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Al Farabi

Genre: World

Biography

The intuitive vision of al-Farabi (born: Abu Nasr Mohammad Ibn al-Farakh al-Farabi) left its mark in philosophy, sociology, political science and metaphysics. In addition to writing several books on music, including the influential *Kita al-Musiqa*, al-Farabi

The son of a general, al-Farabi traveled to Baghdad for his higher education. While there, he gained a mastery of several languages. Although he spent extended periods in Damascus and Egypt and became a companion of Syrian prince Saif al-Daula, Baghdad remained his prime base for the remainder of his life. Working initially as a judge, al-Farabi left law to become a teacher. He is often referred to as "the second great teacher after Aristotle".

A prolific writer, al-Farabi wrote on a wide range of subjects. Although many of his books have been lost, one hundred and seventeen tomes are known including his most influential book, *Ara Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila* (The Model City). ~ Craig Harris, All Music Guide

al- Farabi

(born c. 878, Turkistan — died c. 950, Damascus?) A logician and one of the great philosophers of medieval Islam. He was probably the son of one of the caliph's Turkish bodyguards, and he grew up in Baghdad. From 942 he resided at the court of Prince Sayf al-Dawlah. Greatly influenced by Baghdad's Greek heritage in philosophy, especially the writings of Aristotle, he was known as the Second Teacher Aristotle. He used Aristotle's ideas in his proof of the existence of God or the Second Aristotle. He used Aristotle's ideas in his proof of the existence of God, he Plato and was influenced also by Neoplatonic ideas and Sufi mysticism. Like Plato, he believed it was the philosopher's task to provide guidance to the state. He wrote more than 100 works, notably *The Ideas of the Citizens of the Virtuous City*.  
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Farabi, al- (āl-fārā'bē) , d. 950, Islamic philosopher. He studied in Baghdad and Damascus. He died in Damascus. Al-Sufism later flourished in Aleppo as a Sufi mystic (see Sufism). Farabi was the author of an encyclopedic work drawn largely from Aristotle; he was one of the earliest Islamic thinkers to develop a philosophical method reconciling Aristotle and Islam, though he believed human reason to be superior to revelation. One of his major concerns; he believed that the political philosopher was the proper ruler of the state. In his own philosophy he is clearly influenced, especially that of the Greek school of Alexandria. A Neoplatonism influenced by

renowned musician, he is considered the greatest Islamic music theorist. He is known in the West by the name Alfarabius.

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#### Al-Farabi

During the tenth-century, philosopher, scholar, and alchemist Al-Farabi (c. 870-c. 950) popularized the philosophical systems of Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato. He integrated their views into his Islam-based metaphysical, psychological, and political theories. Al-Farabi was among the first philosophical theologians of the Islamic faith.

Historians classify Al-Farabi as a member of the eastern group of Moslem philosophers who were influenced by the Arabic translations of Greek philosophers by Nestorian Christians in Syria and Baghdad. During his life, he placed a heavy emphasis on logic and believed that each human individual possesses the ability to discern between good and evil, which he considered the basis for all morality. He is credited by historians for preserving the works of Aristotle that otherwise might have been forgotten and subsequently destroyed during the Dark Ages. He earned the nickname Mallim-e-Sani, which often is translated as "second master" or "second teacher" after Aristotle, who was considered the first master.

By 832, Baghdad contained a group of translators dedicated to converting Greek texts by Plato, Aristotle, Themistius, Porphyry, and Ammonius into Arabic. These efforts resulted in the progenitors of Islamic philosophy adopting a Neo-platonic approach to religious thought, of whom Al-Farabi is considered the first. Influenced by Islamic Sufism and his reading of Plato, Al-Farabi also explored mysticism and metaphysics and placed contemplation above action. In his interpretations of Islamic religious suppositions based upon his readings of Plato and Aristotle, Al-Farabi attempted to provide rational explications of such metaphysical concepts as prophecy, heaven, predestination, and God. Al-Farabi also believed that prophets developed their gift by adhering to a rigidly moral lifestyle, rather than simply being born with divine inspiration. In addition to his philosophical theology, Al-Farabi is considered a preeminent musical theorist. Among his works on musical theory are *Kitab Mausiqi al-Kabir* (Grand Book of Music), *Styles in Music*, and *On the Classification of Rhythms* in which he identified and provided detailed descriptions of musical instruments and discussed acoustics. Among the many works attributed to him, including such scientific examinations as *The Classification of the Sciences* and *The Origin of Sciences*, Al-Farabi also wrote respected works on mathematics, political science, astronomy, and sociology.

Al-Farabi was born in Faral in Asia Minor, in what is known now as Othrar, Turkistan. His father is reported to have been either a Turkistan general or a bodyguard for the Turkish Caliph, and Al-Farabi's parents raised him in the mystical Sufi tradition of Islam. He was schooled in the towns of Farab and Bukhara, before continuing his studies of Greek philosophy in Hanan and Baghdad. He spoke seventy languages and traveled widely throughout the Arabian kingdoms of Persia, Egypt, and Asia Minor. Al-Farabi studied with the Nestorian Christian physician Yuhanna ibn-

Haylan, a noted logician, and Abu-Bishr Matta ibn-Yunus, a Christian scholar of Aristotle.

Al-Farabi relied on the writings of Aristotle and Plato in what is considered to be his major work of political science and religion, *On the Principles of the Views of the Inhabitants of the Excellent State*, also titled *The Ideal City*. In this work, he borrows freely from Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* to construct a treatise on his idea of a utopian society. In such a society, Al-Farabi reasoned that a political system could be made to adhere to Islamic beliefs through the combined study of philosophy, hard sciences, mathematics, and religion. Such a political theology would result in an ordered society that recognizes the need for community and a hierarchal structure that revolves around the received knowledge of divine law by the community's prophets and lawgivers. Divided into three sections, *The Ideal City* begins with a section on metaphysics, in which he elaborated upon his concepts of philosophy and religion. The second section is a discussion of psychology, and, in the third section, Al-Farabi presented his views on the qualities he believed identify the perfectly governed and populated state.

Al-Farabi divided his studies into two distinct categories, which he labeled physics and metaphysics. Physics applied to the physical sciences and phenomenology, and metaphysics applied to ethics, philosophy, and theology. Al-Farabi also divided the study of logic into two categories, which he labeled imagination and proof. He believed religious faith was an example of the former and that philosophy represented the latter. Al-Farabi ultimately believed that philosophy was purer than religion because philosophy represented the study of verifiable truths by an intellectual elite. The truths that have been identified by the philosophers are subsequently converted into religious symbols that can be easily interpreted by the imaginations of the general populous. Al-Farabi explained that a religion's validity lay in its ability to accurately convey philosophical concepts into readily identifiable religious symbolism. He further noted that each culture employed its own symbols to interpret the same philosophical truths. Although he believed that philosophy was superior over religion, he also contended that religion was necessary in order to make philosophical concepts understandable to the uneducated.

Al-Farabi inverted previous theological methodology by insisting on the study of philosophy before attempting religious understanding, whereas philosophers previously had developed philosophical systems to support preexisting religious dogma. Applying Aristotelian notions of logic to the Muslim faith, Al-Farabi concerned himself with such theological issues as proving the existence of God; God's omnipotence and infinite capacity for justice in meting out punishment or rewards in the afterlife; and the responsibilities of the individual in a moral and social context. Al-Farabi believed that a thorough grounding in logic was a necessary introduction for the continued study of philosophy, and he was instrumental in separating the study of philosophy as an inherently theological enterprise. Employing Aristotle's notion that a passive force moves everything in the world, Al-Farabi concluded that the First Movement emanates from a primary source, God, which aligns Greek philosophy with the Islamic belief that God imbues all things with existence. If all existence emanates from God, Al-Farabi argued, then all human intelligence proceeds directly from God in the form of inspiration, illumination, or prophecy as it did when the angel Gabriel imparted cosmic wisdom to the prophet Mohammed.

Predisposed to mysticism through his Sufi upbringing, Al-Farabi also integrated Platonic thought into his cosmology by asserting that the highest goal of humankind should be the attainment of the knowledge of God. If all worldly material emanates

from God, Al-Farabi reasoned, then enlightened humans should aspire to a return to God through the study of religious texts and moral acts. Al-Farabi's writings since have influenced a wide range of subsequent religious, philosophical, and sociological thought. The Moslem philosopher Avicenna (980-1037) credits Al-Farabi's analysis of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* with his own understanding. Avicenna claimed he had read the Greek philosopher's work forty times but was unable to comprehend the work's meaning until he read Al-Farabi's explication. By asserting the metaphysical concept that a higher being contributes knowledge to the intellectual pursuits of humankind, Al-Farabi anticipated Henri Bergson's theory of philosophical intuition. Al-Farabi's theory that individuals make the conscious decision to group together according to their beliefs and needs anticipated the social contract of Henri Rousseau. In his *History of Philosophy*, Frederick Copleston noted that Al-Farabi's concept of God as the First Mover of all physical essence has been appropriated also by the Jewish philosopher Maimonides and such Roman Catholics writers as St. Thomas Aquinas and Dante Alighieri. Al-Farabi believed that the distinction between essence and existence proved that existence is an accidental byproduct of essence. His adherence to philosophical rationalism has been detected also in the works of Immanuel Kant. Al-Farabi is also considered by many historians and critics to be the most important musical theorist of the Muslim world. He claimed to have written *Kitab Musiqi al-Kabir* (Grand Book of Music) to dispel what he felt was the erroneous assumptions of Pythagoras's music of the spheres. Instead, Al-Farabi asserted that sound emanates from atmospheric vibrations. Other works of music theory include *Styles in Music*. Several of his scientific works, including *The Classification of the Sciences* and *The Origin of the Sciences*, contain essays focused on the physical and physiological principles of sound, including harmonics and acoustical vibrations. He is credited also for inventing the musical instruments *rabab* and *qanun*.

Later in life, during a pilgrimage to Mecca, Al-Farabi arrived at Aleppo, in modern-day Syria, where he encountered the country's ruler, Saifuddawlah. When Saifuddawlah offered him a seat, Al-Farabi broke Aleppo custom by taking Saifuddawlah's seat. Speaking in an obscure dialect, Saifuddawlah told his servant that Al-Farabi should be dealt with severely. Speaking in the same dialect, Al-Farabi responded, "Sire, he who acts hastily, in haste repents." Impressed with Al-Farabi, Saifuddawlah allowed him to speak freely on many subjects. When Al-Farabi finished speaking, the ruler offered him food and drink, which Al-Farabi refused. Instead he played a lute masterfully, reputedly moving his audience from tears to laughter depending on the music. Saifuddawlah invited Al-Farabi to stay at his court, where he remained for the rest of his life. Despite the fact that Saifuddawlah belonged to the Suni sect of Islam, Al-Farabi retained his Sufi affiliation.

Reports on Al-Farabi's death are unclear but often note he died around 950. Some historians believe that Al-Farabi died in Damascus, where he was traveling with Saifuddawlah's court. Others write that he was killed by robbers while searching for the philosopher's stone. The philosopher's stone was a legendary substance sought by alchemists, which was believed to possess the properties to transform base metals into gold or silver. Regardless, he is believed to have written more than one-hundred books on a wide-range of scientific, musical, religious, and philosophical topics during his lifetime. Of these works, only one-fifth are believed to have survived.

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Influences: Plato, Aristotle

Influenced: , Abu Hayyan Al Amiri, Abu Yaqub Sijistani, Yahya ibn Adi, Ibn Sina al-Tawhidi

) or Abū Nasr al-محمد فارابی: PersianAbū Nasr Muhammad ibn al-Farakh al-Fārābi (in Fārābi (in some sources, known as Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn as Alfarabius, Al-Farabi, Farabi, and WestUzalagh al-Farabi), also known in the scientists and one of the greatest philosopher Islamic) was an CE 950–870Abunaser ( and philosophers of his time.

Biography

There is no consensus or sufficient evidence to decide the matter of al-Farabi's ethnic origins. The existing variations in the basic facts about al-Farabi's origins and pedigree indicate that they were not recorded during his lifetime or soon thereafter by anyone with concrete information, but were based on hearsay or guesses. The earliest known documents were written some 300 years after al-Farabi's death.

The oldest known document regarding his heritage, written by the medieval Arabic descent. Persianhistorian Ibn Abi Osaybe'a, mentions that al-Farabi's father was of , among other historians, states Farabi's origins (in Flügel p.263) to lie in Ibn al-Nadim is also the name Faryab ("men al-Faryab men ardhµ Khorasan"). KhorasanFaryab in Persian also calls him Dehkhoda Dictionary. The Afghanistanof a province in today's ") , mentioning the fact that his father was a member of the Persian-فارسی المنتسب(" Peter J. . A Persian origin is also discussed by Central Asia court of Samanidspeaking . Some historians, such as medieval Turkish historian Ibn Khallekān, claim [1]King , Otrar (in what is today Farab near Wasijthat Farabi was born in the small village of parents. The older Persian form Parab is given in the historical Turkic) of Kazakhstan for his birthplace.Hodud al-'alamaccount

But what is known with certainty is that after finishing his early school years in Farab to pursue higher studies. He studied 901 in Baghdad, Farabi arrived in Bukharaand who abandoned lay interests Harranunder a Christian cleric Yuhanna ibn Haylan in and engaged in his ecclesiastical duties, and he remained in Baghdad for more than 40 years and acquired mastery over several languages and fields of knowledge.

Contributions

medicine, philosophy, mathematicsFarabi made notable contributions to the fields of , he wrote rich commentary on Neo-Platonist and philosopher. As a musicand into two separate groups, logic's work. He is also credited for categorizing Aristotle sociology." Farabi wrote books on proofthe first being "idea" and the second being " (The Book of Music). He played Kitab al-Musiqa titled musicand a notable book on Arabian tone and his pure musical instrumentsand invented a varied number of (Touma 1996, p.170). Perhaps, his most notable Arabic music is still used in system . Republicwork is Al-Madina al-fadila where he theorized an ideal state as in Plato's in physics.voidFarabi is also famous for his demonstration of the existence of Farabi had great influence on science and knowledge for several centuries.

Unfortunately the book Theology of Aristotle, which he relied upon, was eventually

revealed to be the work of Plotinus, a neo-Platonic philosopher. Nevertheless, he was regarded as the Second Teacher in philosophy for centuries. His work, aimed at synthesis of philosophy and religion, paved the way for sufism. Ibn Sina, saw it as the duty of the philosopher to provide guidance to the state. Influenced by the writings of Plato and Aristotle, in *The Ideas of the Citizens of the Virtuous City* and other books, he advanced the view – potentially considered heretical for a Muslim – that reason is superior to revelation. He engaged in rationalistic questioning of the authority of the revelations and rejected predestination and rejected Qur'an.

He had also mentioned philosophy in his works. Alexander the Great

He discussed the philosophy of Plato & Aristotle elaborately. He hypothesized an Ideal State in his work *Al-Madina al-fadila*. His ideas were not extreme, rather he often tried to unify many contradictory ideas. He accepted the supremacy of God while admitting the absoluteness of creation.

Political philosophy

His idealized state-leader in *Al-Madina al-fadila* is an absolute ruler who assumes absolute power of the state and all others are subservient to him. Citizens are also classified in terms of the power & right they enjoy. A citizen can ordain her lower class and take orders from the upper. This philosophy had an impact on Islamic political thought. He explicitly claimed that attaining ideal Feudal societies centralizing then divided state is impossible, but the struggle should be encouraged.

See also

Charles Butterworth  
Islamic scholars

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