



UDC 111.7

Raikhan Doszhan*

Kazakh National Academy of Choreography
020000, 9 Uly Dala Ave., Nur-Sultan, Republic of Kazakhstan

The Question of Being in Al-Farabi's Legacy and its Succession to Modern Science

Abstract. This study analyses the views of the Arab-Muslim scholar Al-Farabi on reality, life and his judgements on existence. In particular, the significance of his legacy for modern scientific cognition is demonstrated: notions of chaos, vacuum, the coexistence of science and religion, maintaining interdisciplinary links in the direction of research, the application of the integrative methodology, the manifestation of a distinctive model of creative thinking, etc. The methods used include historical research, terminological analysis and systematisation. The cognitive significance of Al-Farabi's ideas remains present at the current stage of scientific development. In particular, his ideas about chaos can be compared with the innovations of modern natural sciences, and the methods of scientific cognition used by him are an example of the use of modern tools of scientists. Al-Farabi is known all over the world as a philosopher, encyclopedic scientist, doctor, physicist, psychologist, mathematician, astronomer, musician, poet, literary critic, etc. In the metaphysical sphere Al-Farabi was interested in ontological, basic conceptual and concrete, fundamental philosophical problems – formation of ideas of “being” and “non-being”; movement and its types; metaphysical problems of “becoming” and “creation” in a thorough study of form-matter relations; reflections on place and space, the nature of the Creator in the act of world creation, etc. Thus, in his arguments about being, Al-Farabi considers several concepts in philosophy, using them as a categorical apparatus. The philosopher's basic reasoning about being consists not only of dry philosophy about the world, he addresses physical, and astronomical problems such as vacuum, chaos, and similar reasoning has great relevance to modern times as well. Thus, the revival of the name of Al-Farabi and his legacy today has become one of the main positions of the Turkic people, including the Kazakh, in the context of spiritual modernisation. The practical significance of the study is determined by the possibility of applying its results to actualise the ideas of Al-Farabi

Keywords: ontology, metaphysics, Arabic philosophy, existence, immateriality

Article's History: Received: 12.04.2022; Revised: 02.07.2022; Accepted: 20.08.2022

INTRODUCTION

The Islamic religion, which originated in the Arab land in the Middle Ages, contributed to the development of science throughout Europe and Central Asia, and not only among the peoples who had this faith. The Muslim Renaissance was distinguished by its versatility [1]. The philosophy of this period is also called “philosophy in Arabic” or “Arab philosophers”. G. Esim [2], one of the researchers of Arab philosophy, noted that according to the range of

its prevalence, Arab-Muslim philosophy was divided into three periods based on the historical-regional principle: 1) under the Baghdad Caliphate: al-Kindi, “pure brothers”, etc.; 2) Central Asian peoples: Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Omar Khayyam, Attar, Al-Ghazali, etc.; 3) Muslim Spain: Ibn Baj, Ibn Tufeil, Ibn Arabi, Ibn Rushd, etc. G.Zh. Nuryshva [3] describes the development of philosophical trends during this period: “Also during this period emerged and

Suggested Citation:

Doszhan, R. (2022). The question of being in Al-Farabi's legacy and its succession to modern science. *Interdisciplinary Cultural and Humanities Review*, 1(1), 40-44.

*Corresponding author

flourished such major currents and schools as the Mu'tazili (founder in the eighth century – Amir ibn Ubayd), kalam (founders in the tenth century – Abu-al-Hasan Ashari, Maturidi), Sufism”.

The distinguishing features of the development of philosophy in this epoch were: the principles within the framework of Muslim religious thought were always considered; because education had become universal, most philosophers of this period became encyclopedists; the heritage of Ancient Greece, forgotten in Europe, was presented and interpreted for the world; Arab philosophy covered a large area from modern Central Asian peoples to European Spain, gaining a significant authority in the scientific and cognitive space of the era; and Arab philosophy was created in a wide variety of ways [4-6]. The philosophy of Al-Farabi is the subject of research by many scientists. Thus, M. Leiva [7] examines the philosopher's reception of Aristotelian thinking, namely concepts such as the intellect and the immortality of the soul. M.A. Khalidi [8] discusses the transfer of philosophical discourse from one language or people to another, as interpreted by Al-Farabi. D. Iskakuly et al. [9] explore the concept of happiness in the philosopher's lyrics, concluding that man and his happiness in Al-Farabi's lyrics are secondary to current reality. Study by N. Tercan and G. Nurysheva [10] focuses on his creative heritage and scientific and pedagogical ideas. The authors note that the creative heritage of the thinker is permeated with the ideas of humanisation and democratisation of society through its improvement by educational means. K. Loevy [11], analysing Al-Farabi's writings, defines the philosopher's attitude to slavery.

One of the thinkers of Arabic-Muslim Oriental philosophy was Abu Nasr Al Farabi, who was born and spent his childhood in the Turkic land of Otrar. His full name is Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn Uzlugh al-Farabi at-Turki. He is known all over the world as a philosopher, encyclopedic scientist, doctor, physicist, psychologist, mathematician, astronomer, musician, poet, etc. In addition, one aspect of Al-Farabi's teachings begins with a hermeneutic analysis of the ancient Greek works of Aristotle and Plato and is one of his most recent works presented in Western Europe [12-14]. In the world's spiritual space, he became the “second teacher” after Aristotle. Al-Farabi wrote about 200 works, but only 100 have been preserved to date: “Philosophical Treatises”, “Mathematical Treatises”, “Social and Ethical Treatises”, “Logical Treatises”, “The Great Book of Music”, “The Views of Good Citizens”, etc.

Al-Farabi, through his writings, left a significant mark in history as one of the “enlighteners” of the time. He made a significant contribution to science, through his book's humanity have knowledge that could have been lost forever. Al-Farabi based his writings on existing facts while adding his own thoughts and ideas, which in the future helped to understand his work more deeply. Practical application of philosophy in ordinary life was one of the main preoccupations of Al-Farabi, he often highlighted this matter in his books (“On Reason and Science”, “Ractat on the views of the inhabitants of a virtuous city”, etc.) [15]. He dreamed of creating an ideal, “virtuous” society in which all people would know their true happiness, and he really wanted people to create this society through philosophy. In his works, Al-Farabi talked about

how there is always a thorny path to perfection and happiness, which each person has to take. His philosophy was calm, simple, there was no room for aggression and anger in it. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the question of existence in Al-Farabi's legacy and its succession to modern scientific cognition.

The philosophical teaching of Al-Farabi

In addition to presenting rational ideas about space, matter and motion, the encyclopaedic scientist sought to experiment and prove his hypotheses in the physical sciences. When it comes to the vacuum, by testing it experimentally, Al-Farabi proves that there is no natural vacuum in the world [16]. Hence, the philosopher's perspective on the actual physical manifestation of free space is also an important point. Studying vacuum experimentally and empirically, Al-Farabi notices its absence through the ratio of air and water. In his psychological viewpoint, the scholar analyses such matters as mind, intellect, and perception; he distinguishes between levels of cognition. To date, an important issue is the division of intelligence into several types and the provision of assistance to everyone. As regards music, the musical expression of sounds, notes and current theoretical levels of musical knowledge are described in *The Great Book of Music* [15]. In the metaphysical sphere Al-Farabi was interested in ontological, basic conceptual and concrete, fundamental philosophical problems – formation of ideas of “being” and “non-being”; movement and its types; metaphysical problems of “becoming” and “creation” in a thorough study of form-matter relations; reflections on place and space, the nature of the Creator in the act of world creation, etc. Thus, in his arguments about being, Al-Farabi considers several concepts in philosophy, using them as a categorical apparatus. These ideas are thoroughly studied in “*The Essence of Problems*” [15].

Presenting logical judgements on necessity, possibility, existence and creation of the world, the philosopher says that everything falls into two categories: “To one of them belong things which, although they exist in their own right, do not cause him to live. This type of thing is called “possibly existing” [15]. The second type includes things that must always exist and in the required quantity. They are called “necessary existing”. Reasoning about “possibly existing” as “possibly not existing” would not be strange. There should be a reason behind the existence of “possibly existing”. When such a cause appears, the thing becomes “necessarily existing because of the other”, argues the thinker, considering “existence” and “non-existence”, assuming that this is a pure ontological entity [15]. The dichotomy is presented conditionally and touches on the key issues of being, although it follows from the general concept of “existence”. Consequently, Al-Farabi reveals two types of life in this judgement [2; 16].

First of all, the appearance of anything on earth here is based on creationist principles in the religious sense. That is, the creationist power of creation is not realised through certain random causes, but through a necessary ‘cause’, creating the grounds for a possibility to become reality. The transformation of “perhaps exists” into “possible negation” corresponds to the project of the inter penetrability of being and non-being, but “possible

existence" is not non-existence in this statement. Therefore, through that which "perhaps exists" shown by the thinker passes into the "necessarily existing", a parameter of its being is recognised. Furthermore, the philosopher analyses whether "necessary existence" is a true reality, an actual existence, and whether "possible existence" is a potential existence [17]. Al-Farabi goes deeper into the ontological essence, revealing these concepts further: "Consider the "necessary existing": if we consider them non-existent, we inevitably allow the insane. There is no reason for their existence. They will not become a true creature of anything. This is the root cause of the existence of things. Hence the conclusion is that the presence of the "necessary existing" is the beginning of all existence, and it must be pure of any faults. Thus, its existence is more perfect. It is necessary, free, reaching the highest perfection of being, without subordination to causes – matter, form, action and purpose" [2].

That is, the concept of "necessary existence", which has reached perfection in this sense, is in fact the essence of perfection developing from within. His transcendence is "by itself". The enriched quality of "perfection" here means, above all, that it repeats its eternal existence, assuming that it is real and that it was not created by evolution. That is, it intends to reveal its absolute freedom because it is evident that its freedom is the freedom of existence. The thinker Al-Farabi, in drawing these conclusions, presents his perfect act. It becomes its own existence rather than its own modus, substance, and substratum. Its existence is not non-existence at all, that is, its existence is being. Consequently, "being" is on a certain plane, clearly expressed, unquestionably represented, and consistently acknowledged, the ultimate truth.

The modern embodiment of the thinker's metaphysical ideas

Al-Farabi continues to study this issue: "It has no bodily character. You could say it exists, but the determinant of "existence" is "matter" – and "matter" is also the determinant of the body. Thus, it can be said that "there is a need": "it is a necessity and it is its way of life" [2]. Hence the conclusion that there is no name, no species, no fact and no evidence of necessary existence. On the contrary, it can itself be the proof of everything. It lives independently in a permanent eternal form, and never disappears forever, its life is not potential. From this follows the conclusion that it cannot exist, that it does not need anything for its indomitable life and that it does not pass from one state to another. Neither the volume, the place, nor the time can be imposed on it. It's not a body. There is nothing in its nature that makes its life dependent. In this sense, it is also a single whole. So, it is impossible to characterise the necessary existence with such concepts as matter, kind, colour" the thinker argues [15]. Consequently, although a "necessary being" exists, it does not conditionally possess any existential quality, it is a purely independent being whose existence has the full meaning of "being for oneself" and which fully possesses the true meaning and essence of life. This unknown party becomes the Creator and is equated with it, it has creative power, the ability to create a holistic world, the power of will to subdue its nature and so on [15]. That is, what Al-Farabi is pointing to is the Creator

himself, God. This is a traditional philosophical theological teaching.

The conclusions of Farabiologist M.S. Burabayev [18] are outlined as follows: "Al-Farabi emphasises that the first subject of this science, i.e., metaphysics, is absolute being, then being and unity, its kinds and connection, "nothingness" and "multiplicity". These judgments indicate a deeper reflection of the philosopher on the problem of non-existence. Al-Farabi's ideas continue to testify about theology: "He gives eternal life to things, ceases their existence. In this sense, it is the cause of the existence of all things, but this does not mean that, by making things exist out of nothing, it gives them the freedom to live independently" [2]. Here, in the will of the whole world, a "necessary", being is born and strengthened, rising only through "existence". From this follows a simple algorithm that being depends on "existence". This clearly shows the difference between being and "existence". This implies a clear statement: "if there is no "existence", then there is no being". It is, by all means, a question of the Creator in religious form. Al-Farabi also points out: "The problem is that first matter cannot exist apart from form, just as natural form cannot exist apart from matter. On the contrary, the first matter needs form to become an actual entity. The first matter and form cannot be the reason for each other's existence, there is another reason that determines the coexistence of both" [2].

Thus, the cognitive significance of philosopher ideas remains present in the modern stage: "From here we see that the thinker's viewpoint on the real physical manifestation of empty space is also an important insight. Studying the vacuum empirically, Al-Farabi comments on its absence through the ratio of air to water" [19]. His ideas on chaos can also be compared with the innovations of the modern natural sciences [20]. Kazakhstan is known to have a fundamental university named after Al-Farabi. The Farabitanu Research Centre has been established at this university and the Department of Philosophy has also opened the Little Farabi Academy to promote his legacy among students. Furthermore, a special course on "Farabi and modernity" has been systematically taught for several years to students of most of the university's majors. This year, in honour of the 1150th anniversary of Al-Farabi, events are being held at several establishments, including higher education institutions in the country. This is an example of the philosopher's legacy being passed on to a new generation.

CONCLUSIONS

Al-Farabi does not regard being as a purely philosophical problem but studies it in the light of its relationship to religious cognition. He recognised that religion and science must coexist. Consequently, even in the modern stage one should not rely solely on science without reference to religion or having an atheistic approach. The thinker points out that the matter of being has unresolved questions even at the present time.

Being is not simply the totality of existing things, and the need to consider it holistically is expressed by the use of a modern integrative methodology, although not intentionally. And also what is today called intersubject communication. Consequently, without linking the question

of being to physics, astronomy and other social sciences, it is also impossible to achieve certain results. Even in that era, Al-Farabi exemplified the use of modern educational systems and methods used in scientific cognition: creativity, productive reasoning, imaginative thinking, etc. Although he also has interpretations of Aristotle's and Plato's ideas, the ideas of being are new ideas born of the virgin world.

The philosopher's basic reasoning about being consists not only of dry philosophy about the world, he addresses physical, and astronomical questions such as vacuum, chaos, and similar reasoning has great relevance to modern times as well. Thus, the revival of the name of Al-Farabi and his legacy today has become one of the main positions of the Turkic people, including the Kazakh, in the context of spiritual modernisation.

REFERENCES

- [1] Rahman, M. (2020). Renaissance of Arabic literature: A brief study. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, 29(8), 2154-2157.
- [2] Esim, G. (2004). *History of philosophy*. Almaty: Raritet.
- [3] Nuryshva, G.Zh., & Atash, B.M. (2016). *Philosophy of scientific knowledge*. Almaty: Kazakh University.
- [4] Druart, T.A. (2019). From Plato to al-Fârâbî. *Journal of World Philosophies*, 4(1), 156-160.
- [5] D'Ancona, C. (2018). God and intellect at the dawn of Arabic philosophical thought. *Studia Graeco-Arabica*, 8, 133-152.
- [6] Aldulaimi, S.H. (2019). Leadership concept and constructs in Arabic philosophy. *Journal of Economic Cooperation and Development*, 40(2), 193-210.
- [7] Leiva, M. (2022). The reception of the Aristotelian Doctrine of the intellect in Al-Fârâbî and the problem of the immortality of the human soul. *Revista de Humanidades*, 45, 143-166.
- [8] Khalidi, M.A. (2022). Al-Farabi on acquiring a philosophical concept. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*. doi: 10.1080/09608788.2022.2083071.
- [9] Iskakuly, D., Kopbossynov, M., Yerkinbayev, U., Alpysbayeva, S., & Kenzhalin, K. (2021). The phenomenon of a happy person in the works of Al-Farabi as a classic expression of poetic images. *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language*, 9(2), 54-63.
- [10] Tercan, N., & Nuryshva, G. (2021). Al-Farabi's creative heritage and his scientific-pedagogical ideas. *Perspektivy Nauki i Obrazovania*, 54(6), 434-442.
- [11] Loevy, K. (2020). Literary resistance to the philosophy of slavery: Al-Farabi and the Ikhwan Al-safa'. *Philosophy and Literature*, 44(2), 237-254.
- [12] L'Arrivee, R. (2019). Echoes of the caliphate in Al-Farabi's reconceptualization of Plato's decline of the regimes. *History of Political Thought*, 40(2), 175-195.
- [13] Michel, K. (2019). Political art and its teleological aim: The question of happiness in al-Farabi, Miskawayh, and the pseudo al-'Amiri. *Archives de Philosophie*, 82(4), 701-718.
- [14] Sacks, J. (2018). Philologesis in adunus, Al-Maarri Al-Farabi. *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 49(3), 204-242.
- [15] Al-Farabi. (1972). *Philosophical treatises*. Almaty: Nauka.
- [16] Aref, M. (2018). Roshdi rashed: Formation of the arab scientific mind. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 11(1-2), 279-295.
- [17] Atash, B.M. (2013). *Philosophy of non-existence*. Almaty: Kazakh University.
- [18] Burabayev, M.S. (1998). *Philosophy of Abu Nasr al-Farabi*. Almaty: Aql kitabı.
- [19] Kakhya, E. (2001). The problem of space and chaos in Farabi. In A.N. Nysanbayev (Ed.), *The legacy of Al-Farabi and world culture: Proceedings of the international congress "Heritage of Al-Farabi and world culture"* (pp. 39-46). Almaty: Institute of Philosophy and Political Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan.
- [20] Sarymsakov, A.M. (2009). The problem of chaos and order in the philosophy of Al-Farabi and modern science. In B.T. Zhumagulov (Ed.), *Al-Farabi: Philosophy. Culture. Religion: Proceedings of the International Scientific-Practical Conference Dedicated to the 75th Anniversary of the Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi* (pp. 153-157). Almaty: Kazakh University.

Райхан Казибеківна Досжан

Казахська національна академія хореографії
020000, просп. Улі Дала, 9, м. Нур-Султан, Республіка Казахстан

Проблема буття у спадщині Аль-Фарабі та її спадкоємність із сучасним науковим знанням

Анотація. У дослідженні аналізуються погляди арабо-мусульманського вченого Аль-Фарабі на реальність, буття та його судження про існування. Зокрема, показано значення його спадщини для сучасного наукового пізнання: поняття хаосу, вакууму, співіснування науки і релігії, підтримання міждисциплінарних зв'язків у напрямку досліджень, застосування інтегративної методології, прояв самобутньої моделі творчого мислення тощо. Використано методи історичного дослідження, термінологічного аналізу та систематизації. Пізнавальна значущість ідей Аль-Фарабі зберігається і на сучасному етапі розвитку науки. Зокрема, його ідеї про хаос можна порівняти з новаціями сучасного природознавства, а використані ним методи наукового пізнання є прикладом застосування сучасного інструментарію вчених. Аль-Фарабі відомий у всьому світі як філософ, вчений-енциклопедист, лікар, фізик, психолог, математик, астроном, музикант, поет, літературний критик тощо. У метафізичній сфері Аль-Фарабі цікавили онтологічні, базові концептуальні та конкретні, фундаментальні філософські проблеми – формування ідей “буття” і “небуття”; рух та його види; метафізичні проблеми “становлення” і “творення” у ґрунтовному дослідженні співвідношення форми і матерії; роздуми про місце і простір, природу Творця в акті творення світу тощо. Так, у своїх міркуваннях про буття Аль-Фарабі розглядає декілька концепцій у філософії, використовуючи їх як категоріальний апарат. Основні міркування філософа про буття складаються не лише з сухих філософських роздумів про світ, він звертається до фізичних, астрономічних проблем, таких як вакуум, хаос, і подібні міркування мають велику актуальність і для сучасності. Таким чином, відродження імені Аль-Фарабі і його спадщини сьогодні стало однією з головних позицій тюркських народів, в тому числі і казахського, в контексті духовної модернізації. Практичне значення дослідження визначається можливістю застосування його результатів для актуалізації ідей Аль-Фарабі

Ключові слова: онтологія, метафізика, арабська філософія, буття, нематеріальність