

The Core Philosophical Perspectives of Abu Nasr Farabi on Religion

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Abstract

This article examines the fundamental philosophical perspectives of Abu Nasr Farabi regarding religion, focusing on the conceptual relationship between philosophy, morality, society, and the spiritual development of the individual. As one of the greatest thinkers of the Islamic Golden Age, Farabi developed a unique theory of religion grounded in reason, virtue, and political philosophy. The study analyzes Farabi's views on the origin of religion, its social function, its connection with philosophy, and the role of the ideal ruler. His ideas continue to shape contemporary discussions on the harmony between rational thought and religious belief.

Keywords: Abu Nasr Farabi; philosophy of religion; symbolic representation of truth; virtuous city; rational theology; philosopher-prophet; Islamic philosophy; metaphysics; moral education; social harmony; prophetic intuition; religion and society; reason and revelation; intellectual perfection.

Introduction

In the Republic of Uzbekistan today, one of the main priorities of state policy is the education of free-thinking, spiritually mature, independent, and socially active individuals who can integrate national heritage and rich spiritual traditions into their worldview. The significance of national and universal values, as well as historical and spiritual heritage, is therefore paramount. As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has emphasized: "Preserving historical heritage, studying it, and transmitting it from generation to generation is one of the most important priorities of our state policy." In this context, the integration of education with cultural and intellectual heritage—alongside the study of advanced foreign experiences—acts as a vital factor in realizing the idea of moving "from national revival to national ascent." Cultivating an intellectually capable younger generation grounded in both tradition and innovation is thus considered essential for the nation's future development.

Among the great thinkers of the East, Abu Nasr Farabi occupies a distinctive place through his profound views on religion. For Farabi, religion is necessary for the governance of society, and its central task is to serve humanity and contribute to human happiness. He argues that various religions can coexist within a single state without contradicting one another, provided they contribute to social harmony and shared moral goals. Farabi maintains that religion should not

oppose the interests of society or the state; on the contrary, it supports the functioning of social and political institutions.

Farabi sought to illuminate the essence of philosophy, religion, and theology, as well as the relationship among them. According to him, religion reflects the images of things and beings in the human heart. Because ordinary people often find it difficult to grasp abstract metaphysical truths, religion conveys these truths through symbols, metaphors, and imitative representations. Whereas philosophers comprehend the world through rational concepts, pious believers apprehend it through imaginative forms. In his view, religious knowledge can be understood as an imitation of philosophical knowledge—they address the same subjects, provide insights into the First Cause, and guide humanity toward its ultimate purpose: the attainment of happiness. As Farabi notes, “Philosophy presents these truths through essences and concepts that the intellect can perceive, while religious doctrine conveys them through the use of imagination. Thus, philosophy proves, whereas religion commands belief.”

Farabi also classifies people not only by religious affiliation but by their natural characteristics, intellectual capabilities, and the knowledge and experience they acquire throughout life. He argues that when individuals and communities mobilize their intellectual, creative, and spiritual capacities, society progresses and human life improves. As he states: “The foundation that unites all people is their humanity; therefore, humanity requires that people live with one another in mutual peace.”

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, numerous scholars continued research on Farabi’s life and intellectual legacy. His philosophical contributions are particularly analyzed in works such as Abdugaffar Qazvini’s *Nigristani Gaffari* and Majduddin Muhammad Ali Husayn’s *Majmu‘ al-Awliya*. These scholars emphasize that Farabi and his followers offered philosophical interpretations of Islamic beliefs and developed them within a rationalistic framework. They also highlight Farabi’s role as one of the earliest thinkers to construct a systematic theory of Islamic philosophy.

In his renowned work *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*, Farabi asserts that God is the creator and prime mover of all existence and that His being is superior to all created beings. The philosopher affirms that God has no partner; His existence belongs solely to Himself. God is distinguished from all creatures by His eternal and unique nature. Farabi describes God as the Most Powerful, the Judge, and the Ultimate Truth. Regarding divine knowledge, he writes: “He (God) is the Judge. His dominion manifests in the knowledge of the best things with the most perfect knowledge. He knows in the most complete way possible, and perfect knowledge is unchanging and constant; it does not diminish or depart. This knowledge is His eternal attribute.”

On the scientific heritage and activities of Abu Nasr Farabi one can show the scholars of the present period John Kumar, Jamil Saolibiy, Usman Amin, Hanna Al-Faxuri and Hanna Al-Jarra, Umar Farrukh etc. Who have worked in arabic. Umar Farrukh, in his work “Two Farabi”, widely used medieval schools dedicated to the creativity of Farabi and Ibn Sina and scientific research of Western Orientalist scientists, in which the Farabi worldview and works are detailed and chukur interpretation. Popular Western scientist R.Hammond of the present time in his book “The Philosophy of Farabi and its impact on medieval philosophical thinking” admits that the worldview of Farabi is close to medieval philosophy and religious views in Europe. He also describes Farabi as a religious figure of mysticism, one of the founders of the formation of the

famous Foma Aquinsky philosophy in the XIII century¹. According to European scientists, the medieval Muslim thinker – Farabi in his works studied mainly the religion of Islam, theology, the universe and the connection between them and the issues of unity.

Farabi studied various fields of medieval science. He came into contact with people of different religions, philosophical and political views, not afraid of religious obstacles. Farabi's philosophical reflections on a just and virtuous society, as well as on the democratic governance of the state, occupy a central place in his intellectual legacy. In his ideal model of society, special value is given to productive labor, intellectual excellence, moral virtue, and the practical wisdom gained through life experience. For Farabi, the flourishing of society depends not on religious uniformity, but on enlightenment, scientific progress, human perfection, collective happiness, and the triumph of goodness. Qualities such as religious hostility, intolerance, or hatred toward other beliefs play no constructive role in his conception of a virtuous society.

Farabi emphasizes that what matters most is not which religion individuals follow, but whether they seek knowledge, cultivate virtue, and contribute to the common good. In his view, a truly prosperous society must be grounded in moral education, intellectual development, and mutual solidarity.

Farabi also discusses the divine attributes of God, describing Allah as glorious, noble, and exalted above all creation. In *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*, he explains God's uniqueness and absolute perfection, remaining consistent with the principles of Islamic philosophy. He aligns his interpretation of divine attributes with the foundational doctrines of Islam, demonstrating how religion and philosophical reasoning can be harmonized.

Farabi's worldview is free from religious superstition and is grounded in the principle of religious freedom. While he held deep respect for Islam and regarded the Qur'an as a guide for proper human conduct, he rejected the misuse of religion for personal gain or manipulation. He criticized those who exploited people's ignorance for mercenary or political purposes. For Farabi, true religion must contribute to human perfection, ethical development, and enlightenment.

The philosopher therefore advocates for the correct understanding of religion among citizens of the virtuous city. For him, religion is not merely a system of beliefs but an essential instrument for achieving human happiness, moral discipline, and social harmony.

From these considerations it becomes clear that Farabi never opposes religious beliefs or rituals in his works. He does not criticize the fundamental doctrines of religion; on the contrary, he greatly respects religion's educational, moral, and regulatory functions. He consistently upholds the idea that religion should guide society toward enlightenment and human perfection. His worldview thus reflects a balanced synthesis of reason, spirituality, and freedom of belief.

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