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## PERFECT ATTRIBUTES OF THE FIRST IN THE AL-FARABI'S METAPHYSICAL THEOLOGY

This research examines such attributes of divine perfection as 'knowing', 'wise', 'real' (in its substantive and etymological similarity with the concept of 'true') and 'living' (also in its semantic similarity with the term 'life'). According to al-Farabi, these attributes have no underlying causes for their appearance, since there is nothing that could precede the First himself. Since these attributes are attributes of perfection and by their nature, definition and characteristics belong to the First, that is, they express the very perfection of the First, and then these attributes do not have any basis for their appearance. The very basis of their existence is their belonging to the First, as qualities of a descriptive and at the same time substantive nature. So here, al-Farabi describes these attributes based on the very pre-existence of the First as such. Al-Farabi describes the above-mentioned qualities of being the First in paragraphs 7-10 of his *On the Perfect State*. In these four paragraphs, al-Farabi gives the most general describing of the perfection of God, referring to the attributes of an existential and cognitive nature that are a priori inherent in the divine nature of the First Being. This means that the existence of the First is determined, first, by the existence of those attributes that, in a fundamental sense, indicate its original and unconditional perfection.

**Key words:** the First, perfection, omniscient beginning, true being, divine attributes.

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### Әл-Фарабидің метафизикалық теологиясындағы Құдай кемелдігінің сипаттары

Бұл зерттеуде илаһи кемелдіктің «бәрін білуші», «ең дана», «шынайы бар» (мазмұны мен этимологиялық жағынан «шын» ұғымымен ұқсастығы) және «тірі» («өмір» сөзіне жақын) сияқты сипаттар қарастырылады. Әл-Фарабидің пікірінше, бұл сипаттардың пайда болуының негізгі себептері жоқ, өйткені Құдайдың (Бірінші Болмыстың) өзінен бұрын болатын еш нәрсе жоқ. Ал бұл сипаттар кемелдік сипаттар болғандықтан және өзінің жаратылысы, анықтамасы мен сипаттары бойынша Құдайға тән болғандықтан (яғни, олар Құдайдың кемелдігін білдіретін), онда бұл сипаттар өздерінің пайда болуына ешбір негіз жоқ. Олардың өмір сүруінің негізі олардың сипаттаушы және сонымен бірге субстанциялық сипаттағы қасиеттер ретінде Құдайға тиесілі болуы болып табылады. Осыны ескере отырып, әл-Фараби бұл сипаттарды Құдайдың алдын ала бергендігіне сүйене отырып сипаттайды. Әл-Фараби «Қайырымды қала тұрғындарының көзқарасы» §§7-10 тармақтарында Құдай болмыстың жоғарыда аталған қасиеттерін сипаттайды. Осы төрт параграфта әл-Фараби Құдайдың кемелдігі туралы ең жалпы сипаттама береді. Сонымен бірге ол Бірінші Болмыстың құдайлық болмысына тән экзистенциалды және танымдық сипаттағы қасиеттерге назар аударады. Яғни, Бірінші Болмыстың бар екендігі, ең алдымен, түпкі мағынада оның бастапқы және сөзсіз кемелдігін көрсететін сипаттардың болуымен көрсетіледі.

**Түйін сөздер:** Бірінші Болмыс, кемелдік, бәрін білуші бастау, шынайы болмыс, илаһи сипаттар.

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### Атрибуты совершенства Первого Сущего в метафизической теологии аль-Фараби

Данное исследование рассматривает такие атрибуты божественного совершенства, как 'всезнающий', 'мудрейший', 'истинно существующий' (в его содержательном и этимологиче-

ском сходстве с концептом 'истинный') и 'живой' (также в его смысловом сходстве с термином 'жизнь'). По словам аль-Фараби, эти атрибуты не имеют базовых причин появления, поскольку нет ничего, чтобы могло бы предшествовать самому Богу. А поскольку эти атрибуты являются атрибутами совершенства и по своей природе, определению и характеристикам принадлежат Богу, то есть выражают само совершенство Бога, то и у этих атрибутов нет какого-либо основания для их появления. Самим основанием их существования является их принадлежность к Богу, как качества описательного и в то же время содержательного характера. Ввиду этого, аль-Фараби описывает эти атрибуты, исходя из самой преданности Бога как такового. Аль-Фараби описывает обозначенные выше качества бытия Первого в §§7-10 своего «Трактата о взглядах жителей добродетельного города». В этих четырех параграфах аль-Фараби дает самое общее описание совершенства Бога, ссылаясь на атрибуты экзистенциального и когнитивного характера, которые априори присущи божественной природе Первого Сущего. То есть, бытие Первого Сущего обозначается, в первую очередь, существованием тех атрибутов, которые в фундаментальном смысле указывают на его изначальное и безусловное совершенство.

**Ключевые слова:** Первый Сущий, совершенство, всезнающее начало, истинное бытие, божественные атрибуты.

## Introduction

The philosophy of al-Farabi has a significant influence on the formation of modern metaphysical and theological worldview. "If Aristotle was named 'the first teacher', al-Farabi was conferred the title of 'the second teacher'. In XII c. some of his philosophical views influenced greatly on the development of world philosophical cogitation" (Baitenova, 2013: 15). As well, al-Farabi "is a neo-Platonist, more exactly a Plotinian; although he himself would not have recognized this title. He held, as we have seen, that he was simply retelling the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle. But he was also a devout Muslim" (Macdonald, 2008: 164). From the very beginning of his *On the Perfect State*, al-Farabi emphasizes that the First is the prior beginning of all existents as a whole. Al-Farabi considers it as a beginning, which is devoid of any shortcomings. And here we see that he, in fact, points to four arguments according to which the One has no flaws.

*The first argument* states that the presence of flaws in the First would mean that something exists outside of Him and He does not have access to this something that exists outside of Him. In this regard, due to deficiency of access to this something, the First Being is not one in nature, but is not sufficient to be fully one. That is, in this case, He would not have had enough of this something to become fully the First in His nature and essence. And since He is the One, this by itself means that He has no shortcomings. In everything, the First is self-sufficient. Everything else, writes al-Farabi, has at least one drawback, since it no longer possesses the fundamental property of great unity, which is possessed by the First, that is, Allah. "In addition to being pure thought or intellect, the First is also described as the

highest existent (*mawjūd*) and as the cause of existence (*wujūd*) in all the other beings" (Janos, 2012: 181).

*The second argument* argues that the First is actually perfection. Perfection is an attribute of the First, which denotes the pinnacle of all existence, the self-fulfilled unity of all existing elements of being, just as perfection means existing being itself in its ultimate meaning. This most all-encompassing being is the First, which at the same time means perfection itself. In addition, if the perfect First embraces absolutely all of existence, then it includes what could be His shortcoming. Thus, the judgment that the perfect First has at least one flaw is meaningless.

*The third argument* for the absence of shortcomings of the First is the argument of time. Al-Farabi notes that the First is free from all these [shortcomings], for His existence is perfect and precedes everything else in existence, there is no existent more perfect than Him, and no existent can precede Him. In this judgment, he emphasizes that the First not only embraces the entire world as the constancy of being, but also corresponds to the entire dynamics of the processes occurring in the world. The First himself personifies time, being the source of chronological development and movement in the world. Therefore, it is logical that the First is outside the framework of time, simultaneously carrying out the temporal process of the being of Universe.

Finally, *the fourth argument* for denying the shortcomings of the First is the argument of the highest good. Al-Farabi writes that His existence is virtuous and perfect in the highest degrees. If the First were flawed, he would not have the ability to bring the highest, universal good to the universe. In this process, He would constantly lack something (lack) in order to carry out the perfect activity of

spreading good in the world. Since He is perfection, He is the natural identity of the Good itself.

Thus, perfection, as we have already found out, cannot have flaws. "Like Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, God is seen as one, eternal, immaterial and necessary. However, for Aristotle, his 'God' is the 'causer' in the sense of putting the universe into motion. That is, God is the First Cause of all other things but He is not the creator (efficient cause) of all other things. For Alfarabi, and for Islamic theology for that matter, it was unacceptable that there could be a separate substance from God: before God there was nothing and God created the universe ex nihilo ('out of nothing')" (Jackson, 2014: 43).

### **Justification of the choice of articles and goals and objectives**

A choice of this topic corresponds to the importance of a correct understanding of the First's essence, which al-Farabi repeatedly writes. Touching upon the question of the absence of shortcomings of the First, al-Farabi raises the question of non-existence. He affirms the idea that it is impossible to think of the non-existence of the First, since we can think of the non-existence of something, but it is simply impossible to think of the non-existence of the First's existence. For example, we can think of the non-existence of something that may appear very soon, but which does not exist at the moment. That is, now the future thing exists in its potentiality, but in reality, this thing does not exist. This thing does not exist at the moment, since its possibility of appearance exists, and this is something other than the real existence of the thing. When a given thing appears, this indicates that its reality was embodied due to some external conditions that contributed to the appearance of this thing. That is, the real existence of a thing before its appearance needed external forces that transferred its state from the potentially possible to the actually possible.

### **Scientific research methodology**

In this research, two main methods were used – (1) the method of correlation between the historical and logical and (2) the dialectical method.

The method of correlation between the historical and logical is to identify the logical basis for the perfection of the First, as it was understood in the al-Farabi's lifetime and at the same time as this perfection is understood in modern Islamic theology.

The dialectical method manifests that the authors show that in almost all of his works al-Farabi reveals the essence of categories, phenomena and process through the contradiction prism. Al-Farabi was able not only directly, but also through existing contradictions to show how phenomena interact with each other and how to find the true essence of everything in this contradiction. The same dialectical intention was used him to reveal the perfection of the First.

### **Main part**

#### *The First as 'knowing'*

In his *On the Perfect State*, Al-Farabi opens the seventh paragraph (§7, The First as 'knowing') with relation of the First towards knowledge. He writes: "For it is, in order to know, in no need of an essence other than its own, through the knowledge of which it would acquire excellence, nor is it, in order to be knowable, in need of another essence which would know it, but its substance suffices for it to be knowing and to be known" (al-Farabi, 1998: 73). By this, al-Farabi demonstrates that the First is self-sufficient in knowing itself and surrounding reality, in the fullness of which it seems identical with the surrounding reality itself. Being actual intellect in relation to its highest cognitive activity (at the same time being a synthesis of all intellects in the process of fundamental understanding and reflection of surrounding reality), the First, however, does not express that form of knowledge that characterizes human knowledge.

Human knowledge is imperfect for a simple reason that it is basically aimed at eliminating the lack of any information. A man learns in order to discover something new. "And to the one intellect, which answers to this description because it becomes all things, corresponds the other because it makes all things, like a sort of definite quality such as light" (Aristotle, 1907: 135). If a man lacks information about any subject, process or phenomenon (or he constitutes a general picture of the world in his head), he begins to build not only a certain cognitive strategy, which is aimed at the object of his research, but he also has his own 1) basic scheme and 2) a completely meaningful structure. So, here we will briefly analyze both of them.

1) *Basic scheme of cognition*. As indicated previously, generally, the process of human cognition has several levels, which in general terms we can divide into two levels – sensory and rational levels. "Plato may have been the first carefully to distinguish

sense (*αισθήσεις*) from reasoning (*συλλογισμός*) and opining (*δοξάζειν*), yet perhaps even Plato was more concerned to disentangle thought from sense than to determine just how far sense can go” (Polansky, 2007: 430). Here we see that the objective certainty of the facts of cognition in this cognitive process act, if there exists an initial factual material, on which human intellect is aimed. The scheme of progressive knowledge is as follows:

First level of human knowledge is *sensory cognition* which is divided into three stages, that is:

- the first stage is *sensory feeling*. In this process, man with the help of senses obtains the most direct empirical data. Sensation does not give a person any full knowledge due to it do not pass over a long period. As a rule, sensation itself appears to be a single contact with the object and gives its single sensory image.

- the second stage is *perception*, which arises as a result of steady and holistic contact of the senses with the perceived object. Unlike sensation, perception gives us a holistic and stable image of an object. As an example, almost all modern teaching systems are based on the psychological law of perceptual stability. “There are apparently at least four elements in perception, all evident in a simple case like seeing a green field in front of me: (1) the perceiver, me; (2) the object, the field; (3) the sensory experience, my visual experience of colors and shapes; and (4) the relation between the object and the subject, commonly considered a causal relation by which the object produces the sensory experience in the perceiver” (Audi, 2004: 58).

- the third stage is *representation* that arises in human mind as the reproduction of an image of the empirical object which is already known in sensory feelings without any direct contact with it.

Following the sensory level of knowledge, there follows a *rational cognition*, which is also in turn subdivided into three stages, that is:

- the first stage is *concept* (or, *notion*). It comes as a form of thought in which the essential features of an object (or a group of similar objects) are reflected. For example, a ‘*pen*’ is an object that you can write while holding it in your hand: in this way, we have highlighted the essential properties of all pens – to be used precisely in the hand.

- the second stage is *judgment*. It is a form of thought, which expresses a connection of two or more concepts in which we record either presence or absence of any quality in the object. For example, ‘the weather is nice’ or ‘some birds fly south in winter.’

- the third stage is *ratiocination* (or, *conclusion*). Ratiocination is a complex form of thought, which integrates several judgments into one proposition. There are three types of ratiocinations – induction, deduction and traduction (or, analogy).

2) *Basic scheme of cognition*. As indicated previously, generally, the process of human cognition has several levels, which in general terms we divide into two levels – sensory and rational levels. “Plato may have been the first carefully to distinguish sense (*αισθήσεις*) from reasoning (*συλλογισμός*) and opining (*δοξάζειν*), yet perhaps even Plato was more concerned to disentangle thought from sense than to determine just how far sense can go” (Polansky, 2007: 403).

The attribute of knowledge refers to the universal when it comes to the attributes of the First. According to Aristotle, substance means ‘something *this*’, in contrast to a universal, which “refers to the question of whether properties exist, and if so, what they are” (Moreland, 2001: 184). In this regard, according to al-Farabi, knowledge of the First about reality, because of its identity with the surrounding reality, distinguishes knowledge of the First from the knowledge of man. In other words, the first knowledge is perfect knowledge itself (the First as perfection contemplates its own substance), while the second knowledge is a constant struggle of man with a lack of new knowledge about the world. Al-Farabi writes that “the fact that it knows and that it is knowable and that it is knowledge refers to one essence and one substance” (al-Farabi, 1998: 73).

If al-Farabi sees the First’s essence in its perfection and His perfection is a fundamental expression of its essence, then all its other attributes are also expressed in perfect form; since it “is the First Mover who is incorporeal and source of all beings” (Turker, 2011: 74-75). The same applies to cognition. However, the difference between human cognition and cognition, which is performed by the First, as we have already found out, is that His cognition is a manifestation of the absolute principle and its expression, while human cognition is the discovery of what a person did not know yet. “However, despite this exalted role ascribed to the Active Intellect, at both the intellectual and cosmological levels, al-Farabi regards it as subordinate to the First Principle, from which the intellectual world directly and the material world indirectly emanate” (Fakhry, 2002: 74). In fact, the knowledge that is embodied by the First cannot be called knowledge in the full sense of the word, since it does not discover something new for itself, since its knowledge, according

to al-Farabi, is perfect. It is impossible for the First to know something and to know only in the process of cognition. His knowledge is knowledge of a completely different kind: it is wisdom.

*The First as 'wise'*

In the eighth paragraph (§8, The First as 'wise'), al-Farabi describes a meaning of wisdom of the First. If he sees the essence of the First in its perfection and His perfection is a fundamental expression of its essence, then all its other attributes are also expressed in perfect form. The same applies to cognition. However, a difference between human cognition and cognition of the First, as we have already found out, is the First One's cognition is a manifestation of absolute cause and its expression, while human cognition exists as a discovery of what a man did not know yet. In fact, knowledge that is implemented by the First cannot be called knowledge in the full sense of the word, since it does not discover something new for the First, since its knowledge, according to al-Farabi, is perfect. It is impossible for the First to know something new and to know about new thank to only process of cognition. Its knowledge is knowledge of a completely different kind: it is wisdom. "We have distinguished the various senses of 'prior', and it is clear that actuality is prior to potentiality" (Aristotle, 1984: 1657).

Wisdom as a process of cognition realized by the First is not similar to human wisdom. The First One's wisdom is much wider; it is unlimited. His wisdom is that it is not based on a life experience of an individual subject, as is often the case in human life. Often a man interprets wisdom as a life experience, and sometimes human wisdom can even be contrasted with human knowledge. Allegedly, a wise person will never commit evil deeds, even if a wise person does not have a lot of practical knowledge. While a very knowledgeable man can be also be not a wise person. At one time, Heraclitus proclaimed that knowledge of many things does not testify to human wisdom. Therefore, in a person's life, based on his knowledge or stupidity, one can often clearly distinguish between wisdom and knowledge.

A criterion for such a distinction between wisdom and knowledge in human life is ethical virtue. On the one hand, if a person who does not possess high knowledge adheres virtuous life and does not commit evil deeds, then he is considered a wise person. However, he is not necessarily condemned for having a small amount of knowledge. His ethical

qualities, which carry a lot of good to other people, very much compensate for the lesser amount of knowledge in his head. On the other hand, knowledgeable people are also treated with great respect, even if in some of their actions people see an insufficient amount of ethical virtue. In view of their deep knowledge of any sciences or arts, knowledgeable people enjoy great authority and universal recognition. Of course, the ethical side of the character of highly educated people and their social behavior also play a big role in shaping their reputation. Therefore, we can say that knowledge and wisdom often act as mutually substituting aspects of human soul and intellect.

Things are completely different with the wisdom of the First. Firstly, its knowledge is not the result of its knowledge of those things about which it hitherto did not know and only thanks to cognitive activity did it can get an opportunity to know about them. Secondly, knowledge of the First is completely identical to its wisdom. The all-encompassing essence of its wisdom consists in its identification with its knowledge of true world, the embodiment of which it is; and therefore, it is the actual reality itself. In other words, wisdom, or knowledge, is the embodiment of the very First and a way it is manifested in universal form of the universe itself. This process of expressing the First is an ongoing and endless process. Al-Farabi writes that wisdom "intelligizes its essence and through knowledge of it knows the most excellent thing. The most excellent knowledge is the permanent knowledge, which cannot cease to exist, of what is permanent and cannot cease to exist. That is its knowledge of its essence" (al-Farabi, 1998: 73).

Thus, the First is the identity of its own essence with reality. And all that exists in reality is an expression of its universal and infinite essence. Therefore, the First One's knowledge about its own nature is that knowledge that is perfect in its fundamental nature and real necessity. It is no coincidence that describing absolutely perfect nature of knowledge of the First, al-Farabi notes that its wisdom "consists in thinking the most excellent thing through the most excellent knowledge" (al-Farabi, 1998: 73). Its wisdom is not the result of its knowledge; its wisdom is the integration of its knowledge of itself as a universe. Thus, wisdom of the First is an expression of its ontological necessity of the world to exist, and the First One's wisdom is not a subject to any external characteristic, since it is impossible to characterize the First by the external parameters of its existence.

*The First as 'real' and 'true'*

The ninth paragraph (§9, The First as 'real' and 'true'), al-Farabi turns to existence (it is being in his understanding) as a synthesis of *the real* and *the true*. In fact, here al-Farabi reveals one of the most important theses of his entire philosophy, namely, identity of being and ontology of the mind. Reality and truth express actual existence. In this sense, al-Farabi writes that "real and true go with existence, and 'reality' and 'truth' go with existence" (al-Farabi, 1998: 75). A question of the identity of reality and truth has always been one of the most problematic and at the same time exciting and encompassing questions. So, clarifying the essence of what is revealed in direct being, Hegel describes "*Existence* is immediate unity of being and reflection, and hence *appearance*; it comes from the ground and goes to the ground. The actual is the *positedness* of that unity, the relationship that has become identical with itself; hence, it is exempted from *passing-over*, and its *externality* [*Äußerlichkeit*] is its energy; in that externality it is inwardly reflected; its being-there is only the *manifestation of itself*, not of an other". (Hegel, 1991: 213-214). In this regard, al-Farabi correlates truth with being itself as an accomplished reality. It significantly expands understanding of truth, reducing it to ontological content. Truth in this vein is not only a cognitive component of the process of knowledge the surrounding reality itself, that is, not only identity of human knowledge and objective reality, where a man acts as a subject of cognition, but objective reality as an object of cognition. Here, truth, along with cognitive meaning, also has an ontological orientation, which means that truth is an expression of reality itself. Truth characterizes being itself as a fundamental self-manifestation of ontic existence. Al-Farabi again underlines that "the reality and truth of a thing is its particular existence and the most perfect state of the existence which is its lot" (al-Farabi, 1998: 75).

These words were continued so in Hegel's dialectic, where he establishes a direct interdependence of truth and reality, which, in turn, leads to the absolute existence of everything, or absolute *necessity*. Existence of every thing only then finds a necessity of its existence when its possibility of existence is confirmed by true intention in its existence. That is, a thing can have a possibility of existence (a probability of its realization is so high that its possibility passes into its reality) only if it is true in its content. In other words, this is a case where the Platonic ideas of a thing find its implementation in Aristotelian reality.

Hegel himself admitted that people are often mistaken when trying to contrast a thought of a thing with its real existence, and that in fact thought must be considered as an expression of the truth of reality, and reality acts in relation to the truth of thought. In particular, in the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences, he writes: "Actuality and thought – more precisely the Idea – are usually opposed to one another in a trivial way... Those who talk like this, however, only demonstrate that they have not adequately interpreted the nature either of thought or of actuality. For, on the one hand, in all talk of this kind, thought is assumed to be synonymous with subjective representation, planning, intention, and so on; and, on the other hand, actuality is assumed to be synonymous with external, sensible existence" (Hegel, 1991: 214-215).

For example, we can say that Socrates is a real philosopher when his essence as a philosopher is true, that is, when Socrates exists as a philosopher, and this statement is also true. In other words, Socrates in his actuality is a philosopher, and in the people's minds, he acts as a philosopher. Thus, everybody's idea about the existence and reality of Socrates as a philosopher comes as correspondence of their knowledge that Socrates is a philosopher and that Socrates is a philosopher in his actuality. In this case, we see the cognitive side of truth (according to Aristotle), when a man's knowledge corresponds to the object to which his knowledge is directed. Thus, a statement "Socrates is a philosopher" has true sense.

However, al-Farabi also adds ontological aspect to the correlation of actuality and truth, reducing this correlation to existence, that is, to actual being. In this regard, the statement "Socrates is a philosopher" contains not only a formal logical sense (that technically demonstrates that Socrates was a philosopher by his occupation), but this statement suggests that Socrates was a philosopher in his spirit and by his mental essence. So, the statement "Socrates is a philosopher" can be continued as "Socrates is a real/actual philosopher", i.e., the latter statement is strengthening the moment of Socrates' connection with his profession and transferring his purely technical status of his profession as a philosopher to a deeper level of recognition Socrates as a real philosopher. In this connection, a statement of al-Farabi that truth corresponds to reality has a more true context, since many people are philosophers by profession, but only a small number of people, including Socrates, can be called a real (i.e., true) philosopher. That is, al-Farabi, like Hegel, puts emphasis not

only on the formal correspondence of knowledge and reality (which is truth as a logical formalism), but also on the meaningful sense of this correspondence. And according to logical verification procedure, Socrates acts as a philosopher (which can be confirmed by his contemporaries), and according to his actual desire to be a philosopher (which can be confirmed not only by his contemporaries, but also by direct followers), Socrates is a true philosopher.

Both in his ability Socrates took place as a philosopher and in reality he became a philosopher. This is confirmed by the fact that Socrates, in his necessity, had to take place and actually took place as a philosopher. He synthesized a hypostasis of opportunity and a hypostasis of actuality in necessity, which became higher than the fact that he could be just a philosopher by profession, but not by vocation. On this occasion, Hegel writes: "Actuality, as itself *immediate* form-unity of inner and outer, in thus in the determination of *immediacy* as against the determination of immanent reflection; or it is an *actuality* as against a *possibility*. The connection of the two to each other is the *third*, the actual determined both as being reflected into itself and as this being immediately existing. This third is *necessity*" (Hegel, 2010: 478). Thus, in its real sense, a thing can appear as according to its content, and in its true sense, a thing can appear as the real content of any entity to which it corresponds. "It has been maintained secondly that the concept of 'Being' is indefinable. This is deduced from its supreme universality, and rightly so, if *definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specijicam*" (Heidegger, 1962: 23). That is, here we find absolute identity of the truth of thing and the reality of thing; and this identity is manifested in the existence of thing.

Further, going to the First's essence, al-Farabi once again mentions cognitive side of the truth in Aristotelian interpretation. However, here al-Farabi highlights a moment that an important part of the truth is not only the active subject of cognition or the process of cognition itself as correspondence of human knowledge and reality. He also draws attention to the object of intellection. As in the Husserlian interpretation of intentional objects which directly involved in the formation of apodictic reality in the human mind, al-Farabi's interpretation of intelligible objects in cognitive process also affirms the truth of cognition itself. Al-Farabi sees completeness of cognitive process and the truth in a full examination of all the components of the process of cognition. "Further, real and true are said of the intelligible through which the intellect happens to meet

an existent, so as to grasp it. It is then said of that existent that it is real and true, inasmuch as it is intelligible, and that it exists with regard to its essence and by not being related to what intelligizes (thinks) it" (al-Farabi, 1998: 75). An intelligible object is a full-fledged element of interaction between an active subject of cognition and the immediate reality, which, being the object of cognition and comprehension, also functions as an active side of cognitive activity, in no case as a passive object of cognition.

This moment is extremely important for understanding what al-Farabi means when he writes that "in the case of the First, it can be said that it is real and true in both these senses at once, and that its existence is the most perfect and in that it is the intelligible by means of which he who thinks it comes into contact with the existent as it exists" (al-Farabi, 1998: 75). In other words, functioning as the active substance of self-knowledge, the First intelligizes itself in all contexts in the process of self-reflection; and that affirms the unity of all elements of cognitive process by the First. That is, the First is both intelligizing substance, intelligible object, and it expresses the very process of interaction between the intelligizing and the intelligible. Hence, the First exists as intellect itself in an ontological sense. In view of this, al-Farabi notes that the First "is by the fact of its being intelligible in need of no other external essence which would think (intelligize) it. It also deserves than anything else to be called real and true in both these senses at once. And its reality and truth are nothing else but its being real and true" (al-Farabi, 1998: 75). With this, al-Farabi once again proves the First One's perfection, but through the prism of its cognitive hypostasis. Al-Farabi especially emphasizes the essence of the First, which corresponds to the Aristotelian *ενέργεια* in the very process of realizing existence of a thing and its transition from potential into real being.

#### *The First as 'living' and 'life'*

Further (in §10, The First as 'living' and 'life'), al-Farabi discusses the First's essence through prism of such concepts as 'living' and 'life'. Al-Farabi makes a caveat that these two terms are represented within one essence with the only difference that *living* is a process of emanation of the First, while *life* is its manifestation. So, 'living' expresses comprehension that emanates from the First. In this respect, 'living' expresses perfection of comprehension of intelligible entities through perfection of the First One, represented in the most excellent intellect. Al-Farabi writes: "In the case of the First, the meaning

of *'living'* is that it intelligizes the most excellent intelligibles though the most excellent intellect, or that it knows the most excellent knowable through the most excellent knowledge" (al-Farabi, 1998: 75). The concept of *'living'* contains the focus of the First as representation of perfection in its hypostasis of the First through the most excellent intellect. The fact that the most excellent intellect comprehends something is *'living'* because the process of intelligibility is already being realized; and this realization is perfect and true.

Along with that al-Farabi attributes intellectual knowledge to the highest form of comprehension of reality and really existing things, he also attributes sensible perception to the lower form of apprehension of the surrounding real world. "The first being or cause can have no contrary since to have a contrary entails the possibility of nonexistence and whatever can possibly not exist cannot be eternal (*'azali'*). For al-Farabi, contraries are forms of the possible and temporally generated" (Frank, 1979: 75). For al-Farabi, cognition, which is carried out on a rational conceptual level, is cognition that is steadily carries us to truth and a real reflection of reality in human consciousness. Sensible apprehension is the apprehension which belongs to direct perception of reality, which, due to its imperfection, may contain errors, since physical human feelings tend to mislead a man. But with all this, al-Farabi does not exclude importance of sensible apprehension from the cognitive process and allows some analogy between the concepts of *'living'* and *'life'* with when they are applicable to description of human knowledge. Applying human sensible apprehension to the concepts of *'living'* and *'life'*, al-Farabi agrees that "likewise it is in our case, when we apprehend the lowest apprehensibles through the lowest kind of apprehension, that we are called *'living'* in the first instance" (al-Farabi, 1998: 75). That is, even at a level of sensible apprehension, the very possibility of perceiving and subsequently cognizing at a higher rational level indicates that knowing (or, intelligizing) mind itself is *'living'* faculty and it correlates with the concept of *'life'*.

As for the essence of the First, which realizes perfect knowledge, then by virtue of the definition of human sensible knowledge as already corresponding to the concepts of *'living'* and *'life'*, then knowledge realized by the First is all the more an expression of perfect knowledge, since precisely the First (due to its ultimate perfection) is a universal criterion for defining perfection of knowledge, and hence the definition of any knowledge as corresponding to the

concepts of *'living'* and *'life'*. So, "the First, which is the most excellent intellect, thinks and knows the most excellent intelligibles through the most excellent knowledge. It deserves in a higher degree to be called *'living'*: for it thinks inasmuch as it is intellect" (al-Farabi, 1998: 77).

Therefore, al-Farabi concludes that within the meaning of the First, to be thinking, to express intellect itself, knowledge itself and to be an expression and carrier of universal knowledge are all the same thing with respect to the essence of the First. The same full correspondence applies to the concepts of *'living'* and *'life'*, within the frames of which meanings of *'living'* and *'life'* coincide with meanings of thinking, intellect, knowledge, and one who has universal knowledge, i.e. the First.

Further, al-Farabi makes a significant amendment, stating that the concept of *'living'* does not necessarily refer to only animated entities. The concept of *'living'* implies being itself, since what exists is already in its full essence of perfection (if we are talking about the First) or close to perfection, since in all its attributes something cannot be totally identical to the First since the First is one and nothing can be identical with it, except it. In other words, *'living'* means being in the broadest sense; therefore, it does not mean just what has a soul as opposed to what which does not have. So, al-Farabi writes that "the word *'living'* may be predicated metaphorically of non-animals as well, so that it can be predicated of any existent which has come to its ultimate perfection and of everything which has reached that state of existence and perfection in which it produces that whose nature it is to proceed from it" (al-Farabi, 1998: 77).

Moreover, since, as we found out above, every existent somehow expresses some kind of knowledge, it can be predicated as *'living'*, i.e. in this vein as existent. Even more so, the concepts of *'living'* and *'life'* refer to the First within the limits of its perfect essence as in the broadest metaphorical sense, since in no way can the First be depicted within the framework of only a narrow understanding of the words *'living'* and *'life'*. Thus, the First in its perfection and entirety expresses life as the most fundamental being.

## Results and discussion

As a result of the analysis of the al-Farabi's metaphysical theology, the following moments have been found out:



- firstly, al-Farabi demonstrated the impossibility of determining the reasons for the emergence of the perfect qualities of the First, since the First himself is the root cause of everything; and therefore all its qualities are also eternal and do not have any previous causes;

- secondly, all the perfect qualities of the First relate primarily to the First himself, and the creatures created by the First only partially possess perfect divine qualities;

- thirdly, al-Farabi shows that to comprehend the perfect qualities of the First it is necessary to possess something more than just logical argumentation; To comprehend the divine attributes requires deep immersion in the knowledge of the First through intuition, awakening, prayer, and so on.

## Conclusion

To conclude, we mention that study of the question of the First, carried out by al-Farabi, certainly deserves attention from both historians of philosophy and professional ontologists and epistemologists. Al-Farabi's approach is distinguished by its full-scale nature and fundamental nature. And that's true. In view of the wide scope of issues, that al-Farabi dealt with, indeed, to be his student means to be a universally minded researcher. In addition, as practice shows, the appearance of such people is an extremely rare phenomenon in the history of humankind. However, I believe that every person, regardless of his faith, citizenship, political or social position, should encounter the wisdom and higher intellect that were left by outstanding thinkers, among whom al-Farabi occupies an honorable place.

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