contemporaries, al-Fārābī's decisions become more pronounced. While al-Rāzī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' certainly suffered from critical notoriety, the Abbasid period allowed for numerous explorations of the relationship between philosophy and revealed religion. Al-Fārābī

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[106] *Epistle 45*, 115; *Epistle 45* (Ar.), 41-42.

could have emphasized the authority of revealed religion or could have rejected it *in toto*; he could have embraced a more amorphous view of the methods by which humans obtain truth. Instead, he deliberately adopts a triumphant view of demonstration, with religion, as imaginative expression, serving as the handmaiden to certain philosophy. The care with which he establishes his metaphysics and grounds his political philosophy upon it is no accident. Fārābīan political philosophy is built upon the certitude of the Imām, and certitude is made possible through al-Fārābī's careful and laborious cosmological model.

3. Al-Fārābī's Adopters

Al-Fārābī's successors, the adopters of his political philosophy writ large, never lost sight of the importance of al-Fārābī's metaphysics to his political philosophy. Following in his footsteps, they carefully adopted, adapted, and integrated the basics of his metaphysical model regarding the establishment of religion. Most importantly, they recognized philosophy as the preeminent expression of truth, with religion serving as its imagistic expression. Put simply, they recognized religion as a Construction of Social Knowledge, a beneficent deception, or an imagistic translation of philosophical truth. The thinkers discussed briefly below, Avicenna (d. 1037), Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185), Maimonides (d. 1204), and Averroes (d. 1198), all received and adapted the Fārābīan model for their own purposes.

3.1. Avicenna

Perhaps no one popularized (and adapted) al-Fārābī's Neoplatonic-Aristotelianism more for broad consumption by the Muslim world than the famed "principal master" (*al-*

shaykh al-ra'īs), Avicenna.[107] A great deal of ink has been spilt on Avicenna's philosophical psychology, metaphysics, and its effect on his view of prophecy, so new ground need not be broken here.[108] But the parallels to al-Fārābī's own position, at least the Revealed-as-Determined model, are notable and lend credence to the cohesion between Fārābīan metaphysics and politics. Avicenna, happy to forge his own path in other arenas, leaves the metaphysical underpinnings of his theory of revelation relatively unchanged from their roots in al-Fārābī.

Like al-Fārābī, Avicenna explains revelation through a philosophical psychology built upon a precise cosmological model which grounds the intelligibility of the world upon a series of emanated Intellects which flow from the fecundity of the First Cause, which Avicenna describes as the Necessary Existent.[109] These Intellects culminate, in like manner to al-Fārābī, in the Active Intellect, which empowers human intellection and serves as the source of sublunar intelligibility.[110] And while Avicenna's model remains distinct from al-Fārābī's own model in its precise mechanics—Avicenna's Active Intellect plays both a larger psychological role in the process of abstraction and a larger metaphysical role, as the *dator formarum* of the sublunar world—, the basic components which accompany prophecy as beneficent political deception remain unchanged, namely the preeminence of philosophical knowledge insofar as it is built upon a metaphysics and psychology which allow for certainty and a metaphysics which necessitates the

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[107] For an account of Avicenna as the "culmination of the tendencies that preceded him" and the "fountainhead of everything that came after him", see Gutas 2002.

[108] See Davidson 1992, 74-126; López-Farjeat 2014; Gutas 2012a; Gutas 2016; Marmura 2012; Morris 1992; Corbin 1962, 165-175; Pomeroy 2015; McGinnis 2010, 89-226.

[109] *Shifā' (Metaphysics)* 1.6-7; 9.4. See Lizzini 2011, 2016b; Davidson 1992, 74-83; McGinnis 2010, 178-208; Janssens 1997; Twetten 2015, 375-379; Adamson 2013; Janos 2011.

[110] *Shifā' (Metaphysics)* 9.5.3; *Najāt* (Ar.) 317; *Shifā' (Soul)* 234-236. See Davidson 1992, 78-94; McGinnis 2010, 129-136; 187-190.

deficiency of some subset of human beings.[111] Expounding upon these issues in detail

goes beyond the scope of this project and adds little to the already rich secondary

literature available. But for the purposes of understanding al-Fārābī better, Avicenna

reveals that, even in a model which avoids having the prophet deliberately convert

philosophical knowledge into images, instead having the particularization of religious

images occur through an entirely natural psychological process, the legitimacy of religion

requires, as discussed in Chapter 1, that images are both necessary (given the inability for

many humans to attain philosophical certainty) and the 'next best thing' to universal

philosophy.

Drawing upon al-Fārābī's Revealed-as-Determined model as discussed in Chapter

3, Avicenna grounds prophecy upon demonstration, with the distinguishing characteristic

of the prophet being his aptitude for acquiring the middle terms of syllogisms. As

Avicenna explains:

> The acquisition of knowledge (*'ulūm*), whether from someone else or from within
> oneself, is of various degrees. Some people who acquire knowledge come very
> near to immediate perception, since their potential intellect which precedes the
> capacity we have mentioned is the most powerful. If a person can acquire
> knowledge from within himself, this strong capacity is called 'intuition' (*ḥads*). It
> is so strong in certain people that they do not need great effort, or instruction and
> actualization, in order to make contact (*yataṣalla*) with the active intelligence
> (*'aql al-faʻʻāl*)... This is the highest degree of this capacity. In this state the
> material intelligence must be called 'Holy Intellect' (*'aql qudsī*). It belongs to the
> genus of *intellectus in habitu* (*al-'aql bi-l-malaka*), but is so lofty that not all
> people share it. It is not unlikely, indeed, that some of these actions attributed to
> the 'Holy Spirit' (*al-rūḥ al-qudsī*) because of their powerful and lofty nature
> overflow into the imagination (*mutakhayyila*) which symbolizes them in images
> (*'amthila*) and words (*al- kalām*) in the way which we have previously indicated.
> What proves this is the evident fact that the intelligible truths are acquired only
> when the middle term (*al-ḥadd al-'awsaṭ*) of a syllogism (*al-qiyās*) is obtained.
> This may be done in two ways: sometimes through intuition (*al-ḥads*), which is an

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[111] *Shifā' (Metaphysics)* 9.5.3; *Najāt* (Ar.) 317; *Shifā' (Soul)* 234-236. See Davidson 1992, 78-94;
McGinnis 2007; McGinnis 2008; McGinnis 2010, 129-136, 187-190; Hasse 2001; Hasse 2012; Gutas 2001;
Gutas 2012a.

act of mind by which the mind itself immediately perceives the middle term (*al-ḥadd al-'awsaṭ*). This power of intuition is quickness of apprehension. But sometimes the middle term is acquired through instruction... There might be a man whose soul has such an intense purity (*al-ṣafā'*) and is so firmly linked to the rational principles that he blazes with intuition (*ḥads*), i.e. with the receptivity of inspiration (*'ilhām*) coming from the active intelligence concerning everything. So the forms of all things contained in the active intelligence are imprinted on his soul either all at once or nearly so, not that he accepts them merely on authority (*taqlīd*) but on account of their logical order which encompasses all the middle terms. For beliefs accepted on authority (*'umūr*) concerning those things which are known only through their causes possess no rational certainty (*yaqīnīa 'aqliyya*). This is a kind of prophetic inspiration (*al-nubuwwa*), indeed its highest form and the one most fitted to be called prophetic power (*quwwa al-nubuwwa*); and it is the highest human faculty.[112]

Here, Avicenna outlines the natural process for knowledge acquisition, in its various degrees: either the middle terms (*al-ḥadd al-'awsaṭ*) of syllogisms are learned through instruction or through intuition (*ḥads*), what Gutas translates as 'Guessing Correctly', which itself can vary in quickness and degree.[113] (Moreover, as Avicenna describes in the Persian *Philosophy for 'Alā'-ad-Dawla*, all knowledge ultimately reduces to intuition, insofar as "every problem has been found by means of Correct Guesses, since everybody has learned from somebody else but he who was the very first never learned from anybody".)[114] This process of correct guessing, which falls under the activity of the *intellectus in habitu*, can occur quickly, after delay, or not at all, according to the quality of human souls.[115] This process is then guaranteed via the activity of the Active Intellect, whose contact (*ittiṣāl*) imprints the forms of things on the human soul. And, at times, this intellective process can be so powerful that some of the activity attributed to intuition (*ḥads*) overflows into the "imagination (*mutakhayyila*) which symbolizes [this activity] in

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[112] *Najāt* 35-36; *Najāt* (Ar.) 205-206; See also, *On the Rational Soul* 68-70.
[113] Gutas 2014, 179f.
[114] Gutas 2014, 9.
[115] Gutas 2014, 8-9.

images (*'amthila*) and words (*al-kalām*)". This process, an entirely natural process grounded in the normal, but exemplary, functioning of the human intellect, is what Avicenna labels 'prophetic power' (*quwwa al-nubuwwa*). Moreover, it is entirely grounded in al-Fārābī's Revealed-as-Determined model, as will be discussed below.

Without delving into the sophisticated proximate Avicennian psychological commitments which abut knowledge acquisition through intuition (*ḥads*)—e.g., abstraction (*tajrīd*), methodic experience (*tajriba*), the various stages and powers of intellect, and conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the Active Intellect—, it is important to recognize how philosophically predictable and necessary, both in an Aristotelian and a Fārābīan sense, Avicenna's account of prophecy is.[116] Put otherwise, revelation is a concomitant philosophical outcome of Avicenna's psychology which happens to explain what religion calls prophetic power (*quwwa al-nubuwwa*), not an aberration or a *deus ex machina* of Avicenna's philosophical commitments in order to justify religious tradition. As Gutas explains:

> The great merit of this theory lies in the fact that, first, it enables Avicenna to combine into one the two seemingly disparate ways of acquiring the secondary intelligibles, the "demonstration" and "revelation" or "inspiration"... by making the common feature of both cognitive processes the discovery of the middle term, and second, it integrates this process firmly into the function of the *intellect in habitu*, a philosophically well defined stage of the rational soul's relation to the intelligibles. The mechanism of acquiring the intelligibles is thus fully explained, "revelation" and "inspiration" are demystified and adapted to this mechanism, incongruities in terminology are eliminated or explained away, and the whole account is made not only to fit neatly in the theory of the soul as developed in the Aristotelian tradition, but also to harmonize and interrelate the various branches of this philosophical tradition: psychology provides the framework within which epistemology, through logic, reproduces ontology which posits psychology. In other words, the agent engaged in intellection (the intellect/psychology), the process of intellection (Guessing Correctly the middle term/epistemology), the

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[116] For discussion of abstraction in Avicenna, see McGinnis 2007; cf. Hasse 2001; for experience, see Gutas 2012b; Janssens 2004; McGinnis 2003; for the stages of intellect, see Davidson 1992, 83-94; Gutas 2012a; for conjunction, see Davidson 1992, 103-116.

method of intellection (syllogistic reasoning, the middle term/ logic), and the objects of intellection (the intelligibles/ ontology) are interdependent and mutually explanatory elements unified in a coherent and systematic theory.[117]

This systematic integration of psychology, epistemology, ontology, and religion mirrors what is found in al-Fārābī, as discussed in Chapter 3, even if the precise mechanics are adjusted by Avicenna, as mentioned above. But for the purposes of this project, Avicenna's identification of intuition (*ḥads*) with the rational prophetic power and its overflow into the imagination (*mutakhayyila*), which produces the particular images associated with religion, most readily reveal Avicenna's foundation in al-Fārābī's model.

3.1.1. Intuition (*ḥads*)

As has been noted elsewhere, Avicenna's conception of *ḥads* is not original; it is rooted in Aristotle's own conception of εὐστοχία and αγχίνοια, the former of which Aquinas later describes as a "valid conjecture" (*bona coniecturatio*) but literally means 'hitting the mark', the latter of which is the acumen for the former.[118] Put simply, αγχίνοια is the aptitude for εὐστοχία.[119] The landmark study by Dimitri Gutas, already noted, explores the origination of *ḥads* in Avicenna's thought, from its foundation as εὐστοχία and αγχίνοια in Aristotle, εὐστοχία's translation as *ḥusnu ḥadsin* in Abū Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus' translation of Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn's Syriac translation of *Posterior Analytics*, as well as the lack of Greek development, outside of the ethics of the Stoics, from the original Aristotelian notion (beyond faithful, continuous transmission).[120]

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[117] Gutas 2014, 196.
[118] *Summa Theologiae, Secunda Secundae* 48.1; *Posterior Analytics* 89b10-15; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1142a31-b15.
[119] *Posterior Analytics* 89b10-15.
[120] Gutas 2014, 189-201. See also Gutas 2012b; Gutas 2001.

Helpfully, Gutas even notes how discrete Muslim concepts—revelation (*waḥy*),

inspiration (*ilhām*), and innate knowledge (*badīha*), chief among them—lent themselves

to integration under the Aristotelian notion of εὐστοχία and the Avicennian notion of

ḥads. Like al-Fārābī before him, Avicenna subsumes revelation under the authority of

philosophy, by defining it as simply the preeminent version of intuition, a part of normal

human psychology. For this reason, Gutas credits the general synthesis between

Aristotelian psychology and Muslim religion as originating in al-Fārābī.[121] However,

Gutas identifies the systematic synthesis of philosophy and religion under intuition (*ḥads*)

as an Avicennian invention.[122]

This is not the case.[123] Al-Fārābī, too, links εὐστοχία, in the Aristotelian sense of

identifying middle terms, with revelation. As he explains in *PR*, what demarcates the first

ruler, the Imām, from others is that he needs no instruction, as he is able to apprehend the

means by which happiness is attained through conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the Active

Intellect (after having reached the status of the acquired intellect). Through this

conjunction, the Active Intellect emanates a power "by which [the Imām] is able to seize

upon the definition (*taḥdīd*) of things and action and direct them toward happiness,"

which al-Fārābī calls revelation (*waḥy*).[124] *Taḥdīd* is the verbal noun of *ḥaddada*, to

define, and shares the same root as Avicenna's concept of the 'middle term' (*al-ḥadd al-*

'awsaṭ) which is seized by intuition. It may indeed be the case that this passage is

Avicenna's proximate source for his synthesis between Aristotelian εὐστοχία and Islamic

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[121] Gutas 2014, 194.
[122] Gutas 2014, 194.
[123] Although, in fairness to Gutas, who credits Avicenna with "the synthesis of these diverse element into a coherent and consistent account", the Fārābīan account, while consistent and coherent, remains underdeveloped.
[124] *PR* 79-80.

waḥy. That said, Avicenna's development of the notion of intuition (*ḥads*) far outstrips al-Fārābī's own doctrine, who, to my knowledge, only mentions the concept in this passage, seemingly in reference to the Stoic concept of having an acumen (ἀγχίνοια) for a conjecture (εὐστοχία) toward appropriate action (καθῆκον).[125] In sum, both al-Fārābī and Avicenna insist that the ability to seize upon definitions, enabling demonstrative knowledge (beyond the instruction received by others), is a key component of revelation, although Avicenna builds out his model more consistently and in detail.

Why is it important that a prophet or Imām can intuit the middle terms of syllogisms? And what does Avicenna's inclusion of this doctrine, qua reader of al-Fārābī, say about al-Fārābī's justification for beneficent political deception? Both al-Fārābī and Avicenna require that revelation begins, first and foremost, with knowledge. Moreover, it begins with the kind of knowledge that is certain, insofar as it is verified by a certain method, i.e., demonstrative syllogisms. Only after certain knowledge does revelation take on the particularity of the images of religion. For al-Fārābī and Avicenna, beneficent political deception is not the crass maneuver of a skeptic trying to consolidate power for some personal aim or unknowable good. Nor is beneficent political deception the sincere, but unverified, expression of religious experience, taken as gospel on authority. For both al-Fārābī and Avicenna, knowledge precedes religious expression. Knowledge precedes beneficent deception.

But while for al-Fārābī, the importance of the certain knowledge which undergirds revelation is apparent in almost every text, for Avicenna, reader of al-Fārābī,

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[125] *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* III, 64.14-28. The influence of the Stoics upon Muslim thinkers is unknown, given the many unknowns surrounding the textual transmission of Stoic thought into Arabic. See Gutas 2014, 193.

the importance of the knowledge which precedes revelation is a development in his

thought. This reveals how important knowledge is for a Fārābīan account of revelation,

given that Avicenna, apparently, changes his mind on the issue, taking a more Fārābīan

position. The early Avicenna had no conception of intuition (*ḥads*) as providing the

middle terms of syllogisms, instead he speaks about 'alertness' (*yaqaẓa*), which provides

a means by which one may skirt around the need for middle terms. In the early Avicenna,

conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) serves to sidestep, rather than bolster, demonstration. As Avicenna

explains in his first philosophical work, *The Compendium on the Soul*:

> In some people, keenness of mind (*al-yaqaẓa*) and contact (*al-ittiṣāl*) with the
> universal intellect may so predispose the rational faculty as to free it from having
> recourse to syllogisms and reasoning in order to acquire knowledge; inspiration
> (*al-'ilhām*) and revelation (*al-waḥy*), rather, are sufficient sustenance for it. This
> specific property of the rational faculty is called sanctification (*taqdīs*), in
> accordance with which it is then called sanctified spirit (*rūḥ muqaddis*). None
> shall gain the enjoyment of this rank except prophets (*'anbiyā'*) and messengers
> (*rusul*) of God, peace and prayers be upon them.[126]

Rather than providing the middle terms for syllogisms, the young Avicenna viewed

revelation, ungrounded and unphilosophical, as sufficient for knowledge. Yet by the

writing of the *Najāt*, it is not enough for Avicenna that the prophet accepts things "merely

on authority (*taqlīd*) but on account of their logical order which encompasses all the

middle terms. For beliefs accepted on authority (*'umūr*) concerning those things which

are known only through their causes possess no rational certainty (*yaqīnīa'aqliyya*)".[127]

The mature Avicenna identifies this—certainty through demonstration aided by

intuition—with the prophetic power. The images of religion must be grounded upon

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[126] *The Compendium on the Soul* 8; *The Compendium on the* Soul (Ar.) 364-365.
[127] *Najāt* 35-36; *Najāt* (Ar.) 205-206; See also, *On the Rational Soul* 68-71.

certain knowledge. Avicenna, reader of al-Fārābī, reorients himself to be more in line with the Second Teacher's position.

3.1.2. Avicenna's Revealed-as-Determined Model

Concerning the production of the images of religion themselves, Avicenna gives an entirely naturalistic account in accord with al-Fārābī's Revealed-as-Determined model.[128] In the previously quoted passage from the *Najāt*, he explains that the emanations from the Active Intellect "overflow into the imagination (*mutakhayyila*) which symbolizes them in images (*'amthila*) and words (*al-kalām*)," echoing al-Fārābī's Revealed-as-Determined model as presented at *PS* 15.10.[129] In his *Proofs of Prophecy*, Avicenna makes the content of these images even more clear:

> Revelation (*al-waḥy*) is the emanation (*al-ifāḍa*) and the angel (*al-malak*) is the received emanating power (*al-quwwa al-maqbūla al-mufayḍa*) that descends on the prophets as if it were an emanation continuous with the universal intellect (*al-'aql al-kullī*). It is rendered particular (*mujzzi'aa*), not essentially (*li-ḏāt*), but accidentally (*bi-l-'araḍ*), by reason of the particularity of the recipient. Thus the angels have been given different names because [they are associated with] different notions (*ma'ānin*); nevertheless, they form a single totality, which is particularized, not essentially, but accidentally, because of the particularity of the recipient. The message, therefore, is that part of the emanation termed "revelation" (*waḥy*) which has been received and couched in whatever mode of expression is deemed best for furthering man's good in both the eternal and the corruptible worlds as regards knowledge and political governance, respectively. The messenger is the one who conveys what he acquires of the emanation termed "revelation," again in whatever mode of expression is deemed best for achieving through his opinions the good of the sensory world by political governance and of the intellectual world by knowledge.[130]

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[128] For an explanation as to why I call Avicenna's account 'naturalistic', see López-Farjeat 2014; Gutas 2004.

[129] *Najāt* 35-36; Najāt (Ar.) 205-206; See also, *On the Rational Soul* 68-71. See Chapter 3, 3.2.1.2.

[130] *Proof of Prophecies*115; *Proof of Prophecies* (Ar.) 47-48.

Revelation is the reception of the universal qua particular in the imagination of the

messenger. And while the images are revealed as already determined, they are received

by those who know both the particular (e.g., Gabriel) and the universal (e.g., the Separate

Intellects).[131] Only then does the messenger decide whether the universal or the

particular, i.e., philosophy or image, is the more appropriate mode of expression for the

sake of political governance. Put otherwise, like al-Fārābī's Revealed-as-Determined

model, the Avicennian model does not credit the prophet with creating the images of

religion, as they are given to him as already determined according to the strictures of his

own particular imagination, but neither does the Avicennian model deny the prophet's

understanding that the particular is a mere stand-in for the universal. These two modes of

discourse, the universal and the particular, differ in both expression and in content.[132]

Because while, in totality, the images approximate the truth, individually, they signify

different notions (*ma'ānin*). In simple terms, for Avicenna, the images of religion are

conceptually distinct from the universals to which they are meant to refer. Even if they

are likenesses of the truth, they are, strictly speaking, not true. The particularity of the

images introduces, even if by accident, a degree of falsity.

Nonetheless, the images are often more preferable than the universals, when given

practical consideration. Avicenna, like al-Fārābī, acknowledges and insists upon the

deficiency of some (large) subset of the human species. As Avicenna explains in his

Pointers and Reminders, "The Truth Itself is loftier than to be a drinking place for every

comer... one who listens to it and is then revolted by it must accuse his soul of not being

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[131] See also *Remarks and Admonitions* 4.10.9; *Remarks and Admonitions* (Ar.) 123-124.
[132] For the content of religion according to Avicenna, see Kaya 2013; Marmura 2012; De Smet and Sebti 2009; Gutas 2014, 337-350.

appropriate for it."[133] Some human beings are incapable of philosophical knowledge and, thus, require a substitute for the truth. Avicenna is so strident in this view that he prohibits "any human to reveal that he possesses knowledge he is hiding from the commonality."[134] Because, while he acknowledges that particular religious impositions are not required for those that know the truth universally, Avicenna worries that to introduce any kind of sophisticated philosophy to the *hoi polloi* will only result in confusion and error.[135] After all, "it is only with great strain that they can conceive the true states of such matters in their true aspects; it is only the very few among them that can understand the truth of divine 'unity' and divine 'transcendence'... For it is not for everyone that [the acquisition] of divine wisdom is facilitated."[136] Yet, despite the elitist aspects of this view, Avicenna, like al-Fārābī before him, is concerned for those who may both a) have the ability for philosophy and b) lack access to philosophy. For this reason, he ends his discussion of revelation in the *Shifā'* by saying, "There is no harm if the legislator's words contain symbols and signs that might call forth those naturally disposed toward theoretical reflection to pursue philosophic investigations."[137] The images of religion are not meant only for societal cohesion, but also as pedagogical tools.

3.1.3. What Avicenna tells us about al-Fārābī

In sum, Avicenna, as reader of al-Fārābī, confirms the elements required for the internal cohesion of al-Fārābī's political philosophy as already identified in Chapter 3. If

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[133] *Remarks and Admonitions* 4.9.27; *Remarks and Admonitions* (Ar.) 109-110.
[134] *Shifā' (Metaphysics)* 10.2.6. See also Gutas 2014, 256-266.
[135] *Remarks and Admonitions* 4.9.26; *Remarks and Admonitions* (Ar.) 109; *Shifā' (Metaphysics)* 10.2.5.
[136] *Shifā' (Metaphysics)* 10.2.5.
[137] *Shifā' (Metaphysics)* 10.2.7.

religion is composed of images meant to be consumed by the masses, then those images,

given their conceptual distinction (even if accidental) from the universals which they

serve as proxy, must be necessitated by the deficiency of the people and corroborated as

appropriate surrogates via universal knowledge. Concerning this latter point, Avicenna

even changes his position: it is not enough to take religious images on authority; they

must be understood by the messenger. Of course, that Avicenna seems to put stock in

these elements does not necessitate anything regarding al-Fārābī himself, but the fact that

Avicenna alters his position to more closely adhere to the Fārābīan Revealed-as-

Determined model bespeaks its internal coherence.

3.2. Ibn Ṭufayl

Avicenna's philosophical doctrines would come to dominate the eastern portion

of the Muslim world, rendering al-Fārābī's direct influence insignificant.[138] But in the

court of the Almohad Caliphate in the Andalusian west, under Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf (d.

1184), philosophy and the influence of al-Fārābī would thrive (quizzically, given the

regime's fundamentalist, Ẓāhirīte, doctrines). Interestingly, the first Andalusian

'Fārābīan' discussed here, Ibn Ṭufayl, was notoriously critical of the Second Teacher,

even while adopting many of his views.[139] Living from the first decade of the 12th

century until 1185, he served primarily under the Caliphate of the Almohads. Born near

Grenada during a century of peaceful Almoravid rule in the Maḡrib (North Africa) and

Andalusia (known in Europe as Moorish Spain), in his early years, Ibn Ṭufayl saw the

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[138] See Gutas 2002.

[139] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 13-14. See also Hawi 1976. Unfortunately, the interesting thought of Ibn Bājja (d. 1139) falls outside the scope of my purposes here, though further research concerning his *Rule of the Solitary* and its relation to al-Fārābī is warranted in further research. See Montada 2018.

overthrow of the Almoravids begun by the zealous Berber scholar, religious leader, and

politician, Ibn Tumart. While Ibn Tumart died in 1130, more than a decade and a half

before his successor, the father of Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf, al-Muʾmin (d. 1163), finished the

conquest of the Almoravids, Ibn Tumart's religious fervor lived on in the doctrines of the

Almohads.[140] Taking their name from the Arabic *al-Muwaḥḥidun* or 'the monotheists,' a

name etymologically linked to the term *tawḥīd* which signifies Divine simplicity, the

Almohads were strict monotheists, and under their rule *ḏimmī* status, the protection of

other non-Muslim monotheists, was revoked.[141] Some scholars even speculate that a

young Maimonides and his family were forced to convert from Judaism to Islam until

they could flee to Fez, Morocco after the final triumph of the Almohads in Cordoba in

1148.[142] With the Almohads came stark religious reforms, most notably the adherence to

Ẓāhirīte jurisprudence, which emphasized following the apparent meaning of Qurʾān and

Ḥadīth. As A.S. Fulton characterizes, "This reformed doctrine demanded two things: in

belief, a purely spiritual conception of Allah; in conduct, a literal acceptance of Koranic

teaching."[143] In short, during Ibn Ṭufayl's life, Andalusia quickly changed from a bastion

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[140] See Hodgson 1974b, 268f.; Fulton 1929, 9f.; Goodman 2009, 3f.; Fromhertz 2009, 1f.

[141] For discussions of Ibn Tumart's life and thought, see Fromhertz 2009, 19f., 135f.; Fletcher 1991; Fletcher 1997; Griffel 2005; Fierro 2000. For a more general discussion of the Almohads, see Fromhertz 2009; Cressier, et al. 2005; Montada 2006. For a look at the Almohad court, see Fierro 1999; Montada 2011.

[142] Ibn Daud, a contemporary of Maimonides, decried that "years of calamity, evil decrees, and religious persecutions befell Israel," that Ibn Tumart "decreed that Israel should leave its faith," so that he could "cut them off from being a nation, so that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance". *Book of Tradition* 43. The forced conversions, often performed by the Jewish community as a stop-gap measure until escape to more moderate political climes was possible, were so prevalent that some speculate that Maimonides himself became a nominal Muslim and a crypto-Jew until he could flee to southern Spain and eventually Morocco. Several Muslim sources even confirm the suspicion of Maimonides forced conversion, though some scholars doubt the veracity of these claims. See Davidson 2005, 11; Stroumsa 2009, 59f.; Kraemer 2008, 124f.; Mazor 2007, 110f.; Roth 16f.

[143] Fulton 1929, 6.

of religious plurality, heightened learning, and cosmopolitanism, to a strict puritanical, dogmatic, and, to a certain extent, xenophobic brand of Islam.[144]

Despite what one might expect, Ibn Ṭufayl thrived under Almohad rule. While the society writ large was fundamentalist, demanding strict adherence to the most literal interpretation of religious symbols and laws, the court was philosophical. Put simply, Almohad society, at least under Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf, was, broadly speaking, Fārābīan, with philosophers in power, charged with implementing religious symbols throughout society. (I make no claims as to whether these symbols were, in practice, grounded in philosophy, nor whether the court was truly devoted to philosophy, except as a topic of interest.) Ibn Ṭufayl became Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf's primary physician and trusted counselor, even, reportedly, introducing Averroes to the caliph. And while the colorful reports we have should be taken with a grain of salt, they, if nothing else, reflect the reputation of the court. As reported by the historian ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, a student of Averroes reported that:

> I often heard Ibn Rushd relate the following story: 'When I went in to the Sultan Abū Yaʿqūb, I found him alone with Abū Bakr Ibn Tufayl. Ibn Tufayl began praising me and speaking of my family and my background, very kindly adding many good things which I really did not deserve. Having inquired as to my name and origins, the first thing the Commander of the Faithful asked me was "What do they (he meant the philosophers) believe about the heavens? Are they eternal or created?" I was seized with consternation and did not know what to say. I tried to excuse myself by denying that I had studied philosophy. I had no idea how far his prior discussions with Ibn Tufayl had gone. His Excellency saw that I was frightened and confused. He turned to Ibn Tufayl and began to discuss the question with him, referring to the positions of Aristotle and Plato and all the other philosophers, and citing the arguments of the Muslims against them. I soon realized that he was more learned than I would have expected a full time specialist to be. He put me so well at ease that I myself spoke up and he soon saw that I was not as ignorant as I had seemed. When I had gone he sent me a gift of money, and a splendid robe of honor, and a horse.[145]

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[144] See, for example, Fromhertz 2009, 83f.

[145] *al-Bayān al-Muğrib* (Ar.), 172-175; Goodman 2009, 4-5. See also Fulton 1929, 10-11.

Thus, Ibn Ṭufayl, and likewise Averroes, who followed him, enjoyed the pleasure and protection of the court; they also enjoyed an intellectual freedom allowed only to the elite of Almohad society. (The same cannot be said for the Jewish Maimonides, who will be discussed below.) Along with reflecting the theoretical framework of a broadly Fārābīan political philosophy, Ibn Ṭufayl reflects the political reality of the surrounding milieu: philosophy is meant for consumption only by the elite; something else must satiate the lower rungs of society.

3.2.1. Summary of Ibn Ṭufayl's Novel

Ibn Ṭufayl's philosophical thought only survives as a result of the popularity of his novel, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* (lit. "Alive, son of Awake"), a retelling and reworking of Avicenna's own philosophical tale of the same title, even though Ibn Ṭufayl's account bears little resemblance to Avicenna's own.[146] In this philosophical tale, Ibn Ṭufayl tells the story of a man, who, depending upon which of two beginnings of the tale the reader follows, is either deserted or spontaneously abiogenerates upon a lush equatorial island divorced from the mainland, in isolation from all other human beings.[147] As other scholars have noted, Ḥayy's dual beginnings—one account, that of a princess, secretly wed against the wishes of her brother, the king, trusting her baby to the ocean's waves and God's providence to prevent the exposure of her secret, the other account, that of a physical and natural narrative of spontaneous generation—mirror the dual nature of religion and philosophy, the former reminiscent of the stories of the prophets, the latter

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[146] Mehren 1889; Corbin 1960, 137-151. Gutas even questions whether Ibn Ṭufayl had access to Avicenna's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*. See Gutas 1994, 229.
[147] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 20-26.

reminiscent of the Neo-Aristotelian cosmologies of al-Fārābī and Avicenna.[148] In either

case, Ḥayy's journey is a solitary one, a thought experiment about humanity outside of

society.[149]

But to survive in isolation as a child, Ḥayy would need help. A fallow doe who

had lost her fawn, laden with milk, responds to his cries and nourishes him into

childhood.[150] From here the story quickly progresses, as Ḥayy becomes a natural

scientist, mimicking animal cries, learning the difference between human and non-human

animals, and classifying (and miming with tools) animal weaponry. Upon his mother

doe's death when he turns seven, he even learns about different organs by dissecting her,

in the hope of identifying the obstacle which is preventing her from living and removing

it.[151] He begins to study the animals more systematically, finding the difference between

the living and the non-living.[152] He studies physics.[153] And eventually, realizing that there

are no creatures on the island like him, he begins to study the stars at age 28.[154] Seeing

their motion, he knows that they must be alive, and after watching carefully, that they

must be incorruptible in their consistency. The heavens are the only creatures which he

has found that are greater than he, and he begins to mimic them, as he once mimicked the

animals. He circumambulates his island to mimic their eternal motion, a nod to the

circumambulation of the Kaʿba in Mecca, and spins in place, a seeming reference to the

Sufi practice of the whirling dervishes.[155] Ḥayy attempts to focus on their nature. He

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[148] E.g., Goodman 2009, 187-188; Malti-Douglas 1996, 55-58. For explanations of Ibn Ṭufayl's conception of abiogenesis, see Kruk 1990, 274f.; Hawi 1975.

[149] See Goodman 2009, 52f.; Malti-Douglas 1996, 53f.; Kukkonen 2008.

[150] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 26, 33f.

[151] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 34f.

[152] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 50f.

[153] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 60f.

[154] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 75f.

[155] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 116. See Goodman 2009, 216.

realizes that even these heavenly bodies are, in fact, bodies: limited, spacial, finite, and

interconnected.[156] Here the story turns. In the interconnection of the motions of the

heavens, Ḥayy recognizes a *telos* behind the universe.[157] There must be a being which is

not finite, and therefore, a being eternal and without a body. He devotes himself fully to

imitating the heavens and this final, necessary being, imposing upon himself a strict diet

of the fallen fruits of plants, being careful never to eat the living seeds in order to avoid

the ethical violation that would be taking a life (even the life of a plant).[158] He eats very

little, that he might focus on the being behind the heavens rather than focusing on bodily

pleasure. In this state, Ḥayy experiences his first beatific vision: the culmination of the

human life, ineffable, transcendent, and entirely beyond the meager limits of Aristotelian

philosophy.[159] It is in this beatific achievement that Ibn Ṭufayl tries to explain, through

Ḥayy, the non-Aristotelian secrets of Avicennian Eastern philosophy which I will discuss

below. It should be noted, as has been argued by others, that these notions are not, in fact,

truly Avicennian, but a contrived position of Ibn Ṭufayl.[160]

Eventually, reminiscent of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, Ḥayy must return to the

enmattered world. An ascetic named Absāl appears on the island looking for solitude.[161]

After teaching Ḥayy to speak, as Ḥayy, of course, had no access to human language prior

to socialization, Absāl is determined to share with him the religion of the nearby island

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[156] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 76f.

[157] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 81f.

[158] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 106f.

[159] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 120f. While Ibn Ṭufayl admits that descriptions of the beatific are impossible, he does try to give the reader "hints" (*ishārāt*) by "coining symbols" (*ḍaraba mithāl*). *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 122. At this level of experience, Ḥayy moves beyond the scope of discursive reason, the distinction between universal and particular, self and other, and language itself. *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 122. His discussion here is more reminiscent of Plotinus in *Ennead* 4.8 than anything found in al-Fārābī or Avicenna.

[160] See Gutas 1994. See also Szpiech 2010.

[161] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 138f.

upon which Absāl and, at least according to one story, Ḥayy had originated.[162] But Ḥayy

has already experienced the deepest truths of the religion himself, without need for the

images which the religion applies to the ineffable God.[163] At first, Ḥayy is confused as to

why the prophet who set down the symbols and images of the religion would not just

simply reveal the truth.[164] But after Absāl, recognizing Ḥayy's wisdom, convinces him to

travel to the mainland, the prophet's actions become clear.[165] The people of the mainland,

including Absāl's friend Salāmān, do not recognize their images *as* images, but literal

truth.[166] Realizing that "most men are no better than unreasoning animals", Ḥayy

apologizes to them, pretending to disavow the truths he has spoken, and leaves with

Absāl to return to the island.[167]

3.2.2. Ibn Ṭufayl and Fārābīan Political Philosophy

There is a great deal to be said about Ibn Ṭufayl and his predecessors, and indeed

a great deal has already been written.[168] Moreover, the purpose of Ibn Ṭufayl's work is

itself enigmatic, being at once an exploration of human learning in isolation from society

and an exploration of the learned human confronting an unlearned society.[169] And these

issues barely touch upon the most inexplicable element of Ibn Ṭufayl's thought, an

epistemology which culminates in a suprarational principle which transcends language

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[162] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 136.
[163] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 146f.
[164] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 146.
[165] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 149f.
[166] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 150f.
[167] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 153f.
[168] See Hawi 1976; Gutas 1994.
[169] See Hourani 1956; Conrad 1996; Gauthier 1909; Hawi 1976; Pococke 1671; Munk 1859, 410-418; Goodman 2009, 7-91.

and expression.[170] Unsurprisingly, like with the figures both above and below, the

conversation here needs to be more constrained than, perhaps, Ibn Ṭufayl deserves. The

most pertinent questions for these purposes are not 'What is Ibn Ṭufayl saying?' or 'What

is Ibn Ṭufayl's purpose?' Rather, the question here is 'What does Ibn Ṭufayl as reader of

al-Fārābī and adopter (at least in part) of Fārābīan political philosophy tell us about al-

Fārābī himself?'

In the introduction to *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, Ibn Ṭufayl speaks plainly about his

disdain for al-Fārābī. He says:

> Those of Farabi's books that have reached us are for the most part on logic, and
> those on philosophy are full of doubts. In *The Ideal Religion* he affirms that the
> souls of the wicked live on forever in infinite torments after death. But in his *Civil
> Politics* he says plainly that they dissolve into nothing and that only the perfected
> souls of the good achieve immortality. Finally in his commentary on Aristotle's
> Ethics, discussing human happiness, he says that it exists only in this life, and on
> the heels of that has words to the effect that all other claims are senseless ravings
> and old wives' tales. This makes mankind at large despair of God's mercy. It puts
> the wicked on the same level with the good, for it makes nothingness the ultimate
> destiny of us all. This is an unspeakable lapse, an unforgivable fall. This on top of
> his misbelief, openly avowed, that prophecy belongs properly to the imagination,
> and his preference of philosophy to revelation—and many more failings which I
> pass over.[171]

Several aspects of this passage merit consideration.

First, Ibn Ṭufayl correctly identifies al-Fārābī's inconsistency concerning the

afterlife.[172] But while nothing definitive can be said about al-Fārābī's position in his no

longer extant commentary on Aristotle's ethics, al-Fārābī's position in *PS* more closely

reflects Ibn Ṭufayl's own than does the position of Avicenna, whose secrets Ibn Ṭufayl

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[170] See Radtke 1996.
[171] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 13-14.
[172] See Chapter 3, Note 229 and Chapter 2, 4.2.3

espouses to be unveiling.[173] Ibn Ṭufayl's discussion of the afterlife occurs in the context

of his discussion of Ḥayy's beatific vision. Ibn Ṭufayl explains:

> Ḥayy had "died" (*mir*) to himself, and to every other self. He had witnessed his vision
> and seen nothing in all existence (*wujūd*) but the everliving ONE. Recovered now
> from his seemingly intoxicated ecstasy, he saw other things once more, and the notion
> came into his head that his identity was none other than that of the Truth. His true self
> was the Truth. What he had once supposed to be himself, as distinct from the Truth,
> was really nothing in itself, but was in reality in no way discrete from the Truth.[174]

But Ḥayy is in error, as beyond materiality and embodiment, the accidents of number do

not apply. Ibn Ṭufayl continues:

> This specious thinking might well have taken root in his soul, had not God in His
> mercy caught hold of him and guided him back to the truth. He then realized that he
> would never have fallen prey to such a delusion unless some shadows of the physical
> or taint of sensory things still lurked within him. For 'many' (*kathīr*), 'few' (*qalīl*),
> and 'one' (*wāḥid*); 'singularity' (*waḥda*) and 'plurality' (*jamʿ*); 'union' (*ijtimāʿ*) and
> 'discreteness' (*iftirāq*), are all predicates applicable only to physical things.[175]

Put simply, Ibn Ṭufayl suggests that souls, absent the body, lack particularity, contra

Avicenna.[176] He seems to agree more closely with al-Fārābī, who rejects that accidents of

the body, including number, apply to the soul absent the body.[177]

Second, Ibn Ṭufayl suggests that al-Fārābī attributes prophecy only to the

imagination. But, as has been discussed, this is false.[178] Prophecy (*nubuwwa*) might

belong to the imagination, but revelation (*waḥy*), is placed in the rational faculty for al-

Fārābī. That said, there is genuine disagreement between the two thinkers here; the

suprarational mystical vision Ḥayy experiences in the passages quoted above has no place

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[173] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 3-8. See also Chapter 2, 4.2.3.
[174] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 122-123.
[175] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 124.
[176] See *Shifā' (Soul)* 225-226. See also Goodman 1992, 163f.; Davidson 1992, 109; Black 2012.
[177] See *PS* 16.3-4. See also Chapter 2, 4.2.3 and Chapter 3.1.1.1.
[178] See Chapter 3, 3.2.1.2.

in Fārābīan philosophy, but neither does it have a place in Avicennian philosophy, as noted above.[179] Ibn Ṭufayl argues for an experience of truth beyond what is possible through Aristotelian philosophy (though he seems to hold that the sciences serve as propadeutics for mystical experience and never stand in conflict with mystical experience).[180] Nonetheless, Ibn Ṭufayl, al-Fārābī, and Avicenna all agree on the role that imagination plays in political philosophy and religious expression: some individuals are incapable of encountering the truth directly and require surrogate images to guide them.

In sum, despite the passage from Ibn Ṭufayl's introduction, quoted above, which disparages al-Fārābī's political philosophy, there is significant overlap between the two thinkers, with the main source of authentic disagreement sourced in whether demonstration or suprarational mystical experience serve as the highest expression of human knowledge. This discrepancy between what Ibn Ṭufayl says about al-Fārābī and his seeming reliance upon Fārābīan philosophy has led some, most notably Sami Hawi, to suggest that Ibn Ṭufayl is a closet Fārābīan, hiding his agreement with al-Fārābī behind a "riddle" (*ramz*) and a "veil" (*ḥijāb*).[181] Of course, there is another, simpler, possibility— Ibn Ṭufayl was either a poor reader of al-Fārābī (and Avicenna) or lacked direct access to his texts.[182]

Whatever the case, whether directly due to a reliance upon Fārābīan texts, mediately due to a reliance upon Avicenna, or due to a recognition of the internal

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[179] He seems to take a passage from Avicenna's *Remarks and Admonitions* to reference mystical, rather than rational, revelation. *Remarks and Admonitions* 4.9.9f.; *Remarks and Admonitions* (Ar.) 88f. Maimonides takes the same passage to reference the Revealed-as-Determined model. See Section 3.1.2 and 3.3.1 of the present chapter.

[180] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 5-6.

[181] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 11, 155. See Hawi 1976, 94-97.

[182] As Hawi notes, this possibility does not reckon with the philosophical tension of Ibn Ṭufayl's own text. He attributes Fārābīan doctrines (e.g., the destruction of the soul with the body) to Ḥayy, despite attributing them accurately to al-Fārābī, and critiquing them, in his introduction. See Hawi 1976, 95.

coherence of al-Fārābī's Construction of Social Knowledge, Ibn Ṭufayl adopts many of the same conditions for beneficent political deception as al-Fārābī and Avicenna. Prior to teaching anyone, through the use of images or otherwise, Ḥayy carefully develops his reason through repeated practice and mastery of the propaedeutic sciences (even if his knowledge goes beyond reason, culminating in a mystical experience which never "contradicts what is revealed by reason", but is simply "an increase in what is seen").[183] Upon meeting Absāl, recognizing in Absāl's character that he was capable of knowing the truth, Ḥayy speaks honestly with him, and Absāl recognizes, at once that " all the traditions of his religion about God, His angels, bibles and prophets, Judgement Day, Heaven and Hell were symbolic representations (*'amthila*) of these things that Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān had seen for himself".[184] When Absāl teaches Ḥayy about his religion, Ḥayy "recognized that whoever had offered this description had given a faithful picture and spoken truly".[185] But Ḥayy was confused as to why the prophet relied on symbols, "instead of simply revealing the truth", and Ḥayy was "confounded" (*yastaḡribu*) by the particularity of the rituals of the religion, which seemed "superfluous" (*taṭwīl*).[186] Ibn Ṭufayl explains that Ḥayy's confusion stems from his ignorance that human beings are "deficient" (*naqṣ*) and "stupid" (*balāda*).[187] But Ḥayy finally recognizes the human condition and the need for symbols after he journeys to Salāmān's island, recognizing the inability of most people to learn, realizing that:

> If ever they were to venture beyond their present level to the vantage point of insight, what they had would be shattered, and even so they would be unable to reach the level of the blessed. They would waver and slip and their end would be

all the worse. But if they went along as they were until overtaken by death, they would win salvation and come to sit on the right.[188]

The deficiency of human beings necessitates the use of images as a surrogate for truth.

Here, Ibn Ṭufayl, like Avicenna before him, endorses the Fārābīan conditions for justified political deception. Untruths, i.e., images, are required when the truth will not suffice. But the mere fact of human deficiency does not give carte blanche justification for beneficent political deception. Political deception is only permissible from the standpoint of someone who knows the truth, recognizes the deficiency of the human condition, and can create untruths which, while not true in themselves, function as surrogates for the truth. Even Ibn Ṭufayl, who explicitly distances himself from Fārābīan philosophy, endorses the necessity of these conditions.

3.3. Maimonides

Like Ibn Ṭufayl and Averroes, Maimonides (d. 1204), born in Almoravid Córdoba, benefitted from growing up in a city rivaling classical Athens and Abbasid Baghdad in learning, culture, and wealth, and thereby received the cumulative knowledge of the Islamic world, having access not only to the texts of his Jewish heritage, but accounts of the Greeks, the Muslim commentators, and the *'Ilm al-Kalām*, the rationalist theological tradition of Islam and, later, Judaism. While born as a *ḏimmī* under the relatively secure auspices of Almoravid Spain, a young Maimonides and the surrounding Jewish community were thrown into turmoil as a result of the Almohad conquest of Córdoba in 1148. The conquering Berber tribe's fundamentalist fervor was so great that *ḏimmī* status was removed, and compulsory apostasy was enacted for non-Muslims.

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[188] *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* 154.

Whether or not Maimonides was himself a crypto-convert to Islam, an *anusim* or 'forced

one,' coerced apostasy was a recurring problem for the Jewish community during

Maimonides' life, even after he had escaped the Almohad Dynasty.[189] Unlike Ibn Ṭufayl

and Averroes, Maimonides lacked the protection of the Almohad court (although he

would later enjoy the patronage of the famous Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn as a physician).[190] Needless

to say, the importance of religious truth, religious identity, and political power were

manifest within the context of his life. And Maimonides turned to Fārābīan political

philosophy to navigate the complicated nexus between philosophical truth, religion, and

politics.

3.3.1. Maimonidean Prophecy and al-Fārābī

In a famous passage of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Part II, Chapter 32,

Maimonides claims that his own doctrine of prophecy is similar to the opinion of the

philosophers, excepting one factor: the role played by the Divine Will (*mashī'a*

'ilāhiyya). Whereas the philosophers, namely al-Fārābī and Avicenna, view prophecy to

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[189] Kraemer 2008, 104. See also Footnote 142 of the present chapter. Maimonides writes two distinct epistles about the phenomenon, the *Epistle to Yemen* (*Iggeret Teiman*) and the *Epistle on Martyrdom* (*Iggeret ha-Shemad*), though the latter's authenticity has at times been questioned. See Davidson 2005, 14, 508. In the former letter, Maimonides responds to an inquiry from Yemen about unrest in the community. He says: "You write of the affair of the rebel leader in Yemen who decreed forced apostasy of the Jews, and compelled all the Jewish inhabitants in all the places he had subdued to desert their religion, just as the Berbers had obliged them to do in the Maghreb. This report has broken our backs and astounded and dumbfounded the whole of our community, and rightly so. For these are evil tidings, and both ears of everyone who hears about it will tingle. Indeed, our hearts are weakened, our minds are confused, and our strength wanes because of the dire misfortunes that have come upon us in the form of the religious persecution in the two ends of the world, the East and West." *Epistle to Yemen* 95. The entire Jewish community, from East to West, from Yemen to al-Andalus, was dealing with such persecution that Maimonides mournfully credits the community's subjugation to their sins in a personal letter. He does the same in the *Epistle to Yemen*, suggesting that God had set the Arabs as judges over the people of Israel for their iniquities. See *Epistle to Yemen* 126; Davidson 2005,13. As Joel L. Kraemer points out, Maimonides' choice of language echoes *Ayah* 62 of *Surat al-Baqarah* of the Qur'an, which discusses the sins of the Israelites. Kraemer 2008, 241.
[190] Frank 1981, 82.

be an entirely natural process, achieved only when human beings perfect their nature,

Maimonides explains that, while training and perfection are required for prophecy to

occur, God must also will that a prophet become a prophet, or more specifically, God

must not prevent (*yamna'u*) him from becoming a prophet. That Maimonides' doctrine is

extremely close to the philosophers' doctrine is clear; in fact, he provides some of the

best available practical examples of prophecy as an imagistic and legal expression of

philosophy, as will be discussed below. However, how his position is distinct from theirs,

namely how the Divine Will determines who will become a prophet, remains unclear,

especially given Maimonides' insistence upon Divine Simplicity, meaning God's Will is

not distinct from his Wisdom (and neither are distinct from his Essence).[191] This has led

some to believe (or at least consider) that Maimonides' disagreement with the

philosophers is a distinction without a difference, that Maimonides position collapses into

al-Fārābī's own, and Maimonides' stated, exoteric, position is a red herring, masking his

true, esoteric views.[192] Whether any meaningful distinction can be drawn between

Maimonides' position and the philosophers, especially in contrast with the one espoused

by al-Fārābī, likely depends upon Maimonides' conception of particularization (*takhṣīṣ*)

and purpose (*qaṣd*), but this issue will not be settled here.[193] Instead, the important issue

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[191] See *GP* I.53; I.69.

[192] E.g., Davidson 1979; Kaplan 1977; Harvey, 1981; Strauss 2004.

[193] While Maimonides and al-Fārābī largely share a doctrine of prophecy, both in terms of the psychological foundations for prophecy (with some influence by developments found in Avicenna) and the meaning of prophetic content, Maimonides distances himself from the purely natural prophetic process espoused by the philosophers, even while holding the philosophers' sufficient conditions for prophecy as necessary conditions. In other words, for Maimonides, all prophets must meet the conditions described by the philosophers while fulfilling another condition, that God wills them to be a prophet. (Actually, to be precise, *Guide* II 32 actually describes that prophets must meet the condition of avoiding that God wills them not to be a prophet in order to become a prophet.) From a practical sense, this results in identical conditions for prophethood. The content of prophecy is the same; the qualities of the prophet are the same. But Maimonides distinguishes himself from the philosophers in *Guide* II 32 with reference to the Divine Will (*mashī'a 'ilāhiyya*) which can prevent (*yamna'u*) someone from becoming a prophet.

for the task at hand is that, regardless of the role God's Will plays in Maimonidean

prophecy, the prophet's knowledge precedes any prophetic act, and thus beneficent

political deception. Both the content and the psychology of prophecy is the same for

Maimonides and al-Fārābī, even if Maimonides raises differences between al-Fārābī and

himself regarding the metaphysical underpinnings of prophecy, replacing the role played

by necessity and accident with purpose (*qaṣd*) and particularization (*takhṣīṣ*),

respectively.[194] For both Maimonides and al-Fārābī, knowledge precedes beneficent

political deception.

As a result of this thin distinction, readers of Maimonides as early as Joseph ibn Kaspi have suggested that it is possible that the textual tension this distinction brings about suggest that Maimonides' doctrine is caused by the Seventh Cause for contrary statements, as laid out in the Introduction of Part I of the *Guide*, namely it is an effort to conceal his own position. See *Guide* I. Intro; *Masklyot Kesep* 113; Kaplan 1977, 239; and Harvey 1981. According to this view, Maimonides is, in fact, in agreement with the position of the philosophers, but concealing his true intent. This position has also, of course, been held concerning many of Maimonides' other doctrines, like creation and miracles. Considering that *Guide* II 32 links prophecy to the notions of Divine Will, creation, and miracles, one can see how simply denying that Maimonides is sincere in espousing the existence of miracles, prophetic prevention, or creation creates a tidy solution to this nexus of some of the most difficult topics within the *Guide*, i.e. in all the trickiest passages, Maimonides' position is simply the same as that which is held by al-Fārābī and Avicenna.

For example, in *Guide* II.25, Maimonides claims that creation in time renders the existence of miracles possible. One can see an example of the link between creation and miracles in the *Commentary on the Mishnah* where he identifies the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea as built into the nature of the world at its foundation. See Langermann 2004, 151. There has been a great deal of discussion about Maimonides' conception miracles and its link to creation; I won't give a definitive account here. But what can be said, given Maimonides embedding miracles into the foundation of creation is this: miracles are not arbitrary or disordered, but they're not purely natural either. Creation, and the miracles contained within creation, are neither necessary nor frivolous. Maimonides' rejection of the necessitated emanation schemes of the philosophers is similar in this regard, as he critiques Aristotle for thinking that "if He wished to lengthen a fly's wing or shorten an insect's foot, He could not do it", instead favoring that the world has "been made by [God] in virtue of a purpose (*qaṣd*) and a will (*'irāda*) directed toward this particular being" and that "all things exist in virtue of a purpose (qaṣd) and not of necessity". See *GP* II.22; II.21; II.19. Maimonides' rejection and refutation of the "from one comes only one" principle in *Guide* II.22 is particularly important, insofar as it reveals that it must be possible for a simple substance to particularize (*takhṣīṣ*) the heavens (given their multiplicity, as discussed in *Guide* II.22), meaning that for Maimonides, God is able to, and must, act upon and will multiple existents within creation without violating His simplicity. For the roles of *takhṣīṣ* in creation, see Goldin 1992; Seeskin 2006, 121f. For the relationship between creation and prophecy, see Pessin 2016; Harvey 1981. This opens the door for providence. God is, at least according to an external reading of his text, able to bestow an act of particularization (*takhṣīṣ*) and purpose (*qaṣd*) on creation and the prophets.

[194] See *GP* II.22; II.21; II.19. See also Footnote 193.

In *Guide* II 32, Maimonides distinguishes between the opinion of the *hoi polloi*, the philosophers, and himself concerning prophecy. Maimonides explains, in the following edited quotation:

> The opinions of people concerning prophecy (*nubuwwa*) are like their opinions concerning the eternity of the world (*qadm al-ʿālam*) or its creation in time (*ḥudūthhu*). I mean by this that, just as the people to whose mind the existence of the deity is firmly established, have, as we have set forth, three opinions concerning the eternity of the world (*qadm al-ʿālam*) or its creation in time (*ḥudūthhu*), so are there also three opinions concerning prophecy (*nubuwwa*)...

> The first opinion — that of the multitude of those among the Pagans who considered prophecy as true and also believed by some of the common people professing our Law — is that God, may He be exalted, chooses whom He wishes from among men, turns him into a prophet, and sends him with a mission. According to them it makes no difference whether this individual is a man of knowledge (*ʿālim*) or ignorant (*jāhil*), aged or young. However, they also posit as a condition his having a certain goodness (*khayriyya*) and sound morality (*ṣalāḥiya*)...

> The second opinion is that of the philosophers (*ra'y al-falāsifa*). It affirms that prophecy is a certain perfection (*kamāl*) in the nature of man (*ṭabīʿa al-'insān*). This perfection is not achieved in any individual (*shakhṣ*) from among men except after a training that makes that which exists in the potentiality (*quwwa*) of the species pass into actuality (*fiʿl*), provided an obstacle due to temperament or to some external cause does not hinder this, as is the case with regard to every perfection whose existence is possible in a certain species. For the existence of that perfection in its extreme and ultimate form in every individual (*shakhṣ*) of that species is not possible. It must, however, exist necessarily in at least one particular individual (*shakhṣ*); if, in order to be achieved, this perfection requires something that actualizes it, that something necessarily exists. According to this opinion it is not possible that an ignoramus should turn into a prophet; nor can a man not be a prophet on a certain evening and be a prophet on the following morning, as though he had made some find. Things are rather as follows: When, in the case of a superior individual who is perfect (*al-shakhṣ al-fāḍil al-kāmil*) with respect to his rational and moral qualities, his imaginative faculty is in its most perfect state and when he has been prepared in the way that you will hear, he will necessarily become a prophet, inasmuch as this is a perfection that belongs to us by nature. According to this opinion it is not possible that an individual should be fit for prophecy and prepared for it and not become a prophet...

> The third opinion is the opinion of our Law and the foundation of our doctrine (*maḏhabnā*). It is identical (*mithl*) with the philosophic opinion except in one

thing. For we believe that it may happen that one who is fit (*yaṣlaḥu*) for prophecy and prepared for it should not become a prophet, namely, on account of the divine will (*mashī'a 'ilāhiyya*). To my mind this is like all the miracles (*muʻjizāt*) and takes the same course as they. For it is a natural thing (*al-'amr al-ṭabī'iyy*) that everyone who according to his natural disposition (*jibilla*) is fit (*yaṣlaḥu*) for prophecy and who has been trained in his education and study should become a prophet. He who is prevented from it is like him who has been prevented (*muni'a*), like *Jeroboam*, from moving his hand, or, like the *King of Aram's* army going to seek out *Elisha*, from seeing. As for its being fundamental with us that the prophet must possess preparation and perfection in the moral and rational qualities, it is indubitably the opinion expressed in their dictum: *Prophecy only rests upon a wise, strong, and rich man.* We have explained this in our Commentary on the *Mishnah* and in our great compilation, and we have set forth that the *disciples of the prophets* were always engaged in preparation. As for the fact that one who prepares is sometimes prevented (*yumna'u*) from becoming a prophet, you may know it from the history of *Baruch, son of Neriah*.[195]

There is a great deal worth detailing here and continual reference to this passage will be made through the remainder of this discussion, but for now, three things are worth highlighting. First, Maimonides, correctly characterizes the philosophers as describing prophecy as a natural and necessary expression of human perfection brought about through education, even though it is only necessary that any perfected individual be a prophet and necessary that at least one individual within, and not all of, the human species be a prophet. In other words, one cannot have a perfected nature and not be a prophet, nor can either all or none of humanity attain perfection, as it is one extreme end of a natural, accidental process. Second, Maimonides' position is similar to the philosophers' position, except one difference, namely the role of the Divine Will. And third, understanding the distinction between Maimonides' position and that of the philosophers is made clearer in reference to his doctrine of miracles. In other words, to understand how the Divine Will affects prophecy, one must first understand how it

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[195] *GP* II.32.

affects miracles (and, given his explanation of miracles, creation, itself), a task too far afield to be addressed fully here.[196]

Maimonides' characterization of the philosophers is faithful. For al-Fārābī, as discussed in Chapter 3, the prophet or Imām is simply an instantiation of human perfection: someone who, while having a sound body and temperament, as well as a perfected imagination, through the mundane process of being able to abstract (*intaza'a*) or transfer (*naqala*) potential intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt bi-l-qūwa*) to the potential intellect (*'aql bi-l-quwa*), renders both the intelligible and the intellect actual (*fi'l*) to the point of no longer needing the process of abstraction anymore, because the intellect acts as its own intelligible, forming a noetic unity that al-Fārābī brands as both the Acquired Intellect (*'aql al-mustafāḍ*) and the state of happiness (*sa'āda*).[197] Put simply, a prophet is a healthy, virtuous person with a strong imagination and knowledge. This is how al-Fārābī defines human perfection, through the transition from potential to actual, as Maimonides describes in *Guide* II 32, and it is synonymous with being an Imām or a prophet. The rise of an Imām is largely determined by natural forces (given the view that the Active Intellect plays a natural, not supernatural, role for human existence), namely, the contrary motions of the heavens which act through heat and light upon the world thereby creating a mixture which results in the existence of all possible existents (both deficient and perfect). In al-Fārābī's cosmos, which is the most fecund of all worlds, everything is brought about through necessary cosmological principles (except that which is brought about by human choice) but much of the world is deficient and accidental, including whether a nation produces demonstrative philosophy or an Imām. That both

[196] See Footnote 193.
[197] See Chapter 3, 3.2.1.1.

prophets and human beings with deficiency (*naqṣ*) exist is necessary for al-Fārābī as a result of these cosmological principles. Needless to say, Maimonides reads al-Fārābī as espousing the views described in Chapter 3.

Now, compare al-Fārābī's Revealed-as-Determined model to Maimonides' own. Maimonides explains:

> Know that the true reality and quiddity of prophecy consist in its being an overflow overflowing from God, may He be cherished and honored, through the intermediation of the Active Intellect, toward the rational faculty in the first place and thereafter toward the imaginative faculty. This is the highest degree of man and the ultimate term of perfection that can exist for his species; and this state is the ultimate term of perfection for the imaginative faculty. This is something that cannot by any means exist in every man. And it is not something that may be attained solely through perfection in the speculative sciences and through improvement of moral habits, even if all of them have become as fine and good as can be. There still is needed in addition the highest possible degree of perfection of the imaginative faculty in respect of its original natural disposition.[198]

Here, Maimonides confirms in his own doctrine the major principles of al-Fārābī's own. Prophecy is empowered by the activity of the Active Intellect, but it is determined by natural disposition and education. A perfected rational faculty is not possible in every human being (nor is a perfected imaginative faculty). Moreover, prophecy is the state of perfection for humankind—it is happiness. Even given Maimonides' claim that God may veto prophecy through an act of Will, Fārābīan prophecy is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for Maimonidean prophecy.

More germane to the discussion here is how al-Fārābī describes the socio-political and religious function of the prophet. And in this domain, Maimonides and al-Fārābī most closely converge. (So much so that one could characterize Maimonides' exegetical project in the *Guide* as a Fārābīan endeavor.)[199] For al-Fārābī, the Imām is a philosopher

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[198] *GP* II.36.
[199] See Berman 1974.

qua poet; he is someone able to translate philosophical truth into images (*mutakhayylāt*), emulations (*muḥākāāt*), likenesses (*mithālāt*), or near likenesses (*mithālāt qarība*) of the truth for the multitude, who, due to the same accidents which produced the Imām, lack the perfections which would allow them to understand the truth through strict demonstration.[200] Using poetical statements (*al-'aqāwīl al-shi'riyya*), the Imām is able to link virtuous conduct to images which are familiar to the multitude and express theoretical truths through these same images, resulting in an aversion to vicious behavior and a desire for virtuous behavior.[201] Under this model, religion serves as a stand-in for the philosophical life. As al-Fārābī explains, in a passage addressed previously:

> Although it is the legislator who also represents (*yatakhayyalu*) these things (*hāḏihi al-'ashīā'*) through images, neither the images (*mutakhayylāt*) nor the persuasive arguments (*muqanna'āt*) are intended for himself. As far as he is concerned, they are certain (*balla yaqīnīa li-hu*). He is the one who invents (*ikhtara'a*) the images (*mutakhayylāt*) and the persuasive arguments (*muqanna'āt*), but not for the sake of establishing these things in his own soul (*al-'ashīā' fī nafs*) as a religion for himself (*malaka li-hu*). No, the images (*mutakhayyl*) and the persuasive arguments ('*iqnā'*) are intended for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, these things are certain (*yaqin*). They are a religion for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, they are philosophy (*falsafa*). Such, then, is true philosophy (*al-falsafa bi-l-ḥaqīqa*) and the true philosopher (*al-faylasūf bi-l-ḥaqīqa*).[202]

Here, al-Fārābī gives the theoretical model for the invention of religion, which is a near truth or an image of philosophy. But, like Maimonides describes in *Guide* II 32, this only occurs within the person who has a perfected rational and imaginative faculty. Unfortunately, al-Fārābī focuses almost exclusively upon giving a theoretical model for this doctrine, writing in universal terms without specifying how this would be expressed

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[200] *PS* 17.2-3; 17.12.
[201] *CP* 267-68; *CP* (Ar.) 274.
[202] *AH* 44; *AH* (Ar.) 61. See also Chapter 2, 2.1.1.3 and Chapter 3, 4.1.2.

in any given religion. Here, Maimonides, given his numerous examples, provides useful insight as to what a Fārābīan political philosophy looks like in practice.

Maimonides' use of Avicenna and al-Fārābī for his own doctrine has been long established.[203] Certain passages, like where Maimonides compares the flashing of truth to the flashing of lightning through the dark of the night in the Introduction to Part I of the *Guide*, are lifted directly from Avicenna.[204] And Maimonides' project in the *Guide* as a whole is Fārābīan, aiming to explicate how the images of religion refer to a truer, philosophical understanding. Citing *Proverbs* in a passage from his Introduction to the *Guide* noted in previous chapters, Maimonides explains that every parable of the prophets is twofold, holding an outer and inner meaning, like a golden apple covered in silver filigree.[205] The outer imagistic meaning is itself beautiful and valuable, like the silver filigree, but nothing in comparison to the internal golden demonstrative truth. As he says:

> The external (*ẓāhir*) meaning ought to be as beautiful as silver, while its internal (*bāṭin*) meaning ought to be more beautiful (*'aḥsan*) than the external one, the former being in comparison to the latter as gold is to silver. Its external meaning also ought to contain in it something that indicates (*yadullu*) to someone considering it what is to be found in its internal meaning, as happens in the case of an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree-work having very small holes.[206]

For those with limited faculties, the outer imagistic meanings are valuable, allowing these people to live a virtuous, if unreflective, life.[207] But for those with the ability to look closer, the prophet's images, i.e. religion, deconstruct themselves, leading to demonstrative truth. This idea is sourced in al-Fārābī himself.

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[203] For example, see Davidson 1963; Berman 1974; Harvey 2008.
[204] *Remarks and Admonitions* 4.9.9f.; *Remarks and Admonitions* (Ar.) 88f.; *GP* Introduction.
[205] *GP* Introduction; *Proverbs* 25:11.
[206] *GP* Introduction.
[207] *PS* 18.3; 18.9.

Maimonides even takes al-Fārābī's three distinct kinds of prophetic activity—

divination (*nubuwwa*), and the aforementioned models for revelation (*waḥī*), the

Revealed-as-Determined model and the Construction of Social Knowledge model— and

places them on scale, the lower end of which occurs through an emanation which spurs a

prophet toward action, speech, or a dream and the highest of which is known by Moses

alone, who Maimonides places in a special category outside of the spectrum.[208] Those on

the lower end appear to receive what al-Fārābī would describe as divination (*nubuwwa*),

an emanation to the lower faculties which results in dreams, images, and actions. Those

on the higher end, but below Moses, seem to receive Revealed-as-Determined prophecy,

an emanation that appears as an imaginative vision, but expresses itself rationally. (For

example, the highest degree of non-Mosaic prophecy takes the form of a prophet

receiving the image of a speaking angel and reporting its words.) Moses, alone,

experiences the content of prophecy through his rational faculty without the aid of his

imagination, following the Construction of Social Knowledge model by deliberately

setting down the law. As Maimonides describes in *Shemonah Perakim*, Moses

encountered God though nothing but the 'pellucid lens' of his intellect as an

intermediary.[209] Although, it should be noted that Avicenna is still influential here:

Maimonides is surely referring to Moses when he discusses the unnamed prophet in the

aforementioned lightning analogy whose rational intuition (*ḥads*) is so perfect that he

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[208] *GP* II.45.

[209] *Shemonah Perakim* Chapter 7; See also, *Guide* II.35, 39. Gorfinkle translates אספקקלריא המאירה literally as 'translucent specularia'. Maimonides continues to compare Moses' intellect to a crystal or glass in the passage.

experiences such frequent flashes of truth that it is like he experiences perpetual

brilliance.[210]

Maimonides' clear understanding of the philosophers who preceded him and his

adoption of the general framework of their doctrine results in a fascinating case study for

al-Fārābī's conception of beneficent political deception when applied to a particular

religion. The *Guide*'s exegetical project which aims to parse out the inner meaning of the

images provided in the language of the prophets, usually concerning the images

suggestive of the corporeality of God, reveals a tangible case study of a Fārābīan

Construction of Social Knowledge in practice.

One particularly fascinating example can be found in Maimonides' treatment of

the Sabbath, already mentioned in Chapter 3, Section 4.1.3.[211] Unlike the Account of the

Beginning (*Ma'aseh Bereshit*) or the Account of the Chariot (*Ma'aseh Merkabah*), the

effects of the law concerning the Sabbath have less theoretical and more tangible aims.[212]

One can see in this example how the outer, literal meaning of the commandment has

meaningful benefits for the multitude, even as the inner meaning points toward both

theoretical and practical truths from philosophy. Maimonides explains:

> Perhaps it has already become clear to you what is the cause of the Law's
> establishing the Sabbath so firmly and ordaining *death by stoning* for breaking
> it...You know from what I have said that opinions do not last unless they are
> accompanied by actions that strengthen them, make them generally known, and
> perpetuate them among the multitude. For this reason we are ordered by the Law
> to exalt (*taʿẓīm*) this day, in order that the principle of the creation of the world in
> time be established and universally known in the world through the fact that all
> people refrain from working on one and the same day. If it is asked: What is the
> cause of this?, the answer is: *For in six days the Lord made*. For this

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[210] For discussions about the peculiar, yet exemplary, case of Moses in Maimonides' thought, see Reines 1969-70; Kreisel 2015, 315f.

[211] For another example, see Levine 2002-2003.

[212] See *Jewish Encyclopedia* 1906, 235-236.

commandment two different causes are given, corresponding to two different effects. In the first Decalogue, the cause for exalting the Sabbath is stated as follows: *For in six days the Lord made, and so on*. In *Deuteronomy*, on the other hand, it is said: *And thou shalt remember that thou wast a slave in Egypt. Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day*. This is correct. For the effect, according to the first statement, is to regard that day as noble and exalted. As it says: *Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it*. This is the effect consequent upon the cause stated in the words: *For in six days, and so on*. However, the order given us by the Law with regard to it and the commandment ordaining us in particular to keep it are an effect consequent upon the cause that we had been slaves in Egypt where we did not work according to our free choice and when we wished and where we had not the power to refrain from working. Therefore we have been commanded inactivity and rest so that we should conjoin the two things: the belief in a true opinion— namely, the creation of the world in time, which, at the first go and with the slightest of speculations, shows that the deity exists and the memory of the benefit God bestowed upon us by giving us rest *from under the burdens of the Egyptians*. Accordingly the Sabbath is, as it were, of universal benefit, both with reference to a true speculative opinion and to the well-being of the state of the body.[213]

The two parts of the Sabbath obligation, keeping it and remembering it, each serve a purpose. Remembering the Sabbath via the Kiddush prayer causes the listener to reflect on creation and *pesach*. Through the former, the existence of the Deity is remembered; through the latter, one remembers the needs of the body even while one rests, as Maimonides describes in a passage of the *Mishneh Torah*, on "Shabbat" and *Guide* II 31.[214] (As noted in Chapter 3, the Talmud mandates both the Kiddush prayer, to be said over the wine, and the Havdalah prayer , the 'sanctifying' prayer and the prayer of 'distinction', respectively, which mark the beginning and end of the Sabbath. Each must occur each Sabbath, as traditionally set down by the Great Assembly.)[215] Here, one can readily see prophecy and legislation as al-Fārābī envisions them. The story of the seven days of creation serves as an image of God's causal role; the story of Jewish households

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[213] *GP* II.31.
[214] *Mishneh Torah*, Sefer Zemanim, "Shabbat" 29; *GP* II.31.
[215] *Talmud*, Shabbat 119b; Berakot 33a.

in the land of Egypt serves as a reflection on forced servitude. The former venerates the

Divine; the latter values freedom and reflects upon the needs of the body. Each are

required for a happy life and a healthy society. For the multitudes who follow the law,

these images serve as an introduction to philosophical considerations of God's causality

and the physical needs of the body, even if they fail to demonstrate any truths using

philosophy.

3.3.2. What Maimonides tells us about al-Fārābī

Perhaps more than any other thinker, Maimonides provides us with both a clear

understanding of al-Fārābī's thought and an example of faithful Fārābīan political

philosophy in practice. The *Guide*, as a whole, is a rich exploration of the philosophically

appropriate meaning behind the images of religion, a key for recognizing the truth that

undergirds the untruth of religious expression. With this exploration comes a consistent

refrain: the internal, philosophical meaning of the law is superior to the external,

imagistic meaning, but it is necessitated by the deficiency of the people and grounded

upon the knowledge of the founder of the law.

Despite Maimonides' insistence (whether sincere or otherwise) that his position

concerning prophecy remains distinct from the philosophers' account, his justification

remains identical to al-Fārābī's own insofar as it hinges upon the theoretical knowledge

of the prophet. As he explains:

> We have explained this in our *Commentary on the Mishnah* and in our great
> compilation, and we have set forth that the disciples of the prophets were always
> engaged in preparation. As for the fact that one who prepares is sometimes
> prevented from becoming a prophet, you may know it from the history of Baruch,
> son of Neriah. For he followed Jeremiah, who trained, taught, and prepared him.
> And he set himself the goal of becoming a prophet, but was prevented... It is

> possible to say that this is a clear statement that prophecy is too great a thing for Baruch... However, we shall find many texts, some of them scriptural and some of them dicta of the Sages, all of which maintain this fundamental principle that God turns whom He wills, whenever He wills it, into a prophet; but only someone perfect and superior to the utmost degree. But with regard to one of the ignorant among the common people, this is not possible according to us—I mean, that He should turn one of them into a prophet—except as it is possible that He should turn an ass or a frog into a prophet. It is our fundamental principle that there must be training and perfection, whereupon the possibility arises to which the power of the deity becomes attached... For this is the state of every prophet: he must have a natural preparedness in his original natural disposition, as shall be explained.[216]

Prophecy is not an expression of pure political persuasion, but an expression of knowledge, gained through preparation and natural disposition, to those incapable of knowledge. Even God cannot turn someone who lacks knowledge into a prophet, except miraculously, in the same manner that He can make an ass or a frog prophesy. Prophecy is undergirded by truth; the silver filigree is judged by its golden core. As Maimonides explains, "everyone who communicates knowledge as to something secret" must be fit to achieve "the rank of prophecy, and even those in various degrees".[217] If one lacks knowledge, then one is not a prophet. If one lacks a fully developed rational faculty, then one is a lesser. As Maimonides says:

> You should know that the case in which the intellectual overflow overflows only toward the rational faculty and does not overflow at all toward the imaginative faculty—either because of the scantiness of what overflows or because of some deficiency existing in the imaginative faculty in its natural disposition, a deficiency that makes it impossible for it to receive the overflow of the intellect— is characteristic of the class of men of science engaged in speculation. If, on the other hand, this overflow reaches both faculties—I mean both the rational and the imaginative—as we and others among the philosophers have explained, and if the imaginative faculty is in a state of ultimate perfection owing to its natural disposition, this is characteristic of the class of prophets. If again the overflow only reaches the imaginative faculty, the defect of the rational faculty deriving either from its original natural disposition or from insufficiency of training, this is characteristic of the class of those who govern cities, while being the legislators, the soothsayers, the augurs, and the dreamers of veridical dreams. All those who

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[216] *GP* II.32.
[217] *GP* II.32. See also *GP* II.45.

do extraordinary things by means of strange devices and secret arts and withal are not men of science belong likewise to this third class. You ought to obtain knowledge of the true reality, which is that some people belonging to this third class have—even while they are awake—extraordinary imaginings, dreams, and amazed states, which are like the vision of prophecy so that they think about themselves that they are prophets. And they are very much pleased with what they apprehend in these imaginings and think that they acquired sciences without instruction; and they bring great confusion into speculative matters of great import, true notions being strangely mixed up in their minds with imaginary ones. All this is due to the imaginative faculty, to the weakness of the rational faculty, and to its not having obtained anything—I mean thereby that it has not passed into actuality.[218]

Even those members of society with perfected imaginative faculties who lack the perfection of the rational faculty, due either to disposition or training, pose a danger to civic happiness, as they cause great confusion through inappropriately relating to their images. Only a prophet, someone who has actualized their rational faculty and their imagination, is equipped to establish religious law.[219]

Resorting to imagination, in accordance with al-Fārābī, occurs only as a response to human deficiency. As Maimonides explains:

Now as the nature of the human species requires that there be those differences among the individuals belonging to it and as in addition society is a necessity for this nature, it is by no means possible that his society should be perfected except—and this is necessarily so—through a ruler who gauges the actions of the individuals, perfecting that which is deficient and reducing that which is excessive, and who prescribes actions and moral habits that all of them must always practice in the same way, so that the natural diversity is hidden through the multiple points of conventional accord and so that the community becomes well ordered. Therefore I say that the Law, although it is not natural, enters into what is natural. It is a part of the wisdom of the deity with regard to the permanence of this species of which He has willed the existence, that He put it into its nature that individuals belonging to it should have the faculty of ruling. Among them there is the one to whom the regimen mentioned has been revealed by prophecy directly; he is the prophet or the bringer of the *nomos*.[220]

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[218] *GP* II.37.
[219] See Kreisel 2015, 74.
[220] *GP* II.40.

This passage from *Guide* II 40 echoes one from Maimonides' *Treatise on Logic*: natural political science establishes right rule for a city by aiming the habits of citizens toward happiness, as established by those who have "knowledge of true happiness".[221] The Mosaic Law supersedes natural political philosophy (I will leave open the question of whether the Mosaic Law simply is the natural political philosophy for the Jewish people according to Maimonides), but every polis needs a moral prescription from one who has knowledge, given the deficiency of most human existence. Rulership, *nomos*, prophecy, the Law, and religious images all stem from the same need: many humans are not capable of self-rule or knowledge of true happiness.

In Maimonides, one finds both an able reader and faithful disciple of al-Fārābī, as well as another data point for how al-Fārābī was read in subsequent centuries. Al-Fārābī's beneficent political deception does not occur arbitrarily. Political deception is necessary, given human deficiency. It is only justified given the knowledge of the deceiver. And its justification depends upon the beneficent political deception, the image, adhering as closely as possible to the truths of philosophy. Presenting an apple of silver filigree to the people is only justified given their inability to appreciate the gold at its center.

3.4. Averroes

While Maimonides serves as an exemplar for the adoption of al-Fārābī's Construction of Social Knowledge in a wholesale manner, providing examples and synthesizing dissonant texts, Averroes (d. 1198), the Commentator, presents Fārābīan political philosophy in its starkest light. The context of Averroes' life has been mentioned

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[221] *Treatise on Logic* XIV, 64. See Berman 1969.

above, concerning his relationship to Ibn Ṭufayl and the Almohad court, although he did fall into disfavor with the court after the death of his and Ibn Ṭufayl's patron, Abū Yaʻqūb Yūsuf.[222] While Averroes enjoyed a period of patronage under Abū Yaʻqūb's son, Abū Yūsuf Yaʻqūb (d. 1199), he was ultimately expelled from the court for unclear reasons, resulting in many of his books being burned and his exile to Lucena (al-Yussāna).[223] For the purposes here, the most pertinent work of Averroes was written before his exile, commonly referred to as *The Decisive Treatise*, but which, as Richard Taylor, at times, and A. El Ghannouchi note, is more appropriately translated as *The Book of the Distinction of Discourse and the Establishment of the Connection between the Religious Law and Philosophy* (*Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl wa-taqrīr mā bayna al-sharīʻa wa-l-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl*).[224] At the time of its writing, likely around 1179-1180, Averroes still enjoyed the privileged status of a *qāḍī* or judge.[225]

Unlike his predecessors, Averroes does not adopt al-Fārābī's Revealed-as-Determined model, but rather seems to endorse the Construction of Social Knowledge model wholesale. In the barest terms, Averroes seems to reject that any kind of emanation or extramission from a higher being, whether God or the Active Intellect, is responsible for prophecy. Rather, religion is constructed for political purposes from truths known to philosophy. Religion, as image and law, serves as a kind of truth, at a different level of discourse, for the masses, even though it is not, strictly speaking, true in the way that

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[222] Arnaldez 910; Fakhry, 2f.; Hourani 164.
[223] Arnaldez 910; Fakhry, 2f.; Hourani 164; Dutton 190.
[224] Taylor 2009, 227; Taylor 2018, 288; Ghannouchi 2002, 145. More recently, Taylor has suggested that the rhyme in the title and a possible Qurʻānic reference problematize any definitive translation.
[225] Whether Averroes was still a *qāḍī* in Cordoba or was in Seville at the time is a matter of some unclarity. Urvoy suggests that he spent a brief stint of time in Seville before becoming chief *qāḍī* of Cordoba, but, as Dutton notes, there does not seem to be corroborating evidence of this. See Urvoy 1996, 34; Dutton 1994, 190.

demonstration is. In Averroes, one finds a clarity and brazenness to the Fārābīan position, especially as explored in *The Decisive Treatise*.

3.4.1. Averroes and the Construction of Social Knowledge

Before turning to Averroes' distinctions concerning the different modes of discourse and its roots in al-Fārābī, Averroes' reasoning and rejection of the Revealed-as-Determined model should be explored in light of this project, even though, on its own terms, it has already been well documented by the likes of Herbert Davidson and Richard C. Taylor.[226] In his *Epitome on Aristotle's Parva Naturalia*, Averroes argues against both, as Taylor describes, an "account of prophecy that is congruous with the traditional religious conception of prophecy as literally a conveyance and instruction provided to human beings on the nature of God, on the things of world, or on the proper nature of human conduct and fulfillment" and against the Revealed-as-Determined approach, in which a Separate Substance provides prophets or an Imām with rational emanations, which are then particularized through their own imaginations.[227] Neither God nor the Active Intellect particularize religious images to a prophet, nor do They provide universal knowledge which is subsequently particularized within a prophet. The former, a position rejected by the Fārābīan school *in toto*, is a result of the impossibility of Separate Substances knowing particulars.[228] The latter, an argument never made explicitly by al-Fārābī, is the reason why the Social Construction of Knowledge model is more parsimonious than the Revealed-as-Determined model. As Averroes explains:

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[226] See Davidson 1992, 340f.; Taylor 2018.
[227] Taylor 2018, 302.
[228] See *EPN* 43-44; *EPN* (Ar.) 74-75.

In general, the acquisition of any of the concepts of the theoretical sciences in this manner would be accidental (*bi-l-ʿarḍ*) and rare. It is therefore impossible that a theoretical art be fully acquired by a person, by God, unless a person assumes that we have here a species of man that can comprehend the theoretical sciences without training. Now this species, if it indeed existed, would be called "man" only equivocally (*bi- ishtirāk al-ʿism*), but actually it would be closer to angels than to man. Now it will be seen that this is impossible from that which I shall say. This is so for the reason that theoretical knowledge in itself is one (*wāḥida*) and not subject to change, whether it is acquired by training or it is acquired without training. Now if it is acquired by both means together, training would not be included in the definition (*ḥadd*) of theoretical knowledge nor would training be necessary for the acquisition thereof. We are therefore confronted with a dilemma. Either we admit that this kind of knowledge is applied to human knowledge only equivocally, or we agree that one thing in itself can exist through different causes. According to the latter assumption, the relationship of the thing to its causes, whereby it has its existence, would not be a necessary (*ḍarūriyy*) relationship. Such assumption, of course, is entirely false. But if one were to assume that it is possible for the images of theoretical things to be acquired by a species of man in this manner of comprehension, such assumption would be untenable, since their acquisition in this manner would be superfluous, inasmuch as man has already acquired them in a more perfect manner; except that one may say that it is possible that this kind of comprehension may be found in one for whom the training in the theoretical sciences is impossible, either by nature or for some other reason. If such people do exist, they are "men" only in an equivocal sense.[229]

In effect, Averroes' argument is this: 1) if the human species is one, 2) the truths that humans know are one (*qua* universals), and 3) the relationship between human knowing (properly understood) and universals is necessary, then, in conclusion, there can only be one means by which humans know. If there are two means by which humans know, then either there are two distinct types of human beings (demonstrative knowers and prophetic knowers) or the means by which we know (i.e., demonstration) does not hold a necessary relation to the truth (i.e., certainty). Both of these are absurd conclusions, and the latter, in particular, is worrisome. To borrow from Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*, "truth does not

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[229] *EPN* 52; *EPN* (Ar.) 89-90. See also Davidson 1992, 340f.; Taylor 2018.

oppose truth", and were there to be two methods by which one knows the truth, then the

agreement between truths would not be, in principle, necessary.[230]

This passage from the *Epitome on Aristotle's Parva Naturalia*, suggests that

Averroes does not endorse any kind of emanative revelation. There is only one means by

which human being can obtain truth: philosophy. As Davidson describes:

> Averroes is making an extremely radical statement for a medieval philosopher, a
> statement from which he appears to retreat elsewhere. He is asserting that the
> phenomena we are considering, including revelation and prophecy, give no
> reliable information about matters belonging to the domain of science, not even
> by furnishing the uneducated with a figurative representation of theoretical truths.
> Revelation and prophecy do not, either expressly or allusively, instruct mankind
> about God, the universe, creation, the human soul. They promulgate no rules of
> human behavior leading to eudaemonia. Revelation as well as the written record
> of revealed knowledge thus contribute nothing to the soul's well-being.[231]

And while, as Davidson notes, Averroes at times, especially in his dialectical works,

seems to adopt a more robust view of prophecy, Taylor gives a convincing argument that

the dissonance between Averroes' texts indicates methodological precision concerning

his mode of discourse (as will be discussed below), more than indicating some sort of

confusion or an evolution in his thought.[232] As Taylor explains:

> [Averroes] clearly enough explains his philosophical worldview methodically and
> generally follows that method in his writings, setting out teachings that accord
> with the principles of religion in his 'evident' (*ẓāhir*) works while reserving
> explanations that clash with religion for investigation by philosophers suited for
> 'interpreted' (*mu'awwal*) writings... Hence, it seems reasonable to conclude that
> Averroes found in philosophy and its sciences the most complete and precise truth
> content and highest levels of knowledge and understanding and from them
> constructed his worldview. Given that perspective, religion—which is
> indispensable for proper human ethical and political development—is like an
> Aristotelian practical science in that it concerns good and right conduct in the

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[230] *DT* 9. Averroes borrows this concept from Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* I.32, 47a8-9. See Taylor 2000;
Taylor 2007, 39-40.
[231] Davidson 1992, 344.
[232] Taylor 2018, 292-293. E.g., see *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* 427-8; *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (Ar.) 257-8; *Al-Kashf*
179-80.

achievement of an end attained in action, not truths to be known for their own sake.[233]

In other words, Averroes totally rejects prophetic knowledge, redefining prophetic activity as a purely political and pedagogical act. As Davidson explores, this would mean that:

> ...the human author of Scripture first acquired theoretical knowledge through proper scientific methods and then coolly and deliberately—not through an inspired imaginative faculty—recast his hard-won philosophic knowledge into language appropriate for his less enlightened brethren. The term prophet would, on this reading, mean nothing more than the human author of Scripture; and the term revelation would mean a high level of philosophic knowledge.[234]

This model is familiar. It is al-Fārābī's Construction of Social Knowledge model, in which the Imām "invents (*ikhtara'a*) the images (*mutakhayylāt*) and the persuasive arguments (*muqanna'āt*)" for the people of the city.[235]

3.4.2. Tripartite City, Tripartite Discourse

Returning to a passage from the *Perfect State* addressed in Chapter 3, one can see how Averroes seizes upon elements within Fārābīan philosophy and expands upon them. At *PS* 17.2, noted earlier, al-Fārābī explains, concerning the beliefs required for an excellent city:

> [T]hese things can be known in two ways, either by being impressed on their souls as they really are or by being impressed on them through affinity (*munāsaba*) and symbolic representation (*mathīl*). In that case symbols arise in man's minds, which reproduce them by imitation. The philosophers in the city are those who know these things through strict demonstrations and their own insight; those who are close to the philosophers know them as they really are through the insight of the philosophers, following them, assenting to their views and trusting them. But others know them through symbols which reproduce them by imitation, because neither nature nor habit has provided their minds with the gift to

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[233] Taylor 2018, 303-304.
[234] Davidson 1992, 350-351.
[235] *AH* 44; *AH* (Ar.) 61.

understand them as they are. Both are kinds of knowledge, but the knowledge of the philosophers is undoubtedly more excellent.[236]

Things can either be known truly or by affinity and symbolic representation. Either one knows the truth or something else, which stands in for the truth. But then al-Fārābī introduces a third category: those who know, not through their own insight, as the philosophers do, but need not rely on images. Embedded into this passage are the keys to justifying Fārābīan beneficent political deception: some members of society know, others are incapable of knowledge, and those that know are responsible for providing something resembling the truth to those that are incapable of knowledge.

Averroes develops this short passage into an entire method for proper discourse, adopting the tripartite distinction that al-Fārābī suggests. In *The Decisive Treatise*, Averroes explains:

> ...some assent by means of demonstration; some assent by means of dialectical statements in the same way the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstration, there being nothing greater in their natures; and some assent by means of rhetorical statements, just as the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstrative statements.[237]

Some know. Some can assent to the knowledge of those that know. And some need something to stand in for knowledge. As he continues:

> Concerning the things that are known only by demonstration due to their being hidden, God has been gracious to His servants for whom there is no path by means of demonstration—either due to their innate dispositions, their habits, or their lack of facilities for education—by coining for them likenesses (*'amthāl*) and similarities (*'ashbāh*) of these [hidden things] and calling them to assent by means of those likenesses, since it is possible for assent to those likenesses to come about by means of the indications shared by all—I mean, the dialectical and the rhetorical. This is the reason for the Law being divided into an apparent sense and an inner sense. For the apparent sense is those likenesses coined for those

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[236] *PS* 17.2. See also Chapter 3, 4.1.2.
[237] *DT* 8.

meanings, and the inner sense is those meanings that reveal themselves only to those adept in demonstration.[238]

Things are known either as they are (i.e., in truth), according to the inner meaning of the Law in agreement with demonstration, or known via likenesses (*'amthāl*) and similarities (*'ashbāh*). In combination, these passages create a systematic reading of *PS* 17.2—there are two ways to know (as things are and through likeness), but three kinds of citizens and modes of discourse (demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical). Averroes affirms this by saying:

> [T]here are three methods of bringing about assent for people—demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical—and two methods of forming concepts, either by means of the thing itself or by means likeness of it; and not all people have natures such as to accept demonstrations or dialectical arguments, let alone demonstrative arguments given the difficulty in teaching demonstrative arguments and the length time needed by someone adept at learning them.[239]

In effect, Averroes systematizes the methods of discourse which are implicit in al-Fārābī's own text.[240] In doing so, he explicates many of the commitments which belie al-Fārābī's model.

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[238] *DT* 19.

[239] *DT* 24.

[240] In doing so, Averroes draws further distinctions within the second group of people, those who know by relying upon the philosophers. He identifies this group with those that know via dialectic (*jadal*). Whereas rhetoric gets associated with those who are adept at preaching (*maw'iẓa*) (*DT* 18) and demonstration is implied to be the purview of the philosophers (*DT* 1f.), those who know via dialectic are never identified explicitly. A ready answer seems to be the dialectical theologians (*mutakallimūn*), but as, unlike in the English translation, Averroes does not explicitly link *Kalām* with *jadal*, more reflection is required. In dialectic (*jadal*), the two axes of the present passage seem to intersect, insofar as dialectic can concern itself with either "the thing itself" or "the likeness of it" within the Law. Averroes discusses how dialectic can be built upon likenesses (*'amthāl*) (*DT* 19), which would clearly fall under the domain of the dialectical theologians (*mutakallimūn*), but he also describes a form of assent through dialectic (and even rhetoric) which is certain, because it is built, not upon likenesses, but upon certain premises, i.e., "matters taken in themselves rather than likenesses" (*DT* 24-25). While these arguments also seem to be a regular activity for the dialectical theologians (*mutakallimūn*), this is a distinct method for bringing about assent than dialectic built upon likenesses. Only those that rely upon this latter activity which is built upon "matters taken in themselves" would fall under al-Fārābī's description of "those who are close to the philosophers" who "know [things] as they really are through the insight of the philosophers" (*PS* 17.2).

First and foremost, Averroes makes explicit the Fārābīan position concerning the truth of philosophy and religion. There is only one truth, and that truth is attained through demonstration. Despite the famous confusion surrounding Averroistic "double truth", Averroes is emphatic that "truth does not oppose truth; rather, it agrees with and bears witness to it".[241] And while the "Law is true and calls to the reflection leading to cognizance of the truth", cognizance comes about through demonstration.[242] As he describes, "[W]hat is intended by the Law is only to teach true science and true practice. True science is cognizance of God (may He be blessed and exalted) and of all the existing things as they are..."[243] Recall that for both al-Fārābī and Averroes, knowing things themselves, as they really are, is reserved only for the philosophers. Those that believe the law only in the apparent sense do not know the truth, only a likeness.

In the *Perfect State*, al-Fārābī introduces, shortly after distinguishing between these modes of discourse, the possibility of using the images of religion to climb toward demonstration. At *PS* 17.4, he considers the individual who, rejecting the falsity of a symbol, is lifted toward a better symbol, which, when rejected, leads to a better symbol still.[244] If he remains persistent and dissatisfied with symbols, "He will be made to know the truth (*ḥaqq*) and will be placed into the class of those who take the philosophers as their authorities. If he is not yet satisfied with that and desires to acquire philosophical wisdom and has himself the strength and gift for it, he will be made to know it."[245] Implicit in this model is the notion that the symbols are not themselves the truth; they are

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[241] *DT* 9. See Footnote 230. See also Taylor 2007, 39f.; Gilson 1938; Gilson 1955; Mandonnet 1911; Maurer 1995; Bianchi 2008; 2017.
[242] *DT* 8. See also Taylor 2012.
[243] *DT* 23.
[244] *PS* 17.4.
[245] *PS* 17.4.

beneficent deceptions. Nonetheless, they orient one toward the truth, and, given skill and desire, they can facilitate one toward reaching the truth.

Yet here Averroes diverges from al-Fārābī. While Averroes views the Law as pedagogical for practical matters, i.e., ethics; theoretical matters remain beyond the reach of those who are not already philosophers. Admittedly, he suggests that the Law contains "a means of alerting those adept in the truth to the true interpretation", but he is more concerned with censorship than upward mobility. For Averroes demonstrative truth is dangerous, because:

> ...for anyone not adept in science, it is obligatory to take them [the descriptions of the next life] in their apparent sense it is unbelief to interpret them because it leads to unbelief. That is why we are of the opinion that, for anyone among the people whose duty it is to have faith in the apparent sense, interpretation is unbelief because it leads to unbelief. Anyone adept in interpretation who divulges that to him calls him to unbelief; and the one who calls to unbelief is an unbeliever. This is why it is obligatory that interpretations be established only in books using demonstrations.[246]

Symbols, rather than an invitation to knowledge, are permanently fixated as a replacement for the truth. Revealing the inner sense to those citizens incapable of demonstration causes confusion and unbelief, not knowledge.[247] For this reason, "What is obligatory for the imams of the Muslims is that they ban those of his books that contain science from all but those adept in science, just as it is obligatory upon them to ban demonstrative books from those not adept in them."[248] Furthermore, even this distinction between discourse should not be mentioned to the multitude, lest they realize that their images are in fact merely images. He explains, "This interpretation ought not to be

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[246] *DT* 21.
[247] *DT* 26.
[248] *DT* 22.

declared to those adept in dialectic, not to mention the multitude."[249] In Averroes, one can recognize Fārābīan beneficent political deception in its starkest terms, as a Construction of Social Knowledge which holds no pretense of being the truth itself, having the same weight as demonstration, or as coming from God. For this reason, the political purpose of the Law as rhetorical, symbolic discourse must be hidden.

3.4.3. What Averroes tells us about al-Fārābī

Averroes develops different aspects of Fārābīan political philosophy than any of the other preceding thinkers discussed above. He rejects any kind of special emanation from the Active Intellect to the prophet and, with it, the Revealed-as-Determined model. Instead, he lays bare the deceptive quality of Fārābīan political philosophy. Religion, as imagistic and rhetorical, is a form of untruth. Yet it is constructed by those with demonstrative knowledge for those who lack it. It is a surrogate for truth, but still leads to true practice, allowing those who lack knowledge the ability to "follow the actions that promote happiness and to avoid the actions that promote misery".[250] In short, while neither mean nor cruel, it is clearly a beneficent deception. Even though it is born out of necessity for Averroes, untruth presents itself as truth and is bolstered by a program of careful censorship. In Averroes, one finds a true Construction of Social Knowledge, as the Law is meant to permanently displace demonstration (although, only for those incapable by nature or education).

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[249] *DT* 26.
[250] *DT* 23.

3.5. What Al-Fārābī's Adopters Teach Us

Despite spanning multiple religions, continents, and empires, al-Fārābī's adopters all recognize the same internal coherence to his doctrine of beneficent political deception. Whether an adapter and adopter of the Revealed-as-Determined model (e.g., Avicenna), an innovator who expands upon, even while rejecting, Fārābīan political philosophy (e.g., Ibn Ṭufayl), a disciple who attempts to create an amalgam of the two distinct doctrines present in al-Fārābī's texts (e.g., Maimonides), or a brazen Aristotelian who rejects the Revealed-as-Determined model wholesale (e.g., Averroes), each of these thinkers recognizes the same internal coherence to al-Fārābī's thought. There is no justification for political deception, as such. Beneficent political deception, however, is justified through its necessity, its nearness to the truth, and the ability of the deceiver to know what is best for the citizenry.

4. <u>Conclusion</u>

Through discussing al-Fārābī's context, it is clear that his position was not necessitated by historical circumstance. He could have rejected deception wholesale, rejected philosophy wholesale, rejected religion wholesale, claimed that religion and philosophy were simply two *maḏāhib* amongst many, or claimed that religion and philosophy were compatible. He did not. Through examining his adopters, it is clear that his commitments have an internal coherence. His adopters could have untethered political deception from the truth, allowed for deception for purely political power, or denied the necessity of images which serve as surrogates for philosophical truth. They did not.

This is not to say that my preceding interpretation of al-Fārābī is definitive. Instead though, the context out of which he writes and the interpretations of those who adopt his philosophy lends a great deal of credence to my account in Chapter 3.

V. AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S JUSTIFICATION FOR BENEFICENT POLITICAL DECEPTION

1. **Introduction**

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, I explored the nuances of al-Fārābī's position, showing that, while there are challenges to reading al-Fārābī, he develops a clear Doctrine of Beneficent Political Deception grounded in a metaphysics which attempts to justify the need for the Construction of Social Knowledge. Moreover, his doctrine was developed in environs which would have allowed for numerous distinct approaches; his commitments appear to be sincere. Further, his successors shared his core commitments. Clearly, al-Fārābī thinks beneficent political deception is ethically warranted. But are his justifications successful?

In Chapter 5, I explore some common critiques of Plato's Noble Lie and Phoenician Story and explore whether al-Fārābī's own form of beneficent political deception can address them. All told, al-Fārābī can meet the objections of critics like R.H.S. Crossman and Karl Popper through an appeal to his metaphysical commitments and the certainty they allow. While al-Fārābī is successful in defending that beneficent political deception is warranted in some cases, if and only if one presumes the accuracy of his metaphysical approach, one ambiguity remains: how beneficent political deception qua surrogate of the truth can be assessed. Put otherwise, even if al-Fārābī can show that political deception is necessary (as opposed to the explicit expression of a universal truth), it remains ambiguous how he can justify the use of any particular deception, given that the falsehood and particularity of the deceptive image prevents it from being knowable qua particular. Simply, if rectitude is determined in reference to truth, how

could any falsehood be recognized as the 'right' falsehood. The answer to this question will have to await Chapter 6.

2. <u>Crossman and Popper</u>

In both *Plato To-Day* (1937) and *The Open Society & Its Enemies* (1945), R.H.S. Crossman and Karl Popper famously object, respectively, to the aspects of Plato's political philosophy built upon the foundation of deception. Not all of these objections are specifically directed at the Phoenician Story or the Noble Lie, but all of them address a political system built upon Plato's genealogical account of his city's entrenched caste system. Each objection is, in part, an implicit objection to the Phoenician Story. If, as Crossman and Popper contend, Plato is an illiberal paternalist, i.e., a totalitarian, the centralization of Plato's state power rests first and foremost upon a lie.

It is beyond the scope of this project to assess the soundness of Crossman and Popper's claims, i.e., whether their objections are fair to Plato. Instead, this chapter will abstract six useful objections to al-Fārābī's model from their objections to Plato, namely that his political model results in injustice concerning: 1) paternalistic control of information; 2) the rejection of equality, freedom, and self-government; 3) a hereditary caste system; 4) censorship; 5) the identification of the state with the ruling class; and 6) totalitarianism. That said, two tendencies concerning their critiques of Plato should be noted.

First, both Crossman and Popper assume a state of affairs for proper human political association that could be described, broadly speaking, as classically liberal in its approach. As will be discussed in my concluding chapter, I agree with this approach concerning the actual state of affairs for proper human political association. But as

readers of Plato, importing liberalism as a standard to which Plato must be held to

account flattens the nuances of his position. For example, Crossman's claim that "Plato's

philosophy is the most savage and the most profound attack upon liberal ideas which

history can show" does not reveal much about Plato's philosophy itself, other than,

perhaps, that Plato lived prior to the existence of modern political theory.[1] Popper even

admits to his lack of concern for Plato's views in relation to the context of time,

admitting:

> I wish to make it quite clear that I am confining my treatment of Plato to his
> historicism, and to his 'best state'. I must therefore warn the reader not to expect a
> representation of the whole of Plato's philosophy, or what may be called a 'fair
> and just' treatment of Platonism. My attitude towards historicism is one of frank
> hostility, based upon the conviction that historicism is futile, and worse than that.
> My survey of the historicist features of Platonism is therefore strongly critical.
> Although I admire much in Plato's philosophy, far beyond those parts which I
> believe to be Socratic, I do not take it as my task to add to the countless tributes to
> his genius. I am, rather, bent on destroying what is in my opinion mischievous in
> this philosophy. It is the totalitarian tendency of Plato's political philosophy
> which I shall try to analyse, and to criticize.[2]

Put simply, neither Crossman nor Popper aim to give a full account and justification for

Plato's political philosophy; instead, they both aim to defeat it in the context of

contemporary politics.

This is all well and good for their respective projects, but for the purposes here it

will not do. Just as, as discussed in Chapter 1, it is philosophically uninteresting to

examine political deception through, say, a Kantian lens (for example: 1. All lies are

morally impermissible; 2. Political lies are lies; therefore, Political lies are morally

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[1] Crossman 1959, 92. In Crossman's defense, this critique is used, in part to establish a contrast with other readers of Plato who viewed the *Republic* as a mere idealization of a perfect state, rather than "a grimly realistic estimate of the moral and intellectual capacities of the masses". Crossman 1959, 93.
[2] Popper 2013, 31.

impermissible), it is philosophically uninformative to import liberalism into a robust account of political deception.[3] To say that:

> 1. All human beings ought to have political rights granting equal access to political power.
> 2. Truth holds political power.
> 3. Political lies create unequal access to political power.
> ∴ Political lies are a violation of political rights.

is perhaps both true and informative concerning the justifiability of political lies from the standpoint of liberalism, but it is uninformative about the nature of political lies themselves. Understanding the conditions by which political deception is made to be justifiable gives a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. It establishes the limit to which political deception can be understood to be justifiable.

This leads to the second tendency of note in Crossman and Popper's accounts: a dismissiveness concerning the relationship between metaphysics, ethics, and politics. Crossman's dismissiveness is implicit, with a narrow focus toward the political, but Popper makes his approach clear. He explains:

> I believe, in common with a great number of thinkers, and especially with many social scientists, that the distinction between laws in sense (*a*), i.e. statements describing regularities of nature, and laws in sense (*b*), i.e. norms such as prohibitions or commandments, is a fundamental one, and that these two kinds of law have hardly more in common than a name. But this view is by no means generally accepted; on the contrary, many thinkers believe that there are norms—prohibitions or commandments—which are 'natural' in the sense that they are laid down in accordance with natural laws in sense (*a*). They say, for example, that certain legal norms are in accordance with human nature, and therefore with psychological natural laws in sense (*a*), while other legal norms may be contrary to human nature; and they add that those norms which can be shown to be in accordance with human nature are really not very different from natural laws in sense (*a*). Others say that natural laws in sense (*a*) are really very similar to normative laws since they are laid down by the will or decision of the Creator of

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[3] Chapter 1, 4.1.

the Universe—a view which, undoubtedly, lies behind the use of the originally normative word 'law' for laws of the kind (*a*).[4]

Again, within the scope of his project of rejecting totalitarianism, this approach seems fine. But it is not Plato's approach, a thinker who clearly looks to nature, particularly the nature of the good, in his assessment of the *nomoi* of the city.[5] Moreover, assuming we take Plato to be sincere that humans ought to order ourselves according to the orderliness of nature, such an approach can lead to the misnomer that political aims dictate metaphysical models, not the other way around.[6] Popper himself seems to fall prey to this worry, saying:

> According to our analysis, the theory of Forms or Ideas has at least three different functions in Plato's philosophy, (1) It is a most important methodological device, for it makes possible pure scientific knowledge, and even knowledge which could be applied to the world of changing things of which we cannot immediately obtain any knowledge, but only opinion. Thus it becomes possible to enquire into the problems of a changing society, and to build up a political science. (2) It provides the clue to the urgently needed theory of change, and of decay, to a theory of generation and degeneration, and especially, the clue to history. (3) It opens a way, in the social realm, towards some kind of social engineering; and it makes possible the forging of instruments for arresting social change, since it suggests designing a 'best state' which so closely resembles the Form or Idea of a state that it cannot decay.[7]

Again, assessing Popper's faithfulness to Plato is beyond the scope of this project, but his framing here seems suspect. In the realm of the political, the Theory of Forms does not have a mere functional role in relationship to the best state for the purpose of social engineering; it is the model by which the best state can be assessed. The Form of the Good is not, if taking Plato to be sincere, a mere tool by which Plato can justify his *polis*, but the metaphysical ground upon which his *polis* is built.

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[4] Popper 2013, 56-57.
[5] E.g., *Laws* 627d, 630e-632d; *Gorgias* 507a-508c.
[6] *Gorgias* 507a-508c.
[7] Popper 2013, 28-29.

That said, concerning Plato's use of the Noble Lie, distinguishing between nature

and custom lends traction to Popper's discussion, given that the inequality of the city is

grounded upon a myth, which, while presumably is itself grounded upon nature, never

gets justified via an explicit model of nature.[8] Put simply, the caste system in the

Republic hinges upon the admittedly false Phoenician Story, not a careful appeal to the

metaphysical necessity of deficient expressions of humanity.[9] But for al-Fārābī, who

takes care to explain the principles for deficiency in his metaphysical model and models

his city after the macroanthropotic organization of the cosmos, many of Crossman and

Popper's objections fail to register. Put simply, as will be discussed below, certain

critiques, e.g., that the city lacks equality, ring hollow, because al-Fārābī does not build

inequality into his political system through lies; his conception of nature recognizes and,

indeed, even necessitates the inequality of the citizenry.

2.1. Crossman

R.H.S. Crossman's critique of Plato stems from his historical assessment of

Plato's context, in particular "his bias in favour of aristocracy" and Plato's mistake that

the elite of society can be trusted with "absolute freedom of action" via "a virtue far

beyond their reach."[10] Plato failed to account for the corrupting influence of power, while

neglecting to provide a trustworthy metric by which one can assess whether someone is

deserving of power.[11] What starts as a misconception concerning a human being's

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[8] See Chapter 1, 2.1.
[9] See Chapter 1, 2.1.
[10] Crossman 1959, 184.
[11] Crossman 1959, 184. See Chapter 1, 2.2.

relationship to the state becomes amplified when political deception is made available.

As Crossman explains:

> The real problems, therefore, were firstly the conversion of the Greek gentleman
> to Platonic philosophy, and secondly the pacification of a proletariat avid for self-
> government. These are the practical questions which the *Republic* tries to answer,
> and both are in a sense educational. Of the first we have already spoken and we
> shall return to it in a later chapter. But the second is no less important. The
> civilian must be educated to accept his subjection to the rule of law. But since he
> is naturally incapable of philosophy or of directing his life according to reason
> and cannot understand the *raison d'être* of the State, it is useless to explain the
> truth to him. He must therefore be fed on political and religious myths, 'noble
> lies' as Plato called them, which appeal to his emotions and stimulate him to obey
> the law. By the 'noble lie' Plato meant propaganda, the technique of controlling
> the behaviour of the stupid majority: and he believed that this was the only sort of
> general education which the civilian should receive. He must, in fact, be content
> with the education which Plato had prepared for the children of the ruling class,
> since politically and morally he would always remain a child. Just as children are
> told improving stories to prevent them from biting their nails or stealing or telling
> lies, so the civilian must be fed on propaganda to prevent him from asserting his
> right to self-government...[12]

Care must be taken here to distinguish between two related but distinct critiques. The first

critique, one which Plato cannot answer successfully, focuses on whether Plato has

recourse to reality which justifies his use of deception, what Crossman describes as

propaganda. In other words, is Plato justified in describing that there is a necessary need

to control the "stupid majority"? Crossman thinks, I think rightly and obviously, that

Plato is wrong about his elitism and his low view of the capabilities of most humans. But

this critique is distinct from a more difficult question: does Plato have recourse to

something which justifies his use of deception via his own model of reality? In other

words, does Platonic metaphysics justify the use of propaganda via explaining the

necessary deficiency of human beings and providing a mechanism by which one can

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[12] Crossman 1959, 90-91.

distinguish between deficient and capable human beings? As was discussed in Chapter 1, Plato never provides his reader with a foolproof method for distinguishing between the different kinds of citizens, nor does he ground the distinction between citizens in any clear metaphysical mechanism.[13] But to say either that Plato *does not* justify his use of deception because his conception of the world is wrongheaded or that Plato *does not* justify his use of deception via his metaphysics because he lacks an explicit justification in his texts is distinct from saying that Platonic philosophy *could not* justify deception via a recourse to metaphysics.

Added to Crossman's concern about the imprecise elitism of Plato's politics is the vacuous nature of Platonic propaganda. Even though Plato discusses the falsehoods through which we teach our children and, paternalistically, the masses as "though they have some truth in them" and as if they have medicinal value, he never describes how falsehoods serve to educate the populace.[14] The Phoenician Story has an anti-educational effect, keeping citizens from questioning their social status. As Crossman describes:

> Philosophy for the ruler, and propaganda for the rest—this, says Plato, is the best way of avoiding bloodshed in the establishment and maintenance of the 'dictatorship of the best'. The mistake of Socrates had been his belief that the Law of Reason was suitable for everyone. He had condemned rhetoric and sophistical education altogether and tried to convert the city of Athens to philosophy. But philosophy and reason are poison to the masses. Misunderstood and perverted by them, they merely intensify social unrest. The masses need not the truth, but a convenient falsehood...[15]

Political lies thus serve as a tool for pacification, not as 'the next best' thing in subservience to the truth.[16] If, as Crossman suggests, political lies function only to

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[13] See Chapter 1, 2.2.
[14] *Republic* 377a; *Republic* 459c.
[15] Crossman 1959, 91-92.
[16] See Chapter 1, 1.3.

effectively consolidate power and prevent social unrest, it is difficult to ascertain how they could ever be justifiable.

Crossman's critique culminates in a lucid and impassioned rejection of the consequences of Platonic political philosophy, even if it does import some of Crossman's own commitments. He writes:

> Plato's philosophy is the most savage and the most profound attack upon liberal ideas which history can show. It denies every axiom of 'progressive' thought and challenges all its fondest ideals. Equality, freedom, self-government—all are condemned as illusions which can be held only by the idealists whose sensibilities are stronger than their sense. The true idealist, on Plato's view, will see men as they are, observe their radical inequalities, and give to the many not self-government but security, not freedom but prosperity, no knowledge but the 'noble lie'. The perfect State is not a democracy of rational equals, but an aristocracy in which a hereditary caste of cultured gentleman care with paternal solicitude for the toiling masses.[17]

Plato wrongly ascribes inequality to the citizenry, paternalistically deciding that the (arbitrarily impossible) aims of freedom and self-government are inferior to the goods of security and prosperity. Moreover, he condemns the citizenry to a life of untruth, restricting access to knowledge. Instead, the masses are fed a diet of propaganda, while the aristocracy enjoys access to truth. Crossman's biting critique of Plato's hereditary castes readily highlights the danger of consolidating power in a rejection of self-government, especially in a political system which also consolidates access to truth.

2.2. Popper

In many ways, Karl Popper's critiques of Plato serve as a reiteration, elucidation, and expansion upon those which Crossman raises.[18] And Popper, as mentioned previously, is particularly sensitive to the ways that Plato's political philosophy could be

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[17] Crossman 1959, 92.
[18] Popper even mentions the similarity of his approach to Crossman's approach. Popper 2013, 529.

put to use and abuse in living political systems. He does not suffer the anesthetization of

his reader to the implications of Plato's politics. Distinguishing between elites and

inferiors is dangerous; hereditary class distinctions are dangerous. The doctrines within

Plato's *Republic* are no mere idyllic game, and they should not be engaged with purely on

theoretical terms. And Popper is right in this regard. As he explains:

> Before proceeding to this description, I wish to express my belief that personal
> superiority, whether racial or intellectual or moral or educational, can never
> establish a claim to political prerogatives, even if such superiority could be
> ascertained. Most people in civilized countries nowadays admit racial superiority
> to be a myth; but even if it were an established fact, it should not create special
> political rights, though it might create special moral responsibilities for the
> superior persons. Analogous demands should be made of those who are
> intellectually and morally and educationally superior; and I cannot help feeling
> that the opposite claims of certain intellectualists and moralists only show how
> little successful their education has been, since it failed to make them aware of
> their own limitations...[19]

These, again liberal, principles should be kept in the forefront of the reader's mind.

Plato's elitism has been superseded by better political theory. But to fully understand

Plato's recommendation for the use of political lies, one must temporarily bracket (in the

sense of ἐποχή) the truth of Plato's views about human nature and engage with his

political philosophy on its own terms. Because, as we will see with al-Fārābī, even if

Plato does not himself justify the use of political deception in his political philosophy,

Platonic political deception can be justifiable on its own terms (even though justifiability

on its own terms does not equate to justifiability as such).

Given the above caveat that Popper denies the possibility of any justification for

totalitarianism, elitism, or paternalism, he critiques Plato on these grounds. As he

explains, the Spartan state, to which Plato looks for inspiration, "was a slave state, and

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[19] Popper 2013, 47-48.

accordingly Plato's best state is based on the most rigid class distinctions. It is a caste

state. The problem of avoiding class war is solved, not by abolishing classes, but by

giving the ruling class a superiority which cannot be challenged".[20] Popper continues:

> It is true that Plato discusses nowhere explicitly the status of slaves in his best state, and it is even true that he says that the name 'slave' should better be avoided, and that we should call the workers 'supporters' or even 'employers'. But this is done for propagandist reasons. Nowhere is the slightest suggestion to be found that the institution of slavery is to be abolished, or to be mitigated. On the contrary, Plato has only scorn for those 'tenderhearted' Athenian democrats who supported the abolitionist movement. And he makes his view quite clear, for example, in his description of timocracy, the second-best state, and the one directly following the best. There he says of the timocratic man: 'He will be inclined to treat slaves cruelly, for he does not despise them as much as a well-educated man would.' But since only in the best city can education be found which is superior to that of timocracy, we are bound to conclude that there are slaves in Plato's best city, and that they are not treated with cruelty, but are properly despised. In his righteous contempt for them, Plato does not elaborate the point.[21]

Here, Popper highlights the importance of political representation as an expression of

freedom. If, as the *Republic* states, the *hoi polloi* are to be convinced that they are inferior

in quality, fit only to accept a lower lot in life, devoid of political representation or

agency, in what sense can they be said to be free?[22] Moreover, if there is no reliable

mechanism by which the gold, silver, bronze, and iron citizens can distinguish

themselves from one another, in what sense can this restriction of freedom be said to be

anything but capricious and arbitrary? Perhaps one can conceive of a *natural order* which

puts restrictions on freedom and political power and is *expressed* most readily through

myth, but for such a state of affairs to be just, the necessity of this arrangement must be

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[20] Popper 2013, 45.
[21] Popper 2013, 46.
[22] *Republic* 414b–415d.

apparent.[23] Yet, the *Republic* admits that "only a general pattern and not the exact details" of the divisions within society are provided.[24] Plato, here, is not being a good butcher and cutting society up precisely at the natural joints, but rather cutting up his myth, the Phoenician Story, a myth, itself, based upon just a general sense of society, at the joints.[25] He is *expressing* a myth, which he claims reflects reality generally with inexactitude, and is then pretending that the myth is in fact the *natural order*. This is *prima facie* unjust.

Further, as Popper notes, one should be suspect that Plato's class divisions are merely descriptive when they would have the obvious practical ramifications of stifling upward mobility. Because, while Plato considers the possibility of intergenerational upward and downward mobility, in which a silver citizen is born to a gold citizen and vice-versa, the results of Plato's educational system are obvious.[26] If truth is restricted to the guardians and the children of the guardians are assumed at birth to be proto-guardians, then they alone will receive the proper education to be eventually deemed golden in soul. As Popper explains:

> The stronger the feeling that the ruled are a different and an altogether inferior race, the stronger will be the sense of unity among the rulers. We arrive in this way at the fundamental principle, announced only after some hesitation, that there must be no mingling between the classes: 'Any meddling or changing over from one class to another', says Plato, 'is a great crime against the city and may rightly be denounced as the basest wickedness.'[27]

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[23] Even then, as Popper notes, the justice of such an arrangement would be in dispute. Popper 2013, 47-48.
[24] *Republic* 414a.
[25] See *Phaedrus* 265e.
[26] *Republic* 414b–415d.
[27] Popper 2013, 47. See also *Republic* 434a-c. Popper later compares the relationship between the rulers of the Republic and the masses, not to ruler and subject, but shepherd and sheep. He says, "This is an outline of Plato's theory of the best or most ancient state, of the city which treats its human cattle exactly as a wise but hardened shepherd treats his sheep; not too cruelly, but with the proper contempt..." Popper 2013, 52.

Plato also warns about the dangers of an iron or bronze citizen becoming a guardian.[28]

All of this bespeaks a paranoia directed at the masses, fear that the *hoi polloi* will exert

political control. Yet the elite have no inherent checks upon their power, only their own

self-control. As Popper continues:

> The problem is important from the point of view of the political equilibrium, or rather, of the stability of the state, for Plato does not rely on an equilibrium of the forces of the various classes, since that would be unstable. A control of the master class, its arbitrary powers, and its fierceness, through the opposing force of the ruled, is out of the question, for the superiority of the master class must remain unchallenged. The only admissible control of the master class is therefore self-control.[29]

The ultimate result of Plato's model is a political system which restricts political power to

the elite, built upon a lie, without a defined natural order which undergirds the hereditary

castes it proposes. The system is capricious, restrictive, coercive, and lacks justification.

Popper summarizes the elements best in a long passage which opens his argument

that Plato is a totalitarian. He says:

> I believe that practically all the elements of Plato's political programme can be derived from these demands. They are, in turn, based upon his historicism; and they have to be combined with his sociological doctrines concerning the conditions for the stability of class rule. The principal elements I have in mind are: (A) The strict division of the classes; i.e. the ruling class consisting of herdsmen and watch-dogs must be strictly separated from the human cattle. (B) The identification of the fate of the state with that of the ruling class; the exclusive interest in this class, and in its unity; and in its unity; and subservient to this unity, the rigid rules for breeding and educating this class, and the strict supervision and collectivization of the interests of its members. From these principal elements, others can be derived, for instance the following: (C) The ruling class has a monopoly of things like military virtues and training, and of the right to carry arms and to receive education of any kind; but it is excluded from any participation in economic activities, and especially from earning money. (D) There must be a censorship of all intellectual activities of the ruling class, and a continual propaganda aiming at moulding and unifying their minds. All innovation in education, legislation, and religion must be prevented or suppressed.

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[28] *Republic* 415c.
[29] Popper 2013, 50.

> (E) The state must be self-sufficient. It must aim at economic autarchy; for otherwise the rulers would either be dependent upon traders, or become traders themselves. The first of these alternatives would undermine their power, the second their unity and the stability of the state. This programme can, I think, be fairly described as totalitarian.[30]

Here, new critiques are explicitly introduced which were merely implicit before, namely the presence of censorship and the identification of the success of the city with the success of its rulers. I ignore Popper's (C), the restriction on military training, and (E), the self-sufficiency of the state, because they do not address al-Fārābī's own model. Whether or not any reading of Plato can survive these critiques is beyond the scope of this project.

3. <u>Enumeration of Potential Objections</u>

All told, I number the possible objections made toward Plato which translate to al-Fārābī's model at six: 1) paternalistic control of information; 2) the rejection of equality, freedom, and self-government; 3) a hereditary caste system; 4) censorship; 5) the identification of the state with the ruling class; and 6) totalitarianism. While each of these critiques presents at least some challenge to al-Fārābī's model, within the framework of his own metaphysics, al-Fārābī is able to provide justification for his use of beneficent political deception. They are all, in part, interrelated. So, before turning to al-Fārābī's response, I will define each critique more clearly in turn, in order to more sharply focus the conversation.

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[30] Popper 2013, 83-84.

3.1. Paternalistic Control of Information

The first critique of Plato by Crossman and Popper is the most obvious incompatibility between political deception and liberal values. Political deception, by definition, requires the withholding of truth from the populace and the substitution of that truth for a falsehood. Within a democratic context, this means determining citizens' political power without their consent, because, after all, they do not even know that it is a lie to which they are consenting.[31] It should not be forgotten within this theoretical discussion of propaganda, deceit, and lies that political deception, with or without the qualification that it is 'beneficent', is first and foremost a false depiction of reality to others who are intended to take the falsehood to be true. To assert one's right to dictate (or, equally brazenly, to accept the onus of dictating) the terms of reality to a fellow human being requires either an inherent lack of empathy or a necessity born out of profoundly unfortunate circumstances. In either case, political lies are, by nature, paternalistic. The only question that remains is whether there can be cases of justifiable paternalism. Are there circumstances unfortunate enough that some rational agents must necessarily restrict access to information and coerce other rational agents to believe in falsehoods?

Moreover, even if such a state of affairs can be justified, it does not seem apparent that just any substitution for the truth will do. If, say, there are some citizens to whom one must lie, not every kind of lie can be justified. A lie which causes undue harm or which inhibits access to a good life is clearly never acceptable. Even a neutral lie that lacks benefit for the infantilized subject seems like an abuse of power. And even still, a lie

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[31] See Chapter 1, 1.2.

which confers benefit upon the infantilized subject is surely not justifiable if a smaller, less egregious, lie is available. While accepting the (perhaps dubious) premise that paternalism can be justified through necessity, greater restrictiveness is still required.

For example, imagine a (literally) paternalistic lie: Santa delivers presents to children on Christmas Eve. This lie we tell our children is surely not justifiable in absolutist terms; it is not necessary. The affability of this Christmas myth is in its low stakes and the presumed benefits it affords (e.g., a shared sense of social history, the instillation of the feeling the "magic of Christmas" in children, the excuse for parents to eat a few more cookies prior to their children waking, etc.). But one can imagine two distinct instantiations of this lie: one which contains its own exposure and another which insists upon itself. The former, which is typical, says that Santa delivers presents to all children across the world in a single night, coming down chimneys one by one. The clever child or the maturing child is able to ask questions: 'How does he deliver toys to every house in one night?'; 'How does he fit down the chimney?'; 'Does Santa deliver toys to children whose religious traditions do not celebrate Christmas?'; 'Why do Santa's presents come with price tags?' Eventually, they will stumble upon the reality: Santa is merely a mythic tradition which inspires feelings of generosity at Christmas. But we can also imagine the latter, a version of the lie which insists upon itself. Questions are met with ready responses: 'Santa follows a particular set of flight paths using proprietary Santatech$^®$'; 'Santa uses Pym particles to shrink and grow at will'; 'Santa delivers presents to non-Christian children on other holidays'; 'Santa is a minority stakeholder in Wal-Mart'. Ultimately, further questions are met with censorship, as will be discussed below (e.g., 'Stop asking so many questions'). Surely, the former case can be considered

innocuous enough, but the latter borders on abuse of parental authority. It is one thing to tell a lie prior to the giving of explicit consent and another entirely to insist upon a lie once consent has been explicitly denied. (After all, what is questioning if not an insistence that one deserves the truth?) It seems that even if one justifies lying, one cannot justify insisting upon a lie. Even better than a lie which does not insist upon itself would be a lie which mitigates the inherent harm of deception by containing the keys to its own rejection, i.e., a lie which hints at the truth. This seems to be the standard by which justification is possible. Otherwise, political deception would simply be a rank abuse of power and the intentional harm of one's fellow citizens.

3.2. Rejection of Equality, Freedom, and Self-Government

Deception is, at its heart, a rejection of equality. Either it is the case that certain subjects, according to nature, do not merit equal access to the truth, or circumstances dictate that equal access to the truth is not tenable. In either case, the effect of a lie is the creation of an in-group and out-group. Some know the truth; some believe a fiction. Insofar as the in-group initiates the creation of the out-group (or enforces it by disingenuously endorsing a convenient falsehood), they reject, in practice, a belief in equality as it pertains to accessing truth.

Rejecting equality, freedom, and self-governance is not, in principle, *prima facie* unjustifiable. After all, if, as Jefferson writes, the truth "that all men are created equal" is as "self-evident" as he describes, the American War of Independence would not have needed to be fought (nor, would the American Civil War have been necessary).[32] Instead, it seems more accurate to say something along the lines of 'it ought to be self-evident that

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[32] See Conclusion 3.2 for more.

all human being are created equal' or some such. Needless to say, throughout human history the equality, innate freedom, and right to self-governance of individuals has not been universally recognized. There are ways to justify inequality. To say that these justifications fail, insofar as their premises are false, is not the same as to say that they are not justifications. To say that inequality is not ever successfully justified is not the same as to say that inequality is not justifiable in principle. Again, here, the discussion is not yet concerned with the truth or falsity of the reasons through which one justifies political deception. Soundness will be address in the concluding chapter. Rather, this project aims to examine the structure of such justifications. How *could* one justify inequality and, in particular, the inequality of lies?

One more thing ought to be said. To merely claim that inequality is justifiable is less tenable than giving reasons explaining the necessity of inequality. Moreover, claiming that one has reasons which justify inequality is less tenable than demonstrating how one *knows* that inequality is necessary. I take it as a point of principle that only the latter case truly approaches justifiability. The innate human desire for self-governance, freedom, and equal treatment is such that to deny it would need the most unimpeachable justification. From the standpoint of liberalism, no one deserves to have their autonomy stripped away from them, full-stop. But even from the standpoint of other worldviews, it seems apparent that no one deserves to have their autonomy stripped away from them if such an act is based upon a guess or a mere opinion.

3.3. Hereditary Caste

A lie whose effect is to establish a caste system which allows no possibility for upward mobility is unjustifiable. A lie which establishes inequality upon the basis of birth is beyond the pale. Even within the context of a project which is trying to understand the inner workings of political deception *on its own terms*, I am unwilling, given the historical abuse of such 'justifications', to seriously consider that any political system which initiates or devolves into a caste system based upon heredity is worthy of moral consideration.[33]

3.4. Censorship

The censorship critique of political deception follows a similar pattern to some of the critiques mentioned above. If the truth is censored, then political power, autonomy, and freedom are also censored. But censorship highlights a second component of potential injustice in a political arrangement built upon untruth, namely the speech act and belief, itself. Prior to now, the critique has focused upon access to truth, but censorship adds a prohibition against the expression of truth to the mixture. Put another way, one can discuss censorship in either the sense of a) a government's restriction upon official speech or b) the government's restriction upon individual speech. The former censors access to the truth; the latter censors and censures the expression of truth. Both instances are repugnant to liberalism, but only the latter adds something unique to the previous critiques.

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[33] Plato, himself, even seems embarrassed of the hereditary implications of his position, when he highlights the caveat that maybe some intergenerational social mobility is possible. See *Republic* 414b–415d.

This critique is further complicated by the two domains in which censorship can occur: the public and the private. Censorship of public speech, while illiberal, is not *prima facie* unjustifiable. After all, censorship of certain public speech acts (e.g., classified information, hate speech, etc.) is familiar even within liberal democratic contexts. Even more restrictive censorship seems plausibly justifiable if the public good (in coordination with the individual good) is necessarily predicated upon the conformity of public speech. (Again, to say that the world does not necessitate the conditions by which censorship would be required is distinct from saying that the world could not necessitate such conditions in principle.) But the restriction of private speech seems intrinsically unjustifiable. To limit private speech, and thus belief, to a lie, means divorcing an individual from the truth forever. This level of censorship does more than posit the necessity of deception insofar as some rational agents are incapable of knowing the truth, but, instead, insists upon the rectitude of deception even when rational agents are capable of knowing the truth (as said rational agents are not, even in private, afforded the opportunity to learn and discuss). Private censorship would require inhuman conditions, either a society in which belief itself was legislated (something which is surely impossible) or in which the expression of belief is legislated even amidst the confines of the home (something which is surely cruel). Any justified censorship must surely, thus, restrict itself to public discourse.

3.5. The Identification of the State with the Ruling Class

Popper's critique that Plato identifies the fate or success of the state with the fate or success of the ruling class hinges upon Popper's justifiable belief that there is nothing which intrinsically distinguishes the ruling class from the *hoi polloi*. But, given a

metaphysics which necessitates an intrinsic distinction between the capabilities of individual members of society, there is no reason to suggest that a politics which identifies the success of the state with the success of the ruling class is *prima facie* unjust. To say that a world which contains intrinsic inequality resulting in distinct levels of possible human fulfillment is not the best of all possible worlds is distinct from saying that a politics, within the context of a deficient world, cannot be justified in evaluating its success upon the highest levels of human fulfillment. Justice, in this kind of deficient world, seems to require a politics which maximizes the happiness of all human agents within the political sphere, insofar as happiness is constrained by nature. But the use of the happiness of the ruling class as a metric for the success of a *polis* seems justifiable, given certain metaphysical conditions.

3.6. Totalitarianism

While Popper and Crossman's critique of Plato's totalitarianism encompasses all of the aforementioned issues noted above, one aspect concerning the unjustifiability of totalitarianism should be noted, namely, the relationship between totalitarianism and knowledge. Foundationally, prior to concerns about speech, equality, etc., totalitarianism is unjustifiable because political governance is messy. Given the imprecision of knowing the good life, the ordering of the well-ordered city, and the correct course of action in the context of the particularity of political life, and given the, seemingly obvious, fact that no human being has privileged access to the truths of politics, no rational agent has the right to rule over another. Political power must be built upon the consent of equally fallible creatures. Given universal epistemic uncertainty, no rational agent can justifiably orient

the lives of others without their consent. For if one is to justifiably mandate that another

orient themselves toward a perceived good, one must first know that said good is, in fact,

good. It is precisely in light of the messiness of the world that Winston Churchill

famously said:

> Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin
> and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed it has been
> said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other
> forms that have been tried from time to time...[34]

Democracy, as opposed to totalitarianism, is not perfect by any stretch of the imagination,

but given the epistemic uncertainty which lies at the heart of the human condition "in this

world of sin and woe", democracy, i.e., consent, is minimally injurious.

Yet again, this critique relies on a certain conception of metaphysics, one with

which both Plato and al-Fārābī disagree. They recognize the multiplicity inherent to

democracy, acknowledging the good that arises in a democratic context while

admonishing the evils which occur concurrently.[35] Their view of democracy is not

dissimilar to Churchill's own; it is a form of government of mixed quality. But unlike

Churchill, they posit an alternative which allows for an unconditionally good political

system, insofar as knowledge of the unconditional good is viewed as possible within their

metaphysics. The totalitarian justification in Plato and al-Fārābī is grounded upon their

belief that human beings can, at least in principle, have total knowledge of the truth.

Surely, Churchill's historicity presents a more empirically grounded view of human

governance and limitations, but rejecting the underlying metaphysics of a justified

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[34] Churchill 1947.
[35] See, for example, *PS* 18.18; *PR* 99f.; *Republic* 557cf.; 563df.

totalitarianism is distinct from rejecting the justification of totalitarianism from Plato and al-Fārābī's metaphysics, itself.

4. Al-Fārābī's Justification for Beneficent Political Deception

Given the legwork done in previous chapters, al-Fārābī's ability to sidestep these problems is apparent. While he is committed to beneficent political deception, his entire model ensures that each and every beneficent political deception is minimally injurious. In fact, given the underlying nature of the recipients of his beneficent political deception they are maximally beneficent, giving citizens the maximum possible chance for happiness. The deceptions are themselves tethered to the truth, allow for (and empower) upward mobility, encourage virtue and maximal happiness, and educate the citizenry. Where Popper and Crossman's critiques are inevitable, al-Fārābī rejects that they are critiques of his ethics. Equality as a principle is well and good, but al-Fārābī's metaphysics, through the contrary motions of the heavens, necessitate unequally distributed deficiency. Identifying the state with the *hoi polloi* is charitable, but in a cosmos in which the human species (and all of the sublunar world) is only teleologically fulfilled through the actualization of the most elite of human individuals, it is metaphysically wrongheaded. Self-rule is a beautiful ideal, but it will impinge on even marginal happiness when the city is no longer oriented toward virtue. Put simply, beneficent political deception is not merely permitted for al-Fārābī; it is required.

Taking the objections above in turn, while al-Fārābī is susceptible to critiques of totalitarianism, paternalism, and inequality, his totalitarianism and paternalism is in response to a natural inequality found in nature. The world and humans with it are constituted through the contrary motions of the heavens rendering the world deficient.

The heat and light of the heavens do not apply across all matter equally, and, thus, there is inequality in nature amongst nations and individuals. And while the Secondary Causes, through the Active Intellect, provide an opportunity for human happiness, this happiness is not available to all. Moreover, as a result of the deficiency of human beings in general, humans are only capable of happiness in the context of community and cooperation, which, given individual deficiency, cannot occur by self-rule. Thus, the only available options are: a) live in a community in which only a few individuals are truly happy, while the rest of the community is maximally happy; or b) live in a community in which everyone is equally unhappy. Within this context, forming a community, even a totalitarian one, which orients the community toward maximal happiness is clearly justified.

But totalitarianism does not entail dishonesty. One can be a totalitarian and tell the truth. Yet here again, al-Fārābī's metaphysics necessitate beneficent deception. A virtuous city is such that its citizens believe and act according to the principles by which exemplary members can attain true happiness and typical members can attain maximal happiness. But demonstrations and truth are not sufficient for the political rule which enables cooperation, given the deficiency of human persons; a leader must "rouse imagination".[36] That said, as noted above, requiring the replacement of demonstrative knowledge with deception, rhetoric, and images in public discourse is not carte blanche permissibility for any form of deception, rhetoric, or images. They must be minimally injurious deceptions. Here al-Fārābī clearly feels the ethical pull of the truth, because, while he clearly believes that the truth is only known through philosophy, and thus

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[36] *PS* 15.11.

philosophers, he insists that any and all images be likenesses of the truth or near-truths.

Even when fellow humans are incapable of knowledge, al-Fārābī insists upon maximally

true untruths, which, through the poetic syllogism, orient the citizenry toward a life of

virtue. Moreover, al-Fārābī even uses the very falsehood of the images he recommends

to serve as a pedagogical tool. As he describes in *PS* 17.3, one of the citizens may put

"his finger on the grounds for objection to those symbols and [hold] that they are

inadequate and false". Using these objections, anyone in the city may climb from the

ranks of those who use the symbols and images of religion to the rank of the

philosophers, themselves. Not only does al-Fārābī reject the hereditary caste system as

found in Plato's Phoenician Story, he rejects a rigid caste system altogether, allowing for

anyone with the disposition for philosophy to rise to the highest political ranks. This also

bespeaks the kind of censorship which al-Fārābī recommends. Unlike Averroes (and even

Avicenna), al-Fārābī does not seem to fear questioning the images of religion. While

there is certainly a religious and educational program in al-Fārābī's city which publicly

enforces the symbols and images of religion, individual questioning is welcomed,

assuming that one rejects the images in favor of the truth.[37] Instead, those who desire

more truth and have a disposition enabling their advancement receive further education.

Unlike Plato, who stifles upward mobility through a lie, al-Fārābī's beneficent deceptions

encourage education, enabling upward mobility.

Yet, al-Fārābī's political model still seems problematic, given Crossman and

Popper's critiques. Can one really justify a political regime based upon deception? What

gives the Imām the right to decide for other agents what is and is not true? What gives the

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[37] *PS* 15.4-6.

Imām the authority to take absolute rulership, rulership even over the truths of religion? This is the point upon which al-Fārābī's entire justification hinges.

Al-Fārābī's Imām is not merely well-intentioned. He is not simply the most intelligent member of the city. He does not give his best guess at the good life. Nor does he establish religious imagery upon truths that he believes to be true. Beneficent political deception is not built upon conjecture; it stems from knowledge.

Al-Fārābī's Imām is certain. He knows, and he knows that he knows. He even knows why he knows. He knows the metaphysical cause for deficiency comes from the heavens. He knows "every action by which felicity can be reached".[38] And he knows that human happiness and cooperation is only enabled through beneficent political deception. He knows that communities require a Construction of Social Knowledge. He is like the heart in relation to the body; he is like the First in relation to the cosmos.[39] He is meant to rule on account of his knowledge. Only in the Imām's rectitude and certainty is al-Fārābī justified.

5. **Conclusion**

One question remains before settling whether al-Fārābī provides a justified model of political deception: how is it that the Imām is certain? Chapter 6 will explore al-Fārābī's notion of certainty and address in what manner and regarding what issues the Imām can have certain knowledge.

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[38] *PS* 15.11.
[39] See *PS* 15.5-6.

VI. CERTAINTY

1. <u>Introduction</u>

If there is to be any hope that Fārābīan beneficent political deception is justified,

it must be established in the certain knowledge of the Imām. Without certainty,

beneficent political deception cannot be warranted. While al-Fārābī can rely upon his

metaphysics as a bulwark against critiques like those found in Crossman and Popper in

Chapter 5, if the Imām aims to justify beneficent political deception, said metaphysics

cannot be mere conjecture. Put simply, a deception justified through other falsehoods is

not justified at all. Likewise, a deception justified through uncertain premises is not

properly justified. Given the gravity of deception and the preeminence of the truth, as

agreed to in Chapter 1, any justification for any single deception requires a higher

standard than mere belief. An entire political system built as a Construction of Social

Knowledge requires the highest degree of epistemic surety, both that it is necessary and

that it is minimally injurious.

Al-Fārābī, himself, seems to agree with this assessment, as he requires the

certainty of the legislator, i.e., the Imām. As he says, in the, now familiar, passage from

the *Attainment of Happiness* noted previously:

> Although it is the legislator who also represents (*yatakhayyalu*) these things
> (*hāḏihi al-ʾashīāʾ*) through images, neither the images (*mutakhayylāt*) nor the
> persuasive arguments (*muqannaʿāt*) are intended for himself. As far as he is
> concerned, they are certain (*balla yaqīnīa li-hu*). He is the one who invents
> (*ikhtaraʿa*) the images (*mutakhayylāt*) and the persuasive arguments
> (*muqannaʿāt*), but not for the sake of establishing these things in his own soul (*al-
> ʾashīāʾ fī nafs*) as a religion for himself (*malaka li-hu*). No, the images
> (*mutakhayyl*) and the persuasive arguments (*ʾiqnāʿ*) are intended for others,
> whereas, so far as he is concerned, these things are certain (*yaqīn*). They are a
> religion for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, they are philosophy

(*falsafa*). Such, then, is true philosophy (*al-falsafa bi-l-ḥaqīqa*) and the true philosopher (*al-faylasūf bi-l-ḥaqīqa*).[1]

The true philosophy upon which religion is built is not probable, possible, or likely, but rather certain (*yaqīn*). Prior to any expression of beneficent political deception, the legislator must know the truth in order to know both that deception is required and what manner of deception is required. Moreover, he must know that this deception will lead the city to happiness.

2. <u>Conditions of Certitude</u>

When al-Fārābī demands that the legislator ought to have certitude of that which he expresses within religion, he has a very specific conception of what certitude entails. As Deborah Black explains:

> 'Certitude' is identified as the cognitive state produced in the knower by her employment of demonstrative methods, in contrast to the inferior logical arts of dialectic, rhetoric, poetics, and sophistry, which produce cognitive states that approximate the certitude of demonstration in varying degrees.[2]

Certitude, for al-Fārābī, thus follows as the conclusion of the demonstrative method which Aristotle describes in *Prior and Posterior Analytics*, where he explains respectively , "A deduction is a discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so" and that these things which are initially stated are pre-existent knowledge and ultimately "depend on things which are true and primitive and immediate and more familiar than and prior to and explanatory of the conclusion".[3] In other words, certainty only occurs through a process

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[1] *AH* 44; *AH* (Ar.) 61.
[2] Black 2006, 11.
[3] *Prior Analytics* 24b19; *Posterior Analytics* 70b20.

in which certain first principles are used in syllogisms in order to lead to conclusions which are themselves certain as a consequence of their necessary relation to the certainty of the initial first principles. True first premises followed by valid deduction leads to certainty.

According to al-Fārābī, absolute certainty requires six specific conditions: 1) belief, 2) agreement between the belief and the external world, 3) knowledge of the correspondence between the belief and the external world, 4) that the untruth of the aforementioned correspondence is impossible, 5) that the truth of this belief is timeless, and 6) the essentiality of the truth of this belief.[4] And while there are relative grades of certitude provided by arts other than demonstration, absolute certitude is clearly the normal sense of the term *yaqīn*, the standard by which one must judge beneficent political deception according to the *Attainment of Happiness*.[5] Deborah Black helpfully designates the six conditions for certitude: the belief condition, the truth condition, the knowledge condition, the necessity condition, the eternity condition, and the non-accidentality condition, respectively.[6] For the Imām to be certain of the truths which are translated into the images which govern the city, his knowledge must meet this standard.

2.1. The Belief Condition

The first condition of certitude, the belief condition, is the most easily cleared hurdle for certitude, as it merely requires belief, and frankly, any belief will do. Al-Fārābī only uses this first condition to establish the parameters of the kind of thing of which

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[4] *CC* 97.
[5] Black 2006, 11-46.
[6] Black 2006, 16.

certitude is descriptive. Belief is the epistemological genus of all knowledge. As al-Fārābī

explains:

> Our saying "to believe of something that it is thus or not thus" is the genus of
> certitude. And there is no difference between calling this "belief" or calling it
> "consensus" (*al-ijmāʻ*) that the thing is thus or not thus. And this is opinion (*al-ra'y*). And what comes after this are the differentiae (*fuṣūl*) of certitude.[7]

Belief is simply the epistemological state of asserting the truth of some proposition.

Beyond this meager description, al-Fārābī moves on. As Black notes, "Since the belief

condition is relatively straightforward… he devotes most of his attention to explaining

the role of each of the five differentiae (*fuṣūl*) in specifying a subset of beliefs as

certain."[8]

2.2. The Truth Condition

The second condition for certitude is the truth condition. The truth condition

merely ensures that the belief one holds corresponds to the external world. Al-Fārābī

places caveats upon his initial externality definition to nuance scenarios in which one

questions the certitude of beliefs about beliefs, but these exceptions are beyond the scope

here.[9] He says:

> In our saying "to agree that it corresponds and is not opposed to what belongs to
> the existence of the thing externally," the meaning of "corresponds and is not
> opposed" is that if the soul's belief is affirmative, then this thing which is external
> (external to the belief, that is), is also affirmative, and if the belief is negative,
> then the thing which is external to the belief is negative. For this is the meaning of
> truth (*al-ṣidq*), namely, the relation (*iḍāfa*) of what belongs to the belief to the
> object of belief insofar as the latter is external to the soul, or insofar as it is
> external to the belief, or insofar as it is a subject (*mawḍū*) of the belief.[10]

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[7] *CC* 97.
[8] Black 2006, 17.
[9] See *CC* 97; Black 2006, 17-19.
[10] *CC* 97. Transliteration slightly modified.

The second condition is a correspondence condition. Given one's belief, does one's belief correspond to evidence? Is the world really how one believes it is? As al-Fārābī continues to whittle down the genus of belief, the first step is to determine if the belief is verified outside the mind.

2.3. The Knowledge Condition

The third condition of certitude, the knowledge condition, mandates that it is not enough for one to believe in something and for that thing to correspond to the external world; one must know that one's belief corresponds. As al-Fārābī explains:

> And our saying, "and to know that it corresponds and is not opposed to it," is only made a condition for [certitude] because it is conceivable that there should be agreement and that it correspond to the thing, but that believer is not aware that it corresponds, but rather, it is in his view possible that it may not correspond.[11]

It is possible, therefore, for someone to both believe a proposition and have that proposition correspond to the state of the external world and yet for that person to have no verification that her belief does correspond to the outside world. A person cannot be certain unless she knows *that* she knows. As Black explains:

> This allows Fārābī to introduce a level of second-order knowledge into the theory of demonstration without obvious regress or circularity. The object which one knows is now established as distinct from the object about which one is certain: knowledge is usually about the external world, e.g., my belief that "a human being is an animal"; whereas certitude concerns the status of my first-order belief about p, e.g., "My belief that 'human being is an animal' is true." If the third condition for certitude is absent, then, a person may indeed have a true belief that corresponds to some actual state of affairs, but she will not have the requisite second-order belief that this correspondence itself must hold.[12]

Certainty requires both correspondence and verification of said correspondence.

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[11] *CC* 97.
[12] Black 2006, 20.

2.4. The Necessity Condition

The fourth condition of certitude, the necessity condition, explains that for a belief to be certain it must be known that it corresponds to the world necessarily. In other words, it is not enough that the belief is true, nor enough that it is known to be true, but it must also be known to be true via a reliable method of ascertainment. As al-Fārābī explains:

> And our saying, "that it is not possible for it not to correspond or to be opposed," is the assurance (*ta'kīd*) and strength (*wathāqa*) by which conviction and belief (*al-i'tiqād wa-al-ra'y*) enter into the definition of certitude. And it is necessarily required that it does conform to it (and that it was not possible for it not to have corresponded to it), and that be in some state that is not possible to be opposed to it, but rather, it is in a state in which it is necessarily required that it correspond to it, and that it not be opposed to nor contradict it. And this strength and assurance in the belief itself is an inference/acquisition (*istifāda*) from the thing which produces [the belief]. This thing is either by nature (*bi-ṭabī'a*) or the syllogism.[13]

Put another way, al-Fārābī is restricting what can be known with certainty to that which is known innately (i.e., via first principles) and that which is known through demonstration. Following the *Posterior Analytics*, it is not enough to know the correspondence of the belief to the world, but one must know the cause of the knowledge of the correspondence of the belief to the world for the belief to constitute unqualified knowledge. If this condition is met, the belief can be known necessarily and in an unqualified way. As Aristotle explains:

> We think we understand a thing without qualification, and not in the sophistic, accidental way, whenever we think we know the cause in virtue of which something is—that it is the cause of that very thing—and also know that this cannot be otherwise. Clearly, knowledge (epistêmê) is something of this sort. After all, both those with knowledge and those without it suppose that this is so—although only those with knowledge are actually in this condition. Hence, whatever is known without qualification cannot be otherwise.[14]

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[13] *CC* 98. Transliteration slightly modified.
[14] *Posterior Analytics* 71b9–16.

That which is demonstrated cannot be doubted, because one knows that the veracity of the conclusion is guaranteed by the method of demonstration itself and the truth of the demonstration's premises. Given that the premises cannot be otherwise and the method cannot be otherwise, the conclusion of the demonstrative syllogism is guaranteed. As Black explains:

> The necessity condition itself, despite initial indications to the contrary, does not stipulate that only necessary propositions or necessary existents can be the objects of absolute certitude. Rather, the necessity condition states that the believer must not only know—that is, be aware—that her belief is true; she must also recognize that it is impossible for it to be false. And that impossibility, Fārābī rather cryptically explains, ultimately derives from the fact that the believer has acquired her belief by a process that ensures or necessitates cognitive success.[15]

The necessity condition is met by properly following a specific process which begins with first principles and continues via demonstration.

2.5. The Eternity Condition

The fifth condition, the eternity condition, limits certitude to universal subjects which cannot change. Al-Fārābī adds:

> And our saying, "And moreover that it is not possible for something opposed to it to exist at any time." This too is another additional assurance of the acquisition/inference of the belief from the assurance of the thing which is its subject in its existence outside the belief and its strength. For the first condition may also occur in sensibles and in existential propositions, whereas this [condition] may occur in beliefs whose subjects are unqualifiedly necessary intelligibles. For sensibles may be true, and it may be impossible for them to be opposed to our beliefs that they are such and such; however, they may either be capable (*mumkina*) of ceasing in an indeterminate time, such as Zayd's being seated; or it may be inevitable for them to cease at some determinate time, such as the eclipse of the moon which one is now seeing. Likewise universal existential propositions, like your saying, "Every human being is white." And as for what is not possible to be opposed, and not at any particular time, this is only in the case of the necessary intelligibles. For in this case the belief cannot become opposed to

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[15] Black 2006, 23-24.

existence at any particular time, nor can existence opposed to the belief at any particular time.[16]

Here, al-Fārābī restricts certitude to those things which are beyond corruption and decay. This condition, as Black notes, is not surprising for al-Fārābī to hold, as it "reflects the traditional assumption that knowledge can only be had of objects which are absolutely necessary in themselves, inasmuch as they are eternal and immutable".[17]

2.6. The Non-Accidentality Condition

The last condition required for certitude, the non-accidentality condition, is meant to ensure that the person who attains certitude does so using the proper method for gaining certitude, i.e., demonstration. Al-Fārābī finishes his list of conditions saying:

> And our saying, "that whatever of this occurs should occur essentially, not accidentally," is that by which the definition of unqualified certitude is completed. And this is because it is not impossible that all these things might arise in a human being by chance, rather than from things whose natural function is to cause them to arise.[18]

He raises the possibility of someone accidentally fulfilling the other conditions without using demonstration, e.g., someone who fulfills these conditions through overconfident trust in another person (a person who does have certitude) or someone who is driven by emotion to believe a particular (but true) claim.[19] But as Deborah Black notes, this final condition seems redundant, as the examples al-Fārābī gives seem not to meet the other conditions, e.g., the overconfident, trusting person does not meet the necessity condition,

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[16] *CC* 100. Transliteration slightly modified.
[17] Black 2006, 25.
[18] *CC* 100.
[19] *CC* 101.

insofar as the method is not necessary, and the emotional person does not meet either the knowledge or the necessity conditions. As Black clarifies:

> The principal function of Fārābī's sixth criterion is to eliminate those rare but conceivable cases in which all the conditions of certitude are met by chance. Fārābī's motivations for adding this sixth condition are closely tied up with his concern to differentiate philosophically demonstrative certitude from dialectical and rhetorical conviction. But his account is puzzling in some ways, since the other five conditions taken conjointly (and in some cases even in isolation), seem sufficiently strong to rule out any such chance occurrences.[20]

The sixth condition seems to lack value above and beyond the previous five.

3. **The Certainty of the Imām**

Given al-Fārābī's robust conception of certainty, one might scoff at first glance at finding any worthwhile beneficent political deception which is grounded in certainty. If politics is the sphere of the particular and certainty only pertains to the demonstrable and eternal, what overlap is available for the Imām? Ethical and political certainty, the primary domain of religious images and law, seem particularly elusive, due to their inexactitude. From an Aristotelian perspective, ethics deals primarily with particulars, not universals, and can be at best an inexact application of universal truths, just like the sciences of medicine and navigation.[21] (As will be discussed below, al-Fārābī seems to part with Aristotle on this topic.) Another Aristotelian concern regarding certitude of ethics comes from the questionable reliability of a human being's acquisition of foundational first ethical principles, which come from a variety of sources, e.g., induction, perception, well established popular truths, habituation, etc.[22] It is likely due to

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[20] Black 2006, 29.
[21] *NE* 2.2.
[22] *NE* 1.7.

this plurality of sources for first principles and the contingency of some of them (e.g.,

culture and circumstance seem to play a fundamental role in both 'established truths' and

'habituation') that Aristotle concedes that ethics admits of variation and that ethics differs

in its precision compared to other sciences.[23]

This challenge in Aristotle is due in part to the fact that first principles

themselves, whether ethical first principles or otherwise, are a confounding topic in the

Aristotelian corpus. Aristotle himself raises the concern in *Posterior Analytics* in a

famous passage. He says:

> Some people think that since knowledge obtained via demonstration requires
> the knowledge of primary things, there is no knowledge. Others think that
> there is knowledge and that all knowledge is demonstrable. Neither of these
> views is either true or necessary. The first group, those supposing that there is
> no knowledge at all, contend that we are confronted with an infinite regress.
> They contend that we cannot know posterior things because of prior things if
> none of the prior things is primary. Here what they contend is correct: it is
> indeed impossible to traverse an infinite series. Yet, they maintain, if the
> regress comes to a halt, and there are first principles, they will be unknowable,
> since surely there will be no demonstration of first principles—given, as they
> maintain, that only what is demonstrated can be known. But if it is not
> possible to know the primary things, then neither can we know without
> qualification or in any proper way the things derived from them. Rather, we
> can know them instead only on the basis of a hypothesis, to wit, if the primary
> things obtain, then so too do the things derived from them. The other group
> agrees that knowledge results only from demonstration, but believes that
> nothing stands in the way of demonstration, since they admit circular and
> reciprocal demonstration as possible.[24]

Regarding first principles there are two possibilities: either they are indemonstrable and

therefore knowledge is impossible or they are demonstrable, themselves requiring a

demonstration via other first principles, which themselves require first principles, *ad*

nauseum. The former position mandates skepticism; the latter mandates belief in circular

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[23] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.3.
[24] *Posterior Analytics* 72b5–21.

demonstration. In either case, first principles do not seem to provide the Archimedean point for logic which certitude demands. (Ultimately, Aristotle proposes a third way, in which we acquire first principles through perception. He explains, "And from experience, or from the whole universal that has come to rest in the soul [as a result of perception] (the one apart from the many, whatever is one and the same in all those things), there comes a principle of skill and understanding…"[25] Any further discussion as to the meaning or the success of this approach goes beyond the scope of this project, but, needless to say, al-Fārābī seems sensitive to the issue).

Whether as a response to the aforementioned issues in Aristotle or otherwise, al-Fārābī departs from the Stagirite, grounding his first principles within the interaction between the human intellect and the Active Intellect, thereby having the Active Intellect act as a guarantor for their rectitude. He says while addressing the issue of certainty:

> The knowledge that is a virtue of the theoretical part is for the soul to attain certainty of the beings whose existence and constitution owe nothing at all to human artifice, as well as about what each one is and how it is, from demonstrations composed of accurate, necessary, universal, and primary premises of which the intellect becomes certain and attains knowledge by nature.[26]

Those first principles which are required to know are known by human beings by nature in accordance with the activity of the Active Intellect. As al-Fārābī explains in the *Perfect State*:

> When, then, that thing which corresponds to light in the case of sight arises in the rational faculty from the 'Active Intellect', intelligibles arise at the same time in the rational faculty from the sensibles which are preserved in the faculty of representation. Those are the first intelligibles which are common to all men, as for example, that the whole is greater than the part, and that things equal in size to one and the same thing are all equal to another. The common first intelligibles are of three kinds, (a) the principles of the productive skills, (b) the principles by which one becomes aware of good and evil in man's actions, (c) the principles

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[25] *Posterior Analytics* 100a1-10.
[26] *SA* 51.

which are used for knowing the existents which are not the objects of man's actions, and their primary principles and ranks: such as the heavens and the first cause and the other primary principles and what happens to come to be out of those primary principles.[27]

Primary principles exist in human beings potentially according to nature but are only brought about through the activity of the Active Intellect which brings about the principles of intellection.[28] As al-Fārābī details:

This intellect may be potential as long as it has not attained these first [things]. When it attains them, it becomes an intellect in act and of a powerful disposition for inferring what remains. With respect to what it attains, it is not possible that error befall this faculty; indeed, it is not possible for anything pertaining to the sciences to befall it other than what is certainly accurate.[29]

The Active Intellect functions as a guarantor of the theoretical faculty's rectitude and ensures the necessity of its first principles and thus any further demonstration dependent upon these first principles.[30]

Interestingly, the first principles the Active Intellect provides extend well beyond "the whole is greater than the part" or the law of non-contradiction. According to al-Fārābī, those first principles provided by the Active Intellect include things like "the principles by which one becomes aware of good and evil" and "the principles which are used for knowing... the first cause and the other primary principles and what happens to come to be out of those primary principles".[31] In other words, the Active Intellect provides humans with the first principles of ethics and the first principles of metaphysics. Moreover, it provides humans with the ability to know what ensues as a result of the

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[27] *PS* 13.2-3.

[28] Elsewhere, al-Fārābī claims that the Active Intellect gives us these first principles. *PR* 74. See also, Chapter 3, 3.2.1.

[29] *SA* 50-51.

[30] It should be noted that al-Fārābī denies certitude itself to these principles in the *Epitome to the Posterior Analytics* 23-24, but seems to be simply following Aristotle in arguing that they cannot be proven by demonstration.

[31] *PS* 13.3. See also *EI* 9-10.

primary principles of the cosmos (presumably, including the doctrines discussed in Chapter 3 which necessitate beneficent political deception). As a result, an Imām could conceivably have certain knowledge about both metaphysical and ethical/political truths.

3.1. Knowledge of Metaphysics

While knowledge of the First Cause and the Secondary Causes may seem like a peculiar avenue for beneficent political deception aimed at producing happiness within the city, al-Fārābī views knowledge of the immaterial beings as paramount to a virtuous city. As al-Fārābī explains, in order to lead the city to happiness, the city must believe in the First Cause and the Secondary Causes. This is not only because true happiness is achieved when a human reaches the status of the acquired intellect, the stage which denotes the human attainment of universal knowledge and designates transcendence over material life.[32] (As was addressed in Chapter 3, once someone philosophically adept has abstracted all the intelligibles from things which are forms in matters, one can shift one's attention to those things which are not, never were, nor never will be in matter, i.e., the immaterial existents like the First Cause and the Active Intellect.)[33] Rather, the Imām must know the Secondary Causes as they really are and provide images to those who cannot know, allowing them to receive an image of the truth as likenesses in their souls.[34] As al-Fārābī explains, the first and second universal characteristics of all excellent cities, regardless of differences in culture, taste, and familiar symbolism, is belief in the First cause and the other immaterial existents.[35] Yet, these things can be "known in two ways,

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[32] *PS* 15.10-11; *PR* 81. See Chapter 3, 3.2.1.1.
[33] *EI* 20.
[34] *PR* 85.
[35] *PS* 17.1.

either by being impressed in their soul as they really are or by being impressed on them through affinity (*munāsaba*) and symbolic representation (*mathīl*)".[36] The ultimate principles should be known by all, but "the vulgar ought to comprehend merely the similitudes of these principles".[37] Whereas the foremost cause of happiness in a nation is having a legislator who develops a science which achieves certain demonstration of the immaterial beings, having a legislator who develops a rhetorical science and a method of persuasion which leads the citizens of the nation to similitudes of the immaterial existents in their souls is also critical for the success of the perfect and happy nation.[38] Without the Imām's certitude to ground the other methods by which happiness can be achieved, the rest of the city would not know the immaterial beings at all. Without the Imām's political deception, most of the citizenry would lack even an image of the Secondary Causes.

And, given al-Fārābī's suggestion that "the principles which are used for knowing... the first cause and the other primary principles and what happens to come to be out of those primary principles" are given to us directly by the Active Intellect, one can readily conceive of how, at least in principle, the Imām knows the First Cause and Secondary Causes with certainty.[39] Via the belief in the Secondary Causes and the First Cause, the external evidence of their activity by the motion of the heavens, the first principles given to us by nature (*bi-ṭabī'a*) to know the First Cause and Secondary Causes, and the eternality of their substances, one can readily see how a demonstration and certainty could be produced.[40] The Imām believes in the Secondary Causes. The

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[36] *PS* 17.2.
[37] *AH* 36-37; *AH* (Ar.) 53.
[38] *AH 39*-40; *AH* (Ar.) 55-56.
[39] *PS* 13.3.
[40] *CC* 98.

belief corresponds. He verifies his belief. He is able to demonstrate his belief with certain premises (given the first principles provided by the Active Intellect). And the object of his belief is eternal. The Imām could, in principle, have certitude concerning the Intellects, justifying his production of images of the Secondary Causes (e.g., angels and the like).

3.2. Knowledge of Ethics

Ethics and politics exhibit a more difficult case. Moreover, the lack of any extant copies of al-Fārābī's *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* make any precision about this topic near impossible.[41] That said, a similar pattern could be adopted, given al-Fārābī's suggestion that "the principles by which one becomes aware of good and evil in man's actions" are produced in the human intellect by the Active Intellect.[42] And in fact, at times, al-Fārābī suggests that demonstration within the science of ethics is possible, even saying that there exists "demonstrative proof for the determined actions that are in virtuous religion".[43] While the form of any such demonstration would likely take the shape of a practical syllogism (for example: 1) All humans desire to know; 2) Reading this book will help me learn; therefore, I will read this book), as Thérèse-Anne Druart notes, practical syllogisms are not, strictly speaking, demonstrative, given that they conclude in actions not propositions.[44] The kind of reasoning al-Fārābī suggests seems to look more like this:

1) All humans desire to know.

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[41] See Chapter 2, 4.2.3.
[42] *PS* 13.3.
[43] *BR* 47. See Druart 97, 407.
[44] *De Anima* 434a15-20; *De Motu* 701a20-24; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1147a-23-30. See Druart 97, 407. See also Broadie 1968.

2) Studying regularly increases knowledge.
∴ Humans ought to have a time devoted to study.

From this proof, one can readily imagine why an Imām might construct a myth establishing the Sabbath, with instructions to study the religious law on that sacred day. The image, the political deception, is born out of demonstration.

Given the first principles al-Fārābī suggests are available from the Active Intellect, one can see how knowledge of this type could be certain. The value of study (and free time to study) is believable. It corresponds to human nature. It is verifiable in experience. And it is produced (given the first principles provided by the Active Intellect) via a necessary method, i.e., demonstration. It could also be argued to be eternal, if one takes the subject matter to be the universal human being, i.e., the intelligible, as such, not any individual human. Thus, the Imām has adequate knowledge to ground his justified beneficent political deception.

4. <u>Images in Flux</u>

One final note should be mentioned before advancing to the conclusion of this project. While al-Fārābī provides the mechanisms by which the Imām can have certain knowledge, the images of religion are never themselves certain. In universal terms, one can justify political deception as necessary using al-Fārābī's model, and even suggest that it is built upon universal knowledge, but there are no mechanisms which justify any particular beneficent deception. The expression of philosophy "through those symbols which are best known" to the people of any given city is not measurable or assessible in any meaningful way.[45] While the religious law can be judged according to its effect (i.e.,

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[45] *PS* 17.2.

whether it is functioning as a successful poetic syllogism), there is no knowable justification for why any particular image is used, because knowledge does not extend to particularity. No argument can determine the exact nearness of an image to the truth. Images qua particulars are untruths. They are never near the truth, except insofar as they lead to virtuous action and belief which accords with the truth.

Al-Fārābī seems to recognize this problem when he builds a corrective into his system. In the *Perfect State*, one of the qualities of the second ruler is his ability "to meet new situations for which the first sovereigns could not have laid down any law".[46] In the *Political Regime*, al-Fārābī even discussed reform:

> Just as it is permissible for one of them to change a Law he legislated at one moment if he is of the opinion that it is more fitting to change it at another moment, so may the one now present who succeeds the one who has passed away change what the one who has passed away has already legislated. For the one who has passed away would change [it] himself, were he to observe the [new] condition. When there does not happen to be a human being of this condition, the Laws that the former [kings] prescribed or ordained are to be adopted, then written down and preserved...[47]

Given the particularity of religious images, their efficacy is constrained by context. Eventually, their pedagogical and social value will diminish, requiring new images to take their place. Beneficent political deception might be justifiable on a universal level, but the truth will out.

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[46] *PS* 15.13.
[47] *PR* 80-81.

VII. CONCLUSION

1. <u>The Necessary and Known Next Best Thing</u>

In Chapter 1, I argued that to advance the conversation surrounding the tension between the *realpolitik* need for political deception and the *prima facie* prohibition against political deception, one required a philosophical exploration of the topic which recognized the horns of the dilemma, yet tried to navigate it anyway. Finding a robust and meaningful justification for political deception, which neither dismissed the tension between truth and expediency out of hand nor denied the pull of the truth itself, could spark a deeper understanding of the shape of political deception and what a justified version might look like.

In al-Fārābī, one finds a successful justification for beneficent political deception, as long as one grants him his metaphysical premises. The construction of religious imagery in his model is not born out of frivolity; it is necessitated. His beneficent political deception is not untethered from reality; it educates. In a meaningful sense, within his metaphysics, beneficent deception is not only 'the next best' thing, it is better than the simple truth, insofar as unmediated truth leads those unequipped for knowledge into confusion and error. Beneficent deception serves as a surrogate of the truth for those who cannot encounter the truth directly. Most importantly, al-Fārābī's Construction of Social Knowledge is grounded in knowledge: knowledge of its own necessity, knowledge of the truths it emulates, and knowledge of its own knowledge. Al-Fārābī's beneficent political deception is fully justified as necessary, known, and 'the next best' thing to problematic simple truth, when one grants him the truth of his metaphysics.

But rather than strengthening the case for the usefulness of political deception as such, al-Fārābī's successful model reveals how feeble a tool political deception is when limiting its usage to justifiable conditions. (Of course, the *realpolitik* efficacy of political lies without moral scruples is not in dispute.) Beneficent political deception, that species of political deception purported to be found in Plato and successfully expounded in al-Fārābī, is self-limiting. Beneficence, unsurprisingly, constrains the potency of deception. Ethical considerations constrict the usage of deception to an exceedingly narrow set of conditions, even when adopting Fārābīan metaphysics, e.g., the establishment of images and laws which orient the citizens of a city toward the good life. No more should one hear talk about the "noble lie" as an impetus to advance a specific war, a military action, an economic or healthcare policy, or a particular policy position.[1] Such lies cannot, in principle, be noble. Even within Fārābīan metaphysics, noble lies or beneficent political deceptions are only warranted concerning universal, not particular, truths, because necessity only concerns the universal.[2]

It is important to highlight, at the risk of redundancy, that al-Fārābī's entire enterprise is founded upon a very particular conception of reality. Beneficent political deception is only beneficent insofar as the world necessitates the impossibility of truth as

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[1] For example, the language of "noble lies" has been used inappropriately to describe: the impetus behind the Second Gulf War (Mason 2004; Drury and Postel 2003; Leupp 2013); the portrayals of Columbus, the bombing of Hiroshima, and the Second Gulf War in American Civic Education (Burch 2007); a variety of popular medical simplifications and dogmas (Greenberg 2008); the notion of Irish Nationalism (Coakley 1983); the justification for certain treatments of epilepsy (Gallagher 2013); the appropriateness and adequacy of reparations (Bass 2012); class difference in a contemporary context (Andrew 1989); and rhetoric surrounding the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Welch 2014). I make no claims as to the accuracy about the depiction of these topics as 'lies' or even falsehoods, nor am I suggesting that there was ill-intent concerning any of these subjects. Rather, I am making the more pedantic point that policies which do not reflect the universal end of human life cannot, in principle, be 'noble'. Moreover, policies which do not ground themselves in a metaphysics and epistemology which empower certain deceptions to be 'noble' cannot be 'noble'.

[2] See Chapter 6, 2.5.

a political tool, and this impossibility is knowable, demonstrable, and certain. Al-Fārābī's

justification for beneficent political deception does not justify political deception *in toto*,

nor does it justify merely benevolent political deception.[3] Deception, at least in reference

to the Fārābīan model, is only justified in light of its positive result, the reliance upon

deception to achieve this positive result, and knowledge about the necessity of reliance

upon deception to achieve this positive result by the author of said deceit.[4] Al-Fārābī's

example does not give *carte blanche* permission for lying in politics. Rather, his care and

rigor restrict the possible use of political deception to only those circumstances which can

emulate this care and rigor, a rigor expressed in his careful explication of the causes of

intelligibility and deficiency via a scrupulous charting of the cosmos. And even still, al-

Fārābī's justification hinges entirely upon the truth of this metaphysics.

2. <u>Unwieldy Conditions</u>

But no one should ever grant al-Fārābī the truth of his metaphysics (unless, of

course, one is writing a ~400 page thought experiment about him). There are significant

problems raised for his entire worldview by the heliocentric model of the solar system

and contemporary findings within biology, neuroscience, and the philosophy of mind.

Moreover, one should never grant an interlocutor, without some skepticism, a premise as

powerful as the Active Intellect, a near-literal *deus ex machina*. The Active Intellect

performs many of the most difficult to explain functions in al-Fārābī's metaphysics, from

granting humans the power of intellection, providing divination and revelation, and

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[3] See Chapter 1, Footnote 19.
[4] This emphasis on results should not be read in a utilitarian sense, but rather to distinguish between deceptions which merely intend positive outcomes (as if opinion is sufficient) and those which are known to result in the best possible association.

emanating (at times) the forms, to providing, wholesale, all of the most difficult truths of human existence as first principles to the human mind. In short, concerning the perennial problems which plague Neo-Aristotelian philosophy, the Active Intellect functions as a metaphysical panacea. Even without the problems raised by more modern understandings of the universe, human beings, and natural history, al-Fārābī's metaphysics should be viewed with more skepticism. In light of modern astronomy, physics, biology, and psychology, al-Fārābī's metaphysics is in even more dire straits. Put simply, al-Fārābī's metaphysics is false. I take this fact to be uncontroversial.

That said, al-Fārābī's systematic and intricate care reveals something insightful about political deception writ large. Justifying political deception takes an enormous amount of work. Were one to try to recreate a model of justified political deception using contemporary metaphysics, think of the onerous conditions one must meet in order to simply mirror al-Fārābī's own justification. One would need:

1) A particular conception of human beings in which some, but not all, human beings are capable of knowledge
2) A means by which one could distinguish between the groups in (1) or a mechanism through which the groups self-select
3) A particular conception of human beings in which truth is harmful to some, but not all, human beings
4) A means by which one could distinguish between both the groups in (3) and those to whom truth in neutral or a mechanism through which the groups self-select
5) A particular psychology which allows for a functional replacement of the truth
6) A particular epistemology which allows for 'near-truths'
7) A particular metaphysics which justifies (1), (3), (5), and (6)
8) An understanding of human happiness and how it is obtained
9) Epistemological certainty for (1-8)
10) A mechanism by which the functional replacement of the truth can serve as a pedagogical tool for finding the truth
11) A commitment to only use political deception in service to others' happiness

Even in these general terms, meeting all of these conditions would be so unwieldy and onerous that it renders political deception useless. If al-Fārābī presents his reader with a successful, if restrained, model of justified political deception, outside of Fārābīan metaphysics, the situation is even bleaker. Outside of Fārābīan metaphysics (or something like it), political deception is seemingly unjustifiable. This is because, if beneficent political deception is rendered beneficent only in reference to its own necessity and the certainty of its necessity, what hope does any political deception have of being justified outside of a metaphysics which grounds said necessity and certainty?

The principal problem for a model of beneficent political deception in a modern democratic context is the reality of the lack of metaphysical certainty available to contemporary discourse.[5] First, even the idea of metaphysical certainty is no longer in vogue.[6] But even if one claims the metaphysical rectitude of one of the few particular comprehensive metaphysical doctrines with contemporary parlance, e.g., the truth of Kantianism, Thomism, or some particular sect of Judaism, Islam, or Christianity, this would not alleviate the problem. Within a democratic context, the rectitude of these comprehensive doctrines cannot be viewed as certain in the political sphere, as democracy analytically assumes epistemological humility and empowers disagreement.[7]

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[5] Of course, one could readily point out that metaphysical certainty has never been truly available to any discourse, in any epoch.

[6] E.g., Kant famously viewed classical metaphysics as an intractable problem, a battlefield in which there was no winner (*Critique of Pure Reason* B xv); Carnap viewed the value of any abstract ontological entities as dependent upon language (Carnap 1950); Hume claimed that metaphysics was "sophistry and illusion" (Hume 1748, 12.27, 12.34); and Strauss claims that "the right way of life cannot be established metaphysically except by a completed metaphysics, and therefore the right way of life remains questionable" (Strauss 1953, 122-123).

[7] One might wonder why I have turned my focus to beneficent political deception within the context of democracy, here. The reasons are twofold. First, I am committed to democracy (or at least something akin to it, like democratic-republicanism), and thus beneficent political deception within a democratic context is more pertinent to my thought. It is beyond the scope of this project to defend democracy wholesale as the preeminent form of governance, but, suffice it to say, beneficent political deception is a fascinating concept

This assumption is the foundation for the right to free speech and the freedom of religion. In democracy, there is no publicly held certainty, only agreement. But a noble lie which lacks certainty—certainty of the truth, certainty that a falsehood is required, and certainty that said falsehood is maximally empowered to succeed at bettering the lives of the deceived—is not noble. It is simply a brazen usurpation of power and autonomy from the listener. Agreement built on a lie is no agreement at all. Put simply, even if one could reconstruct al-Fārābī's metaphysics as a justification for political deception, one cannot use it as a justification for political deception *within a democracy*.[8]

Here lies the central paradox within the idea of a noble lie, i.e., the concept of beneficent political deception. Lies can only occur between individuals, subjects, who share the ability to ascertain truths about the world (even if one admits the possibility of a discrepancy between the epistemological capabilities of various subjects). One cannot lie to an object. Deception, as such, entails a shared subjectivity between the parties involved. Lies are intersubjective acts. Yet lies, by their very nature, restrict access to the

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precisely because it presents a paradox between an act of 'beneficence', a good, and an act of 'deception', a harm, as done to someone who shares an equal claim to the truth. I take this, that all humans deserve equal access to certain fundamental rights like the right to the truth, to be an inherently democratic intuition, as discussed below. But second, relatedly, the problem of beneficent political deception seems to have a unique relationship to democracy. I think it is no accident that the Athenian Plato has the Athenian Socrates, both familiar with the democratic impulse, bashfully present the Phoenician Story as if Socrates is "shrinking" from telling the story, not knowing where he could find the "audacity" (*Republic* 414c-d). Nor do I think it is an accident that the justifications for both Plato's and al-Fārābī's beneficent political deceptions fail at precisely the same joints as their justifications for autocracy. Once certainty is removed, justifications for both autocracy and deception fail. Put most simply, the *need* for a *justification* on the part of the government presumes a certain equality between ruler and ruled, as will be discussed below. The recognition that others are owed the truth comes from the standpoint of rights, from the same standpoint as the democratic impulse.

[8] Whereas in a democratic state, the notion of justified beneficent political deception is self-defeating, in the case of an undemocratic state, beneficent political deception remains logically possible in principle iff it is metaphysically necessitated. However, whereas these deceptions would not be self-defeating, their justification would depend entirely on the rectitude of the metaphysics upon which they are built (just like the case of al-Fārābī's model). So, while one can imagine a theocracy, for example, which claims the right to control the access of information to its citizens, simple scrutiny concerning the certainty of the rulers of said society would quickly reveal the fraudulent nature of their claim.

truth. Lies are intersubjective acts which debilitate one of the subjects from knowing the truth. Given the presumed right of a subject to know the truth, lies are inherently injurious intersubjective acts. Rendering a lie noble, fashioning a deception into something beneficent, requires a great deal of effort. One must defend (and even recommend) the withholding and obscuring of truth between two human subjects. A distinction between subjects must be made which renders the distinct treatment of the subjects justifiable. (This distinction is not and cannot be made in a democratic context.)[9]

One obvious way to escape the paradox is to simply deny the legitimate respect that is owed to the deceived subject. Such an approach is not unfamiliar; the objectification of fellow human beings has been a useful excuse for denying other's rights throughout human history. Denying another's right to the truth is no different. But such an approach does not really confront the paradox. Infantilizing or objectifying others might justify the expression of falsehoods, but it does not justify political deception, insofar as deception requires that the other individual is capable of believing what is true. If, in substance and according to nature, some subset of humans are merely lesser beings, beings who are undeserving and incapable of truth, then they make no moral demands upon us. There is no justification for political deception, because there is nothing to justify. No harm was done. Political deception requires that both parties, deceiver and deceived, each have some sort of claim to the truth. (Moreover, this approach is antithetical to any democratic system, insofar as citizens in a democratic context are first

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[9] While it is outside the scope of the argument of this project to make any affirmative metaphysical claims about the rights and relations between human subjects, I would be remiss to leave my own position ambiguous: no context, democratic or otherwise, allows any human subject to deny the rights and dignity owed to another human subject.

and foremost political agents, granted the rights afforded to a subject, regardless of an individuals' metaphysical commitments.)

Al-Fārābī's own approach is not altogether dissimilar from this approach, except that he allows for the shared humanity between all members of the city. Al-Fārābī, following Aristotle, recognizes that all human beings, at a base level, desire to know the truth.[10] For al-Fārābī, it is true that some subset of citizens are incapable of fulsome knowledge, but this is not a wholesale divorce from knowing, nor a result of their being some distinct kind of being. Epistemologically limited human beings are still viewed as part of the community; they are still rational subjects. They belong to the same species as those empowered to know the truth. Still, the human species, necessarily, admits of extremes in variability. There are different levels of intellectual attainment available to different members of the species. But, in principle, all human beings are capable of knowing; all are at least part of a single community which produces knowledge. Yet, al-Fārābī's metaphysics explains, through the notion of deficiency, that there is an insurmountable chasm between those capable of certain demonstrative arguments and those capable only of images of the truth to which demonstration points.

This division between humans who are capable of knowing and humans incapable of fulsome knowing is not a slapdash, haphazard elitism. Al-Fārābī is not merely dividing society between the educated and the uneducated, the wise and the ignorant, or the *'ulamā'* and the unwashed masses. Education admits of degrees. Wisdom admits of degrees. Even the elite in society can be compared between the more learned and the less learned. But certainty does not admit of degrees. It is either attained, or it is not. And, for

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[10] *Metaphysics* 1.1.

those who have truly attained it, there is no disagreement between them (a point al-Fārābī makes explicit).[11] Certainty, at least in the Fārābīan sense, is not the accumulation of right opinion, but a knowledge of reality which is guaranteed through a certain method. It is not certain because of the depth of conviction; it is certain because of the infallibility of its truth. For al-Fārābī, one cannot be 'more certain'; certainty is achieved as the terminal state of human intellection. It is the acquired intellect, that human state which is most similar to the Active Intellect, itself. It is human perfection.

Here, al-Fārābī's escape from the jaws of the paradox becomes clear. Humans are, by nature, the same, even if they admit of degrees. Every human is a subject, a citizen, someone who demands to know. But the manner in which humans engage with the truth is radically distinct, because some, very few, humans *know*, while all others merely *opine*. The difference between those who know and those who opine is not a matter of degree, as if the Imām merely has the best opinions. Rather, the manner of difference is as distinct as that between truth and falsehood. Certainty is the condition of the geometrician who knows that the hypotenuse of a right triangle between sides of 3 and 4 cubits, respectively, ought to be measured at 5 cubits. Those who opine are like those who, by estimate, guess its value to be 4 or 6 cubits. The latter is a kind of insight, if imprecise, which corresponds in some way to the world. But only the former has any claim to knowledge. The geometrician knows, knows the method by which they know, and knows with certainty that any other value but 5 cubits is false, even if false values can be said to be further or closer to the true value. But to say that 6 cubits is a better estimate than 12 cubits is not to say that either should be placed in the same domain as 5

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[11] *PS* 17.3. See Chapter 3, 4.1.2.

cubits. That the hypotenuse is 5 cubits is not merely the best answer, it is the only true answer. All other answers admit of falsehood to varying degrees.

Beneficent political deception, in the Fārābīan context, is not justified through the superiority of some subset of human personages being superior to others. Rather, truth is superior to falsehood; knowledge is superior to opinion. But the unfortunate reality, as a result of deficiency, is that most humans are incapable of both knowing and distinguishing between truth and knowledge. Within al-Fārābī's model, an approximation of the truth serves as a more readily accessible way to understand the world for those who already view the world in a false way, not because they are somehow not counted as full-fledged rational subjects, but because the manner by which they 'know' the world is objectively not knowledge. Those that construct beneficent political deceptions are warranted to do so by virtue of their certainty about the nature of the world and their certainty that some approximations are more favorable than the errors which would occur in a vacuum. Al-Fārābī both recognizes the inferiority of lies to the truth while necessitating political deception, even while avoiding objectifying or infantilizing the deceived. All of this hinges on a very particular metaphysics, a particular conception of human nature, and a particular view of epistemology. But al-Fārābī's conception of certainty also rejects the value of democracy (as does al-Fārābī, explicitly at times) insofar as a universe which is intrinsically knowable with perfect correspondence does not admit the need for political disagreement.[12]

Now, the possible positions concerning beneficent political deception are clear. First, one can deny that there is such a thing as beneficent political deception and prohibit

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[12] E.g., *PS* 18.18; *PR* 99f.

deception in the political sphere.[13] Second, one can deny that there is such a thing as

beneficent political deception and dismiss the importance of beneficence in the political

sphere.[14] Third, one can deny that there is such a thing as beneficent political deception,

but endorse a very similar activity, beneficent political falsehood, which is aimed at

intrinsically lesser members of society. Or fourth, one can take al-Fārābī's approach and

affirm that there is beneficent political deception which is justified through the difference

in epistemic access that some people have to the truth. This final approach does not

require distinguishing between kinds of humans, nor does it divorce any member of

society from eventually knowing the truth. Instead, it justifies itself through a particular

conception of certainty and a particular picture of metaphysics. Any recreation of this

fourth approach would also have to endorse the notion of certainty. No individual who

lacks certain knowledge could appeal to this model as a justification for political lies.

Were one to recreate such a metaphysics and epistemology, then perhaps political

deception could be justified in a political context regarding certain topics, insofar as such

an approach recognizes the need for deception, the right to truth, and the restraints put

upon politicians who are required to deceive the populace. But even still, the context

required for this approach could not be democratic in nature, insofar as democracy

analytically presupposes the rights of an informed citizenry. (It is this intuition that drives

John Rawls' famous Publicity Principle in a *Theory of Justice*).[15] In short, even if it is

possible to recreate al-Fārābī's justification for beneficent political deception, one could

never recreate al-Fārābī's justification for beneficent political deception within a

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[13] See Chapter 1, 4.1.
[14] See Chapter 1, 4.2.
[15] Rawls 1971, §23. See Chapter 1, 4.1.

democratic context. Al-Fārābī and his inheritors should never be used as exemplars or endorsers of paltry political lies nor any lie within the context of democracy.[16]

3. <u>Politics, Pedagogy, and Untruth</u>

Given the preceding discussion, it is clear that political deception, with or without the caveat of being beneficent, is not justifiable without a metaphysics and an epistemology which necessitate, respectively: (1) a clearly delineated inequality between the rulers and the ruled, and (2) a way to know with epistemic certainty both how to delineate between the two groups and how to delineate between truths that can be spoken and truths that must be obscured. Political deception is only justified when it is needed, minimally harmful, and sure. Without a model akin to al-Fārābī's own model, it seems as if any nuance regarding both the *realpolitik* need for and the *prima facie* prohibition against political deception is lost. There seems to be no middle ground between the two positions discussed in Chapter 1: either one must take a Truth Dominant view of deception, in which political deception is never appropriate (despite its usefulness), or one must take a *Realpolitik* Dominant view of deception, in which one is only concerned with political power (despite truth's preeminence).[17] This whole project seems for naught.

Yet the preceding examination of al-Fārābī's model and the positions through which he justifies beneficent political deception exposes more about the nature of

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[16] While slightly different from the Kantian point Rawls is making when he describes that publicity "arises naturally from a contractarian standpoint", the intuition is similar. If democracy is an accommodation for disagreement between citizens, then deceit which constrains information by which one informs one's beliefs is counter to the intended principles of democracy itself. See Rawls 1971, § 23. For examples of democratic 'noble lies', see also Footnote 1 of the present chapter.

[17] See Chapter 1, 4.1 and 4.2.

justified beneficent political deception than merely the conditions by which political deception is justified. It brings to light the usefulness of a justified political deception. In particular, beneficent political deception achieves three distinct (if still related) aims: societal cohesion, the instructional value of the expression (quixotically) of minimally harmful untruths to those uninterested or incapable of learning the truth directly, and the instructional value of the expression of pedagogically useful untruths to those incapable of learning the truth directly *at this moment*. Put simply, beneficent political deception constructs a kind of shared societal knowledge, even if this shared knowledge contains within it some untruth. Moreover, it seems that this must be the case for any justifiably useful political deception, as, while there maybe be other uses for political deception, any political deception which does not function as a Construction of Social Knowledge lacks justifiability, given the terms agreed to above.[18]

Even without developing a comprehensive metaphysics of human beings and how we relate to each other in society, I take the need for societal cohesion, untruth as permanent truth-surrogate, and untruth as temporary pedagogical truth-surrogate to be obvious and trivial. Even given the assumed equality of rational agents, an assumption embedded into the structure of democracy, not all agents are equally adept at knowing the truth in every domain. The economist, physicist, physician, and general need not know equal amounts about domestic final supply, an azimuthal quantum number, the HPA axis, or double envelopment. The functional value of al-Fārābī's model (and Plato's concept of the Noble Lie, minus the problematic Phoenician Story) is as a shared vernacular that

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[18] Again, minimally harmful deceptions seem to be part and parcel of any justified deceptions. Of course, one could conceive of other politically useful deceptions, e.g., a lie whose aim is only to maintain the hegemony, but such deceptions, while useful, are also arbitrary, thus not minimally harmful, and thus not justifiable.

approximates the truth, even if it is built, strictly speaking, out of untruth. The images of religion serve as a shared reference point across society, as a stand-in for truth, and as a ladder to truth which serve society, regardless of capability. They provide something simpler than the truth itself. But al-Fārābī's Construction of Social Knowledge also presents untruth as truth, a position which is unjustifiable in a modern democratic context and outside his metaphysics.

However, one can conceive of a model which establishes a Construction of Social Knowledge which rejects political deception (and the possibility of beneficent political deception), yet it embraces the value of untruth in subservience to truth. Let us call this Political Pedagogy. The central injustice of political deception is that it impedes access to the truth; it is this injustice to which one must respond in order to justify deception. It is not untruth itself which is offensive to justice; it is untruth under the guise of truth. From this realization it is not hard to see an adjusted Fārābīan model which embraces, rather than conceals, its untruth, yet holds to the same basic structure. Imagine, for example, an image of the truth which prefaces itself with the caveat that 'this is merely an image'. Imagine a simplification which acknowledges its own untruth with the admission, '...but, of course, it's more complicated than this'. Or imagine a model which limits its own terms with the admonition to 'think of the issue like this, for the time being'. Political Pedagogy provides many, if not all, of the benefits of beneficent political deception as a Construction of Social Knowledge. (Its limitations will be addressed below).

Before turning to an example of Political Pedagogy, let us take a more banal example of the use of untruth for the sake of pedagogy, outside the realm of politics, to

illustrate the usefulness of Political Pedagogy. It is informative insofar as it clarifies the

model in an uncontroversial way.

3.1. Modeling the Atom

Using untruth for the sake of pedagogy should be uncontroversial. Within the

classroom, within the explicit context of learning, there is an assumption that examples,

approximations, provocations, and images will be used. No "Introduction to Physics"

student expects to learn the math behind the unpredictability of Lorenz systems or the

probabilistic nature of radioactive decay on their first day. Rather, there is an expectation

in learning engrained in us at a young age: first, one learns untruths, simplifications, and

near-truths. Only later, are these untruths complicated, problematized, and reoriented

toward the truth. At first, the Kindergartener learns that the letter 'g' says 'guh'. It is a

hard and fast rule; more nuance would cause confusion. Only later does the teacher begin

to introduce words like 'huge', 'tough', and 'though' which complicate the simplification

of the general rule.

One stark example of this is the modeling of the atom. Despite significant

advances in our understanding of the atomic and subatomic world over the last century,

the Bohr model of the atom reigns supreme in middle school classrooms and in children's

STEM books.[19] While strictly speaking false, having been superseded by models which

depict the probabilistic nature of valence shells, like Schrödinger's Quantum Mechanical

Model (which are themselves merely images of mathematical functions), the Bohr model

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[19] E.g., Ferrie 2017; Kuhn 1996, 55f.; Green 2016, 10f.; Parsons and Dixon 2013; Brown 2012, 168-169. Sometimes the even earlier, but similar, Saturnian model, as developed by Hantaro Nagaoka, is still used. See Bryson 2005, 174.

has some advantages over more nuanced models: it is simple and commonly recognized.[20] It easily depicts ionic and covalent bonds, looks readily familiar given its similarity to the planetary model, and, for the advancing student, opens up pedagogical avenues for "scientific reasoning skills such as model building and making inferences from observations".[21] Some view it as an essential step in a progression of learning.[22] Even while others, due to its imprecision, seek to remove it from the cultural lexicon.[23] (Studies of similar propaedeutic models suggest that lacking a simplified image for those unready or unable to comprehend more accurate depictions of the world leads to either further confused or entirely imagined explanatory depictions.)[24] In short, while the Bohr model is problematic and must eventually be excised from the thought of the burgeoning scientist, it is also helpful both in teaching fundamental principles and fending off even less accurate models.

Put simply, it is a falsehood, but a useful falsehood. For the toddler learning quantum physics, it suffices.[25] For the service industry worker trying to remember the shape of H_2O, it suffices. It is sufficient in part due to its similarity to the truth (e.g., it is

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[20] McKagan, et al. 2008; Niedderer and Petri 1998. For the differing roles models play in science and the advantages and disadvantages of idealized and imprecise models, see Frigg and Hartmann 2020.

[21] McKagan, et al. 2008, 1.

[22] Niedderer and Petri 1998; Bokulich 2011. The role of any kind of modeling, as well as the purpose of models themselves, is a hotly debate topic in the scientific community, both inside and outside the classroom. While a full-fledged discussion is inappropriate here, an introduction to the many issues is available from Frigg and Hartmann 2020. Ultimately, those that endorse the usefulness of Bohr often do so based upon a certain kind of perspective of modeling and the purpose of modeling. For an example of pro-idealization conceptions of modeling, see McMullin 1968.

[23] Kalkanis, et al. 2003; Müller and Wiesner 2002. For an example of a more general discussion of modeling in favor of using more precise and less idealized models, see Friedman 1974.

[24] Vosniadou and Brewer, 1992.

[25] Ferrie, 2017. Yes, this is real. Chris Ferrie gives a delightful pedagogical account of the internal mechanics and structure of the atom using the Bohr model as his imagery in *Quantum Physics for Babies*. Both of my daughters love the book, and it has taught a thing or two about atomic structure to some adult members of my family as well.

not wholesale false, like the plum-pudding model) and in part due to its ubiquity.[26] For most non-specialists, it is the formative image of an atom. For the learning student, it is an introduction to the notion of scientific modeling as such. But even in its untruth it serves as an invitation. No one pretends it is the most accurate or up to date model. A quick search on the internet renders it obsolete. But the image, readily available, at the fore of our cultural folklore makes atoms, and science, less obscure to the *hoi polloi*. Despite being publicly false, it still serves as a Construction of Social Knowledge. Now, let us turn to the more difficult case of pedagogy in the political sphere.

3.2. Modeling an Ethos

At the heart of American democracy lies an image of the human person endowed by the Creator with unalienable rights. As an image, it is striking, poignant, and evocative. As a 'truth' it is so foundational, such a deeply embedded self-certifying myth, to use the term coined by Max Black, that the obviousness of the second sentence of the *Declaration of Independence* is sacrosanct in American political discourse.[27] Yet even a cursory examination of the history surrounding the *Declaration* reveals a less stable

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[26] For the various approaches in evaluating the sufficiency of models, see Frigg and Hartmann 2020.

[27] Black 1962, 242. While Black is talking about scientific models here, not truths espoused in politics, the phenomena seem similar, insofar as what is, strictly speaking, not certain to be real, being either a model or an assertion, is presented as a known metaphysically real entity. As a self-certifying myth, the "archetype will be used metaphysically, so that its consequences will be permanently insulated from empirical disproof". Put otherwise, by establishing equality as the founding assertion of the American experiment, the founders also instantiated equality (to varying degrees of effectiveness) into institutional structures. These structures can then be looked to as validation of the truth of the original assertion, rendering the myth self-certifying. As an example, imagine the person who, questioning the truth of equality between herself and another, thinks to herself, "Well, their vote is worth as much as mine." Here, the institutional structure built upon the original assertion reasserts the initial assertion. This is not to claim that the original assertion is untrue, metaphysically speaking, but that systems built upon the assertion are not themselves evidence of the metaphysical truth of the assertion. That said, Black admits that good archetypes "can yield to the demands of experience", as the imagination is not a "strait jacket". As will become clear, this is a relevant caveat.

ontology for the truth of Jefferson's words, both in their origination and in their interpretation. While perhaps it would be inappropriate to describe Jefferson's aspirational words, following Plato, as 'false, on the whole, while having some truth in them', it is certainly the case that if they are true, they have some falsity in them, as will be discussed below.[28] The words, the foundational idea grounding the American ethos, are located in a liminal space between truth and falsity. Because at the time of their adoption even the endorsers of these words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness…", rejected them in practice, if not also in theory. The paradox is obvious in the stroke of their author's pen, himself a slaveholder who would later pen a defense of the inferiority of an entire race as established by the selfsame "Nature's God" who endows humans with rights.[29] The paradox is obvious in the erasure of what John Adams described as Jefferson's "vehement philippic against Negro slavery" by Southern signatories.[30] It was obvious to Frederick Douglas, who, reflecting on Jefferson's words wrote:

> What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery…[31]

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[28] *Republic* 377a.

[29] See Ceaser 2000, 177f.; Ellis 1998, 66, 105-106, 174, 356; Allen 2014, 135f.; Armitage 2007, 57f.; Kendi 2016, 104f.; Miller 1977, 7f.; Becker 1964, 24f., 63f.

[30] Adams 1822. See Allen 2014, 154; Armitage 56f.; Kendi 2016, 107f.; Miller 1977, 7f., 12f.; Becker 1964, 212f.; Finkelman 2001, 141.; Jayne 1998, 124; Maier 1997, 198.

[31] Douglass 1852. See also Armitage 2007, 97f.

The paradox was obvious to Abraham Lincoln who framed the Civil War and its underlying causes as a test to a nation "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal".[32] It was obvious to Martin Luther King, Jr. who viewed the founders as "signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men—yes, black men as well as white men—would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" despite the apparent historical evidence to the contrary.[33] And the paradox was obvious to Lin Manuel Miranda who puts Jefferson's Preamble into the mouth of the Schuyler sisters in Hamilton, all actresses of color in the original cast, with Angelica subsequently saying, "when I meet Thomas Jefferson… I'm 'a compel him to include women in the sequel!"[34]

The tension between the promise of the Preamble of the *Declaration of Independence* and the reality of American governance and culture at its founding is palpable enough to have spawned an entire genre of literature devoted to untangling the web of contradictions between the founders' and framers' theory and practice as it relates to race.[35] Further examination, while worthwhile, is not appropriate for the purposes here, except to say that the presence of some degree of falsehood within the literal text of the document is apparent. Where said falsehood lies is more difficult to parse and the key to the brilliance of the Preamble as Political Pedagogy.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the natural rights claims in the *Declaration of Independence* is their ability to grow in the telling. Beyond the intention

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[32] Lincoln 1863. Lincoln even claimed that the equality of human beings was inserted into the declaration for future use, as an abstract truth to serve as a rebuke to tyranny and oppression. Lincoln 1857; Lincoln 1859. See also Ellis 1998, 63; Armitage 2007, 26.

[33] Martin Luther King, Jr. 1963. See also Ellis 1998, 356.

[34] Miranda and McCarter 2016, 44.

[35] For example, Ceaser 2000; Wallace 1999; West 1997; Finkelman 2001; Kendi 2016; Guyatt 2016; Miller 1977.

of their author, even though the founders certainly recognized the irony of their assertions about equality and liberty, given the institution of slavery, each subsequent generation was able to find new and *au courant* meanings in Jefferson's words.[36] And while this historical phenomenon of an ever pertinent, ever prescient text is fascinating, the philosophical value of a text which deconstructs itself is more relevant to the current discussion. Here, the concern is not that the text remained germane for future generation through an ever-occurring transformative sense of its own meaning, but what about the Preamble allowed it to have such a chimerical character, even while maintaining an intelligible core. (After all, one could imagine an aphorism with similar staying power by virtue of its lack of any meaning or its trite meaning.) What about the Preamble could inspire a country which accommodated slavery, fought a war to abolish slavery, and established and formalized civil rights from the same 35 words? What about the Preamble allows it to serve as a Wittgensteinian ladder, a Fārābīan ladder, which allows a nation to replace the previous image of equality with a new image of equality which serves as a more inclusive and a more sophisticated understanding of the ethos of the American project?

By my reading, outside of history (though certainly not in ignorance of history), the text demands at least five distinct interpretations at the outset, each interpretation insisting that the reader progress with thoughtfulness to a more sophisticated reading.

1) The Naïve Reading: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...

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[36] For example, see the discussions in Ellis 356; O'Brien 1996, 320; Finkelman 2001, 139f. David Armitage (2007) devotes an entire book to the subject of Jefferson's profound influence in numerous seemingly disparate contexts. For the founders' recognition of the obvious tension between the commitment to equality and the politics of slavery, see West 1997, 1f.; Kendi 2016, 107f.; Guyatt 2016, 21f.; Miller 1977, 12f.; Ceaser 2000, 177f.; Ellis 1998, 66, 105-106, 174.

This reading is the most literal, even though it contains within it the most contradiction. Here, Jefferson and the signatories of the *Declaration*, many of them slaveholders and even theoretical defenders of the institution of slavery, held that it is a self-evident proposition that all men are created equal. (It should be noted that in an earlier draft of the *Declaration*, Jefferson is explicit that slaves are themselves men, and that King George has done them egregious harm by enslaving them.)[37]

2) The Epistemological Reading: ~~We hold~~ these truths ~~to be~~ [are] self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...

   Anyone remotely familiar with the signatories of the *Declaration* knows that they did not all hold that all men are created equal. Jefferson admits as much in an (in)famous passage in his *Notes on Virginia*, and many of the southern slave-holding delegates were concerned with the implications of Jefferson's language about equality (and that his Preamble did not include the sovereignty of property rights as one of the enumerated rights, which would have protected the institution of slavery).[38] In all likelihood, the Preamble was accepted, not because of universal agreement, but because the Preamble to the *Declaration of Independence* was viewed as being of little import, with the enumerated grievances against King George being viewed as the main objective of the document. Thus, knowing this contradiction, the "We hold" aspect of the Preamble is viewed as just a formality. Instead, this reading understands the Preamble as asserting the self-evidence of equality and rights. One need not over-worry about the failings and foibles of the founders.

3) The Metaphysical Reading: ~~We hold~~ these truths ~~to be~~ [are] ~~self-evident~~ [true], that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...

   Once one reflects even briefly on the paradox within the Epistemological Reading, then one is forced to admit that these truths are not self-evident. If the author and the signatories of the document were not themselves compelled to admit the fullness of the meaning of the truths they espoused, in what sense can they meaningfully be described as self-evident? A great deal of literature has been produced about the meaning of "self-evidence" in the *Declaration of*

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[37] See Allen 2014, 154; Armitage 56f.; Kendi 2016, 107f.; Miller 1977, 7f., 12f.; Becker 1964, 212f.; Finkelman 2001, 141.; Jayne 1998, 124.

[38] For Jefferson's views about race, slavery, and integration in the *Notes on Virginia*, see Jefferson 1787, 264-266 Query XIV; Ellis 1998, 174; O'Brien 1996, 319f.; Finkelman 2001, 133f.; Guyatt 2016, 2f. For the importance of property rights to slaveholder's interests and the rejection of the condemnation of slavery in the *Declaration*, see Ellis 1998, 65; Rakove 1997, 290-291; Armitage 2007, 57f.; Kendi 2016, 104f., 109f.; Miller 1977, 12f.; Jayne 1998, 120f.

Independence, ranging from definitions of self-evidence as common sense and common parlance to idiosyncratic notions of self-evidences grounded upon very particular principles of modern philosophy.[39] But, regardless of the specific usage of the term here, it seems disingenuous to describe these truths as being genuinely self-evident given that they seem to have been unclear to Jefferson himself, as a slaveholder. (Jefferson's original draft, which describes these truths as "sacred & undeniable", seems unable to alleviate the apparent tension.)[40] As a result of the ambiguous epistemic certainty of the claims in the Preamble, as evidenced by the doubt and disagreement of the signatories themselves (and a cursory view of human history), one can imagine a new reading of the Preamble which puts the onus on either a theological or a natural principle. Rights are endowed by the Creator or Nature's God. Even if these rights are not self-evident, they are natural and grounded in reality.

4) The Ethical Reading: ~~We hold~~ these truths ~~to be~~ [are] ~~self-evident~~ [true], that all men ~~are~~ [ought to be viewed as having been] created equal, that they ~~are~~ [ought to be viewed as having been] endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...

   Of course, without the epistemological claim to self-evidence, the truths of the Metaphysical Reading are in doubt. In the Metaphysical Reading, the laws of nature are being conflated with the *nomoi* of the city. The Metaphysical Reading might be true, but there is no force to the claim. Rather a political entity is merely claiming to be in agreement with the laws of nature, but this need not be assumed. The Metaphysical Reading does not hold a paradox within itself, but neither does it compel its reader toward agreement. As a result, it devolves into an axiological claim: one *ought* to view rights *as if* endowed by nature.

5) The Social Contract Reading: <u>We hold</u> these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...

   The Ethical Reading suffers from the same problems as the metaphysical reading, leading to the Social Contract Reading. Why ought one hold these truths as true? Why ought one value equality and rights? Is it not only convention? The uncomfortable but illuminating answer is yes.

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[39] For example, Allen 2014, 135f.; Miller 1977, 12f.; Becker 1964, 198; Jayne 1998, 109f., 118f; Rakove 2009, 78.
[40] See Allen 2014, 135f.; Becker 1964, 198.

Here, the brilliance of Jefferson's writing shines through. "We hold" could have easily been avoided. The onus of the claims in the *Declaration of Independence* easily could have been placed on the self-evidence of its truths or the inalienable rights endowed upon humankind by our Creator, but the onus is placed on us. It is placed on the consent of the governed. It is placed on 'we, the undersigned'. It is placed on 'we, the people'. 'We hold these truths', whatever Jefferson's original intentions, is not merely a (dubious) descriptive account of the founders' beliefs; it is a prescriptive intent. 'We' are those who agree to the principles which follow. 'We' are those who aim, even if fallibly and failingly, to view these truths as if self-evident. 'We' are those who agree to a social contract concerning that which follows.

Whether Jefferson had this intent or not matters little, the effect is clear. Jefferson's life concerning the issue of slavery reveals his discomfort with his inability to live up to his own commitment to equality.[41] Many of the founders shared his anxiety.[42] The Civil War, Civil Rights, and countless other advances in equality great and small have been fought on precisely this ground: America holds these truths to be self-evident.

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[41] See Ceaser 2000, 177; Ellis 1998, 66, 105-106, 174; Allen 2014, 154f.; Armitage 2007, 57f.; O'Brien 1996, 319f., Kendi 2016, 104f.; Becker 1964, 212f., 221f.; Finkelman 2001, 129f., 139f.

[42] See West 1997, 5; Kendi 2016, 107f.; Guyatt 2016, 21f.; Miller 1977, 12f.; Ceaser 2000, 177f.; Ellis 1998, 66, 105-106, 174. Thomas G. West, even while documenting this tension, argues that there was no hypocrisy on the part of the founders, but rather a faith that America would take the ideals found in the Preamble and gradually live up to them. West outlines how contemporary scholars try to deal with the apparent tensions between the promise of the Preamble and the actions of the founders in three ways: 1) by denying that the Preamble is meant to be viewed universally; 2) by denying that the founders recognized their own hypocrisy; and 3) by suggesting that the founders acted hypocritically in light of the Preamble's assertions. West argues that all three positions are wrong, and the founders recognized the apparent tension between the Preamble and slavery but trusted in eventual American progress. See West 1997, 1f. While the issue will certainly not be settled here, West's approach seems a bit rose-colored, even if a similar rhetorical approach was taken by both Lincoln and MLK (whether either of these great speakers truly viewed history this way or felt that an optimistic historical narrative was the best method to enact change and progress toward equality is a question better left to historians). See Footnotes 31 and 32 of the present chapter. Ultimately, at least concerning Jefferson and other slaveholders, it seems as if there must have been a certain level of cognitive dissonance between the words or the Preamble and their lived realities.

These truths do not rest on citizens' belief in Lockean political philosophy, in a literal theistic or deistic God who endows us with human rights, or the self-evidence of the founders' claims. These truths rest on agreement. The *Declaration of Independence* is America's founding myth. But rather than sowing class division like Plato's Phoenician Story, it establishes equality. And rather than being built on a lie, its humility lies at the fore. We the undersigned hold... We invite you to hold this, too.

It is obviously the case that the Social Contract Reading is truer than the readings which precede it. Even if rights are metaphysically endowed by a Creator, this is not the reason that the United States, as a democracy, embraces the value of rights. In a democratic context, the power of agreement is the ultimate authority. And yet, one wonders: if Jefferson would have written the mere image of agreement into the *Declaration of Independence*, would the force of the document have been forgotten in the annals of history? If rights were described as mere convention, would they add any particular value to the social order? The image of God imbuing each individual with rights, even if it is image build upon the foundation of agreement, seems to carry more weight. It adds a certain heft to the contract.

Jefferson's image, myriad in its interpretation, is singular in its instantiation. Each of the aforementioned readings of the Preamble are prevalent in American culture, and yet they render little disagreement. These approaches —"The founders held that equality is self-evident."; "Well, the founders were themselves of two-minds about it, but equality is self-evident."; "Well, equality isn't self-evident, but it is grounded in creation."; "Well, equality isn't grounded in creation, but equality ought to be valued."; "We only value equality as if it were self-evident."— all uphold the same societal order. They all

contribute to the same ethos surrounding rights. Yet they are not equally accessible. Social Contract Theory seems to lack the emotional resonance which is present in Jefferson's deistic appeal; societal cohesion seems to lack the narrative force which an appeal to self-evidence does. Jefferson's image gives societal cohesion, even while giving a surrogate image for the truth of the social contract. Moreover, it does this without lying (even if it does introduce some falsity).

Most importantly, the image the Preamble invites the audience into a deeper understanding of its principles. Rather than serving as an obstacle to understanding the social contract which lies at the heart of the *Declaration's* democratic principles, it introduces them (even while obscuring them with appeals to epistemological, metaphysical, and theological principles). For the thoughtful citizen, a clearer understanding of the political reality of democracy is elucidated. It is Political Pedagogy which teaches its reader through the image it establishes.

3.3. Political Pedagogy

Societies are not built on principles alone. Human beings are complex creatures with various modes of knowing, valuing, acting, and speaking. Even a society built on principles needs images, emotional appeals, culture, arts, and myths. Many of these modes of expression are more primordial to the inception of a member of society into the social contract than pure contractual propositions. They contribute to the feeling of belonging, the shared stories, and the shared values which lie at the heart of societal cohesion. When a society is healthy, these myths, images, and emotional appeals do not strain the social contract, they reinforce it.

Ideally, they teach citizens the values of said society, while they introduce the curious into the higher mysteries of civic engagement. And, in a perfect world, they help both society and the individual flourish. But these images and myths need not masquerade as truth to be effective. Visual art, music, and fiction have the power to move people without an appeal to facticity. Histories which emphasize fellow citizens worthy of emulation, journalism which highlights the best of society, and philosophy which highlights virtue can reinforce the ethos of a culture, even while admitting caveats, exceptions, difficulties, and doubts. Put simply, untruths, anecdotes, half-truths, simplifications, and fictions can add to the richness of a society while educating the populace, if carefully oriented toward the aim of the society as a whole, and they need not pretend to be anything other than untruths, anecdotes, half-truths, simplifications, and fictions.

4. **Political Pedagogy in a Time of Uncertainty**

The astute reader might object here: "What is this discussion of truth and falsity in a democratic context? If democracy admits of nothing but mere agreement, a bare social contract, then by what measure can anything be called a truth, a lie, or anything in-between? Never mind the further confusions about any standard being applied to these things to determine if they are properly qualified as noble or ignoble!" And it is certainly the case that democracy is divorced to some degree from, to use a Rawlsian phrase, comprehensive doctrines.[43] Democracy does not endorse a standard metaphysics, insofar as disagreement is protected in a democratic context. But jettisoning metaphysical truth,

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[43] Rawls raises this issue throughout *Political Liberalism*, but introduces it explicitly in the Introduction. Rawls 1993, xvi.

at least from the standpoint of the state, is not the same as jettisoning truth, as such. Here at the close, some avenues for future study and thought can be raised in light of some lessons al-Fārābī teaches.[44]

First, while societies are built for the sake of cooperation, cooperation is only achieved through a shared set of customs, images, myths, beliefs, and culture. Outside of democracy, this shared culture is itself founded, at least in a society with a true religion (*milla ṣaḥīḥa*), i.e., a religion or culture with properly oriented images and customs, upon the truth of philosophy and knowledge of the nature of the human person, the world, and the cosmos. Put simply, in undemocratic contexts cooperation ought to be achieved by adherence (whether through the medium of images or otherwise) to the truth.[45] But democracies do not admit the unity of belief, nor the unity of truth, something al-Fārābī recognizes in his own discussion of democracy.[46] So, in what meaningful sense can cooperation be possible in a democratic context?

Several notable solutions to this problem come to mind. John Rawls famously proposes a democracy built upon reverence for the social contract itself, with each citizen valuing an imagined 'original position' in which each member of society is devoid of identity and commitments to individual comprehensive doctrines, thereby viewing societal issues through a 'veil of ignorance', namely ignorance of their own self-interest, allowing the emergence of an overlapping consensus which empowers societal cooperation.[47] While elegant, this solution requires each member of society to divorce

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[44] Of course, only the barest gesture toward some possible solutions will be presented here. A comprehensive discussion of truth in a democratic context extends well beyond the scope of the present project.

[45] Unfortunately, these aims are rarely paramount in undemocratic contexts.

[46] *PS* 18.18; *PR* 99f.

[47] While these notions are discussed in their fullest form throughout *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls 1971), a summary view can be found at §3.

themselves from their own appetites, values, and habits, resulting in a solution with dubious prospects of success, given the second lesson al-Fārābī teaches us (specifically, that the instruments which engender societal cohesion must be universally accessible and digestible for all members of society), as will be discussed shortly. Put simply, when trying to compel cooperation, the ability of the concept of agreement itself to oblige agreement seems suspect. (This is borne out in the example of the Preamble, in which the Social Contract Reading must be embedded within the more normatively powerful and enticing readings which appeal to metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.) Rawls provides too rarified a solution for the common human experience. People are often unable or unwilling to divorce themselves from sectarian and private commitments and pursuits.

Richard Rorty's likewise well-known solution suffers from a similar problem. Whereas Rawls asks citizens to jettison their comprehensive doctrine in the public sphere, Rorty recognizes their presence, as a certain lexicon of vocabulary and belief, in a pluralistic public sphere, as a "perfected society would not only eliminate traditional inequalities but would leave plenty of room for its members to pursue their individual visions of human perfection".[48] (He does caution against some commitments, particularly philosophical theory, playing a role in the public sphere, but not for any dramatic or normative reason. They are simply politically ineffective, in his view.)[49] His solution runs

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[48] Rorty 1999, 270-271. He discusses the importance of the "literalization of selected metaphors" in the formation of community in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, admitting that his approach is a "description" of liberalism, rather than a "search for foundations", which stems, of course, from his approach which claims that there are no foundations, given that "truth is not 'out there'". Rorty 1989, 44. That said, he does endorse an ideal form of the culture of liberalism which would excise the vocabulary of the divinized world, i.e., claims about natural, metaphysical, or supernatural forces, replacing it with a focus on human beings. Rorty 1989, 45. His recommendations, of course, lack argumentative or normative force, which he readily admits, being itself a description of the metaphors which undergird liberalism.
[49] Rorty 1989, 91f.

afoul of al-Fārābī's lessons in two main ways. The first being that, unlike the pluralism of Rawls which is founded upon a conception of justice, Rorty's pluralism is unfounded entirely, its cooperation unmoored from a telos. Rorty thinks that cooperation is still possible without a telos in a pluralistic context through language and reform, but I leave it to the reader to ascertain whether such a project could succeed.[50] It is clearly the case that he lacks any metaphysical equipment to ground his "ideal liberal society" as "one which has no purpose except freedom, no goal except a willingness to see how such encounters go and to abide by the outcome" and "no purpose except to make life easier for poets and revolutionaries while seeing to it that they make life harder for others only by words, and not deeds", but this is something he would readily admit.[51] Instead of an appeal to a telos or metaphysics, Rorty suggests that the unity of a society comes about through the evocativeness of its language, not argument or truth, even though every culture is just "one more vocabulary, one more way of describing things".[52]

The more pertinent inadequacy with Rorty's position as a response to al-Fārābī's lessons is shared by Rawls: he expects too much from the average citizen. As he explains:

> ...the ideal citizen of such an ideal state would be someone who thinks of the founders and the preservers of her society as such poets, rather than as people who had discovered or who clearly envisioned the truth about the world or about humanity... To sum up, the citizens of my liberal utopia would be people who had a sense of the contingency of their language of moral deliberation, and thus of their consciences, and thus of their community.[53]

But even if Rorty is right—there is no final truth; political actors are merely poets, expressing a picture of the world; each culture's values are just one vocabulary among

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[50] For example, see his treatment of American national pride. Rorty 1998, 3f.
[51] Rorty 1989, 60-61. For the lack of a foundation for liberalism, see Rorty 1989, 52-53.
[52] Rorty 1989, 53-54.
[53] Rorty 1989, 60-61.

many—the average citizen neither wants nor is equipped to live with this kind of double

vision. Living in a state of perpetual contingency concerning one's most dearly held

values requires constant reflection, insight, and tenacity which is lacking in most people.

It also sounds exhausting.

A more rich avenue for study comes from analogues with the social

epistemologists in the scientific community dealing with a newfound recognition that the

explanatory power which is derived from empirical findings rests upon the paradigms,

models, and metaphors in which the empirical findings and their explanations arise,

rather than upon direct correspondence to the explanatory or intelligible structure of

reality.[54] Obviously, these philosophers of science, Thomas Kuhn, Michael Polanyi,

Stephen Pepper, being among the earliest and the most renowned, are dealing in a

different domain, i.e., the domain of scientific knowledge, than Political Pedagogy.[55] But

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[54] A large part of this advance comes in response to the Duhem-Quine problem, in which the testability of hypotheses is not only determined by the falsifiability of the predicted result, but also by the bundle of hypotheses which are assumed at the outset of the experiment. In other words, a hypothesis can be predictive, but only from the standpoint of a broader paradigm, and can be rendered false only in relation to this paradigm, also. For example, the Ptolemaic model of the cosmos (which was explored in Fārābīan terms in Chapter 3, 2.2 and 2.3) was predictive of a great deal of celestial phenomena, with dissonant information just leading to further refinement of the Ptolemaic model. Only with Copernican heliocentrism was the entire bundle of hypotheses revised and the Ptolemaic model discarded. See Quine 1953, 41-43 for the germ of the problem. Duhem's formulation of the problem is slightly less strident, though it is credited by Quine for his later insight. See Duhem 1914, 281. See also Ariew 2018. Of course, it should be noted that the analogy between the epistemological conditions of science and what is known in a democratic context is just an analogy. Whereas truth in science concerns itself with the world as such, with the authors discussed here emphasizing the necessary epistemic distance (because of the mediation of paradigms) a scientist has from the world, democracies assume at the fore an intrinsic uncertainty about metaphysics (from a societal point of view).

[55] The most famous formulation of the problem by Kuhn suggests that normal science (i.e., not revolutionary science) occurs through the normal operation of paradigms which set up an enduring series of commitments and methods such that they resolve certain problems while opening up a new series of problems. Kuhn 1962, 10. Importantly, the paradigm acts as a mediator between the scientist and knowledge of the world, insofar as the world is known only through paradigms, and paradigms change. (This can lead to the bizarre semblance, if one is naïve about the role of paradigms, that the laws of nature have themselves changed). Kuhn 1962, 111. See also Bird 2018. Michael Polanyi, who Kuhn credits for his initial insights states the position boldly: "[C]omplete objectivity as usually attributed to the exact sciences is a delusion and is in fact a false ideal. But I shall not try to repudiate strict objectivity as an ideal without offering a substitute, which I believe to be more worthy of intelligent allegiance; this I have called

their models for scientific cohesion, even in their distinctions, offer a more fruitful

approach than either Rawls or Rorty. To be part of scientific advancement is, in part, to

buy into certain assumptions: metaphors, models, rules, and explanations. In short, to use

Kuhn's terminology, science is advanced only from within a paradigm. And within said

paradigm, there is truth, falsifiability, and structure which allows for cooperation.[56] That

said, the paradigm is recognized as artificial and constructed. Becoming part of the

community takes buying into certain premises. (And the lived reality of most scientists

does not perpetually reflect on the artificiality of the aforementioned paradigm.)[57]

Paradigms can be altered, expanded, and rejected; there is no coercion. However, they

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'personal knowledge'." Polanyi 1958, 18. Ultimately, because "personal judgement" is "involved in applying the formulae of mechanics to the facts of experience", scientific knowledge is entangled with personal judgment. Polanyi 1958, 18. Stephen Pepper, discussing a broader epistemological phenomenon in *World Hypotheses*, discusses how all knowledge begins with uncertain commitments at the outset. As he explains: "A man desiring to understand the world looks about for a clue to its comprehension. He pitches upon some area of commonsense fact and tries to understand other areas in terms of this one. This original area becomes his basic analogy or root metaphor. He describes as best he can the characteristics of this area, or, if you will, discriminates its structure. A list of its structural characteristics becomes his basic concepts of explanation and description. We call them a set of categories. In term s of these categories he proceeds to study all other areas of fact whether uncriticized or previously criticized. He undertakes to interpret all facts in terms of these categories. As a result of the impact of these other facts upon his categories, he may qualify or readjust the categories, so that a set of categories commonly changes and develops. Since the basic analogy or root metaphor normally (and probably at least in part necessarily) arises out of common sense, a great deal of development and refinement of a set of categories is required if they are to prove adequate for a hypothesis of unlimited scope. Some root metaphors prove more fertile than others, have greater powers of expansion and of adjustment. These survive in comparison with the others and generate the relatively adequate world theories." Pepper 1942, 91-92. See also Berry 1984. Put simply, all knowledge is obtained through a relation to a certain root metaphor. These metaphors can be adjusted and altered over time and can be more or less successful to describe phenomena in the world. But human experience of the world begins by adopting a world theory.

[56] Kuhn views cooperation as one of the greatest goods brought about by paradigms. Because scientists "learned the bases of their field from the same concrete models, his subsequent practice will seldom evoke overt disagreement over fundamentals. Men whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice. That commitment and the apparent Consensus it produces are prerequisites for normal science". Kuhn 1962, 11. More recently, Philip Kitcher has suggested that, along with the testability of auxiliary hypotheses and a fecund opportunity for new research, a good science, i.e., a good paradigm, "should be unified", i.e., should involve one or a "small family of problem-solving strategies". Kitcher 1982, 45-47. As a result of this unified set of problem-solving strategies, there is a unified set of methodologies to be shared across various disciplines and experiments.

[57] One current exception can be found in modern physics, in which both the paradigm of general relativity and the paradigm of quantum mechanics are explanatorily powerful, but have yet to be reconciled. The goal of a singular paradigm is still out of reach.

provide a framework for cooperation which allows for certain truths to be held firmly and universally, and subsequently they allow for explanatory untruths, i.e., scientific models.

In the public, rather than the scientific, sphere, the analogue to this position would depend on a kind of paradigm which arouses a shared sense of community and purpose, not to examine the nature of the world, but to empower citizens to flourish, both individually and cooperatively. The success of a political paradigm would be similarly pragmatic to the scientific model, insofar as the paradigm can be altered, adjusted, or overthrown in revolution, depending on the effectiveness of the paradigm in fulfilling its purpose of societal cohesion and the happiness of citizens within the given paradigm. In what sense the success of a political paradigm can be judged without some broader metaphysical conception of the purpose of the human person and society is a difficult and troublesome problem, which it is not appropriate to address here. One possible solution, though, remains analogous to scientific views of paradigms: when the upholders of a paradigm, whether scientists or citizens, no longer find it explanatorily powerful or functional, it has failed.

The advantage of such an approach is found in where the onus of the normative force of the social contract rests. Whereas Rawls' approach requires citizens to value the social contract over and beyond their own interests and Rorty requires citizens to view the social contract (and their own values) as inherently mutable and impermanent, this approach ignores the social contract altogether in day to day life. The geneticist working in the lab is working under a particular post-Darwinian paradigm, but they need not overburden themselves with reflecting on this fact while working on Fragile X Syndrome in *Drosophila*. Nor does the citizen of a particular nation deciding who to vote for need to

agonize over the contingency of their paradigm while voting. 'As Americans we believe...' has a certain normative force within the American paradigm, even if the democratic structure of the United States admits that it has no normative force, as such, insofar as democracy admits of pluralism.[58] A teleology can be in-built to the paradigm of the social contract itself, even if the social contract is not dependent upon any external teleology or metaphysics in order to be effective. Likewise, a citizen can relate to the teleology of the paradigm, even while rejecting that there exists such a teleology external to the paradigm. A British atheist need not believe in God or even the permissibility of monarchy to be moved by the swell and lyrics of *God Save the Queen*. An Israeli citizen need not be a Zionist, a triumphalist, or even a practicing Jew to be spurred toward civic action when reflecting upon the imagery of the menorah from the Arch of Titus, which refers to the promise of Isaiah 60:3 that "Nations will come to [Israel's] light". A well-traveled American need not believe in American exceptionalism or that the United States is, in any unique sense, the land of the free to want to create a society which is exceptional and uniquely free. A French philosopher need not actually believe that, according to nature, human beings are free, equal, or part of a shared fraternal order to live a life dedicated to *liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité*. Nor does a black South African who lived through apartheid have to believe that unity is possible in her lifetime to demand that *!ke e: ǀxarra ǁke* (diverse people unite). The value of the belief rests upon the shared nature of the contract and culture, a shared paradigm, not the external truth or possibility of the claim. To be part of the contract is to partake in a shared paradigm and belief

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[58] For example, one can disagree with the right to free speech in a democratic context, but to do so is to challenge the social contract, the paradigm, itself. The normative force of an argument disputing free speech must rest on some metaphysics or normative ethics outside the social contract. Whereas, for the person upholding the paradigm, the argument is simpler: as Americans we believe in free speech as a right.

structure, even if one knows that it is a constructed paradigm, even if one doubts that the paradigm can account for all empirical phenomena.[59]

Here, a possible solution to the general problem of truth and teleology within a democratic context is found in the very structure of a cooperative society. Whether Rawls, Rorty, or an analogue to the social epistemology arising out of the scientific community, cooperation must be built through the social contract itself. And likewise, any ground for truth, the good, or the purpose of society must be built into the social contract itself. Because, while metaphysical truth in a democratic context is not binding, the truths of the contract which hold together society have normative force.

But the second lesson al-Fārābī teaches problematizes the first. Because while cooperation is necessary, cooperation must be built through various modes of discourse which serve various members of the community with various levels of cognitive ability and interest in the grounds for cooperation. The cause of social unity must be universally understood. It must be either simple or able to be expressed simply. But how can the fact that truth is constructed, that societal cohesion is merely built upon a social contract, ever be rendered simple? (This is the reason that both Rawls' and Rorty's approaches seem utopian and romantic to me, respectively, in terms of actual political discourse. Cooperation, which must appeal to our better angels, must be alluring to the well-read political scholar and the provincially minded laity alike.) In this regard, the paradigm model provides a more promising possible solution: values are accessible to all, even

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[59] Two examples come to mind here: 1) the physicist focusing on either general relativity or quantum mechanics who knows that their paradigm is not explanatory for all phenomena, yet persists anyway (see Footnote 56); and 2) a certain reading of Maimonides which suggests that, in like manner to what is described above, Maimonides did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, even while he endorsed the belief in the resurrection of the dead as one of the mandatory tenets of Judaism in the *13 Principles*. As the reading goes, while Maimonides did not believe in bodily resurrection, he did believe in the belief in bodily resurrection. See Kirschner 1981.

while the grounds for those values and the theory behind those values are appreciated by only a few. One can work within a paradigm without ever reflecting upon the paradigm. One can find truth in a social contract without ever even realizing that the truth hinges upon the social contract. But it is unclear if this can be achieved without some level of willful deception. In fact, it seems that, in practice, some deception must occur. And there is still one more lesson al-Fārābī teaches.

The third and most difficult of al-Fārābī's lessons is also the most important. Even given the conditions described above, i.e., the need for cooperation and the need for various levels of discourse, deception is not permissible. Without some knowledge which is grounded in reality, there is no justification for political deception. Even if truth, within a society, can be grounded upon the social contract itself, even if cooperation can be established through this contract, and even if it is expressible through various modes of discourse, there is still no recourse for truths derived from the social contract to be presented, within a democracy, as anything but truths derived from the social contract. In other words, constructed knowledge can never be justified as presenting itself as unconstructed.[60] There is no justification for an untruth expressing itself as true without metaphysical necessity and certain knowledge. And there is no metaphysical necessity and no certain knowledge within an artificial paradigm. In the simplest of terms, if a society is a democracy, society must create social cohesion from a source other than metaphysics, namely from a shared social contract. But when cooperation comes about through the values embedded within the social contract, then these values are constructed. Yet, if universal buy-in concerning the importance of these values is to be achieved

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[60] The caveat to this, as discussed through the present project, is if the constructed knowledge is minimally harmful, necessary, and known to be necessary.

across all coteries of society, the values need to be presented in such a way that they appear to come from something more authoritative than mere agreement. But presenting these values as if they arise from anything but the mere agreement codified in the social contract is ethically impermissible.

Al-Fārābī's lessons leave the reader with a web of contradictions, if that reader lives in a democratic context.[61] Cooperation is required for human flourishing. Fruitful cooperation only occurs in a society which properly orients itself toward the truth. But truth, as such, cannot be the ground for democracy; only agreement grounds democracy. Agreement must be a substitute for truth (as the ground for societal truths). But agreement can only occur between all members of society if many members of society do not realize that the societal truths they hold dear are built upon agreement alone. Thus, societal agreement, as an untruth, must present itself as the truth itself to achieve its aim of cooperative flourishing. However, untruths which present themselves as truths cannot be justified, unless they are grounded in necessity and knowledge. But in democracy, only agreement is possible, not necessity or knowledge. Again, the reader is left in conflict: political deception is necessary for the *realpolitik* of the society and the state, while political deception remains unjustifiable.

5. <u>Conclusion</u>

In this concluding chapter, I have attempted to open up new avenues for study, even while closing any appeals to al-Fārābī as an advocate for justified political

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[61] This, of course, is unsurprising given his own feelings toward democracy. It should also be noted that al-Fārābī raises the same problem for a reader in an undemocratic context, unless the undemocratic reader has perfect certainty of metaphysical truth which create the conditions described in Section 2 of the present chapter. I leave it to the reader to discern if that is at all likely.

deception in a democratic context. Al-Fārābī raises a prolific number of entangled

philosophical issues concerning truth, deception, imagination, political cooperation,

pedagogy, and the metaphysical ground upon which they are all built. In al-Fārābī, one

finds one of the fiercest advocates in the history of philosophy for the need for a

pedagogical Construction of Social Knowledge, even to the point of justifying deception

for the aim of societal cohesion and edification. But paradoxically, one also finds a

thinker concerned about qualifying and restricting the use of untruth. Al-Fārābī is

meticulous in the conditions he sets up to justify his beneficent political deception as a

justified Construction of Social Knowledge. At once, he is an exemplar for modeling

political deception, even while he is a critic to those who would do so in our time.

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<u>Al-Fārābī</u>

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