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City and Soul in Plato and Alfarabi: An Explanation for the Differences Between Plato's and Alfarabi's Theory of City in Terms of Their Distinct Psychology

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Abstract

In his political treatise, *Mabadi ara ahl al-madina al-fadhila*, Abu Nasr Alfarabi, the medieval Muslim philosopher, proposes a theory of virtuous city which, according to prominent scholars, is modeled on Plato's utopia of the *Republic*. No doubt that Alfarabi was well-versed in the philosophy of Plato and the basic framework of his theory of city is platonic. However, his theory of city is not an exact reproduction of the *Republic's* theory and, despite glaring similarities, the two theories do differ in many aspects. In both, Alfarabi's *Mabadi ara ahl al-madina al-fadhila* and Plato's *Republic*, the theory of virtuous city is accompanied by a theory of the soul. Since the theory of soul plays a foundational role in both theories of the virtuous city, the present article intends to provide an explanation for the differences between the two theories of the city in terms of the differences between the two theories of the soul.

Keywords Alfarabi · Plato · Political philosophy · Psychology · Theory of soul · The Republic · The virtuous city · Utopia

1 Introduction

Abu Nasr Alfarabi, the medieval Muslim philosopher, is the founder of Islamic Neoplatonism and political philosophy. In the political treatise, "*Mabadi ara ahl al-madina al-fadhila*" (Principles of the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City), commonly known as the "*Virtuous City*", he proposes a utopian virtuous city.¹

¹ There are multiple writings of Alfarabi, such as the *Political Regime* and the *Attainment of Happiness*, that deal with the Platonic theme of the best city and contend for a comparison with the works of Plato. However, the present article mainly focuses on the *Virtuous City*. Other works of Alfarabi are occasionally referred to for explanatory purpose.

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Prominent scholars argue for the Platonic nature of Alfarabi's political philosophy in general and his theory of virtuous city in particular. Pines (1963, p. lxxxvi), in the introduction to his translation of Maimonides' *the Guide of the Perplexed*, suggests that Alfarabi's political philosophy is largely Platonic. Fakhry (2002, p. vii) is of the opinion that the *Virtuous City* is "inspired by Plato's *Republic*". He (Fakhry 1983, p. 124) maintains that, although Alfarabi's "analysis of justice" is influenced by "Aristotle's *Ethics*", his "predominant political motif is distinctly Platonic". Walzer (1985, p. 10) suggests that "the political section" of the *Virtuous City* is mainly based on an extinct "commentary on Plato's *Republic*" that might have been "written in the sixth century A.D.". Like Fakhry, Rosenthal (1958, p. 114) also acknowledges that Alfarabi has "drawn upon" Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, but considers his political philosophy as mainly influenced by Plato. Similarly, Marmura (2005, p. 398) suggests that Alfarabi's theory of the state "is Platonic". No doubt that Alfarabi was well-versed in the philosophy of Plato and was greatly influenced by it. He viewed the philosophy of Plato as the true philosophy and followed the *Republic* by treating "the whole of philosophy proper within a political framework" in his major political writings including the *Virtuous City* (Strauss 1945, pp. 358–359). Most importantly, he borrows the Platonic concept of the philosopher-king and uses it in his theory of the state. But, certain obvious differences do exist between Plato's and Alfarabi's theory of perfect association. To furnish few examples: while in the *Republic*'s theory there is a separate class of auxiliaries exclusively responsible for the defense of the city and the philosopher-king does not physically participate in war, Alfarabi makes fighting the holy war one of the important duties of his ruler; Plato devises his program of training and education exclusively for the guardians and marginalize the common masses, Alfarabi, on the other hand, seeks perfection for all the inhabitants of his city; the superior knowledge of Plato's philosopher-king comes through unaided reason as he, in terms of the cave allegory, ascends to the world of ideas and gains the superior knowledge through reason, whereas the source of Alfarabi's ruler knowledge is reason plus divine revelations, associated not to the rational but to the imaginative faculty of the soul; unlike Plato who suggests city-soul analogy, Alfarabi compares his city with the living body.

For a proper understanding of the relationship between the political philosophy of Plato and Alfarabi in general and their theory of virtuous city in particular, it is affirmative to consider the development of the political philosophy from Plato to Alfarabi. The introduction of Greek philosophical thought to the medieval Muslim world owes mainly to the extensive program of the translation of Greek texts into Arabic that was carried out through the collaboration of Christian and Muslim scholars between the eighth and tenth centuries largely in Baghdad, the seat of the Abbasid caliphate (Gutas 1998). As a result of this translation movement, most of the works of Plato, Aristotle and their late Greek commentators had been translated into Arabic by the time of Alfarabi (Black 2011, p. 57). Plato's *Republic*, most plausibly in Arabic translation, was accessible to Alfarabi.² He not only had a deep knowledge of the *Republic* but was also influenced by it to the extent that he incorporated a number of Platonic elements in his political philosophy in general and the theory of virtuous city in particular. However, Plato is not the only influence on Alfarabi that found

² On ninth century Arabic version of the *Republic*, cf. Walzer 1985, p. 426.

expression in his philosophy. Rather, there are at least three other factors that influence the political philosophy of Alfarabi and distinguish it from that of Plato's *Republic*: the religiopolitical context, Neoplatonism and Psychology. First, Alfarabi was a medieval Muslim philosopher who had a unique religiopolitical context distinct from that of Plato. As we have compared, elsewhere, Alfarabi's theory of perfect association to that of Plato's *Republic* in light of its unique religious and political context and pointed out that the distinct religiopolitical context is one of the important factors that distinguish the two theories. Alfarabi's utopia is a program for Muslim revival. The problem that Alfarabi deals with and the solution that he proposes for the problem in the form of his virtuous city are peculiarly Islamic and distinct from that of Plato's *Republic*. Two, some Neoplatonic texts were also translated into Arabic during the translation movement of the Abbasid era, and the "Arabic translations and summaries of the works of Plato and Aristotle were read together with Neoplatonic texts such as the *Theology of Aristotle* (a version of Plotinus' *Enneads* IV–VI), the *Liber de causis* (a version of parts of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*)—both works produced it seems for al-Kindi in Baghdad in the ninth century—and other Neoplatonic texts, by Porphyry, Simplicius, Philoponus, and others, some of which indeed have survived only in Arabic translation" (O'Meara 2005, p. 186). Though Neoplatonists are traditionally known for their lack of interest in the political philosophy, Alfarabi has not only adopted the Neoplatonic emanationist cosmology but has also incorporated it into his political philosophy. This incorporation distinguishes his political philosophy from that of Plato's *Republic*. In Alfarabi's political philosophy, as in Islam, we see a union of political and spiritual. The Neoplatonic emanationist cosmology is used by Alfarabi to provide an explanation for the spiritual and metaphysical aspect of his political philosophy that includes God as the most perfect and superior first cause of things, ten intellects that emanates from the first cause and are recognized as angels by Alfarabi, the tenth of these angels corresponds to angel Gabriel in function as it is the medium through which the revelations from God reach the ruler of the virtuous city. The present article deals with the third factor that distinguishes the political philosophy of Alfarabi from that of Plato's *Republic* which is their distinct Psychology.

In both works, Alfarabi's *Virtuous City* and Plato's *Republic*, the theory of perfect city is accompanied by a theory of the soul. It is neither coincidental nor a casual concurrence of two themes. In fact, as we have discussed elsewhere, the theory of soul serves as a foundation on which Plato and Alfarabi erect their respective theory of ideal association (Ali and Qin 2019). Notwithstanding the similar role of the two theories of the soul in the respective theory of virtuous city, Alfarabi's theory of soul differs considerably from that of Plato's *Republic*. Since Aristotle's *Politics* didn't reach them, Alfarabi and other medieval Muslim philosophers "based their political discussions on Plato's *Republic*", "not on Aristotle's *Politics*" (Melamed 2003, p. 1).³ However, the theoretical philosophy of Aristotle including his psychology was not only available

³ Melamed argues that late Hellenists preferred Plato's *Republic* to Aristotle's *Politics* as a basic textbook on politics. This is evident from the fact that there is not even a single commentary on Aristotle's *Politics* dating from that time. Since the medieval Muslim thinkers inherited the same manuscripts to which late Hellenists inclined, Plato's *Republic* could reach them but Aristotle's *Politics* couldn't. However, even if we keep the question of availability aside, the medieval Muslim philosophers would still

to Alfarabi and other medieval Muslim philosophers but also greatly influenced them (Walzer 1991, p. 779). Alfarabi's theory of soul is largely Aristotelian and distinct from that of Plato's *Republic*. The crucial role of the theory of the soul in the two theories of ideal association makes it affirmative to investigate the extent to which the differences between the psychology of Plato and Alfarabi necessitate the differences between the two theories of the virtuous city. The first part of the article provides a brief survey of Alfarabi's theory of the soul. In his theory, Alfarabi proposes a soul composed of faculties for vital functions. While he is unequivocal about the composition of soul, the nature of the three parts of Plato's soul, owing to the different interpretations of his vexed city-soul analogy, has been subjected to at least two different interpretations: one considers the three parts of the soul agents, while the other faculties. In the second part of the article, we agree with the faculty interpretation that the agent interpretation is problematic and the result of an inaccurate understanding of Plato's psychology, and that the three parts of the soul in the *Republic* are, in fact, faculties for the three distinct functions of the soul: providing, defense, and governance. We also argue that since the three parts of Plato's soul are faculties and only reason is capable of carrying out cognitive activities, the four Pathemata, being the cognitive activities of the soul, can only be related to reason among the three parts of the soul. Finally, once it is settled that, as in Alfarabi's theory, the soul is composed of faculties in Plato's theory and so the two theories are comparable, the last section provides a comparative analysis of the two theories of soul and shows that the differences between the two theories of soul contribute towards the differences between the two theories of utopia.

2 Alfarabi's Theory of the Soul

Alfarabi conceives the soul as a sum of faculties for vital functions. According to his theory of the soul in the *Virtuous City*, the soul has five major faculties: nutrition, sense, representation, appetite, and reason.

Nutrition is the most basic faculty of the soul shared among human beings, plants and animals. It is responsible for the nourishment of living beings. The faculty of nutrition, according to Alfarabi, has a ruling faculty that resides in the heart and governs the auxiliary and subordinate faculties of nutrition distributed among all the other organs of the body. In the *Aphorisms of the Statesman*, Alfarabi (1952, p. 97) recognizes seven sub-faculties of the nutritive faculty: digestive, growth, generative, attractive, retentive, distinguishing and expulsive. The digestive sub-faculty of nutrition breaks down food in the digestive tract and absorbs it in the liver in the form of blood. Growth is the faculty by which our body and body parts develop in size "through nutriment". The generative faculty is the faculty of reproduction by which organisms produce another organism of the same species from the excess blood. The attractive faculty transports the nutriment to different parts of the body. The retentive faculty is responsible for the preservation of "the nutriment in the vessels

Footnote 3 (continued)

have preferred Plato's *Republic* as it suited their theological and philosophical world view better. For further details see Melamed 2003, pp. 1–2.

of the body into which it passes”. The distinguishing faculty “distinguishes” the “amounts” and “kinds of the nutriments”, and ensures that “the appropriate amount and kind” of nutriments reach every part of the body. Finally, the expulsive faculty “expels certain kinds of excessive nutriment from one place to another”.

Sense, on the other hand, is the faculty of soul by which we sense the objects of the visible world through the five senses. Like the faculty of nutrition, the faculty of sense also has a ruling faculty and auxiliaries. Its auxiliaries are the five senses that perceive the objects of the visible world and transmit the sensations to the ruling faculty that resides in the heart. The ruling faculty, as Alfarabi (1985, p. 169) puts it, “is like the king in whose house the news which the messengers from the provinces have brought is put together”.

The faculty of representation or imaginative faculty has neither auxiliaries nor subordinates. Like the ruling faculties of nutrition and sense, it resides in the heart. It retains the impressions of the sensibles after they are no longer available for apprehension by the faculty of sense. However, this faculty is more than a mere storeroom of the sensibles. It exercises an active control over the stored impressions of the sensibles by associating and dissociating them in many different ways. In addition to these two basic functions, it has the capability to simulate the sensibles, intelligibles, nutritive faculty, appetitive faculty and the temperament of the body through the images of the sensibles stored in it.

Reason or the rational faculty of the soul is peculiar to Man by which we can know the intelligibles, make a distinction between good and evil, and acquire the arts and the sciences. It rules the imaginative faculty and the ruling faculties of nutrition and sense. It is divided into theoretical and practical rational faculty. Theoretical rational faculty is that by which we acquire the knowledge of the things that can neither be created nor altered by human beings. The practical rational faculty, on the other hand, deals with the things that can be created and altered by the human agency. It is through the practical rational faculty that we acquire skills and deliberate about the things in order to find out that what should be done or avoided in a specific situation, or whether “it is possible or not, and if it is possible”, how it must be done (Alfarabi 1952, p. 98).

The things apprehended through sense, representation and reason are either the objects of thought or action. However, the thought or action that these apprehensions require is not possible unless the appetitive faculty desires it. The appetitive faculty is that by which we feel desire or aversion towards knowing or doing the things apprehended through sense, representation or reason. The ruling faculty of appetite is also in the heart that decides whether an apprehension should be desired or not. The decision is carried out by the parts of the body that are the instruments or subordinates of the ruling faculty.

3 Republic's Theory of the Soul

3.1 The Parts of the Soul

According to Plato's theory of the soul in the *Republic*, the soul is composed of three parts: reason, appetite, and spirit. In Al-Farabi's theory, it is clear that the soul

is composed of faculties, but the case of Plato's theory is far from simple. There are two dominant interpretations of the nature of the three parts of the soul in Plato: one suggests that the parts of the soul are agents, the other interprets them as faculties.

The agent interpretation of the parts of the soul is based on the strict interpretation of Plato's city-soul analogy that argues for not only the sameness of the structure but also the sameness of the parts of the city and the soul. Each of the three parts of the city is composed of a group of individuals best suited for one of the three social functions: money making, defense, and governance. Each of these social functions involves one or other kind of cognitive activity and it is hard to believe that only the group responsible for governing the city makes use of reason, the defenders are only spirited, and the money makers have appetites only. This makes the parts of the city agents, and if the parts of the city are agents, then the city-soul analogy demands that the parts of the soul are also agents. Furthermore, the agent interpretation is strengthened by Plato's contention that any of the three parts of the soul can rule the soul: reason rules the soul of aristocrat, spirit rules the soul of timocrat, and the appetitive part rules the soul of oligarch. It is obvious that ruling involves reasoning and cognition. Thus, the parts of the soul are agents, each capable of reasoning and ruling the soul. Christopher Bobonich (2002, pp. 219–220) agrees that, in Plato, all the three parts of the soul can reason and have desires. However, he draws a fine distinction between the reasoning of the reason proper and the other two parts. He believes that only the reason proper can reason about the Forms, while the other two parts can reason only about the sensible world.

Plato (1991, p. 262) attributes love to each of the three parts of the soul: reason loves learning, appetite loves money, spirit loves honor. However, this love is different from eros, the frequently used word for love in Greek philosophy. The word used for the love of the parts of the soul is "philia" and philiatric love presupposes beliefs. The attribution of philia to the parts of the soul suggests the attribution of beliefs to these parts, and the attribution of beliefs to these parts suggests the attribution of cognition to them; and in the ultimate analysis the parts of the soul seem to be agents (Santas 2013, pp. 176–177).

All the arguments in favor of the agent interpretation of the parts of the soul are based on the description of the soul as composed of three parts where each of the three parts can perform all the three functions of the soul: we learn, desire, and feel spirited with reason; we learn, desire, and feel spirited with appetite; we learn, desire, and feel spirited with spirit. However, this conception of the soul and its parts is highly problematic. One, it leaves us with no way to distinguish the three parts from one another as all of them perform the same function. Two, this way of understanding the soul makes justice in the soul and, by analogy, justice in the city impossible. Justice in the soul demands that one part of the soul must perform one function for which it is best suited, but this conception asks for each part performing all the functions of the soul. Three, it necessitates that each of the three parts of the soul must have three more parts within it since the three functions of the soul are performed by each of the three parts. Thus, it creates the problem of division within the division and irreparable disunity of the soul. Santas (2013, p. 178) rightly points out that, above all, "it may even commit Plato to the view that there are several just

and/or unjust persons within a person, since agent, like parts, can be platonically just or unjust by his definition of psychic justice”.

In the *Republic* IV, Plato puts forward a long argument, aided by examples, for the division of the soul. The first example is of a person who is thirsty but unwilling to drink. Plato (1991, p. 118) argues that one thing (appetite) in the man “bids” him to drink while another different thing (reason) “forbids” him. This whole discussion for the presence of two distinct and opposing parts in the soul turns out to be futile if we accept that appetite by itself can reason, and “bids” as well as “forbids”. Santas (2013, p. 178) notes that the use of the word “irrational” (alogiston) for the appetitive part by Plato, at 439d, by itself is enough to show that appetite cannot reason. Similarly, the Odysseus example, at 441b-c, for the distinction between spirit and reason will lose its utility if we accept that spirit can reason. The two examples refute the agent interpretation of the parts of the soul which attributes reasoning to each one of them. They also neutralize the Bobonich’s argument as it is clear that reason has nothing to do with the Forms in these examples. The whole lengthy argument for the division of the soul suggests that the three parts are, in fact, three separate faculties for the three distinct functions of the soul.

The *Republic* seems to contain evidence in favor of the agent as well as the faculty interpretation of the parts of the soul owing to “the developmental and interactive” rather than “static” nature of “Plato’s psychology” (Santas 2013, p. 179). Plato believes in the gradual development of the soul with experience, education, and training. It is crucial to distinguish the parts of the soul as they are by nature (in book IV) from what they become after getting fully developed (book VII and IX). The educated parts of the soul of an adult in the later books look like agents as they co-operate and interact in carrying out actions. In the experienced and educated oligarch’s soul, appetite and reason work together to rule which is mistakenly understood as ruling by a thinking appetite. Similarly, the impression of a reasoning spirit ruling the timocrat soul is the result of the working relation created between reason and spirit as a result of education and training. Rule by appetite and spirit can be understood as the satisfaction of desires and the achievement of honor set as the ultimate goal by oligarch and timocrat respectively and using reason only to find the means to achieve these goals.

The misinterpretation of the parts of the soul as agents is the result of an inaccurate understanding of Plato’s psychology and inability to differentiate inborn and natural soul from experienced and educated one. The three parts of the soul, as they are by nature, are faculties or capabilities for the three corresponding functions of the soul.

3.2 The παθήματα (pathemata) of the Soul

Plato presents one of the most interesting and much debated philosophical devices, the simile of the divided line, in the later part of the *Republic* VI. He asks his interlocutor to divide a line into two unequal segments, the longer of the two representing the intelligible and shorter the visible realm. Each of the two segments is further

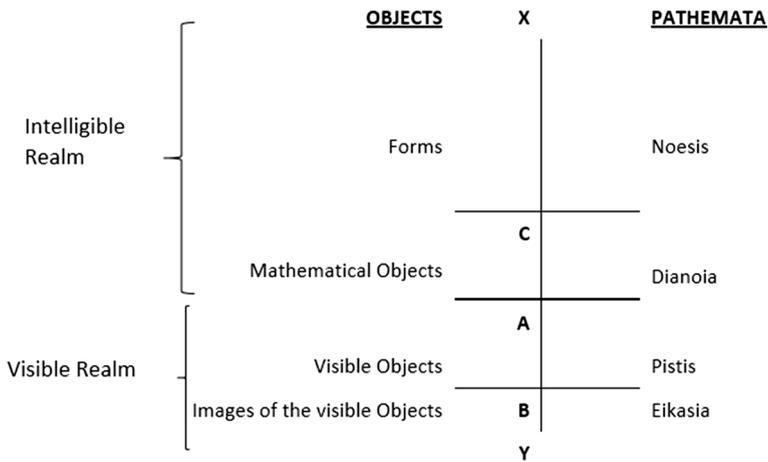


Fig. 1 Plato's divided line

subdivided in the same ratio as that of the initial division. On the segment that represents the visible realm, the longer subdivision stands for the visible objects and the shorter for the images of these visible objects. Mathematical objects and Platonic Forms are represented by the shorter and longer subdivisions of the intelligible realm, respectively. Corresponding to the four kinds of objects, Plato suggests four pathemata of the soul: eikasia (imagination), pistis (trust/belief), dianoia (thought/understanding) and noesis (intellection), corresponding to the images of the visible objects, the visible objects, mathematical objects and Platonic Forms, respectively (Fig. 1).

May Sim (2008, p. 192) argues that the objects on the divided line below the Forms are “better or worse images of the Forms and ultimately of the Good”, and since the pathemata of the soul corresponds to the objects, we can expect a similar kind of relationship among the pathemata of the soul: the pathemata below noesis “are less adequate ways of” noesis. Plato (1991, p. 192) suggests that each of the pathemata “participates in clarity” as much as its corresponding object participates in truth. So, all the pathemata seek the ultimate truth, but only noesis knows it being the only one that has access to the Forms, the objects with the highest truth value. Dianoia follows noesis in clarity as its corresponding objects, the mathematical objects, follow the Forms in truth. Similarly, pistis is twice removed from the ultimate truth as its corresponding objects, the objects of the visible world, are twice removed from the Forms. Finally, eikasia is the most inferior way of knowing the truth as the objects accessible to it, the images of the visible objects, are the worst images of the Forms and the farthest from the truth.

Sim (2008, p. 194) proceeds to establish a relationship between the pathemata and the three parts of the soul, and suggests, on the basis of the claim that just as the pathemata are adequate or inadequate ways of knowing the truth so are the three

parts of the soul, that noesis, pistis and eikasia correspond to reason, spirit and the appetitive part of the soul, respectively: noesis corresponds to reason as both “can access what is truly good for the soul”; eikasia corresponds to the appetitive part of the soul because what both understand as good is the farthest from the genuine good; pistis corresponds to spirit as their understanding of the good, being “based on more thorough observation”, is closer to the genuine good as compared to that of appetite and eikasia.

Sim’s interpretation of the relationship between the pathemata and the three parts of the soul, however, is problematic. The most obvious problem is that she leaves out dianoia, the second most important pathemata of the soul being the nearest to noesis, in her interpretation of the relationship between the parts and the pathemata of the soul. However, the most crucial problem in Sim’s interpretation is that she portrays the parts of the soul as agents by treating them as different ways of knowing like the pathemata. Her understanding of the parts of the soul is similar to that of Bobonich. Like Bobonich, she attributes reasoning to all the three parts of the soul but makes distinction between the reasoning of the reason proper and the other two parts that the reason proper like noesis reasons about the Forms and so can know the genuine good, whereas appetite and spirit like eikasia and pistis reason about the visible world and therefore fall short of the genuine good.

There is no doubt that the pathemata are different ways of knowing, but appetite and spirit are not. As we have settled that the three parts of the soul are distinct faculties for the three distinct functions of the soul, and that reason, among the three parts of the soul, is the only one capable of carrying out cognitive activities. Since the pathemata are cognitive activities, they can only be related to the reasoning part of the soul. Plato’s psychology, as we have mentioned earlier, is developmental. He believes in the gradual development of the soul and soul parts. Reason can but does not always access what is truly good. Only a well-trained and properly educated reason can know what is actually good for the soul. This implies that reason should also go through certain developmental stages. The four pathemata, most plausibly, represents the four stages of the development of reason.

Plato (1991, p. 197) asserts that the soul has an “instrument with which each learns” that needs to be turned around from the visible to the intelligible world. It is obvious that reason is the soul’s instrument for learning, and Plato’s assertion suggests that it can be directed towards different kind of objects ranging from the shadows of the visible world, the most inferior objects, to the Forms in the intelligible world, the most superior objects. Eikasia is the most inferior cognitive activity of reason in which it seeks the truth through the images of the visible world. Since the images of the visible world are thrice removed from the ultimate reality, reason in the stage of eikasia falls thrice short of the ultimate truth. Pistis is the cognitive activity of a relatively developed reason in which it uses the originals of the visible realm to reach the truth. As the originals of the visible world are twice removed from reality, the reason’s cognitive activity of pistis reaches the conclusion which is twice farther from the truth. Dianoia is the third stage in the development of reason. It is the cognitive activity of the second most developed reason that has access to the mathematical objects for knowing the truth. As the mathematical objects are the nearest to the ultimate reality, the knowledge of the reason in the stage of dianoia

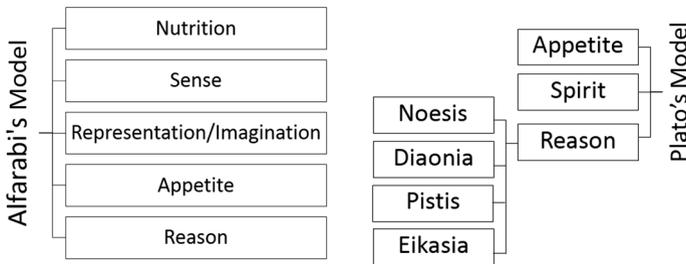


Fig. 2 Alfarabi's model of psyche (L) and Plato's model of psyche (R)

is the closest to the ultimate truth. Finally, noesis is the cognitive activity of a fully trained and educated reason in which it uses the Forms, goes “through the Forms to the Forms” and “ends in the Forms”, the ultimate truth.

However, we should keep in mind that reason, Plato (1991, p. 197) argues, “must be turned around” from the visible to the intelligible world “with the whole soul”. Noesis is only possible when spirit and the appetitive part of the soul also turn away, along with the reason, from sensual objects towards the unchanging and eternal Forms. In the state of noesis, appetite desires the Forms, the soul feels spirited towards them through spirit, and reason ultimately intellectualizes them. Plato's scheme of education proposed in book VII is designed to facilitate the turning of the soul from the visible to the intelligible realm.

4 Comparative Discussion

As shown in Fig. 2, we have two models of Psyche: Alfarabi's model suggests nutrition, sense, representation, appetite, and reason as the five major faculties of the soul, whereas Plato's model argues for a soul composed of appetite, spirit, and reason. We have seen that Plato's three parts of the soul are, in fact, faculties for the three distinct functions of the soul. We have also discussed that, in Plato's model, noesis, dianoia, pistis, and eikasia are the four cognitive states of reason.

Though the faculty of nutrition deals with the vital body functions, Alfarabi treats it as a faculty of the soul. It is obvious that he does not make any clear distinction between the soul and the body, and the faculties of the soul in his model are, in fact, the faculties of a living body. His hylomorphic explanation of the nature of the sublunary existents provides the context for his understanding of the body-soul relationship. Like Aristotle (2016), he argues that the sublunary existents consist of matter and form, and that form is the actualization of matter which is only potentially being in its pre-form state. Furthermore, since matter is the “substratum for the subsistence of form”, it is not possible for form to exist by itself separate from matter (Alfarabi 1985 pp. 109–111). For Alfarabi, as for Aristotle (2016), the body-soul relationship is a specific instance of the general doctrine of hylomorphism where the body is matter, the potentiality, and the soul is form, the actuality of the potentiality. As form cannot exist without matter, the soul cannot exist by itself and perishes with

the body. Thus, for Alfarabi, the body and the soul represent a unity, and neither the soul nor the body but an ensouled body is the ultimate reality and actual being. Plato, on the other hand, has a dualistic understanding of the body and the soul, and considers them as two separate and distinct entities somehow united for a short period of time in this world. Unlike Alfarabi, Plato (1991, p. 292) suggests that the soul is “immortal” and imperishable. It survives death and exists not only in the body but also before and after its temporary union with the body. He identifies the soul with the objects of the intelligible world and the body with the objects of the visible world, and considers the soul to be the true and the real self. Consequently, unlike Alfarabi in the *Virtuous City*, Plato in the *Republic* is equivocal on the question of the relationship between the vital body functions and the soul, and his model of the soul does not contain any faculty corresponding to Alfarabi’s faculty of nutrition. It is argued that the political and ethical context of the *Republic* neither requires nor allows for relating the functions of the body to the soul. However, if it is the subject matter of the *Republic* that prevents Plato from doing so, the *Timaeus* arguably provides the suitable arena where he could if he wanted to relate the basic body functions to the soul, but even there he opts not to. Thus, most plausibly, it is not the context of the *Republic* but his body-soul distinction that necessitates the disconnect between the vital body functions and the soul.

Plato and Alfarabi, both, employ the device of analogy in their respective theory of ideal association. Plato makes the city analogous to the soul, whereas Alfarabi, on the other hand, compares his virtuous city to the living body. This difference in their treatment of the analogy owes, most plausibly, to their different understanding of the body-soul relationship and the nature of the soul. Since Plato considers the soul to be the real self and its temporary union with the body insignificant, it is natural for him to relate his perfect city to the soul instead of an ensouled body. On the other hand, Alfarabi’s understanding that the soul cannot exist separate from the body and that the ensouled body is the ultimate reality explains his replacement of the soul with the living body in Plato’s city-soul analogy.

One of the most obvious differences between the two theories of the soul is the presence of a spirited faculty in Plato’s theory which is absent in that of Alfarabi. Plato (1991, pp. 52, 119–120, 262) argues that spirit is “irresistible”, “unbeatable”, “victory loving and honor loving” part of the soul that makes the soul “spirited”, “invincible” and “fearless”, and that, in case of a conflict in the soul, it is the natural ally of reason. In Plato’s city-soul analogy, spirit corresponds to the auxiliaries or the warrior class of the city. As spirit in the just soul is fearless, invincible and victory loving part that carries out the orders of the reason and keeps the appetitive part in check, the class of the auxiliaries in the just city is the courageous army that serves the philosopher-king and is responsible for the defense of the city. By distinguishing spirit from reason in the *Republic* IV, Plato makes a distinction between the psychic functions of defense and governance assigned to spirit and reason respectively. Analogously, it translates in the city in the form of two distinct classes, the auxiliaries and the ruler(s), responsible for two distinct social functions, defense and governance respectively. As spirit is exclusively responsible for the defense of the soul, the auxiliaries are exclusively responsible for the defense of the city. The presence of a separate spirited part in the soul exclusively responsible for the defense

of the soul and a corresponding warrior class in the city exclusively responsible for the defense of the city explains Plato's not assigning the duty of fighting war to the philosopher-king. Consequently, it differentiates the philosopher-king of Plato from that of Alfarabi. While Plato's ruler only governs through guidance and does not physically participate in war, Alfarabi unites governance and defense in the ruler of his virtuous city. Alfarabi (1985, p. 247) suggests that the ruler will not only provide guidance but will also "be of tough physique in order to shoulder the tasks of war".

Plato and Alfarabi, both, argue for an appetitive faculty in the soul. However, their understanding of the faculty is quite different. Plato (1991, p. 119) suggests that appetite is that part of the soul "with which it loves, hungers, thirsts and is agitated by the other desires, the irrational and desiring, companion of certain replenishments and pleasures". Alfarabi, on the other hand, assigns aversion along with desire to the appetitive faculty. He suggests that sense, representation, and reason apprehend things and the appetitive faculty by itself can either desire these apprehensions or cause aversion from them. Since appetite is a completely irrational part in Plato's model of the soul and needs reason aided by spirit to guide it and keep it in check, its counterpart in the city, the money-making class that constitutes the common masses, is also completely irrational and needs to be strictly controlled by the ruler with the help of the auxiliaries. As appetite is a potential source of instability in the soul, the common masses are a potential threat to the harmony of the city. Owing to the irrational nature of the common masses, Plato seems hopeless about the positive impact of training and education on the common masses. Most plausibly, that's why he devises his scheme of training and education only for the guardians. On the other hand, Alfarabi does not claim the utter irrationality of the appetitive faculty and seems to suggest that it not only desires but can also avert from knowing or acting upon the unwanted apprehensions if it is properly educated in order to discriminate between the desirable and undesirable apprehensions. It is, most plausibly, the reason that, unlike Plato, Alfarabi (1985, pp. 277–279) does not marginalize any section of his virtuous city but seeks perfection for "all the people" of the city and suggests that every one of them "ought to" acquire the knowledge about everything. He (Alfarabi 1985, p. 279) does make a distinction between the knowledge of the philosophers and non-philosophers and suggests that the things that the philosopher knows, as they are, through demonstration, others know their symbolic imitation, which is religion, through imagination. While Plato either excludes or expels the imperfect natures as he deems appetites uncontrollable and the appetitive natures incurable, Alfarabi's policy towards them seems to be that of reformation through religion.

Pistis in Plato's model can be related to Alfarabi's faculty of sense as both deals with the objects of the visible world. Similarly, eikasia is comparable to the faculty of representation on the ground that they work with the images of the visible objects. Pistis and eikasia, as we have discussed, are the two most inferior cognitive activities of reason in which it seeks to arrive at a conclusion about the truth by using the objects of the visible world and the images of these objects respectively. The faculty of sense and the imaginative faculty, on the other hand, are, however, two separate faculties in Alfarabi's model of the soul; the former apprehends and internalizes the objects of the visible world through the five senses in the form of sensibles, whereas

the latter is responsible for the retention of the images of these objects and representation through them. The inferiority of *pistis* and *eikasia* owes to the inferior ontological value Plato assigns to the visible objects and their images. At the end of the *Republic* V, while distinguishing between knowledge and opinion, Plato (1991, pp. 157–161) asserts that the objects of the intelligible realm are pure beings as they are permanent, fixed and always exist, whereas the objects of the visible realm lie between “that is” and “that is not” and “it’s not possible to think of them fixedly as either being or not being, or as both or neither”. Since *pistis* and *eikasia* use these ever-changing objects of the visible realm, the outcome of these cognitive activities is opinion rather than knowledge. Alfarabi, however, treats the objects of the visible world differently in his theory of the soul. Notwithstanding that the apprehensions of the faculty of sense, the sensibles, are, in fact, the copies of the objects of the visible world, and the imprints of these sensibles stored and used by the imaginative faculty are the copies of those copies, thrice removed from the actual objects of the visible world, Alfarabi (1985, pp. 171–173) considers the outcome of the activity of both, the faculty of sense and the faculty of representation, as knowledge. Furthermore, he (Alfarabi 1985, p. 203) treats the sensibles as the source of the intelligibles as he argues that the intelligibles arise “in the rational faculty from the sensibles which are preserved in the faculty of representation”. Thus, he makes the visible world and its objects the fountainhead of the activities of the soul. Due to their relationship with the objects of the visible world, Plato’s *pistis* and *eikasia* are inferior cognitive activities but Alfarabi’s sense and representation are not inferior faculties of the soul.

Clearly, Plato’s understanding of the visible world and the cognitive activities of *pistis* and *eikasia* as inferior has an impact on his theory of ideal association. Since *pistis* and *eikasia* are the inferior cognitive activities, it is the prime requisite for the ruler of his ideal city that his knowledge should be the outcome of *noesis* rather than *pistis* or *eikasia*. He should know the Forms, the genuine truth, through the Forms. Therefore, his reason must be turned away from the visible world towards the Forms. The visible world and its pleasures, according to Plato (1991, p. 197), are “like leaden weights” that impede this turning around of the ruler’s soul, therefore he should be detached from the “becoming” in his early childhood. Contrarily, the visible world and the faculties of the soul related to the visible world play an important role in Alfarabi’s theory of the virtuous city. The ruler of his virtuous city is a prophet who receives prophecies about the divine things and the events of the present and the future. These prophecies are the source of divine guidance for the ruler. It is this prophetic knowledge that qualifies and distinguishes the ruler qua ruler, and it is the imaginative faculty of the soul rather than the rational faculty that is responsible for it. The prophecies are possible only when the emanation from the active intellect, that is actually meant for the rational faculty, arrives in the imaginative faculty instead, which represents it through the sensibles stored in it. Ultimately, the ruler sees the things provided to him by the divine agency “in the shining air” through the faculty of sense. So, while the soul of Plato’s ruler, in terms of the cave allegory, should ascend from the visible world to the world of Forms in order to know the truth and qualify for being the ruler, Alfarabi’s ruler should wait in the visible world for the emanation to descend upon him, use the objects and the faculties

of the soul related to the visible world to receive and decode the divine instructions that make him a ruler and guide him.

It is noticeable that both, Plato and Alfarabi, employ the imagery of the sun in order to explain the process by which the rational faculty of the soul intellectualizes the intelligibles: As the sunlight in the visible realm makes the sight actually seeing and the seeable actually seen, there is an agency in the intelligible realm, corresponding to the sun in the visible realm, that enlightens the intelligibles (which are the Forms in Plato's model) making them true and actually intelligible, and gives the rational faculty the power to intellectualize these intelligibles. This agency that corresponds to the sun in the visible realm is the idea of good in Plato, whereas Alfarabi calls it the active intellect. Alfarabi identifies the active intellect as the angel of revelation that receives emanation from God, that he prefers to call the First, through a number of successive intermediate intellects. This active intellect identified as the angel of revelation then provides the rational faculty something that corresponds to sunlight in case of vision which transforms the human intellect from potentiality to actuality and makes the potentially intelligibles actually intelligible. Consequently, human intellect intellectualizes the intelligibles. Alfarabi's identification of the active intellect with the angel of revelation and his concepts of prophecies, revelations, and true dreams assign a peculiar religious characteristic to his theory of the soul and the virtuous city that differentiate them from those of Plato.

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