



Revue des Sciences Humaines

جامعة القاضي عياض
UNIVERSITÉ CADI AYYAD
كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية
Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines

RIVAGES

Revue scientifique à comité de lecture



N° 6 - 2021

RIVAGES

Revue scientifique à comité de lecture

N° 6-2021

Revue semestrielle, scientifique à comité de lecture, éditée par la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, Université Cadi Ayyad – Marrakech - Maroc

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Tél. 00212524302742 - Fax 00212524302039

Dépôt Légal : 2018PE0010

ISSN : 2605-6410

Le tableau en couverture est de l'artiste peintre Mahi Binebine.

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Publication de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines

Université Cadi Ayyad

Marrakech

Maroc

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Prologue

La philosophie arabe en terre d'islam a fait l'objet d'importantes études et de recherches au sein des universités et des cercles académiques. Cette préoccupation augmente encore de jour en jour, et ce pour plusieurs raisons : tout d'abord les chercheurs ne cessent d'approfondir les études, de jeter de la lumière sur certains points négligés ou ignorés et chercher à répondre à quelques questions suspendues ou tout simplement ébaucher de nouvelles perspectives...

La majorité des recherches publiées jusqu'à maintenant se sont focalisées sur la philosophie arabo-islamique de l'Orient. Certes ceci s'explique par la richesse de cet héritage de l'orient ainsi que l'importance des sages et les philosophes de cette région. De nos jours, nombreux sont les chercheurs qui essayent de continuer cette exploration et d'améliorer ce que les pionniers (orientalistes et arabisants) ont réalisé dans l'histoire de la philosophie en Occident islamique. Le Laboratoire de philosophie de la Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines de Marrakech s'est engagé sur cette voie. C'est ainsi que les articles publiés dans ce présent numéro de la revue *Difāf* (Rivages) ainsi que dans les numéros qui seront publiés ultérieurement reprennent les actes du colloque international organisé par le laboratoire LPSS et *Aquinas and Arab International Work Group (AAIWG)*.

Les articles du présent numéro ont été collectés, revu par Jamal RACHAK en sa qualité de Directeur du LPSS et coordonnateur du projet *Néoplatonisme en occident islamique*, ainsi que :

Terence Kleven (*Central College, Pella, Iowa, USA*),

Janis Esots (*The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, UK*)

Pour *The Aquinas and the Arabs International Working Group (AAIWG)*

Malheureusement, lors de la préparation de ce numéro, nous avons reçue une triste nouvelle, nous étions attristés tous par la perte de l'habile chercheur Janis Esots, qui avait l'habitude de sceller sa correspondance par cette phrase :

«ونرجو منكم الدعاء، الحقيق يانيس»

Tout mon souhait est de prier pour ce méprisable Janis. Nous prions pour que son âme repose dans la paix et la tranquillité et mes sincères condoléances en ce moment de deuil.

Jamal Rachak
Directeur du LPSS
Laboratoire Philosophie et Société du Savoir

The Typology of Excellent and the Non-Excellent Cities according to al-Fārābī and IbnBājja¹

Janis ESOTS

The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, UK

ملخص

تقوم المدينة الفاضلة أو الفلسفية على حكم الملك الفيلسوف من أجل نهج سبيل السعادة باعتباره تجوهر الإنسان. يبدو أن مفهوم العدالة عند الفارابي يمتح من العدالة الهندسية والتناسب، الذي أسسهما، على أغلب الظن، فيثاغورس. فإن قانون العدالة الهندسي يتمشى، في المدينة الفاضلة، مع مبدأ رواقى وهو التناغم والحب المتبادل بين أهلها، والذي ينشأ عن آرائهم المشتركة عن الخير والسعادة ومنفعتهما.

كما يقف هذا المقال على الأقسام الأربعة للمدن غير الفاضلة، والموجودة في كتابي: مبادئ آراء أهل المدينة الفاضلة والسياسة المدنية، وهي: المدينة الجاهلية، المدينة المتبدلة، المدينة الفاسقة والمدينة الضالة. ويرى ريتشارد والز بأن التغيرات البنيوية في النقاش الدائر حول المدن الفاسدة، تبرز لنا كيف تم تبني تصور أفلاطون بخصوص الدساتير المغلوطة، وتم نقله إلى المدارس الفلسفية الهلنستية والرومانية، والتي ورثها بعد ذلك الفارابي.

يشير هذا المقال أيضا إلى أن المقاربة التي قام بها ابن باجه في تدبير المتوحد بخصوص علة اندحار المدينة قائم في فساد الطبع الإنساني، قريبة الشبه بالمقاربة التي قام بها أفلاطون للموضوع نفسه. الكلمات المفتاحية: الفارابي، ابن باجه، المدينة الفاضلة، ريتشارد والز، التصنيف.

Résumé

La cité excellente ou philosophique est établie par le roi philosophe et ses officiers afin de servir de voie au bonheur de l'homme et de l'humanité, et en tant que lieu de l'auto-substantiation (*tajawhur*) de l'homme. La conception de la justice et de l'égalité professée par al-Fārābī semble reposer sur le principe de la justice géométrique ou de l'égalité proportionnelle, peut-être établi par Pythagore. Cependant, dans la Cité Excellente d'al-Fārābī, la loi de l'égalité géométrique s'accompagne du principe (à l'origine stoïque) de sympathie et d'amour mutuels de ses habitants, qui résulte de leurs opinions communes sur le bien et le bonheur et de leur utilité réciproque.

¹ Nous publions cet article dans l'état où il a été soumis pour la publication. Malheureusement, le défunt Janis n'a pas eu assez de temps pour le réviser afin d'intégrer les remarques des évaluateurs et le public présent lors de cette rencontre. Ceci dit nous soulignons que ces dites remarques ne touchent aucunement le fond de l'article.

L'article se concentre sur la classification des villes non excellentes, donné dans le *Mabādi'ārā'ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* et *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya* d'al-Fārābī. Dans le premier travail, al-Fārābī énumère quatre types de cités non excellentes: la cité ignorante (*al-madīna al-jāhiliyya*), la cité perverse (*al-madīna al-fāsiqa*), la cité qui a délibérément changé son caractère (*al-madīna al-mutabaddala*) et la cité qui a raté le bon chemin (*al-madīna al-dālla*) (voir *Mabādi'* V, 15, 15). Ces types n'ont pas d'analogues directs dans la *République*. À son tour, dans le *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, al-Fārābī traite des quatre cités non excellentes évoquées dans la *République*, les considérant comme des sous-types de la cité ignorante. Ils sont discutés dans l'ordre suivant: 1) la cité oligarchique, 2) la cité timocratique, 3) la cité tyrannique et 4) la cité démocratique. Ainsi, nous pouvons conclure que, lors de la composition du *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, al-Fārābī a eu accès à la paraphrase des livres VIII et IX de la *République*. De plus, avec ces quatre sous-types de la cité ignorante, al-Fārābī discute de deux autres – la cité de la nécessité fondamentale et la cité hédoniste.

Le récit par al-Fārābī des types de cités ne reproduit pas la conception de Platon selon laquelle la séquence des régimes ou des constitutions reflète la corruption croissante de l'excellente ville de Kallipolis (d'où il convient de les organiser en fonction de son degré de corruption). Richard Walzer a justement prétendu que les changements dans la structure de la discussion sur les cités non excellentes nous montrent comment la description de Platon des fausses constitutions a été adaptée et transmise dans les écoles philosophiques hellénistiques et romaines, dont l'héritier était al-Fārābī.

Ibn Bājjā, dans son *Tadbīr al-mutawahhid* (§148), soutient que le déclin de la ville a ses racines dans la corruption de la nature humaine. L'auteur fait valoir que, ce faisant, Avempace aborde la question d'une manière plus proche de la propre approche de Platon.

Mots clés : al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājjā, cité excellente, typologie, Richard Walzer.

Abstract

The excellent or philosophical city is established by the philosopher-king and his officers in order to serve as a path to the happiness of man and mankind, and as a locus of man's (self-) substantiation (*tajawhur*). Al-Fārābī's and Ibn Bājjā's understanding of justice and equality appears to be based on the principle of geometrical justice or proportionate equality, probably established by Pythagoras. However, in al-Fārābī's Excellent City, the law of geometrical equality is accompanied by the (originally Stoic) principle of the mutual sympathy and love of its inhabitants to each other, which results from their shared opinions about Good and happiness and their usefulness to each other.

The article focuses on the classification of the non-excellent cities, given in al-Fārābī's *Mabādi'ārā'ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* and *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*. In the former, al-Fārābī lists four types of non-excellent cities: the ignorant city (*al-madīna al-jāhiliyya*), the wicked city (*al-madīna al-fāsiqa*), the city which has

deliberately changed its character (*al-madīna al-mutabaddala*) and the city which has missed the right path (*al-madīna al-dālla*) (*Mabādi* V, 15, 15). These types do not have direct analogues in the *Republic*. In turn, in the *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, al-Fārābī deals with the four non-excellent cities discussed in the *Republic*, treating them as sub-types of the ignorant city. They are discussed in the following order: 1) the oligarchic city, 2) the timocratic city, 3) the tyrannical city, and 4) the democratic city. Hence, we can conclude that, during the composition of the *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, al-Fārābī had access to the paraphrase of the books VIII and IX of the *Republic*. Furthermore, along with these four sub-types of the ignorant city, al-Fārābī discusses two others – the city of basic necessity and the hedonistic city.

Al-Fārābī's account of the types of the cities does not reproduce Plato's conception, according to which the sequence of the regimes or constitutions reflects the increasing corruption of the excellent city, Kallipolis (whence they should be arranged according to the degree of that corruption). Richard Walzer has justly claimed that the changes in the structure of the discussion on the non-excellent cities show us how Plato's description of the wrong constitutions was adapted and transmitted in Hellenistic and Roman philosophical schools, whose heir al-Fārābī was.


Ibn Bājja in his *Tadbīr al-mutawaḥḥid* (§148) claims that the decline of the city has its roots in the corruption of the human nature. By doing so, Avempace addresses the issue in a manner which is closer to Plato's own approach.

Keywords: al-Fārābī, Ibn Bāğğā, excellent city, typology, Richard Walzer.

Introduction

The main paradigms of the Arabo-Islamic political philosophy as it was represented by al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājja,¹ and Ibn Rushd, are those of the Cave, the Excellent City ruled by the Philosopher-King, and the attainment of happiness through divinization. All of them are of Platonic origin: the allegory of the Cave is discussed in the *Republic* 514a–520a; the Philosopher-King in the *Republic* 473c5–474b2; the Excellent (Philosophical) City—both in the *Republic* (the most important discussion occurs between 369c and 474b) and in the *Laws* (throughout the book). The achievement of theoretical happiness is understood by Plato as the perception of the intelligible forms or ideas, in particular the former idea of Good (e.g., *Republic*, 505a1–2; 508e1–4; 517b7–8); the later commentary tradition (re)interprets it as the conjunction with

¹ See his account on the Cave in Ibn Bājja, “Ittiṣāl al-‘aql bi al-insān,” in *Ibn Bāğğā (Avempace), La conduite de l'isolé et deux autres épitres*, ed. and trans. Charles Genequand (Paris: Vrin, 2010), 196–200 (§§41–52), in particular 198 (§§47–48).

The underlying philosophy of the curriculum, apparently, was explained by Plato in the *Republic* VI, 509d–511e.¹ But its implementation would not have been possible without the Aristotle's textbooks (and commentaries on them), dealing with the relevant sciences. The most important of these textbooks were the *Categories*, *De Interpretatione*, *Prior Analytics* and *Posterior Analytics*,² which enabled the student of philosophy to gain a clear understanding of the metaphysics or the first philosophy. By mastering the latter, the student could reach the summit of the knowledge which is, accessible to the human being, and establish a sort of conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the Agent Intellect, which was regarded as the highest degree of happiness (*al-sa'āda al-quṣwā*, ).³

However, after achieving his personal happiness, the accomplished philosopher must return to the Cave, in order to liberate his former fellow-captives and to bring them to that level of happiness that is accessible to each of them, in accordance with their innate disposition and preparedness. To ensure the efficiency of his educational mission, the philosopher must determine which type of five logical art suits each of them. Thus, the political philosophy begins with the philosopher's return to the cave.

This return is accomplished by means of an analogical representation of the intelligible realities (*ḥaqā'iq*) in meanings or concepts (*ma'ānī*) and, through them, in words (*alfāz*). In this way, a continuous analogy or proportion between three levels of being is established: A (reality/truth) relates to B (concept/meaning) as B (concept/meaning) relates to C (word). Notice that B acts simultaneously as the consequent of the first ratio and the antecedent of the second.

$$A : B = B : C^4$$

¹ Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 521d–535a and al-Fārābī, “Taḥṣīl al-sa'āda,” in idem, *The Philosophical Works*, ed. Al Yasin (Beirut: Dar al-Manahel, 1992), 166 (§45). Cf. Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, 190, 195.

² See e.g. Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, 182. Cf. also the discussion in Frédérique Woerther, “L'interprétation de l'*ēthos* aristotélicien par al-Fārābī,” *Rhetorica: A Journal for the History of Rhetoric*, 26/4 (Autumn 2008): 415.

³ Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Risāla fī al-'aql*, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1938), 31, l. 6. Cf. Porphyry, “On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books,” 23.1.13, in Plotinus, *Enneads*, tr. A. H. Armstrong, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 1: 70; cf. also Walzer's comment in al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 443, n. 669.

⁴ Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, 278, 353; idem, “Vrai philosophe et faux prophète selon Farabi. Aspects historiques et théoriques de l'art du symbole,” in *Miroir et Savoir. La transmission d'un thème platonicien, des Alexandrins à la*

Basing his reasoning on the theory of the continuous analogy, as developed by Plato, al-Fārābī argues for the analogical structure of both being and language. Hence, by necessity, the structure of the excellent philosophical city must also be analogous: language and city were both created as images that analogically reproduce the structure of the intelligible reality.¹ Therefore, the city resembles language in a certain way—namely, structurally, they both represent a set or system of interrelated symbols, created by the philosophers for non-philosophers, in order to convey to the latter the philosophical truths in the persuasive form of correct opinions.²

Aristotle's influence on Islamic political philosophy manifests itself predominantly through his teaching of the five logical arts—demonstration, dialectics, rhetoric, sophistic and poetics. To each of them corresponds a certain kind of syllogism (and, hence, a certain measure of truth): 1) the premises of the demonstrative or apodictic syllogism that form the demonstration are absolutely true; 2) the premises of the dialectical syllogism are mostly true; 3) the premises of the rhetorical syllogism are equally true and false; 4) the premises of the sophistic syllogism are mostly false; 5) the premises of the poetical or mythical syllogism are absolutely false.³

Following Proclus,⁴ al-Fārābī contends that the analogical gradation of the logical arts and the degrees of truthfulness they possess reflects the

Charles Butterworth. Unpublished manuscript: 27; Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, 261 and Thérèse-Anne Druart, "Al-Fārābī: An Arabic Account of the Origin of Language and of Philosophical Vocabulary," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 84 (2010), 1–3 (which, however, focuses on the evolution of language in terms of time, from the utterances that explain the basic necessities to the development of dialectic reasoning).

¹ Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, 293–294.

² Vallat, "Vrai philosophe et faux prophète selon Farabi," 125.

³ The division apparently first appears in (Pseudo-) Elias' (fl. 6th c. C.E.) commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* (Elias, *In Porphyri Isagogen et Aristotelis categorias commentaria*, ed. Adolfus Busse (Berlin: Reimer, 1900), 116, ll. 33ff.; cf. Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, 189).

⁴ Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, ed. and trans. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003), 1:9 (I, 2, 11–12); 1:15 (I, 3, 17–21), 4:78 (IV, 27, 10–12) and in particular 1:47–52 (I, 11) (where an elaborated parallel is drawn between the hierarchy of beings and the continuity of the conclusions of the second hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*; cf. also the editors' note in 4:173). Cf. Dodd's statement "...the fundamental weakness [of Proclus' system] seems to me to lie in the assumption that the structure of the cosmos exactly reproduces the structure of Greek logic...the Aristotelian apparatus of genus, species and

analogical structure of being and the world.¹ The degree of the truthfulness of our knowledge thus corresponds to the level of the existence of the objects of the knowledge.² Vallat elucidates al-Fārābī's point, demonstrating the continuity between the different levels of being by means of the continued analogy (on which, see above).³ In particular, he argues that every city or community must possess a set of formally valid syllogisms, arranging three particular terms in a certain way: the minor term, whose function is to suggest an image of the continuity between the political domain, corresponding to the major, and the divine realm, which in turn corresponds to the conclusion. The participation of the members of the political community in virtues and theoretical ideas is thus assimilated to the participation of the sensible things in the intelligible forms.⁴

2. The Philosopher-King

In Plato's *Republic*, the creation of the perfect city takes place in three subsequent 'waves': 1) the establishment of the equal education of female guardians (*Republic*, 451c–457c5), 2) the sharing of women and children (*Republic*, 457c5–473c) and 3) the rule of the philosopher-king (473c5–474b2).⁵ The triad is never reproduced by any Arabo-Islamic philosopher: all of them omit the first two 'waves', leaving only the third one—consequently, Plato's 'triple wave' (*trikumia* 472a) is undermined. Apparently, the omission first occurred in the later Hellenistic or Roman school tradition, well before al-Fārābī. Obviously, it reflected the change of the situation of the philosopher in the city: the philosophers had to minimize their agenda, in view of the fact that, in the early medieval Islamic world,

differentia is transformed into an objectively conceived hierarchy of entities or forces" (Dodds, introduction to Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, XXV).

¹ Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, 279–280, 291, 293–294, 334–340, 347–365.

² Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, 194.

³ Vallat's discussion, apparently, is based on Pierre Aubenque's and Jean-François Courtine's earlier research on the analogy of being in Neoplatonism – see e. g. Pierre Aubenque, "Sur la naissance de la doctrine Pseudo-Aristotélécienne de l'analogie de l'être," *Les Études philosophiques*, 3–4 (1989): 291–304; Jean-François Courtine, "Aux origines néoplatoniciennes de la doctrine de l'analogie de l'être," in *Cahiers de la Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, 20 (1999). *Métaphysiques médiévales, Études en l'honneur d'André de Muralt*, 36ff. Cf. Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, 291.

⁴ Vallat, *Farabi et l'École d'Alexandrie*, 298, the main text and footnote 1.

⁵ On the role of these principles in Plato's theory, see Joshua Parens, *An Islamic Philosophy of Virtuous Religions: Introducing Alfarabi* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006), 11–21.

philosophy had had to seek refuge in Syriac monasteries, and probably in the last surviving ‘oasis’ of the ancient Paganism in Ḥarrān.¹

But, even in a truncated shape, the emergence and existence of the Excellent City is impossible without the philosophers—a group or class of people who possess the required qualifications for its establishment and government. Virtually all accounts of these philosopher-rulers found in the medieval Arabo-Islamic texts are based on the relevant sections from Plato’s *Republic* (474c4–511e, especially 476d–480a). However, the emphases placed by authors (such as al-Fārābī and those of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’) vary. Furthermore, their understanding of what the philosopher is, also differs: as Plato explains in the *Republic* 505a1–2 and c3, the outstanding attribute of the philosopher is his knowledge of the forms (or ideas)—in particular, the form of Good. This distinguishes him from the common people who do not know any form—at best, they believe in it.² In turn, according to al-Fārābī, the distinguishing feature of the philosopher is his being the intellect (‘*aql*’) and the intellect (‘*ma’qūl*’) in *actu* (‘*bi al-fi’l*’),³ which presupposes his being in conjunction with the Agent Intellect (‘*al-‘aql al-fa’‘āl*’).⁴ Both of these characteristics point to the predisposition to the abstraction of the intelligible forms of the things from their material likenesses and to the ability to acquire knowledge that is irrefutable. However, the understanding of the form of Good appears to have remarkably narrowed in the school tradition between Plato and al-Fārābī, with the latter focusing primarily on the epistemological aspect of treating the aforementioned conjunction as the highest form of happiness.

¹ On this, see e.g. Ilsetraut Hadot, *Le néoplatonicien Simplicius à la lumière des recherches contemporaines: Un bilan critique*, with two contributions by Philippe Vallat (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2014), 31–134.

² In the language of medieval scholasticism, this apparently means that the philosopher possesses the knowledge of the unchanging universals, while, *qua philosopher*, he has no – and cannot have – any knowledge of the particulars. See David Sedley, “Philosophy, the Forms, and the Art of Ruling,” in G. R. F. Ferrari (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic* (Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 260.

³ al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 240 (V, 15, §8).

⁴ al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 240 (V, 15, §8). This, apparently, means that the philosopher is immortal as long as his intellect in *actu* thinks the Agent Intellect, which is sometimes interpreted as an instantaneous immortality, achieved and experienced in the act of thought see Alexandre d’Aphrodise, *De l’âme*, 355 (commentary on 90.11–91.6, with references to further discussion). Cf. also Vallat’s discussion in Philippe Vallat, “Onto-noétique. L’intellect et les intellects chez Farabi,” in Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *L’Épître sur l’intellect*, trans. and annot. Philippe Vallat (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012), 175–178.

Plato speaks of the philosophers as a group and/or the ruling class of the city, whose representatives are expected to hold the office for a fixed short period: since public duties will distract them from their engagement with the intelligible and transcendent, they will only assume them as something that cannot be avoided, for a fixed period of time, in order to confer the due benefit on the community (*Republic* 519e2–520a2) and to prevent the rule of the city by those who are worse than themselves. However, al-Fārābī prefers the rule of a single philosopher-king, ‘the first ruler’ (*al-raʾīs al-awwal*)¹ and the ‘true king’ (*al-malik fī al-ḥaqīqa*),² to the collective rule of a group of philosophers, provided there exists an individual in whom all the requisite natural qualities are found.³ This preference is explicitly stated in several passages – e.g., in the *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa* §58, where al-Fārābī discusses four classes of the rulers of the city: 1) the true king or the first ruler; 2) ‘the good rulers and the possessors of excellence’ (*al-ruʾasāʾ al-akhyār wa dawī al-faḍl*)—a group of rulers who epitomize the qualities required for the true king if taken as a group; 3) the traditional king (*malik al-sunna*), who rules according to the traditions, established by his predecessor(-s)—the true king(s); 4) the traditional rulers (*ruʾasāʾ al-sunna*)—a group of rulers, who possess the qualities required for the traditional king if taken as a group.⁴ Al-Fārābī’s ‘true king’ (probably modelled after the Byzantine emperor)⁵ is expected to rule until the end of his life—hence one concludes that he must have envisaged his ‘excellent city’ as a monarchy.

The inborn qualities of the ruler discussed by al-Fārābī in his *On the Perfect State* (*Mabādiʾ*) V, 15, 12, to a significant degree match those mentioned by Plato in Book VI of the *Republic*. Both list physical fitness and health (*Republic* 494b6, 498b5; *Mabādiʾ* V, 15, 12, 246, 9–11), aptitude

¹ E.g. al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 240 (V, 15, §7); Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa*, ed. Fawzī M. Najjār (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1971), 66.

² al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa*, 66; cf. Walzer’s discussion in al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 436.

³ al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 246–247 (V, 15, §12).

⁴ al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntazaʿa*, 66–67 (§58).

⁵ On the possible “Greek [read: Byzantine. J.E.] predecessor” of al-Fārābī as a political philosopher and the tentative Byzantine sources of his political doctrine, see e.g. Walzer’s commentary in al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 419; John W. Watt, “From Themistius to al-Fārābī: Platonic Political Philosophy and Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in the East,” *Rhetorica: A Journal for the History of Rhetoric* 13/1 (Winter 1995), 40. (However, according to Hans Daiber, “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” (Hans Daiber, *The Ruler as a Philosopher: A New Interpretation of al-Fārābī’s View* (Amsterdam-Oxford-New York: North-Holland, 1986), 6).

at learning and understanding (*Republic* 486c3, 490c11; *Mabādi'* V, 15, 12, 246, 12–13), good memory (*Republic* 486cd, 490c11, 494b2; *Mabādi'* V, 15, 12, 246, 13–15), fondness of study (*Republic* 485b; *Mabādi'* V, 15, 12, 248, 9–11), in born self-control (*Republic* 485c3, 498b5; *Mabādi'* V, 15, 12, 248, 4–5), indifference to worldly possessions (*Republic* 485e3; *Mabādi'* V, 15, 12, 248, 7–8), love of justice (*Republic* 486b10, 490b5; *Mabādi'* V, 15, 12, 248, 8–12). One inborn quality, mentioned by al-Fārābī, namely, magnanimity (*megalopsychia/ kibr al-nafs*) (*Mabādi'* V, 15, 12, 248, 5–7), has no equivalent in the *Republic*; instead, it appears to be taken from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* IV, 7, 1124a. In addition, unlike al-Fārābī (*Mabādi'* V, 15, 12, 246, 16–248, 1), Plato does not argue for the necessity for the ruler to possess fine diction and eloquence¹: the addition of this quality to al-Fārābī's list, thus, confirms that importance placed on rhetoric in the school curriculum had significantly increased in the centuries that preceded al-Fārābī.²

Remarkably, while Plato discusses in great detail the education of the philosophers (503e–505b and 535a–540a), al-Fārābī does not say much on the subject: his most important remarks on this matter appear to be found in the above discussed passage from the *Didascalía* (to which a few other concise remarks, scattered in the corpus of his works, might be added).³

¹ For more details and additional references pertaining to the discussion, see Walzer's commentary on *Mabādi'* V, 15, 12 in al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 444–446.

² This increase resulted from the apologetic agenda of the Eastern Christian theology (the same, of course, applies to *kalām* or rational theology in Islam: the legacy of Greek rhetoric was particularly important for the sub-discipline that dealt with the rules of disputation (*ādāb al-baḥṭh*)). On the role of rhetoric in the school curriculum of the Syriac monasteries, the immediate heirs of the school of Alexandria, see e.g. Maroun Aouad, "Aristote, La Rhétorique: Tradition syriaque et arabe," in *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques*, ed. Richard Goulet (7 vols., Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1989–2018), 1: 456–457, and *Supplément*, 219; John W. Watt, "Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Political Thought in the Christian Orient and in al-Fārābī, Avicenna and Averroes," in *Well Begun is Only Half Done: Tracing Aristotle's Political Ideas in Medieval Arabic, Syriac, Byzantine, and Jewish Cultures*, ed. Vasileios Syros (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2011), 17–48; John W. Watt, "From Themistius to al-Farabi: Platonic Political Philosophy and Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in the East," *Rhetorica: A Journal for the History of Rhetoric*, 13/1 (Winter 1995): 17–41; John W. Watt, "The Philosopher-King in the *Rhetoric* of Antony of Tagrit," in *VI Symposium Syriacum*, ed. René Lavenant (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1994), 245–258.

³ E.g. the following one 'he should enjoy the education which will be most appropriate to develop his inborn character. He should have a sound belief in the views of the religion in which he grows up, and should steadfastly perform the

However, the latter deals with logical arts only: one wonders if the potential rulers should engage in physical exercise and the study of music and mathematics.

3. The City

Plato's excellent cities (the Kallipolis of the *Republic* and the Magnesia of the *Laws*) represent small city-states, whose size does not exceed that of the Greek city-states of his time, such as Athens and Sparta. In case of Magnesia, Plato states explicitly that its maximum size would be that of five thousand and forty households (*Laws* 727e, 740d); and Kallipolis must probably be envisaged as a city of a similar size. Al-Fārābī makes no specific statements about the size of his Excellent City – but, from circumstantial evidence,¹ we can conclude that his city could be of any size that allowed it to function as a self-sufficient entity, from a small city-state, akin to Kallipolis, to the entire (inhabited) world. It seems that al-Fārābī (and the late Greek and Syriac tradition that precedes him) was speaking about a state whose size significantly approaches or equals that of an empire.²

In terms of its structure, al-Fārābī's city resembles that of the human body:

The city and the household may be compared with the body of a man. Just as the body is composed of different parts of a determinate number, some more, some less excellent, in neighbourhood and in grade, each doing a certain work, and there is combined from all their actions mutual help towards the

actions prescribed by that religion' (al-Fārābī, "Taḥṣīl al-sa'āda," p. 67; the English translation by Richard Walzer quoted from al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 444, n. 681). Walzer concludes that this means that, in al-Fārābī's curriculum for the rulers, the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* have replaced athletics, music and poetry (al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 444–445). While athletics appear not to be present in any way, music as part of mathematics and poetry as the lower logical art, in fact, are likely to maintain some presence in al-Fārābī's curriculum.

¹ Such as al-Fārābī's critical attitude to all existent religions of his time as built on false philosophy – see chapters 17–19 of his *Mabādī* (al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 276–322); cf. Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-milla wa nuṣūṣ ukhrā*, ed. M. Maḥdī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968), 30, 85–86; see also Vallat's remarks in Philippe Vallat, introduction, in Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Le Livre du régime politique*, trans. Philippe Vallat (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012), XVI.

² It is likely that al-Fārābī was, at least to some extent, acquainted with the Stoic doctrine of the Cosmic City (on which, see e.g. Henry Dyson, "What Kind of Cosmopolitans Were the Stoics? The Cosmic City in the Early Stoa," *Polis*, 25/2 (2008), 181–193). Cf. the discussion in Georgios Steiris, "Al-Farabi's Ecumenical State and Its Modern Connotations," *Skepsis* 22/3 (2012): 256.

perfection of the aim in a man's body, so the city and the household are each composed of different parts of a determinate number, some less, some more excellent, in their relation of neighbourhood and graded in different grades, each doing a certain work corresponding to it.¹

In Gutas' opinion,² this passage echoes Aristotle's *Politics* I, 2, 1253a18sq.,³ but I am hesitant to agree with him: in the quoted passage, the emphasis is simultaneously on mutual assistance and gradation as the pillars of both the city and the household, and this attitude is typically Platonic.

Plato's Kallipolis consists of three major classes – producers, guardians and rulers, which correspond to the three parts of the soul, appetitive, spirited and rational, respectively (*Republic*, 435c–441c). If these three parts of the soul function properly, the person is just (441d12–e2; cf. Brown). Al-Fārābī devotes the entire chapter 10 of the *Mabādī* to the discussion of the faculties of the soul; by doing so, he tacitly accepts the parallel drawn by Plato between the soul and the city, along with the aforementioned parallel between the city and the human body (discussed in the *Fuṣūl muntaza'a* §25);⁴ however, he does not elaborate on the former.

Unlike Plato's Kallipolis, which comprises only three classes, al-Fārābī's Excellent City is divided into five strata– the excellent ones (*al-afāḍil*) (i.e., philosophers proper), 'the possessors of the tongues' (preachers, orators, poets, musicians, scribes and those similar to them), the evaluators (*muqaddirūn*) (accountants, engineers, physicians, astronomers/astrologers and suchlike), the fighters (combatants and protectors) and the acquirers and

¹ Al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntaza'a*, 41–42 (§25). The English translation of the passage quoted here is by Dunlop: D. M. Dunlop, "Al-Fārābī's Aphorisms of the Statesman," *Iraq*, 14/2 (Autumn 1952): 103.

² Dimitri Gutas, "The Meaning of *madanī* in al-Fārābī's 'Political' Philosophy," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*, 57 (2004): 267.

³ 'And it is community in these that makes a household and a city-state. The city-state is also prior in nature to the household and to each of us individually, since the whole is necessarily prior to the part' (C. D. C. Reeve's translation in Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998), 4); cf. H. Rackham's translation: '...and it is partnership in these things that makes a household and a city-state. Thus also the city-state is prior in nature to the household and to each of us individually. [20] For the whole must necessarily be prior to the part' (Aristotle, *Politics*, with an English translation by H. Rackham, 4th ed. (London – Cambridge, MA: Heinemann – Harvard University Press, 1959), 11, available online at

(<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0058%3Abook%3D1%3Asection%3D1253a> accessed 7 February 2019).

⁴ Al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntaza'a*, 41–42 (§25); Dunlop, 'Al-Fārābī's Aphorisms', 103.

possessors of wealth (*mālīyyūn*) (peasants, shepherds and merchants etc.).¹ Taken together, the first three of these strata correspond to Plato's rulers, subdivided into three levels. Their representatives of the highest class of al-Fārābī's Excellent City base their knowledge on the demonstrative or apodictic syllogism; the second highest – on dialectical, rhetorical, sophistic, and poetical syllogisms, depending on their relevant activity. It appears that the three lower classes do not consciously build their activities on any particular kind of syllogism. Their role appears to be that of the 'consumers' (through imitation) of the theoretical knowledge, possessed by the two upper strata.²

As Walzer suggests, al-Fārābī's understanding of justice and equality appears to be founded on the principle of geometrical justice or proportionate equality, probably established by Pythagoras,³ and subsequently elaborated by Plato, Aristotle,⁴ and philosophers of late antiquity. Plato first discusses the principle in *Gorgias* 507e–508b. In particular, in 508a, he remarks that 'geometrical equality has great power among gods and men',⁵ thus positing it as the harmonizing principle of the cosmos and human society.⁶ Later, in *Laws* (756e–758a, but in particular 757c1–5; cf. also 744c), he juxtaposes this geometrical or proportional equality (which consists in assigning the good in proportion with what is fitting to each, 'more to the greater and less to the smaller' (757c1–2)) to the arithmetical one (which treats all, big and small, alike, as shown by Aristotle in *Politics* 1301b29f–1302a8 and the *Nicomachean Ethics* 1131b27, 1158b30ff).

In al-Fārābī's summary of Plato's *Laws*, the principle is illustrated in the following way:

¹ Al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntaza'a*, 65–66 (§57); Dunlop, 'Al-Fārābī's Aphorisms', 113.

² The 48th epistle of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' gives an alternative division of the classes of the Excellent City, based on the gradation of men's abilities according to their age (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il*, risāla no. 48, 693). It might be based on the summary/synopsis of the account of men's education in Kalli polis (*Republic*, 503e–505b and 535a–540a).

³ It is not the purpose of this article to deal with the Pythagorean influences on Plato's political doctrine. However, as Findlay justly remarks, it is possible to treat the *Republic* as the description of "an ideal Pythagorean community, whose virtue and whose mathematics are two sides of one Wisdom" (Findlay, *Plato*, 18).

⁴ In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, 3 1131b7–26 – note, however, that Aristotle is speaking about the proportionate justice, which is a particular instance of the application of the universal principle.

⁵ Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Terence Irwin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979 [reprinted 1995]), 86.

⁶ For more details, see Dodd's commentary in Plato, *Gorgias*, ed. Eric Robertson Dodds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959 [reprinted 2002], 339–340; cf. also Hall's discussion in Geraint Parry, ed., *Political Thinkers*, vol. 9. Robert W. Hall, *Plato* (London – New York: Routledge, 1981), 24–25.

‘Let no one presume that [geometrical] equality consists in giving the slaves and the mean ones the same rank and honors as to the free and the excellent ones. Rather, equality consists in giving each of them the rank he deserves.’¹

However, as Walzer indicates, al-Fārābī’s immediate source of knowledge of the principle of the geometrical equality may have been Simplicius’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*.²

In any case, an examination of the relevant passages in the *Mabādi* make us endorse Walzer’s conclusion, according to which, al-Fārābī believes that the law of the geometrical equality or justice enjoys an universal validity, equally applying to the world in its entirety (I, 2, 2), man’s soul (chapter 10) and body (chapter 11), and to the properly organized human society or city (chapter 15).³ Ultimately, this law points to Plato’s vision of the Good as an ideal proportionality and his belief that all values depend on the mathematical principles of proportionality.⁴ However, it must be added that, in al-Fārābī’s Excellent City, the law of geometrical equality is accompanied (though not superseded) by the principle of the mutual affection of its inhabitants, which results from their shared opinions about Good and happiness and their usefulness to each other.⁵

In Plato’s *Republic*, the four types of non-excellent cities represent the product and manifestation of four types of people (timocrat, oligarch, democrat and tyrant). The prevailing influence of a certain type of people in the city-state leads to the establishment of a particular type of constitution. The four types of constitution (timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny), described by Plato in the *Republic* 545c–576b,⁶ represent the four

¹ Thérèse-Anne Druart, “Le Sommaire du livre des «Lois» par Platon (*Ġawāmi’ Kitāb al-Nawāmīs li Aflāṭūn*),” *Bulletin d’études orientales*, 50 (1998): 143, ll. 13–15; cf. also Ch. Butterworth’s translation in Alfarabi, *The Political Writings*, vol. 2. “Political Regime” and “Summary of Plato’s *Laws*” (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2015), 161.

² Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros quattuor priores commentaria*, ed. H. Diels (Berlin: Reimer, 1882), 4, ll. 17 ff. Cf. Walzer’s English translation in al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 380.

³ See the discussion in Walzer’s commentary in al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 380.

⁴ On which, see the discussions in Leon Robin, *Théorie platonicienne des idées et des nombres d’après Aristote* (Paris: Alcan, 1908), 267–286, 442–466, 499–584; William David Ross, *Plato’s Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 176–212; Findlay, *Plato*, 39–80, in particular 66–78; cf. Sedley, “Philosophy, the Forms, and the Art of Ruling,” 270.

⁵ Al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntaza’a*, 70–71 (§61).

⁶ The timocratic city is dealt with in 545c–550b; the oligarchic city in 550c–555b; the democratic city in 555b–562a; the tyrannical city in 562a–576b.

stages of gradually increasing corruption and decline of Kallipolis, each subsequent stage emerging from its immediate antecedent.

The classification of the non-excellent cities, articulated in al-Fārābī's *Mabādi*, is different from that found in the *Republic*. Al-Fārābī lists four types of non-excellent cities: the ignorant city (*al-madīna al-jāhiliyya*), the wicked city (*al-madīna al-fāsiqa*), the city which has deliberately changed its character (*al-madīna al-mutabaddala*) and the city which has missed the right path (*al-madīna al-dālla*) (*Mabādi* V, 15, 15). These types do not have direct analogues in the *Republic*. However, in the *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, al-Fārābī treats the four non-excellent cities discussed in the *Republic* as sub-types of the ignorant city. They are discussed in the following order: 1) the oligarchic city (*al-madīna al-nadhāla*),¹ 2) the timocratic city (*al-madīna al-karrāmiyya*),² 3) the tyrannical city (*madīnat al-taghallub*),³ and the democratic city (*al-madīna al-jamā'iyya*).⁴ Hence, along with Walzer,⁵ we can conclude that, during the composition of the *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, al-Fārābī had access to the paraphrase of the Books VIII and IX of the *Republic*.

Furthermore, along with these four sub-types of the ignorant city, al-Fārābī discusses two other – the city of basic necessity and the hedonistic city. Al-Fārābī's account of the types of the cities does not follow Plato's approach, according to which the sequence of the regimes or constitutions reflects the increasing corruption and degradation of the excellent city Kallipolis (for which reason, they should be arranged according to the degree of that corruption). Walzer believes that the changes in the structure of the discussion on the non-excellent cities indicate that Plato's description of the wrong constitutions was adapted and transmitted in Hellenistic and Roman philosophical schools,⁶ whose heir al-Fārābī was. Ibn Bāğğā, in his *Tadbīr al-mutawahhīd* §148, aptly remarks that the decline of the city has its roots in the corruption of the human nature, thus addressing the issue in a

¹ Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, ed. Fawzī M. Najjār, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1993), 191; cf. Vallat's translation in Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Le Livre du régime politique*, trans. Philippe Vallat (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012), 190–191.

² Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, 193–199; cf. Vallat's translation in al-Fārābī, *Le Livre du régime politique*, 192–202.

³ Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, 199–203; cf. Vallat's translation in al-Fārābī, *Le Livre du régime politique*, 202–208.

⁴ Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, 206–208; cf. Vallat's translation in al-Fārābī, *Le Livre du régime politique*, 211–213.

⁵ See Walzer's commentary in al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 451.

⁶ See Walzer's commentary in al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 451.

manner which is closer to Plato's own approach.¹ In the same paragraph, Avempace lists four types of cities – 'the one which has an [apt] leader' (*al-madīnaal-imāmiyya*), the city of wealth (*madīnat al-yasār*), democraticcity (*al-madīnaal-jamā'īyya*) and tyrannical city (*madīnat al-taghallub*), without giving further details.² However, it was Ibn Rushd who attributed to the issue of the sequence of the regimes the greatest importance, discussing it in detail in his *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* as well as in his commentary on the *Republic*. The sequences of the regimes, which Ibn Rushd provides in these two commentaries, are significantly different. The sequence given in the first³ reproduces that of the *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 10, 1160a31–b22 ('from monarchy to tyranny, from aristocracy to oligarchy and from to timocracy to democracy'),⁴ whereas the sequence provided in the second⁵ follows that of the *Republic* (Excellent City – timocracy – oligarchy – democracy - tyranny).⁶ As suggested by E. I. J. Rosenthal⁷ (with whom agrees Aouad⁸), in all likelihood, Ibn Rushd's commentary on the *Republic* was composed later than his Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Hence, it is not unreasonable to

¹ *Ibn Bāḡḡa (Avempace)*, La conduite de l'isolé, 158; cf. Genequand's discussion *ibid.*, 46–47.

² *Ibn Bāḡḡa (Avempace)*, La conduite de l'isolé, 158; cf. Genequand's discussion *ibid.*, 38.

³ [Aristotle and Averroes,] *Aristotelisopera cum AverroisCommentariis*, vol. 3. *Aristotelis Stagirate Libri Moralemtotam Philosophiam complectentes, cum Averrois Cordubensis...in Moralia Nicomachia Expositione, Et in Platonis Libros de Republica paraphrase* (Venice, 1562, reprinted Frankfurt, 1962), 121 C-1, cf. Maroun Aouad, "Does Averroes Have a Philosophy of History?," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*, 57 (2004): 433–434.

⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. and trans. Roger Crisp, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 155–156; cf. Aouad, "Does Averroes Have a Philosophy of History?," 418, 433–434.

⁵ [Averroes,] *Averroes On Plato's Republic*, trans. R. Lerner (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), 117–145.

⁶ Plato, *Republic*, translated from the New Standard Greek Text, with Introduction, by C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN – Cambridge, MA, 2004), 240–275; cf. Aouad, "Does Averroes Have a Philosophy of History?," 435.

⁷ See his introduction in Averroes, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, ed. and trans. E. I. J. Rosenthal (Cambridge University Press, 1956), 10–11.

⁸ Aouad, "Does Averroes Have a Philosophy of History?," 436. Cf., however, Butterworth's objection: if all regimes can grow from democracy, as Plato him self admits, this invalidates the sequence described in the *Republic* (Charles Butterworth, "The Political Teaching of Averroes," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 2/2 (1992): 195.

assume that the sequence of the regimes given in the former represents the result of a more profound reflection.

It should be added that, according to al-Fārābī, these types of faulty cities or corrupt regimes result from different types of (faulty) views of their inhabitants (but not from their characters, as Plato believes), which form a part or the whole of their religion and are borrowed from the ancients – al-Fārābī is probably referring here to the Christians, who adopted from the Neoplatonists such attitudes as contempt for the human condition and hatred of the (material) body.¹ One wonders whether, in his accusation, al-Fārābī merely repeats what was a commonplace view in the philosophical tradition in which he was trained, or whether he is expressing his personal opinion. At our present state of knowledge about this tradition (in particular, in the period between Simplicius and al-Fārābī), it is, unfortunately, impossible to give a definitive answer.

Al-Fārābī believes that, in order to achieve happiness, the inhabitants of the Excellent City must possess knowledge of certain metaphysical truths. These include the First Cause, the immaterial existents, the celestial substances, the natural bodies, the man, the first ruler and his substitutes, and the Excellent City²: knowledge of these, which is viewed as the precondition for the achievement of happiness, can be acquired either through demonstration and theoretical insight, or through a likeness and symbolical representation depending on the inborn qualities of the particular individual: only philosophers by virtue of their nature are able to rise to the level of independent thought, based on demonstration, while non-philosophers can approach the truth solely through symbols, which reflect only part of it. Al-Fārābī calls the system of the symbolic representations of the metaphysical truths or realities, designed for the non-philosophers, *milla*, which can be approximately translated as ‘religion’ or ‘confession’.³ The systems of *milla* (as well as the languages, employed by them) differ from each other in terms of their propinquity to the truth, but, since all of them, as a rule, imitate

¹ Al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 322 (VI, 19, §7); cf. Walzer’s commentary *ibid.*, 501.

² Al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 276–279 (V, 17, §1); cf. Walzer’s commentary *ibid.*, 472–474, and Jules Janssens, “Al-Farabi: la religion comme imitation de la philosophie,” in *Orient – Occident: racines spirituelles de l’Europe. Enjeux et implications de la translation des racines spirituelles de l’Europe. Enjeux et implications de la translation des racines spirituelles de l’Europe*, 16–19 novembre 2009, ed. Mariano Delgado, Charles Méla and Frédéric Möri (Paris: CERF, 2014), 500.

³ See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-millawanuṣūkhā*, ed. M. Maḥdī (Beirut: Dār al-Maṣriq, 1968), index of ‘milla’; *idem*, *On the Perfect State*, 280 (V, 17, §2), 286 (V, 18, §1), 322 (V, 19, §7); cf. Walzer’s commentary *ibid.*, 475.

metaphysical truth, they are preceded by philosophy of some sort.¹ The symbols and imitations which they use to express this truth contain a number of topics of contention (*mawāḍiʿ al-ʿinād*) (discussed in Aristotle's *Topica* VIII, 14, 163b34-164a3),² against which irrefutable objections can be voiced.³ This raises the problem of the "noble lie", discussed in the *Republic* 382a4-d3, 389b and 414b-415d. Al-Fārābī briefly refers to this problem in the *Kitāb al-alfāz al-mustaʿmala fī al-manṭiq*.⁴ Ibn Bāḡḡa in the *Tadbīr* §86 explains that the "lie [=inadequacy] of the symbols" (*kaḍīb al-alghāz*) is an inevitable precondition for the achievement of happiness for the non-philosophers.⁵ Ibn Rushd in his *Commentary on Plato's Republic* I, XII endorses Ibn Bāḡḡa's opinion.⁶

In general, we can agree with Vallat that al-Fārābī's theory of imitation represents a synthesis of Plato's theory of images (as discussed in the line analogy in the *Republic* 509e-510a3) and the theory of the classification of homonyms, developed by Aristotle's commentators.⁷ In a nutshell, there seems to be sufficient evidence that al-Fārābī's political philosophy grew out of Plato's *Republic*, representing a systematic allegorical interpretation of the story of the Cave.

As for Ibn Bāḡḡa, one can agree with Makram Abbès, that his program of the solitary is an attempt to implement the programme of the excellent city on the individual level, in the absence of the possibility to enact it on the level of the society. Should a sufficient number of solitaries appear, it would be possible to establish the best regime. However, since such possibility is negligible, to Ibn Bāḡḡa, it is preferable that the philosopher ceases to aspire to the foundation of the excellent city, by performing, on the individual scale, the task which, theoretically, should be accomplished by the ruler of the excellent city. The originality of the political thought of Ibn Bāḡḡa appears to consist in this solution, remarkably

¹ Al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, Walzer's commentary on pages 475-476.

² Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, 183-185; cf. Vallat's translation in al-Fārābī, *Le Livre du régime politique*, 183-184 and his note 579 on p. 183; cf. also Walzer's commentary in al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, 480.

³ The ability to detect these topics of contention testifies to one's philosophical capacity, which can be measured according to the subtleness of the topic.

⁴ Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-alfāz al-mustaʿmala fī al-manṭiq*, ed. M. Mahdī, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968), 92, ll. 3-6.

⁵ Ibn Bāḡḡa, *La conduite de l'isolé*, 140; cf. Genequand's remarks *ibid.*, 42 and 287.

⁶ Averroes, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, ed. and trans. E. I. J. Rosenthal, 5-6; cf. *idem, Averroes On Plato's Republic*, trans. R. Lerner (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), 24.

⁷ Al-Fārābī, *Le Livre du régime politique*, 185, n. 583.

different from those proposed by Plato and al-Fārābī. To put it in a nutshell, abandoning the ambitions of the transformation of the city, Ibn Bāḡḡa focused on individual change, which, in his opinion, was achievable and implementable. This programme is particularly well illustrated by the transformation of the metaphor of the *nābit* ('weed').¹ The principal question posed by Ibn Bāḡḡa, apparently is 'can an individual become excellent – and if yes, how – living in a non-excellent/ imperfect city' (i.e., a city, in which everyone pursues his own goals, without giving thought to the common goal of the city and aspiring to achieve it)? Ibn Bāḡḡa does not give a detailed answer to the question. However, *Tadbīr* §166 seems to suggest that, in a certain aspect, the solitary himself, as the individual in whom both moral and virtues are fully present, can be regarded as the goal of the city.²

Conclusion

As it has been rightly observed by Charles Genequand,³ Islamic political philosophy deals predominantly with an idea city rather than with the really existing forms of constitution and political life. The philosophers, who described this model in their works, were well aware that it would never be implemented in the societies in which they lived: the intended function of the model city was to serve as an object of reflection and a reference point for an assessment of contemporary political regimes.⁴ Hence, we can claim that ancient Greek political thought exerted its influence on Arabo-Islamic political philosophers mainly through the models or paradigms it provided. The principal paradigms – those of the Cave, the Philosopher-King, the Excellent City and the achievement of happiness through divinization – were provided by Plato's *Republic*, where as many particular aspects of their reception in the Arabo-Islamic milieu were pre-determined by the specific traits of the earlier Hellenic, Roman/Byzantine and Syriac scholastic tradition (such as placing a strong emphasis on rhetoric), through which the political teachings of Plato and Aristotle were transmitted to the Arabs. In addition, in the historical context of the caliphate, a substantially different political system from that of ancient Greece, these paradigms were

¹ See the discussion in Makram Abbès, "Gouvernement de soi et gouvernement des autres chez Avempace". *Studia Islamica* 100/101 (2005): 158-159.

² Ibn Bāḡḡa, *La conduite de l'isolé*, 164; cf. Genequand, *ibid.*, 41.

³ Ibn Bāḡḡa, *La conduite de l'isolé*, 42 (of Genequand's introduction).

⁴ Hence, I believe, Ibn Khaldūn's characteristic of the Excellent City envisaged by the philosophers' as 'a hypothesis (*fard*) and assumption (*taqdīr*)' (Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. M. Quatremère ([1st ed. Paris, 1858] 2nd ed. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1970), 2: 127; cf. Charles Butterworth, "Ethical and Political Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 266) is not wrong, but fails to hit the main point.

inevitably understood and interpreted in a different way (for example, all Arabo-Islamic philosophers we have dealt with strongly prefer the rule of a single individual to that of a group (provided this individual possesses all the necessary qualities), whereas the excellent city envisaged by them tends to expand to the size of an empire).

Since Arabo-Islamic philosophers were aware that, in the given historical circumstances, these paradigms could not be realized, they focused instead on producing disciples and successors who, under favourable conditions, could establish an excellent city. For this purpose, they established the groundwork for the school curriculum, which consisted mainly of logical and mathematical arts and was based on the treatises of Aristotle, supplemented by a substantial number of (Neoplatonic and other) commentaries. It can be claimed that Plato's political teachings played a paradigmatic role, while the logical, rhetorical and other tenets of Aristotle served as tools and devices for the implementation of these paradigms to the degree that was possible then and there.

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مجلة علمية محكمة

العدد السادس - 2021

إصدار كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية
جامعة القاضي عياض - مراكش - المغرب

شروط النشر

- مجلة ضفاف مجلة علمية محكمة تعنى بنشر الأبحاث والأعمال التي تدخل في مجال العلوم الإنسانية.
- مجلة فصلية.
- تنشر المجلة مقالات ودراسات وأبحاثاً أصيلة لم يسبق نشرها ولا تقديمها للنشر.
- تخضع الأعمال المقترحة للنشر لشروط البحث العلمي المتعارف عليها من حيث التوثيق وذكر المصادر والمراجع المعتمدة.
- تعبر الأبحاث المنشورة بالمجلة عن آراء أصحابها.
- تقدم الأبحاث في نسخة مطبوعة ونسخة إلكترونية.
- تلتزم المقالات بالمعايير التقنية للنشر بالمجلة، فتكتب المقالات العربية بخط 14 Sakkal majalla والمقالات بالحرف اللاتيني بخط 11 Times New Roman.
- تكتب الهوامش أسفل الصفحة بخط 10 Times New Roman.
- ينبغي ألا تزيد صفحات البحث عن 20 صفحة.
- يذكر الباحث اسمه واسم بنية البحث والجامعة-المؤسسة التي ينتمي إليها في الصفحة الأولى.
- يقدم الباحث ملخصاً لبحثه مستقلاً عن المقال.
- يكتب ملخصاً للبحث بلغة غير اللغة التي كتب بها.
- تخضع المقالات والبحوث المقدمة للمجلة للتحكيم، ويلتزم الباحث بإجراء التعديلات التي يقترحها المحكمون في أجل أقصاه 15 يوماً بعد توصله بها.
- تحتفظ المجلة بحقوقها في عدم نشر أي بحث لا يستجيب لشروطها.
- لا ترد الأبحاث إلى أصحابها نشرت أو لم تنشر.
- تحتفظ المجلة بحقوق التأليف وإعادة النشر الورقي أو الإلكتروني للمقالات المنشورة بها.
- المقالات المقدمة للنشر لا يجب أن تنتهك حقوق مؤلفين أو ملكية أطراف آخرين.

شكر

تتقدم هيئة تحرير مجلة "ضفاف" للعلوم الإنسانية
بخالص تشكراتها لكل من ساهم في إغناء هذا العدد،
كما توجه شكرها الجزيل للأمانة الأجلة الذين لم
يتروا في قراءة المقالات وتقييمها وتحكيمها.

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بجامعة القاضي عياض - مراكش - المغرب

المدير : عميد كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية

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الإيداع القانوني : 2018PE0010

ردمك : 2605-6410

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