THE RULER AS PHILOSOPHER

A new interpretation of al-Fārābī's view

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on his eightieth birthday

In his treatise *Zum ewigen Weltfrieden* the German philosopher Kant has critizised Plato's teaching of the philosopher-king as follows: One should neither expect nor wish that kings become philosophers and philosophers become kings; for the possession of force inevitably destroys free judgement of reason[1].

Plato had taught[2] that political force (δύναμις πολιτική) and love of wisdom (φιλοσοφία) should be combined. He was convinced that the θεῖα μοῖρα takes care of the coincidence of philosophical knowledge and capability to rule in the philosopher-king. The philosopher-king has the pedagogical duty to bring up guardians who combine in a Socratic manner knowledge, will and action[3].

This idea has been taken over in the 10th century A.D. by the Islamic philosopher al-Fārābī[4]. We find it in his book on *The Perfect State* (*al-madīna l-fāḍila*) which now is newly published with English translation and commentary by Richard Walzer[5]. Fārābī had knowledge of Plato's *Republic*, *Laws* and *Dialogues*. These books may have been accessible to Fārābī in the form of paraphrases and late redactions from hellenistic times[6]. However, Fārābī has not taken over Plato's teaching without modifications. It is possible to assume that he found some new, partially neoplatonic interpretations and additions in revisions of Plato's works. At the same time we should not forget that Fārābī had a thorough knowledge of Aristotle. He was convinced that Plato and Aristotle coincide in their philosophy; he has written a monograph on this subject[7]. However, we shall see that Fārābī, starting from this conviction has given to Plato's political philosophy a new, Aristotle-orientated context.

1. 'Daß Könige philosophieren oder Philosophen Könige würden, ist nicht zu erwarten, aber auch nicht zu wünschen: weil der Besitz der Gewalt das freie Urteil der Vernunft unvermeidlich verdirbt'. The text is cited in Hoffmann, *Platon* p. 146.
2. *Rep.* V 473 c-e; cp. Wichmann, *Platon* p. 289.
3. Cp. Hoffmann, *Platon* p. 117.
4. Cp. on him R. Walzer, art. *al-Fārābī*, in EI² II 778-781; Fakhry, *History*² 107ff.; Marmura, *Islamische Philosophie* 346ff. – The so far best description of his political philosophy is M. Mahdi, *Alfarabi, circa 870-950*. – On the historical context of Fārābī's philosophy the reader may compare E.I.J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought* (esp. p. 122ff.) and id., *Politisches Denken*. – For the contents of Fārābī's different works containing his ideas on prophecy s. the description by Brewster, *Philosophical Discussions* p. 93-145.
5. S. the bibliography.
6. Cp. R. Walzer, art. *Aflāṭūn* in EI² I p. 234; Isaac Rabinowitz in his review of Rosenthal/Walzer (ed.), *Alfarabius, De Platonis philosophia*, in: American Journal of Philology 67, Baltimore 1946, p. 77f. and Mahdi, *Editio Princeps* p. 4ff.
7. *Kitāb al-Djamᶜ baina ra'yay al-ḥakīmayn Aflāṭūn al-ilāhī wa-Arisṭūṭālīs* (s. bibliography). Cp. on this book Majid Fakhry, *Al-Farabi* p. 467ff.

Research in Fārābī's teaching of the perfect state has so far been mainly interested in the collection of parallels in platonic, middle-platonic, neo-platonic and peripatetic texts. Often it did not pay enough attention to similar ideas in other books by Fārābī, to the context of Fārābī's ideas and to their Aristotelian background. As we have already shown[8] assumed peripatetic and middle-platonic ideas which R. Walzer had ascribed to lost Greek sources, appear to be based on a combination of disparate Aristotelian thoughts by Fārābī himself.

1. THE INTELLECTUAL QUALITIES OF THE RULER-PHILOSOPHER

Let us begin with the qualities which according to Fārābī the philosopher-king should have. Their enumeration in Fārābī's book on *The Perfect State*[9] appears to be a late summary of discussions which are echoed in other books by Fārābī. We find them also in Fārābī's book *The Attainment of Happiness*[10]: there, they are correctly traced back to Plato's *Republic*[11]. They form the background of Fārābī's *Prolegomena to the Study of Aristotle's Philosophy*[12]. These *Prolegomena* are inspired by Alexandrian theories about the starting-point of philosophical studies[13] and stress the necessity of ethical and intellectual qualities of the philosopher.

This idea has undergone an interesting development in Fārābī. He mentions in his book on *The Perfect State* ethical virtues, like love of truth and justice, resoluteness and contempt of worldly things. Furthermore, he has added several intellectual qualities: Especially interesting are the qualities number five and six[14], according to which the ruler-philosopher 'should have an excellent mode of expression so that he can completely explain every thought (*muḍmar*) with his tongue; further he should like to learn and acquire knowledge, being guided by (this aim) and accepting (this) without being displeased by learning which causes trouble to him and without being annoyed by anything obtained in this way'.

A prerequisite for the activities of learning and explaining is of course a thorough knowledge of the object itself. Fārābī informs us about this by mentioning the following qualities (nr. 2-4) of the 'first ruler' (*ar-ra'īs al-*

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8. S. my paper on *Prophetie und Ethik bei Fārābī*.
9. *al-Madīna l-fāḍila* ed. Dieterici 59, 14ff./ed. Walzer 246, 9ff. with commentary on p. 444-446.
10. *Taḥṣīl as-saʿāda* ed. Hyderabad p. 44, -3ff./ed. Āl Yāsīn 44, ult.ss.
11. 375a ff.; 487b ff.; cp. Walzer's commentary to his English translation of *al-Madīna l-fāḍila* p. 445.
12. *Risāla fīmā yanbaghī* ed. Dieterici 53, 3ff.
13. Cp. Gutas, *Starting Point* p. 115ff.
14. *al-Madīna l-fāḍila* ed. Dieterici 59, 21-23/ed. Walzer 246, 16ff. – My translation here and on the following pages differs sometimes slightly from Walzer's version.

auwal) and Imam[15]: 'He should by natural disposition understand and conceive very well (*djayyid al-fahm wa-t-taṣauwur*) all he is told, so that it becomes comprehensible to him according to the intention of the speaker and according to the matter itself.– Further he should retain very well in his memory what he understood, saw, heard and perceived, and on the whole forget almost nothing.– Further he should have an excellent intelligence and he should be sharp-witted: If he sees something even with a meagre indication, he should understand it according to this indication'.

This is a kind of pedagogical theory. We are told that we can explain something only if we have understood it very well and if we are able to formulate it. Fārābī[16] gives the following summary:'... in formulating what (the ruler) knows he should be able to present it very well[17] in his speech'. The context of this doctrine[18] is not yet recognized and taken into account by modern scholars.

2. THE RULER-PHILOSOPHER AS TEACHER

Indeed Fārābī paid much attention to the problem of understanding and explaining i.e. teaching. He refers to it in his *Prolegomena to the Study of Aristotle's Philosophy*[19], being immediately inspired here by Alexandrian introductions to the study of Aristotle[20]. Furthermore, we have detailed discussions in his book on *Expressions used in logic* (*Kitāb al-Alfāẓ al-mustaʿ-mala fī l-manṭiḳ*)[21] and in his not yet edited *Kitāb al-Burhān*, a short treatise on Aristotle's *Analytica posteriora*[22]. We shall present some main thoughts which are important for us because of their relation to the *Perfect State*.

The above mentioned interrelation between understanding and teaching means the subjection of teacher and pupil to the same process of understanding and learning. Therefore the intellectual qualities of the ruler described in the *Perfect State* of Fārābī are surprisingly similar to those of the learner (*mutaʿallim*) described in Fārābī's *Kitāb al-Alfāẓ al-mustaʿmala*

15. *al-Madīna l-fāḍila* ed. Dieterici 59, 16-20/ed. Walzer 246, 12-16. – On the term *Imām* which is applied to the prophet and his successors cp. Walzer's commentary p. 436; 441f.
16. *al-Madīna l-fāḍila* ed. Dieterici 59, 5f./ed. Walzer 246, 2f. – Cp.ch. 7.
17. *djūdat at-takhayyul. – Takhayyul* here does (against Walzer) not mean 'imagination', but is an equivalent of *taṣauwur;* cp. Berman in Oriens 23-4, p. 511 below.
18. Cp. also Fārābī, *Fuṣūl al-madanī* ed. Dunlop § 54/transl. p. 50/ed. Najjar p. 66.
19. *Risāla fīmā yanbaghī* ed. Dieterici 54, 8ff.
20. Cp. Gutas, *Starting Point* p. 116. – Fārābī does not talk about psychological-anthropological questions of education as Plato and Aristotle did (cp. W.W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle On Emotion*, London 1975, p. 45ff.).
21. Ed. Mahdi p. 86-94.
22. This book has been used (according to ms. Hamidiye 812 in Istanbul, Suleimaniye, fol. 61r-84v, esp. fol. 78 ff.) by Haddad, *Early Arab Theory.* – For further mss. of this not yet edited text s. my article *New Manuscript Findings,* ch. 3, end.

fī l-manṭiḳ[23]. According to this book the learner 'should (1) conceive (*yata-ṣauwaru*) that object (which he is taught) and he should understand (*yaf-ham*) the meaning (*maʿnā*) of what he has heard from the teacher, namely the meaning intended by the statement of the teacher. (2) He should be convinced (*taṣdīḳ*) of the real existence of what he conceived (*taṣauwarahū*) and understood (*fahimahū*) from the formulation (*lafẓ*) of his teacher. (3) He should keep in mind what he has conceived and of what he is convinced'.

The above texts of Fārābī make evident that the perception of existing things and the keeping in mind of this perception are not only prerequisites for the listener, the learner, but also for the teacher, the ruler of the perfect state. Fārābī enumerates in his *Kitāb al-Alfāẓ al-mustaʿmala fī l-manṭiḳ*[24] following means which are useful for learning:
1) 'Formulations (*alfāẓ*) which designate a thing'; 2) 'the definition of a thing'; 3) 'the parts of a definition'; 4) 'the particulars *(djuz'iyāt)* (of a thing)'; 5) its 'universals (*kulliyāt*); 6) 'its descriptions (*rusūm*)'; 7) 'its specific qualities'; 8) 'its accidents'; 9) 'what is similar to it'; 10) 'its contrary'; 11) 'division'; 12) 'example (*al-mithāl*)'; 13) 'induction (*al-istiḳ-rā'*); 14) 'syllogism (*al-ḳiyās*)'; 15) 'placing something in front of one's eyes'.

We can recognize that Fārābī has used here elements of Aristotle's *Organon*, especially of his *Analytica posteriora*[25] which have been translated from Syriac into Arabic by Fārābī's contemporary Abū Bishr Mattā Ibn Yūnus[26] and commented by Fārābī himself (s. above). We shall try to show that the starting-point of this enumeration is Aristotle's thesis of the interrelation between thought and perception.

3. THE INTERRELATION OF THOUGHT AND LANGUAGE AND FĀRĀBĪ'S THEORY OF CONCEIVED PICTURES

In the mentioned chapter on the means of learning Fārābī[27] makes the important statement that difficult conceivable[28] things can be 'replaced' (*abdala*, pass.) by easily conceivable things. Amongst these easily conceivable things Fārābī ranks the mentioned means nr. 1-9. He comments on

23. Ed. Mahdi 87, 11ff.; cp. Haddad, *Early Arab Theory* p. 245f.
24. Ed. Mahdi 87, 11ff.; cp. Berman in Oriens 23-4, p. 511; Haddad, *Early Arab Theory* p. 247ff. and Heinrichs, *Antike Verknüpfung* p. 284f.
25. Cp. Prantl I 96ff.; 104ff., esp. 108ff.
26. Edited by Badawī, *Manṭiḳ Arisṭū* II 309ff. – On the history of the translation cp. Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus* p. 17-20.
27. *al-Alfāẓ* ed. Mahdi 88-91 (§§ 42-45), esp. § 44; cp. Haddad, *Early Arab Theory* p. 248.
28. We should take into account the synonymity of *taṣauwur* and *takhayyul; takhayyala* in this context has nothing to do with 'imagination'; cp. above n. 17.

nr. 9: 'What is similar to a thing is clear too. For, if something similar to a thing is conceived (*yukhayyalu*), the thing itself can easily be conceived (*sahila taṣauwuru sh-shay'i nafsihi*). For the conceived picture (*khayāl*) of a thing corresponds to the conceived picture of what is similar to it. Both (conceived pictures) are in fact similar to each other in so far as both have in common one thing, which is imitated (*yu'khadhu*) at the same time in both (conceived pictures). They are similar to each other by their mutual correspondence (*yatanāsabā*) in a mutually corresponding manner. For example the relation of a captain to his ship corresponds to the relation of an army-leader to his army or of the leader of a town (*mudabbir al-madīna*) to his town. Herewith the army-leader, the leader of a town and the captain are similar to each other by having a similar relation'.

The mentioned structural similarity in the relations enables us to illustrate a thing by a conceived picture. However, Fārābī[29] excludes such substitutions, in which 'extremely complex structures' (*mā rukkiba tarkīban azyada kathīran*) are replaced by simplifying and falsifying pictures so that 'the listener and the learner are very far away form the intended thing'. Such wrong substitutions are ascribed by Fārābī[30] to some Greek philosophers, to the Pythagoreans, Plato and Empedocles. Fārābī here follows in a partially not exact manner the critique of Aristotle's *Methaphysics*[31] which were accessible to him in the 9th century translation of Asṭath (Eustathius)[32]. In Aristotle's report Being (τὸ ὄν) and Unity (τὸ ἕν) are not explainable according to Plato and the Pythagoreans, but according to Empedocles Unity can be reduced to something more comprehensible and well-known (γνωριμώτερον). However, nearly with the same words as Aristotle[33] Fārābī deems it unnecessary to deal with the sayings of those, 'whose philosophy is similar to embellishments'[34] He calls these sayings 'allegories and riddles' (*ar-rumūz wa-l-alghāz*)[35] which 'should be rejected in the teaching of philosophy' and which are only allowed 'in rhetoric and in sayings which are used in political affairs'.

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29. *al-Alfaẓ* ed. Mahdi 91, 6ff. (§ 46); cp. Berman in Oriens 23-4, p. 512.
30. *al-Alfaẓ* ed. Mahdi 91, 10ff. and on Plato cp. Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl* ed. Hyderabad p. 41, 5ff./ed. Āl Yāsīn 91, 4ff.; transl. Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy* p. 45 (with references to Aristotle in n. 7 on p. 134).
31. 1001 a 10ff. (cp. 1000 a 9-19).
32. Ed. Bouyges, *Tafsīr mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabī'a* of Ibn Rushd I 261, 2ff. (cp. 247, 2ff.).
33. 1000 a 18f./transl. of Asṭāh ed. Bouyges (s.prec.n.) I 247, 11f. –The mentioned Artistotelian passages have been pointed out by Berman in Oriens 23-4, p. 512f.
34. A translation for τῶν μυθικῶς σοφιζομένων Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1000 a 18.
35. *al-Alfaẓ* ed. Mahdi 92, 4. – We find the same terminology in Fārābī's *al-Madīna l-fāḍila* ed. Dieterici 52, 16/ed. Walzer 224, 12 – besides *aqāwīl muḥākiya* ('imitating sayings'), *ibdālāt* ('substitutions') and *tashbīhāt* ('similarities') which describe sayings of those who see particulars in their dreams.

4. THE ROLE OF RHETORIC

This doctrine of Fārābī should not give rise to the assumption[36], that 'philosophy and certainty are not for the masses'. This assumption is an exaggeration. According to Fārābī's treatise on rhetoric[37] which follows here Aristotle[38], the art of rhetoric has the task 'to teach the massa (al-djumhūr) much of the theoretical things' and is used in political 'speeches'[39]. However, rhetoric can only 'persuade'[40] and cannot be applied in 'reflexion' (ar-rawīya) and conclusions[41]. As in Aristotle[42] rhetoric first of all aims at the contingent, the particulars and not at the universals, the necessary[43]; it can bring about 'opinions' (ẓunūn), but not 'certainty' (al-yakīn)[44].

Rhetorical persuasion (iknāᶜ) must be converted into conviction by accepting the contents as true (taṣdīk). This is possible by 'indisputable proofs' (al-barāhīn al-yakīnīya)[45]. 'Knowledge of the beings' (ᶜilm al-maudjū-dāt)[46] acquired by the combination of rhetoric and 'indisputable proofs' deserves to be called 'philosophy'.

Besides this kind of direct knowledge we find in Fārābī a second kind of knowledge which is acquired indirectly[47]. The essence (dhāt) of a thing is received by the mind not directly, but is only conceivable (yutakhayyal) in the shape of a 'picture' (mithāl) which 'imitates' (ḥākā) the thing. Thus, knowledge is restricted to conceptions in the shape of 'pictures' (mithālāt) which imitate the beings. Who is persuaded of them (in a rhetorical way) and who is convinced of the reality of pictorial knowledge has acquired knowledge which according to Fārābī is called 'religion' (milla) by the ancient philosophers[48].

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36. For example Berman in Oriens 23-4, p. 513.
37. Kitāb al-Khaṭaba ed. Langhade p. 57, esp. 1. 7-9; cp. Fārāī, Falsafat Arisṭūṭālīs ed. Mahdi 84f./transl. Mahdi, Alfarabi's Philosophy p. 92f., Kraemer, Alfarabi's Opinions 119, n. 20 and Butterworth, The Rhetorician p. 112ff.
38. Rhetorics 1357 a 1ff.
39. al-mukhāṭabāt allatī tustaᶜ malu fi l-muᶜāmalāt al-madanīya (ed. Langhade 57, 9). – This line has been continued by Averroes: s. Butterworth, Averroes and id., The Rhetorician p. 129ff.
40. innamā uᶜiddat li-t-takannuᶜ fakaṭ.
41. Kitāb al-Khaṭaba ed. Langhade 59, 5f.; cp. Zimmerman, Al-Fārābī und die philosophische Kritik p. 402f. and below ch.6 (on n. 54).
42. Rhetorics 1355 b 26.
43. Cp. Fārābī, Kitāb al-Khaṭāba ed. Langhade 33, 11f.; 14.
44. Cp. Fārābī, Kitāb al-Khaṭāba ed. Langhade 59, 11f.
45. Cp. Fārābī, Taḥṣīl ed. Hyderabad p. 40, 2ff./ed. Āl Yāsīn 90, 3f./transl. Mahdi, Alfarabi's Philosophy p. 44.
46. Cp. also Fārābī, al-Madīna l-fāḍila ed. Dieterici 69, 19ff./ed. Walzer 278, 8ff. and the commentary of Walzer p. 474ff.
47. Fārābī, Taḥṣīl ed. Hyderabad p. 40, 13/ed. Āl Yāsīn 90, 14f.
48. Taḥṣīl ed. Hyderabad p. 40, 9ff./ed. Āl Yāsīn 90, 10ff./transl. Mahdi, Alfarabi's Philosophy p. 44.

5. FĀRĀBĪ'S THESIS OF 'RELIGION' AS IMITATION OF PHILOSOPHY

This classification of religion is refined by Fārābī himself. He presents the doctrine that religion 'imitates philosophy' (*muḥākiyatun li-l-falsafa*)[49]; both, religion and philosophy, 'comprise the same subjects (*mauḍūʿāt bi-aʿyānihā*) and both give an account of the ultimate principles (*al-mabādi' al-quṣwā*) of beings (*al-maudjūdāt*). For both supply knowledge about the first principle (*almabda' al-auwal*) and cause (*as-sabab al-auwal*) of beings, and both give an account of the ultimate end for the sake of which man is made – that is, supreme happiness (*as-saʿāda l-quṣwā*) – and the ultimate end (*al-ghāya l-quṣwā*) of every one of the other beings'[50].

Consequently philosophy and religion differ only in the method, not in their aim. Philosophy is based on philosophical proofs (*mā tubarhinuhū l-falsafatu*) and on knowledge acquired by this; religion relies on conceptions which 'imitate' the essence of things and uses rhetorical means, metaphorical language, pictorial conceptions.

6. THE ARISTOTELIAN MODEL OF THEORY AND PRAXIS AS COMMON STRUCTURE OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION. THE ETHICAL AND COGNITIONAL COMPONENT

According to the already cited text of Fārābī philosophy and religion do not only inform about the 'ultimate principles', but also about 'the ultimate aim' and the way, how to reach 'supreme happiness'. The originally koranic term *milla* 'religion' is therefore a description of the 'opinions' and 'actions' which are imposed upon the society by its ruler in the shape of laws[51].

The same function is ascribed to philosophy. According to the wording of Fārābī 'the virtuous religion is similar to philosophy. (Like religion) philosophy is partly theoretical, partly practical. The theoretical (philoso-

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49. *Taḥṣīl* ed. Hyderabad p. 40, 13/ed. Āl Yāsīn 90, 14f./transl. Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy* p. 44.
50. *Taḥṣīl* ed. Hyderabad p. 40, 13-17/ed. Āl Yāsīn 90, 14-19. We follow the translation of Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy* p. 44. – On the term 'supreme happiness' and its history in Islamic and medieval philosophy some material can be found in Burbach, *The Theory of Beatitude;* Burbach has based his discussions of Islamic material on Latin translations. The idea of the identity of philosophy and religion has been taken over by Ibn Ṭufayl (died 581/1185-6), *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* ed. Nader 92ff./transl. and commented by Goodman p. 160ff.; cp. Schreiner, *Ibn Tufail, Hajj ibn Yaqzan der Naturmensch* p. 113ff. and Hawi, *Islamic Naturalism* p. 183. – This parallelism between Fārābī and Ibn Ṭufayl has already been realized by Marmura, *The Philosopher and Society* p. 322 below; cp. also id., *The Islamic Philosophers' Conception of Islam* p. 97ff. (on the adoption of Fārābī's concept of religion as the imitation of philosophy in Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd).
51. *al-Milla l-fāḍila* ed. Mahdi 43, 3; cp. Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy* p. 137 (n.2 of § 33) and Berman, *Maimonides, the Disciple of Alfārābī* p. 159f.

phy) which is related to thinking does not enable a human being – if he has knowledge (of theoretical philosophy) – to act accordingly. However, the practical (philosophy) enables the human being – if he has knowledge (of practical philosophy) – to act accordingly. The practical (section) in religion is that section, of which the universals (*kulliyātuhā*) are implied in the practical philosophy'[52]. These universals become concrete in religion in the shape of 'rules' (*sharā'iṭ*), of 'virtuous laws' (*sharā'iʿ fāḍila*)[53]. Religion has the task to persuade' (*aknaʿa, kanaʿa*) 'the massa' (*al-djumhūr*) of these laws and rules, to 'instruct' (*ʿallama*) in them and 'educate' (*addaba*) by using the already mentioned rhetorical-poetical means[54].

Analogous to the parallelism of praxis in religion and philosophy the 'theoretical opinions' (*al-ārā' an-nazarīya*) in religion have a counterpart in the proofs (*barāhīn*) of theoretical philosophy[55]. As in the case of the practical 'actions' the 'rules' and 'laws', the theoretical 'opinions' of religion can be proved (*barhana*, pass.) and justified (cp. *aʿṭā l-asbāb*) by philosophy, by a comparison with its universals[56].

Remarkable is the ethical component in Fārābī's idea of philosophy and religion. As already mentioned 'philosophical' demonstration and 'religious' persuasion by using the pictorial language of rhetoric and poetics intend to give ethical instructions to the individuals, instructions of the right way to supreme happiness. Religion is instruction in the shape of 'rules' and 'laws' and starts from philosophy which according to Fārābī is preceding religion[57] and has the task to give a firm proof. This observation gives rise to a crucial question: is philosophical demonstration only something which is wanted by educated people, by intellectuals? Is religion therefore on the one side demonstrable by philosophy, on the other side however only assigned to the massa, to non-philosophers? I think, we can deny this. We have to start from the Aristotelian theory-praxis-model which according to Fārābī is shared by philosophy and religion. As Fārābī formulates, religion 'imitates' philosophy which in the Aristotelian manner is interpreted as a combination of theory and praxis, 'scientific cognition' and moral insight, practical prudence[58]. Following the doctrine of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and using Aristotle's *De Anima* as well as the

52. *al-Milla l-fāḍila* ed. Mahdi 46, 22-47, 2.
53. *al-Milla l-fāḍila* ed. Mahdi 47, 2ff.
54. Cp. above ch. 4 and Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* ed. Mahdi 152, 14; Heinrichs 283f.
55. See Fārābī, *al-Milla l-fāḍila* ed. Mahdi 47,6.
56. Cp. Haddad, *Early Arab Theory* p. 253.
57. See Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl* ed. Hyderabad p. 41, 12/ed. Āl Yāsīn 91, 13/transl. Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy* p. 45. – Cp. Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* ed. Mahdi p. 131 and Berman, *Maimonides, the Disciple of Alfārābī* p. 156ff., 161f.; *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* ed. Mahdi p. 154f. and Berman p. 162f.; further below, end of this chapter.
58. For further details on the following discussion s. my paper *Prophetie und Ethik bei Fārābī. I: Mimesis in Fārābīs Musterstaat: eine mittelplatonische Tradition?*

commentary of Alexander of Aphrodisias on *De Anima* Fārābī has developed in his *Perfect State* a new doctrine. As in Aristotle's doctrine ethical actions of human beings and their cognition of the right are controlled by three powers of the soul, the perceptive power, the reason and the striving power. Fārābī follows here the Aristotelian idea of φρόνησις, 'practical prudence': intelligible things are not only the object of scientific knowledge, but also something that leads to moral insight, to the cognition of the desirable good and the avoidable bad; scientific knowledge and moral insight are related to each other. At the same time it is not possible to be virtuous in a general manner, but only by *doing* the good. Theory and praxis belong to each other. Hereby reason determines virtuous actions; at the same time moral insight in desirable good and avoidable bad is orientated at human actions, it is something real, not theoretical.

In this ethical philosophy which is practically orientated Fārābī[59] refers to an Aristotelian doctrine which has been neglected till now by modern scholars, namely the doctrine of the interrelation of thought and perception; according to Fārābī the general good is not conceivable without sense-perception. Therefore Aristotle and also Fārābī have introduced the imaginative power (Aristotle: φαντασία) which as mediator sends to the reasonable part of the soul sense-perceptions (Aristotle: αἰσθήματα) respectively 'imaginations' (Aristotle: φαντάσματα) of the perceived object. These imaginations are called by Fārābī 'imitations' (*muḥākāt*) – a terminological innovation of Fārābī. All perceptible and even all intelligible (*maʿḳūlāt*) things are imitated by the imaginative power. For not the perceived or reflected object itself reaches the reasonable part of the soul, but only an imitation, a picture. Human soul only reflects in such pictures.

With the described interrelation of thought and perception Fārābī has given a further justification for the Aristotelian combination of scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and practical prudence (φρόνησις), of theoretical and practical reason. This combination found its expression in Fārābī's *Perfect State* (*al-madīna l-fāḍila*) and *Perfect Religion* (*al-milla l-fāḍila*). For the 'particulars' (*al-djuzʾiyāt*) of religion have a counterpart in the 'universals' (*al-kulliyāt*) of philosophy which proves the particulars[60]. As a consequence the perfect religion is an imitation of philosophy, it is 'similar' (*shabīha*) to philosophy[61].

As we have seen this similarity is based on a common structure. At the same time religion does not turn out to be a useless copy of philosophy[62]. Religion persuades the citizen of the virtuous city, to believe and to act

59. Cp. besides my paper *Prophetie und Ethik* (p. 730ff.) also Fārābī, *al-Djamʿ* ed. Dieterici 20, 22ff. and on this passage Aristotle, *Anal. post.* I ch. 5; *De anima* III 1.424b.
60. Cp. Fārābī, *al-Milla l-fāḍila* ed. Mahdi 47, 12-17.
61. Fārābī, *al-Milla l-fāḍila* ed. Mahdi 46, 22; cp. above ch. 5.
62. Cp. also here ch. 3.

for the sake of obtaining supreme happiness – what can be proved by philosophy but what can not be deduced from philosophy. This however does not mean that philosophy is a servant of religion. For the relation of philosophy to reality is in the eyes of Fārābī not only justified by the Aristotelian theory of cognition, of interrelation between thought and perception; the virtuous religion is also a concrete and by philosophy provable example for the relation between scientific cognition and moral insight. By 'rules' and 'laws' religion takes care for the relation of ethics to reality and tries to realize the practical prudence of philosophy.

Consequently the relation of theory and praxis in philosophy and religion also combines religion and philosophy. Philosophy and religion are depending on each other like thought and perception, theory and praxis, scientific cognition and moral insight, religious belief ('opinions') and acts according to religious regulations. By demonstrating these interrelations Fārābī turns out to be a very original thinker.
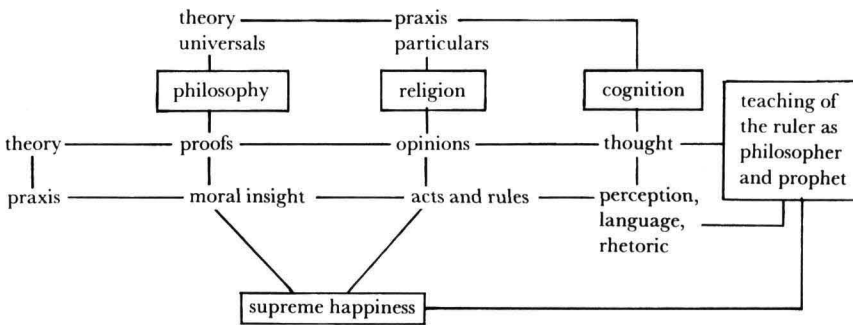
The reality of religion in the virtuous city means the realization of the virtues and the imitating transformation of general ethics into virtuous acts. Religion appears to be an instrument for the realization of the philosophical doctrine about the relation between true virtues and reality; true virtues cannot exist generally, but only in ethical acts. Therefore philosophy needs religion as an instrument. Accordingly we must interpret a saying of Fārābī in his *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*[63], that 'philosophy precedes the instruments in the way that the employer of instruments precedes the instruments in time'. This utterance is an interesting modification of an Alexandrian[64] teaching, which has been taken over in the 10th century A.D. by philosophers in Baghdad[65]; according to this doctrine logic is not

63. Ed. Mahdi 132, 7f./transl. Berman, *Maimonides, the Disciple of Alfarābī* p. 172.
64. For example Elias in his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* in: Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca XVIII/1 ed. A. Busse (Berolini 1900, repr. 1961) p. 117, 9ff.
65. For example Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī: s. Rescher, *Studies* p. 42; cp. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary*, Introduction p. 123 and Hein, *Definition* p. 153ff.

a part of philosophy, but its instrument which enables man to distinguish between true and wrong in theoretical philosophy and between good and bad in practical philosophy. Fārābī has taken over this doctrine in a specific manner, by replacing logic by religion: He classifies in his *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* religion not as part of philosophy, but as its instrument; in this quality religion realizes what is generally existing in philosophy, namely the philosophical idea of moral insight, of practical prudence leading to supreme happiness. Herewith religion appears to be not only an instrument of philosophy; it also enables philosophy to realize itself. Philosophy is depending on religion – just as philosophy requires logic as an instrument.

The autonomy of philosophy appears to be restricted insofar as philosophy and religion are depending on each other – analogous to the Aristotelian relation between thought and perception, scientific knowledge and practical prudence, human cognition and language, learning and teaching, theory and praxis[66].

7. THE LIMITS OF HUMAN COGNITION: PHILOSOPHY AND REVELATION

By describing religion in a specific manner Fārābī has not only limited the autonomy of philosophy; he also has drawn our attention to the limits of human cognition. This is shown by Fārābī's teaching of the dream which has starting-points in Alexander of Aphrodisias' theory of the divine active intellect (*al-ʿakl al-faʿʿāl*) and in Aristotle's teaching of dreams and divination[67]. According to this doctrine dreams are explained as a result of the interaction between sense-perception, imitating imagination and divine 'active intellect' which is identified with the angel Gabriel and by following Sura 26,193 is called 'faithful spirit' (*ar-rūḥ al-amīn*)[68]. If the imitating imagination aims at present and future 'particulars', at 'separated intelligibles' (*al-maʿḳūlāt al-mufāriḳa*) and 'exalted things' which all are inspired by the divine intellect, we can speak of prophecy (*nubūwa*). We find prophecy, if philosophical cognition of what is good appears to be insufficient and is supplemented by inspirations (*waḥy*) of the divine intellect.

Therefore the ruler of the perfect state is not only a philosopher, but also a prophet; since divine inspirations of the active intellect reach the prophet in the shape of imitations of sense-perceptions and intelligibles,

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66. Cp. above, ch. 2 and also Prantl I 108ff.; 116ff.
67. For further details see my paper *Prophetie und Ethik bei Fārābī* p. 737ff. – Fārābī may have based his knowledge of Aristotle's theory of dreams on the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Parva naturalia* which is preserved in the Arabic ms. Rampur (India) nr. 1752, fol. 7r-54v (incomplete); cp. my article *New Manuscript Findings* n. 133.
68. S. Fārābī, *as-Siyāsa l-madanīya* ed. Najjar p. 31f.; *al-Milla l-fāḍila* ed. Mahdi p. 64 § 26.

these inspirations can be taught to human beings. By doing this the ruler of the perfect state can use philosophical demonstrations or he can confine himself to prophetical 'warnings'[69]. In both cases the ruler must 'be able to present' his knowledge 'very well in his speech'[70]. He must have rhetorical-poetical capacities[71]; in using these capacities the ruler should try to convince the philosophically educated man by philosophical demonstrations and to persuade the masses which only have a kind of 'pictorial knowledge'[72], by 'warnings' and 'rules'[73]. As a philosopher he can use in his instructions to the citizen different means of logic and demonstration[74], as a prophet he can use the metaphors of rhetorical-poetical language[75]. This does not mean that prophetical 'warnings' are a kind of knowledge which is less perfect than philosophy and which is only an adaption to the lower capacities of the adherents of religion. Since prophetic 'warnings' are inspired by the divine intellect they supplement philosophical knowledge. This happens in a manner which corresponds to the completion of theoretical cognition by practical orientation, moral insight and practical prudence. Thus religion and its particulars appear to be an imitation, a supplementing picture of philosophy, of the universals without being identical with philosophy.

This limits the possibilities of the ruler-philosopher; he must also be a prophet – not only with regard to the adherents of religion, the masses, but also with regard to the limits of philosophical knowledge. Philosophy and rhetorical-poetical means of language appear to be incomplete servants of religion[76]. This is an interesting modification of the Alexandrian tradition[77] of philosophy and rhetoric as servants of theology[78] which may have reached Fārābī through the mediation of his Christian teachter Yuḥannā Ibn Ḥaylān. According to Fārābī's modification philosophical

69. Cp. the participle *mundhir* in Fārābī, *al-Madīna l-fāḍila* ed. Dieterici 59, 1/ed. Walzer 244, 13 and on its use in the sense of 'informing' s. the commentary of Walzer p. 389 (ad 168, 1.2).
70. See ch.1, end.
71. Cp. Heinrichs p. 292f. and above ch. 4.
72. Cp. Fārābī, *al-Madīna l-fāḍila* ed. Dieterici 70, 1ff./ed. Walzer 278, 12ff.; Kraemer, *Alfarabi's Opinions* p. 115f.
73. See above ch. 6.
74. See above ch. 2.
75. Cp. Heinrichs p. 269ff. and in addition to the article of Heinrichs my paper *Prophetie und Ethik bei Fārābī* p. 739f.
76. In this interpretation we differ from Walzer who has ascribed to Fārābī a less high estimation of prophecy (s. Walzer's commentary to his English translation of *al-Madīna l-fāḍila* p. 422).
77. For example Clemens of Alexandria: cp. Smith p. 142 and Dolch p. 73.
78. Cp. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic* p. 130ff. – An example for the influence of Alexandrian traditions is Fārābī's discussion of philosophical-theological terms; it has a parallel in the platonic school of Alexandria (Johannes Damascenus, *De fide orthodoxa*): cp. Kraemer, *Alfarabi's Opinions* p. 110ff. (following S. Pines).

knowledge has to be supplemented by the divine intellectus agens, by pro-
phetical inspirations. This knowledge of the ruler can only be taught to
the citizen by using imitating pictures. These imitations substitute the
original which can only be perceived and taught in the shape of pictures.
Consequently, those pictures appear to be orientated at the reality just like
philosophical thought with its interrelation of theory and praxis. This
analogy between religion and philosophy – Fārābī speaks of religion as
imitating philosophy – permits the philosophical proof of religious truth
and religious realization of philosophical cognition. Therefore the ruler in
the perfect state is not only a philosopher, but also a prophet who with
the help of God's inspiration – by 'assimilation to God' i.e. by emulating
God's rule[79] – rules the city[80]. This is a reorientation of Greek thoughts
and has Islamic roots.

At the same time Fārābī has classified knowledge of the ruler-philoso-
pher and ruler-prophet as imitations which follow the reality of the perfect
state. Here, the reality of man as a political being (ζῷον πολιτικόν) with
ethical obligations in the association of a city is strongly emphasized[81].
This is contrary to Alexandrian theologians who 'left the perceivable and
turned to the spiritual'[82]. Philosophy is no longer a privilege of specialists
but can be taught by the ruler-prophet to the citizen – in the shape of
'religion'; as an imitation of philosophy religion appears to be the realiza-
tion of true philosophy which is practically orientated, of ethics.

For this reason philosophy is not only an esoteric privilege of philosophi-
cally minded elites; true philosophy arises in the context of the city's reali-
ty in the shape of religion. In this manner also Fārābī's *Summary of Plato's
Laws* (*Talkhīṣ nawāmīs Aflāṭun*) should be interpreted; contrary to Fārābī's
Philosophy of Plato (*Falsafat Aflāṭun*) it very often refers to God, the other
life and the revealed law (*sharīʿa*). Against Leo Strauss[83] Fārābī has not

79. Cp. Fārābī, *Risāla fīmā yanbaghī* ed. Dieterici 53, 13ff. and *al-Milla l-fāḍila* ed. Mahdi
    p. 64-66 (§ 27)/transl. Berman, *Maimonides on Political Leadership* p. 122f. – Fārābī may
    be inspired here by Plato, *Rep.* 613 B; cp. on the definition of philosophy as assimilation
    to God my *Aetius Arabus* p. 327f.
80. Cp. Fārābī, *al-Milla l-fāḍila* ed. Mahdi 64, 16f.
81. On the comparison with Aristotle s. Maroth, *Griechische Theorie* and on platonic parallels
    Sankari, *Plato* p. 1ff. – This idea was widely accepted in the Islamic world: s. Khalidi,
    Some Classical Islamic Views of the City p. 272f. and Najjar, *Siyāsa* p. 102ff. – On Ibn
    Bādjdja/Avempace (died 533/1139) s. Dunlop, art. *Ibn Bādjdja* in EI² III 728b-729a;
    O. Leaman, *Ibn Bājja* p. 109ff. – Ibn Bādjdja as well as Fārābī have been criticized in
    this point by Ibn Ṭufayl (died 581/1185-6) in his philosophical novel *Ḥayy Ibn Yaḳẓān*
    which propagates the mystical union with God and withdrawal from the world as ways
    to knowledge and eternal felicity; cp. A.-M. Goichon, art. *Ḥayy Ibn Yaḳẓān* in EI² III
    333f.; Hawi, *Islamic Naturalism* p. 70ff. and Marmura, *The Philosopher and Society* p. 318ff.
82. Clemens of Alexandria, *Stromateis* VI 11, 90 (cited in Dolch p. 73).
83. *How Farabi Read Plato's Laws.* – A critical review of Strauss' classification of Fārābī's *Sum-
    mary* as an esoteric interpretation can be found in Leaman, *Introduction* p. 195ff.

disguised here his real opinions about Plato; on the contrary, he criticizes the esoteric attitude of Plato[84] and has written his *Summary* with the persuasion that true philosophy is religion.

This statement will have consequences for the interpretation of Fārābī's *Summary of Plato's Laws.* However, we can not enter here into details[85] and conclude with the remark that our view of Fārābī calls for a revision of the standard interpretation by historians of Islamic philosophy: philosophers of Islam should not only be seen as being engaged in the conflict between religion and philosophy[86] or as writers either on philosophy or on religious themes[87].

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84. Cp. his *Talkhīṣ nawāmīs Aflāṭūn* ed. Gabrieli 4, 10ff. and Strauss, *How Farabi read Plato's Laws* p. 322. – On Plato's esoteric attitude cp. K. Gaiser, *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre,* Stuttgart ²1968.

85. For a first discussion of Fārābī's *Summary* as a link between Greek philosophy and Islamic religion s. Mahdi, *Editio Princeps* p. 7ff.

86. Here, we agree with Leaman: s. his article *Does the Interpretation of Islamic Philosophy rest on a Mistake?* and his *Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy* p. 191ff.

87. Here, we differ from Leaman (cp. prec.n.) who classifies Islamic philosophers as being 'perfectly capable of writing on either religion or philosophy without worrying about the relationship that one has to the other' (*Does the Interpretation...* p. 536). According to Leaman (p. 535) 'religion has' in Fārābī's teaching 'no relevance to philosophy'.

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