



### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ARISTOTLE AND PLATO'S IDEAS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ABU NASR FARABI

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#### Abstract

This article reflects the relationship between the philosophy of Abu Nasr Farabi, one of the great figures of Eastern philosophy, with the ideas of Aristotle and Plato, ancient Greek philosophers. In the article, the views of Farabi, who embodies both materialist and idealist ideas, are analyzed in comparison with Greek philosophers, including Aristotle's materialism and Plato's idealism. In the article, it is emphasized that Farabi brought the Greek philosophical ideas to the philosophy of the Muslim East by deeply studying Greek science and writing commentaries on the works of Greek philosophers, thereby bringing about a mutual compromise between Greek philosophy and Islamic philosophy.

**Keywords.** Abu Nasr Farabi, Aristotle, Plato, idealism, "Muallim al-Sani", materialism, idealism, emanation, matter, spirit, body, supreme being, free will, eidos, idea, "world of shadows and ideas" theory, "City of virtuous people", philosophers, eternal happiness, supreme mind, supreme soul.

The full name of the famous Central Asian philosopher and encyclopedist Farabi, who made a great contribution to world culture, was Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Uzlug Tarkhan. He was born in 873 in the city of Farob on the coast of Syr Darya in the family of a military officer belonging to the Turkic tribe. From a young age, Farabi grew up with a thirst for knowledge, knowledge and enthusiasm. Several scientific achievements of the Middle Ages, the development of progressive socio-philosophical thinking in the countries of the Near and Middle East in general are connected with his name. One of the scientist's services to science is that he interpreted the works of Greek thinkers and enriched them with new ideas. Farabi, first of all, wrote comments on Aristotle's works, and is known as a propagator and follower of his natural-philosophical ideas. He was aware of the works of Epicurus, Anaxagoras, Diogenes, Chrysippus, Aristippus, Socrates, Zeno and knew well the schools of Epicureans, Stoics, Pythagoreans and Cynics.

While writing commentaries on Aristotle's works, Farabi enriches his philosophical knowledge with his ideas and follows him, founding the "Eastern Aristotelian" school. If Aristotle is recognized as "The First Teacher" not only by Europe but also by the whole world for his



contribution to the development of scientific ideas, he is called "Muallim al-Sani" in the East, i.e. "The Second Teacher" because Plato's views are felt in Farabi's ideas<sup>1</sup>.

If we analyze Aristotle's ideas, we can see the first correct ideas about the creation of the universe in Aristotle's thoughts. Based on the first materialist doctrine, he reasonably explained the creation of the universe from the point of view of his time. The ideas he created became the basis for the formation of the materialistic views of many philosophers, including Farabi. There is certainly a soul in his ideas that "the Universe arose from matter, and matter was created by some divine force"<sup>2</sup>. If he put matter as the first beginning, Farabi interprets his idea of "matter" as "Earth" according to Muslim philosophy. We know that according to Islamic teachings, God created eighteen thousand worlds, including the Earth. He created all the creatures on earth, including man, from the soil and water on this earth. In a word, Farabi brought Aristotle's materialistic ideas to Islamic philosophy and explained it with proof documents, i.e. verses of the "Holy Qur'an", thereby reconciling the ideas of Greek and Islamic philosophy.

At this point, the question may arise, how did the soul appear in the creatures of the universe? Is there no idea of "soul" in Aristotelian materialism? How did Farabi find a solution to this? We know that according to Islamic philosophy, God created the Universe. He created everything on Earth, including man, first by creating a body, and then gave him life with his breath. Farabi is also faces to Greek philosophy but not to Aristotle, but to Plato. As we mentioned above, Farabi embodied Aristotle's materialism and Plato's idealism.

We know that Plato, who is known as Aflotun in the East, has a special place not only in his time but also in the philosophy of the present time. Together with the ancient Greek philosopher, his teacher Socrates and his student Aristotle, he created the ancient Greek culture. This culture later influenced the formation of not only the West, but also the East. He was also a mathematician, writer and founder of the first academy in Athens<sup>3</sup>. His idealistic views led to the formation of a new stream of idealism in the history of philosophy.

The term idealism itself originates from the central concept of Plato's teaching - "eidos". Plato imagined the world as divided into two spheres: the world of ideas (eidos) and the world of forms (material things)<sup>4</sup>. According to Plato, eidos is the source of the material world. Matter itself is formless and ethereal, the world takes meaningful form only through the presence of ideas. In the world of Eidos, the main place is occupied by the idea of goodness, and everything else flows from it. This goodness represents the beginning of the beginnings, the absolute

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<sup>1</sup> Казибердов А.Л., Муталибов С. А. Абу Наср ал-Фараби. Исследования и переводы. – Т.: Фан, 1986. – 56 с.

<sup>2</sup> Abu Nasr Farabi. Aristotle's philosophy. // Farabi. City of virtuous people.-T. People's heritage. 1993.-124 p.

<sup>3</sup> Adamson, Peter. In the age of Al-Farabi, Arabic Philosophy in the Fourth/Tenth Century//Journal of Islamic Studies 22 (no. 2)-L.: Press, 2011. – P. 176

<sup>4</sup> Abu Nasr Farabi. About the essence of Plato's laws. -T.: People's heritage, 1993.-P.68



beauty, the creator of the universe. Plato condemns godlessness by promoting the existence and oneness of God.

We must admit that Plato is one of the first Greek philosophers to believe in the existence of God, and this is the reason why his ideas are supported by many Muslim philosophers. Plato's theory of emanation, that is, "shining", became the basis for the solution of the puzzle that caused many debates in the history of philosophy<sup>5</sup>. According to his theory of emanation, all existence arose from the effulgence of the divine primordial. Farabi was able to combine Plato's idea of emanation with Islamic philosophy. He explains why man is the supreme being among the creatures created by God through Plato's emanations and verses of the Holy Qur'an proved it. According to Islamic philosophy, the concept of "soul" has divine power. The reason is that God created man from the earth, filled him with his soul, and gave him life. It is for this reason that man is the highest among the creatures created by Him. Farabi also explains the reason for the unique characteristics of humans, which are different from other creatures, with the idea of emanation. When God gave life to man from his spirit, there was a shining, and certain qualities of God's spirit were also transferred to man<sup>6</sup>. For this reason, humans have the ability to create differently than other creatures.

The main essence of Plato's philosophy is described in his doctrine of "ideas" ("eidos"). According to him, the idea is the real entity, the world we know and live in is its shadow. Real change and progress are inherent in the world of ideas, and movement in the world of shadows is its reflection. Not everyone knows the laws of the world of ideas. Those who know them are very rare, and these breeds have great intelligence. Most people are content with the world of shadows<sup>7</sup>. Plato prioritizes the world of ideas over the world of things, because the world of ideas is ideal things.

Here we can see that Farabi's idea of "ideal society" was influenced by Plato's idealistic views. In his work "The City of Virtuous People", Farabi also emphasizes that the people who manage the society should be knowledgeable people, that is, philosophers, who are aware of the mysteries of the world<sup>8</sup>. However, at the same time, he emphasizes that unfortunately such people will be few. Just as Plato preferred the world of ideas to the world of shadows, Farabi also preferred the happiness of the next world to the pleasures of life on Earth.

Happiness, according to Farabi, is the attainment of perfect knowledge and high moral standards that can serve humanity even after a person's death and the extinction of a certain generation. Happiness comes to a person when he destroys all his evil feelings, when he merges with the mind of the eternal world to the highest level in the knowledge of the human soul and

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<sup>5</sup> Abu Nasr Farabi. About the essence of Plato's laws. -T.: People's heritage, 1993.-P.97

<sup>6</sup> Khairullayev M. Renaissance and Eastern thinkers.-T.: Fan, 1993.-P.189

<sup>7</sup> Abu Nasr Farabi. About the essence of Plato's laws. -T.: People's heritage, 1993.-P.98

<sup>8</sup> Abu Nasr Farabi. Aristotle's philosophy. // Farabi. City of virtuous people.-T. People's heritage. 1993. - P. 112



mind. Man dies, but the happiness he achieved during his life is a spiritual and glorious phenomenon, which does not disappear, but remains after him. And the good that remains from every faith is a unique contribution to the further development and improvement of universal spiritual culture<sup>9</sup>. For this reason, Farabi urges people to get rid of their bad vices so that they don't fall in love with eternal happiness by chasing after the transient pleasures of this world. According to the Farabi's view, after death the souls of perfected people are freed and united with the eternal mind, thereby attaining eternal happiness. The greater the number of perfect people who have attained eternal happiness, the greater will be their total happiness. And the evil spirits that could not leave the body will perish with it. Human hearts that have achieved happiness unite with each other, and through this, universal happiness and virtues that serve the next generations are strengthened. Each generation later joins the common happiness, enriches and fills it.

Returning to Plato's views, according to his views, man is a species between the world of ideas and the world of shadows. His soul belongs to the world of ideas, his physical body to the world of shadows. Therefore, a person who is a unity of soul and body belongs to two worlds. The soul is a real part of man. What we call life is the time that the soul lives in the physical body<sup>10</sup>.

As for the human soul, Plato's philosophical doctrine interprets it allegorically as a two-horse chariot driven by a charioteer. A white horse represents nobility and high moral qualities, and a black horse represents instincts, basic desires. The charioteer must hold both the whites in balance, otherwise he will be ruined on the way before reaching the destination. In the afterlife, the soul (charioteer) participates with the gods in eternal realities and perceives the world of eidos. After the new birth, the concept of eternal truths remains in the soul as memory.

Farabi, unlike Plato, considers a person to be between two paths. The first road is short, without any obstacles, at first sight it attracts a person, but when he reaches the destination, he is not impressed, realizes that all beauty is a mirage. The second path is long and arduous, and the destination is so mysterious that it is not visible to the eye, but the person who chooses this path will eventually become a perfect person thanks to the trials he overcomes along the way. Which path to choose depends on the person himself, that is, on free will. A person who follows the first path is deceived by the pleasures of this world and is equal to eternal happiness. A person who follows a difficult path will achieve eternal worldly happiness.

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<sup>9</sup> Rashed, Marwan. On the Authorship of the Treatise *On the Harmonization of the Opinions of the Two Sages* Attributed to al-Farabi, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 2009.19(1): doi:10.1017/S0957423909000587. - P. 45

<sup>10</sup> Mahdi, Muhsin. *Al Farabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.-P.132



To sum up, Farabi is right about many issues that have been the cause of long-standing debates between Eastern and Western philosophers due to religious differences, including the creation of the universe, the free will of man, and why he is a supreme being. Farabi tried to find a universal solution to the riddles. Farabi was able to achieve a general balance between Greek and Islamic philosophy in his ideas. The scientific legacy he created, his comments on the works of Greek philosophers laid the groundwork for the development of the ideas of Eastern philosophers after him.

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