IIUM Journal of Human Sciences
Vol. 8, No. 1, 2026, 53-74
Special Issue "Ilm al-Nafs: Perspectives of the Soul from Early Muslim Scholars"
ISSN 2682-8731 (Online)

Emanation, Intellection, and Virtues: Al-Fārābī's Conception of the Soul *(al-Nafs*)

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ABSTRACT

What do we really mean by "soul"? Which of its concepts are we invoking in the teaching and learning of psychology - the soul as a psychological construct of the West or as the spiritual essence grounded in the Islamic intellectual tradition? To truly obtain a comprehensive view of the soul, this paper argues that we must turn to the work of classical Muslim scholars. As such, we approached the above questions from al-Fārābī's thoughts by first considering his life, major works, and contributions. Second, we focus on his ontological, epistemological, and axiological stances, which are central because the way he perceives reality, knowledge, and values informs his view of the soul. We then discuss al-Fārābī's conception of the soul in terms of its nature, structure, and development. For him, the soul is seen as an immaterial substance that emanates from the First Cause, which is then elevated by intellection, composed of body, soul, and spirit, and perfected through the pursuit of virtue. His classification of five types of soul and their developmental trajectory is also discussed. Rather than retrofitting the works and thoughts of Muslim scholars into contemporary psychology, we argue for a framework grounded in the Islamic teachings, tradition, and history. To understand this premise better, we end with a discussion of the parallel between al-Fārābī's views on the soul and those of recent efforts in Islamic psychology.

Keywords: *Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, Islamic, Nafs, Psychology, Religion, Soul*

INTRODUCTION

What do we really mean by "soul" in the context of understanding human nature, mind, and behaviour? This question is perennial, dating back to ancient Greece and even earlier. It is a core subject for theological and philosophical inquiries and addressing it has been central to the understanding and development of psychology as the field exists today. A modern scientific approach to this question would be to address the soul in terms of the mind or consciousness that shapes our cognition of the observable natural world. This approach, in turn, moved the field to focus on the study of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, which rely on evidence-based and objective approaches, and are often investigated using empirical, testable models.

In their article, Noor and Ahmad (2025) argued that because science deals with what can be observed and measured, it gives us a limited view of reality - one that is shaped by what can be empirically tested only. As such, it does not, and could not, address noumena, i.e., the underlying reality beyond our perception. Therefore, what science describes is not necessarily the same as what is. While it may offer a coherent model of the world, science neither captures the full range of human experience nor presents the complete picture of reality, let alone the inner workings of human nature. That is why contemporary psychology, for all its empirical

rigour, remains ill-equipped to account for the interior depth, purpose, and spiritual orientation that define the human nature and self in their fullness.

Should we speak of the soul in the quest for understanding human nature? The answer is a resounding yes, and to do so, we must return to the root of what soul means in the Islamic tradition and history and recognise the need to inject the soul back into contemporary psychology. Being grounded in the divine source, various information on human nature has been explained by Muslim scholars and philosophers by referring to the Qur'ān and Hadith. To grasp the full depth of human nature, we must therefore engage seriously with these resources. Scholars such as Said Nursi viewed that the exclusion of revealed knowledge or divine information in explaining human nature would only cause psychology to be half-true knowledge (Abdul Rahman, 2020). Any serious inquiry into the soul that ignores this tradition is not only incomplete but may also be fundamentally misguided. Hence, psychology, if it is to truly understand what it means to be human, must restore the soul to its rightful place, not at the margins but at the very centre of its inquiry.

To consider the foundational understanding of the soul in the Islamic tradition and history, this paper contends that al-Fārābī offers us a comprehensive account of its definition, conception, and development. A man of many talents and accomplishments, al-Fārābī was not only a renowned philosopher, logician, physicist, and musician, but also the author of over 130 works (Bakar, 2018; 2019). His approach to human nature weaves together ideas from various disciplines such as philosophy, logic, metaphysics, theology, and politics, giving us a profound and holistic view of the soul. It is thus not surprising that his writings and views on the soul and the philosophy of mind are not compiled in specific sources. Instead, they are contained in his copious philosophical, metaphysical, and political writings, particularly *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah* (Principles of the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City), *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah* (The Political Regime), *Kitāb mabādiʾ al-mawjūdāt* (The Principles of Existents), and *Risālah fi'l-'aql* (The Treatise or Epistle on the Intellect).

Being influenced by the peripatetic tradition, al-Fārābī's philosophical ideas contain elements of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism. However, his understanding of several concepts, such as imagination, happiness, and society, departs from the Greeks as he embedded rational and philosophical Islamic principles and reasoning in his discussions. Furthermore, the existing literature on him has often confined his ideas of the soul to eschatological and political perspectives, without considering how he defined, structured, and explained what the soul is. For this reason, there is a vital need to have a closer look at what insights al-Fārābī's works on the soul can offer to the teaching and learning of psychology, and this paper sets out to address this need.

The Position of this Paper

This paper deliberately sets out to summarise al-Fārābī's explanation of the soul in a structured, reader-friendly manner, while offering a comprehensive exposition of his ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions. The reason for taking this approach is rooted in the importance of clarity, accessibility, and intellectual focus. Al-Fārābī's writings are conceptually rich but often embedded in complex philosophical discourse. By presenting his work in an accessible manner, this paper makes his thoughts on the soul intelligible to a wide readership, while preserving its depth and potential relevance for cultivating a sound human psyche.

A caveat to this paper is that it is not a critical analysis of al-Fārābī's work. While critical analysis has its scholarly value, it can divert the discussion toward debates on accuracy, limitations, or contradictions, rather than staying with the constructive task of understanding his perspective on the soul. Here, the purpose is comprehension and exposition, not critique. Furthermore, this paper is not a discourse of how al-Fārābī's ideas align or contrast with modern psychological theories and movements. Such comparisons, though intriguing, would risk shifting the focus away from al-Fārābī's own framework. They would inevitably frame his thought through a Western or scientific lens; hence, potentially distorting his original intent and making his philosophy appear either deficient or merely a precursor to modern theories. The present focus is on preserving the integrity of his philosophical insights as they are and allowing al-Fārābī to be understood on his own terms.

Finally, the paper does not engage with a discussion of how to integrate al-Fārābī's thought into empirical psychology. While such discussions are valuable within specialised research, they are premature at this stage, as they presuppose an already accessible and well-understood account of al-Fārābī's ideas. By focusing exclusively on summarising his conception of the soul, this paper ensures that al-Fārābī's philosophy of the soul can be grasped in its full integrity, which, in turn, could lay the groundwork for future studies that may indeed attempt integration or comparison.

In this regard, it is practical to have a background on al-Fārābī's life, major works, and contributions first before delving into his thoughts and writings on the soul. His ontological, epistemological, and axiological stances need to be understood, too, as they are related to his view of the soul. Central to this discussion are his views on emanation as the structure of reality, intellection as the path to knowledge, and virtue as the foundation of ethical life. The next part of the paper, which forms the crux of this work, examines al-Fārābī's conception of the soul. The paper ends with a discussion of how his thoughts and works can further inform recent efforts in Islamic psychology.

AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S LIFE AND BACKGROUND

Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭarkhān ibn Awzalagh al-Fārābī, also known as Abū Naṣr, Alfarabius, Alpharabius, Abunaser, Avenasser, or Abynazar, was born in al-Fārāb, Khurāsān, Turkestan (now known as Kazakhstan) around 257 H (870 CE) during the Islamic Golden Era in the 9th to 12th centuries (Bakar, 2018). For someone who has made quite a mark in various areas, little is known about his personal life as he did not leave an autobiography (Netton, 1998). Therefore, accounts of his life are sketchy and complex, but it is known that he studied linguistics, religion, fiqh (jurisprudence), *tafsir* (the exegesis of the Qur'ān), and arithmetic in his early life (Bakar, 2018; 2019). During this period, too, he learned several languages, including Arabic, Turkish, and Persian.

In pursuit of more knowledge, al-Fārābī went to Baghdad and Harrān when he was 40 years old to study logic, advanced fiqh, and philosophy with scholars such as Abu Bishr Matta ibn Yunus and Yūḥannā ibn Ḥailān. Records also indicate that he knew the Greek language and spent some time in Constantinople (Bakar, 2018; 2019). He then returned to Baghdad and lived most of his adult life there. It was during this period that he produced a prolific body of work, particularly in harmonising philosophy and religion as well as in translating, explaining, and integrating Greek philosophy with Islam, especially in theology, logic, and physics. Another important contribution of al-Fārābī to the field of logic was his work in categorising

it into two *takhayyul* (imagination or idea) and *thubut* (proof) (Alwali, 2018). Through these works, he rose to the eminent position in the field and gained the title of al-Mu`allim al-Thani, i.e., the Second Master or the Second Teacher, after Aristotle (Bakar, 2018; Netton, 1998).

Realising the growing political turmoil in Baghdad, al-Fārābī moved to Aleppo in 330 H (942 CE) and became part of the literary circle in the court of the Syrian ruler, the Hamdanid Prince Sayf al-Dawlah (Bakar, 2019). In this circle, the Prince had gathered a most distinguished group of poets, philologists, philosophers, and other scholars. Despite being amongst an elite group, al-Fārābī lived a quiet life, preferring to spend time alone (*`uzlah*) and avoiding the materialistic life (*zuhud*) to focus on his meditation and thinking. He was known to wander on his own in the countryside to reflect and to write - an atmosphere conducive to a natural inclination towards Sufism. With the exception of several short travels abroad, al-Fārābī remained in Syria until his passing in Damascus in 339 H (950 CE) at the age of 80. Records show that he was buried at a cemetery outside the city's southern or minor gate (*al-bāb al-saghir*), and Prince Sayf al-Dawlah himself attended and led the funeral prayers in honour of the scholar (Bakar, 208; 2019; Madkour, 1963). For a more comprehensive account of al-Fārābī's life and works, readers are encouraged to consult Bakar (2018), Bakar (2019), and Fakhry (2014), which have extensively covered these topics.

AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S NOTABLE WORKS

Al-Fārābī was credited as the second outstanding representative of the Muslim peripatetic (*mashshä'i)* school of philosophy after al-Kindi (Marmura, 1983). This credit stems from his works in giving Islamic philosophy its orientations as well as in his devotion to education, logic, philosophy, mathematics, literature, languages, politics, fiqh, and music. He was also the first to separate philosophy from theology. Throughout his life, al-Fārābī produced extensive writings and discussions on various topics. Based on a compilation by Bakar (2018; 2019), we can broadly classify his body of works in, but not limited to, seven categories:

i. First, he wrote a vast amount of treatises on the philosophical curriculum and its method, particularly on logic. Some examples of these works include *Risālat fī sudira bihā al-kitāb* (Treatise with which the Book Begins), *Risālat fī jawāb masā'il su'ilā 'anhā* (Treatise on Answers to Questions Put to Him), and *Risālat fī qawānīn sinā' at al-shi'r* (Treatise on the Canons of the Art of Poetry).

ii. The second category includes writings and commentaries on Plato's and Aristotle's thoughts, such as *Sharḥ kitāb al-samā' al-tabi'i li-Aristutālīs* (Commentary on Aristotle's Physics), *Sharḥ kitāb al-samā' wa'l-'ālam li- Aristutālīs* (Commentary on Aristotle's Book of the Heavens and the Universe), *Sharḥ maqālat al-iskandar al-afrudīsī fi'l*-nafs (Commentary on Alexander of Aphrodisias' Treatise on the Soul), *Falsafat Aristutālīs* (The Philosophy of Aristotle), *Kitāb falsafat aflātun wa ajzā'h*ā (The Philosophy of Plato and Its Parts), as well as *Kitāb al-jam' baina ra'yai al-hakīmain Aflātun al-ilāhī wa Aristutālīs* (The Book of Harmony Between the Ideas of the Two Sages, the Divine Plato, and Aristotle).

iii. Third, al-Fārābī wrote a number of writings on specific and technical subjects such as physics and metaphysics. His works under this category include *Risālat fi'l-khalā'* (Treatise on the Vacuum), *Kalām fī a'dā' al-hayawān* (Discourse on Animal Organs),

Kalām fi'l-haiz wa'l-miqdār (Discourse on Space and Measure), *Maqālat fī maʿānī al-ʿaql* (Treatise on the Meanings of the Intellect), *Ta'liqāt fi'l-hikmah* (Explanatory Remarks on Wisdom), *Kitāb fī zuhür al-falsafah* (On the Appearance of Philosophy), *Maqālat fī aghrād mā ba'd al-tabī'ah* (Treatise on the Aims of Aristotle's Metaphysics), *Fuṣūṣ al-hikam* (Bezels of Wisdom*), Kitāb fi'l wāḥid wa'l-waḥdah* (The Book on the One and Oneness), and *Kitāb fī usul 'ilm al-tabī'ah* (The Book on the Principles of Physics).

iv. Al-Fārābī's significant works also include compendia of scientific discussions such as *'Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm* (The Enumeration of the Sciences), *Risālah fi'l-'aql* (The Treatise or Epistle on the Intellect), and *Kitâb al-hurûf* (The Book of Letters). He also wrote on alchemy and the interpretation of dreams in a treatise called *Fī wujub sanā at al-kīmiyā'* (On the Necessity of the Art of Alchemy).

v. The fifth category of al-Fārābī's writings consists of polemical works and refutations of the views on particular aspects of natural philosophy such as *Kitāb al-radd 'alā jālīnus fī mā taawwalahu min kalam Aristu* (Book of Refutation of Galen's Interpretations of Aristotle's Discourse), *Al-radd 'alā Ibn al-Rāwandī fī ādāb al-jadal* (Refutation of Ibn al-Rāwandī's Account of Dialectic), *Al-radd 'alā Yahyā al-nahwi fī mā raddahu 'alā aristu* (Refutation of John the Grammarian's Criticism of Aristotle), and *Al-radd 'alā al-Rāzi fi'l-'ilm al-ilahī* (Refutation of al-Rāzi's Metaphysics).

vi. Al-Fārābī also spent his life focusing on political philosophy, the science of society, and ethics in society. In this regard, he wrote the monumental *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah* (The Principles and Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City), *Fuṣūl al-madani* (Aphorisms of the Statesman), *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah* (The Political Regime), and *Kitāb mabādiʾ al-mawjūdāt* (The Principles of Existents). Other works in this category include *Kitāb al-millat al-fādilah* (The Book of the Excellent Community), *Talkhīs nawāmīs Aflātün* (Epitome of Plato's Laws), *Risālat fi'l-siyāsah* (Epitome on Politics), *Kitāb taḥṣīl al-saʿādah* (Attainment of Happiness), and *Kitāb al-tanbīh ʿalā sabīl al-saʿādah* (The Exhortation to the Way to Happiness).

vii. Finally, al-Fārābī was also a music theorist and a performer, with notable books such as *Kitāb al-musiqa* (The Book of Music), *Kitāb fi'l nuqra, Kitāb al-tiihsa al-iqa*, and *Kitāb al-musiqi al-kabir* or The Grand Book on Music (Naroditskaya, 2009). His other works, such as *Maqālat fī maʿānī al-ʿaql* (Treatise on the Meanings of the Intellect), also touched on music therapy, in which he discussed the therapeutic effects of music on the soul. Besides contributing to the knowledge of musical notes and writing music treatises, he was an inventor of several musical instruments, including the five-string oud (a short-neck lute instrument) and *qānūn* (an instrument like a harp) (Azizbek et al., 2021). It was also reported that he could play his instruments so well as to make people laugh or weep at will (Alwali, 2018).

It is fortunate that much of al-Fārābī's works have survived, despite the passage of time. A total of 117 are preserved, including 43 on logic, 11 on metaphysics, 17 on music, medicine, and sociology, seven on ethics, seven on political science, and 11 are commentaries (Editor In Chief, Qatar Medical Journal, 2011). We can see that al-Fārābī' framed his thoughts and

writings in Neoplatonist terms befitting the period. The uniqueness of his works, however, lies in the way that he did so by reconciling Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy with Islamic doctrine. Consequently, al-Fārābī had not only influenced the worldview of other Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Bājjah, al-Ghazālī, and Mullā Ṣadrā, but he was also instrumental in the development of philosophical ideas in Asia and Europe, as reflected in the works and thoughts of Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (or Maimonides), Spinoza, and Leo Strauss (Brague, 1998; Netton, 1992; Whittingham, 2007; Yuldashev, 2020).

EMANATION FROM THE FIRST: THE ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S PHILOSOPHY

The nature of existence, reality, and knowledge are the main focal features of al-Fārābī's works. According to him, ontology is the discourse that deals with *mawj*ud (i.e., being or existent) and its attributes. There exist many beings (*mawjudāt*) in various grades and degrees of perfection that can be ordered in a hierarchy in which the higher ones influence the lower. His distinctive account of the hierarchy of beings is predominantly discussed in *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah, Kitāb mabādiʾ al-mawjūdāt*, and *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*. For al-Fārābī, God, who is Perfect and the cause of the existence of all other beings, is placed at the top of the hierarchy. This is followed by the angels, the celestial bodies, and the terrestrial bodies (Bakar, 2019). This hierarchy of beings is described more specifically in terms of six principles (*mabādi'*), beginning with God as the First Cause (*al-sabab al-awwal*) and descending through the Second Causes (*al-asbāb al-thawāni*), Active (or Agent) Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*), soul (*nafs*), form (*surah*), and matter (*māddah*) (Bakar, 2019). The first three principles are independent and immaterial, while the final three are attached to bodies (López-Farjeat, 2024).

God, in al-Fārābī's thinking, is the First Cause - a unique, perfect, uncaused, and necessary being who exists by acting as the object, subject, and act of its own intellection. Following the notion of emanation (*fayd*), all other beings "flow out from" the First (*al-awwal*) because God is the source of all existence. For al-Fārābī, everything that exists (unless later found to be a product of man's will or desire) comes from God, and things that emanated from the First progressed as intellects or incorporeal entities (Ali, 2023; Wain, 2012). It follows that we cannot understand the world or anything without comprehending the knowledge of the First Cause and all its qualities.

The Second Causes, which proceeded from the First Cause, are incorporeal because, being an overflowing of the First, they share its nature. However, they progressed to material entities with physical forms and matter (Ali, 2023; Wain, 2012). The knowledge produced here is the knowledge of the immaterial existents, their specific qualities and rank, and their functions (Al-Fārābī, 1985). The overflow then descends from the Second to become another incorporeal intellect called the Third that constitutes the celestial bodies and spheres, such as the planets, stars, and heaven (*Jannah*) – all of which have their own soul. In al-Fārābī's view, *Jannah* extends beyond the sphere of the stars and includes the afterlife (*akhirah*). The process where the emanation of the Second Causes flows to the Third yielded the knowledge of celestial substances and the qualities of each of them (Al-Fārābī, 1985).

This emanation of intelligences goes on successively until there are a total of ten emanations, nine heavens, and nine souls altogether: i.e., the First Cause, the Second and the

'First Heaven;' the Third and the Fixed Stars; the Fourth and Saturn; the Fifth and Jupiter; the Sixth and Mars; the Seventh and the Sun; the Eighth and Venus; the Ninth and Mercury; the Tenth and the Moon; and finally, the last intelligence known as *al-'aql al-fa''āl* or Active (or Agent) Intellect (Wain, 2012). From this intelligence, flows the soul as well as the *hyle* or *ḥayy* as the prime matter of corporeality to make a body (Netton, 1998). In this Tenth Intelligence, there is a sublunary world with plants, animals, humans, four elements (fire, air, water, and earth), minerals, and matter (Davidson, 1992). Figure 1 summarises al-Fārābī's approach to emanation.

Active Intellect represents human intelligence, or the rational faculty, which constitutes the theoretical and practical parts. With the theoretical part, humans can acquire true knowledge of things, while the practical part enables humans to obtain knowledge and skills by means of their will. In *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah* and *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah*, al-Fārābī posits that Active Intellect enters the rational faculty and turns it into an Actual Intellect by transforming perceptions stored in the imaginative faculty into actual intelligible thoughts (Davidson, 1992). In Actual Intellect, the participation of Active Intellect allows human beings to grasp the first principles of understanding and the construction of intelligibles (Taylor, 2012). For al-Fārābī, the rational faculty is responsible for human cognition in all aspects, including about knowledge of the natural bodies, knowledge of the creation of humans, knowledge of how the faculties of the soul come to be, and knowledge of how the Active Intellect sheds light on them so that the first intelligibles, as well as will and choice, can arise (Bonelli, 2009).

The Active Intellect also constitutes the soul as its incorporeal substance. The soul is regarded as the principle of life with several faculties, ranging from the most basic functions that are common to all life to the most sophisticated, complex faculty that allows cognition. When the soul receives emanation from the Active Intellect, its virtues are completed, and the entity exists as a combination of form and matter (*Note: al-Fārābī's notions about rational and imaginative faculties, as well as the soul, are deliberated further in subsequent discussions of this paper).* A summary to illustrate the relationships between the intellects and types of the soul is provided in Figure 2).

In his treatises, al-Fārābī stated that those with a greater proportion and most developed Active Intellect are natural rulers. Using the Prophet ﷺ as an example, al-Fārābī explained that the Prophet ﷺ was most open to a higher intellect and more sensitive and wiser in managing society. In this regard, he associated Active Intellect with knowledge of rulers and revelations (*wahy*). He maintained that people in a virtuous city must possess the knowledge of eight things: (i) knowledge of the First Cause and its qualities, (ii) knowledge of the Second Causes, (iii) knowledge of celestial substances, (iv) knowledge of natural bodies, (v) knowledge of the creation or generation of man, (vi) knowledge of the first ruler and how 'revelation' (*wahy*) is brought, (vii) knowledge of the rulers who must take his place when he is not available, and (viii) knowledge of the excellent city and its people as well as the felicity their souls must ultimately reach (Bonelli, 2009).

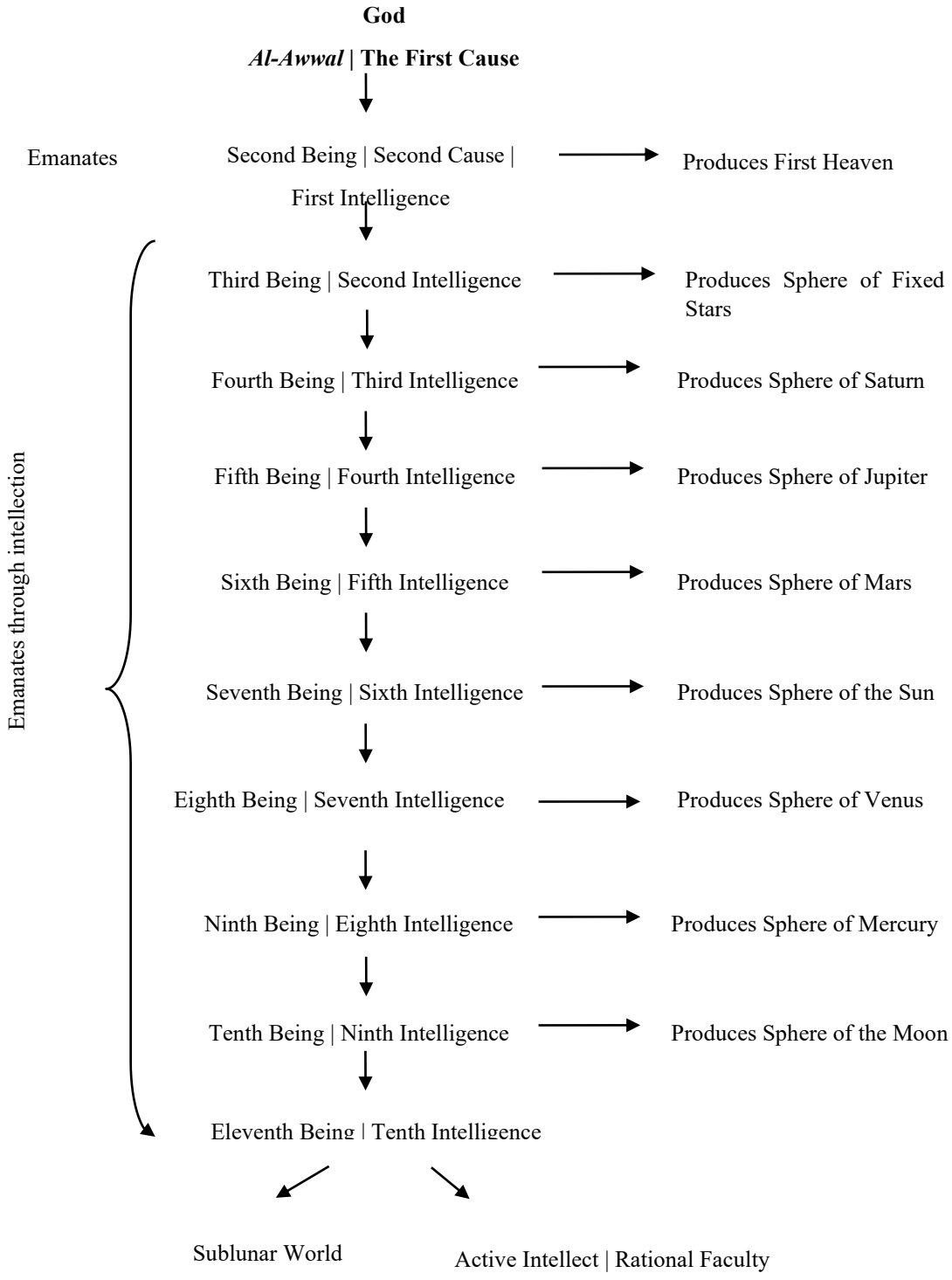

Figure 1: Al-Fārābī's approach to emanation.

INTELLECTION: THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH OF AL-FĀRĀBĪ

Consistent with his theory of the hierarchy of beings, al-Fārābī placed a high value on revelation as a source of knowledge and reason (*`aql*) (Bakar, 2019). He followed up on his ontological views of the intellects by advocating that we approach reality through three means,

i.e., (i) senses (*al-quwwat al-ḥāssah*), (ii) imagination (*al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah*), and (iii) intellect (*al-quwwat al-nāṭiqah*) in his *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*. His epistemological approach holds that all knowledge starts from the senses; that is, we can know something exists when we detect it using our sense organs, perceive and interpret it in the brain in the form of logic and reason, and act out via bodily engagements and processes of choice. According to him, our sensory systems play a central role in detecting and processing the signals received from the environment (loosely called "knowledge"). Knowledge gathered at this stage is known as "knowledge of facts" and concerns individual objects. Following a process of abstraction, knowledge derived from the senses is then developed into intellectual knowledge that deals with universal concepts (Cellamare, 2020). It is at this stage, according to al-Fārābī, that we acquire knowledge through the power of imagination and the power of thought.

The power of imagination refers to the ability to compose and combine new images with other images stored in the faculty of representation (*al-muṣawwirah*). In *Fuṣūṣ al-hikam*, al-Fārābī's theory of the imaginative faculty contrasted five internal senses (*al-ḥawāss al-bāṭinah*). The first involves the faculty of representation (*al-quwwat al-muṣawwirah*), which preserves the forms of sensible objects received from the external senses. However, some forms cannot be perceived by the external senses in the world, and thus, cannot be preserved by *al-quwwat al-muṣawwirah*. For this reason, the second internal sense, i.e., the faculty of estimation *(al-quwwat al-wahm*), exists. This faculty will perform the function of perceiving the non-sensible forms connected with the individual sensible objects that the external senses cannot perceive. The non-material entities perceived by *wahm* are then retained by the faculty of memory (*al-quwwat al-ḥāfiẓah*). Al-Fārābī asserted that the last internal sense is creative in nature due to its compositive function. By compositive, he meant the ability to produce new composite images out of the images stored in the representative faculty through the process of combination (*khalṭ* or *tarkīb*) and separation (*tafṣīl*) (Bakar, 2019). In humans, this faculty is known as *al-quwwat al-mufakkirah* (rational imagination), whereas in animals, it is called *al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah* (sensitive imagination).

The functions of the imaginative faculty (i.e., retention, composition, and estimation of images) lend themselves to *al-quwwat al-nāṭiqah*, i.e., the power of thought or the intellect or the rational faculty. For Al-Fārābī, *al-quwwat al-nāṭiqah* enables us to learn about the world, and through it, the soul of the learners is raised to the level of the rational human (Al-Tālbī, 1993). In *Risālah fi'l-'aql*, he posited that there are several degrees of intellect. The first degree is the Potential Intellect (*al-'aql bi'l-quwwah*), also known as Material Intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*), which refers to the human being's natural disposition to receive intelligible forms (Bakar, 2019). The Potential Intellect then transforms to an Actual Intellect in relation to the intelligible forms it received. This intellect, which consists of intelligibles abstracted from matter, does not depend on the imaginative and sensitive faculties (Bakar, 2019).

When actual intellect can think the intelligibles within it and itself, it becomes what al-Fārābī calls *al-'aql al-mustafāḍ* (Acquired Intellect). Humans attained the highest degrees of human perfection when the Actual Intellect and Acquired Intellect become united (*muttahidah*), i.e., "*when the Acquired Intellect participates in the reality of the Active Intellect without being essentially identified with the latter*" (Bakar, 2019, p. 63). The degree of this perfection, however, depends on the extent of the intelligible forms received from the Active Intellect (Bakar, 2019). The Acquired Intellect, therefore, is the most developed form of the

human intellect. In his *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*, al-Fārābī regarded those who achieve this state and have perfected the imaginative faculty, along with having other characteristics such as a healthy body and a proper moral disposition, as *Imāms* or wise persons (Oschman, 2020). This achievement of understanding and intellect, in turn, yields the greatest happiness – a topic that is discussed next.

VIRTUES: THE AXIOLOGICAL POSITION OF AL-FĀRĀBĪ

The concept of happiness is central to al-Fārābī's discourse and shapes his axiological position. For him, the ultimate goal of human existence is to attain perfection in the present life (*al-sa'ādat al-dunyā*) and supreme happiness (*al-sa'ādat al-quswā*) in the hereafter (Bakar, 2019). Al-Fārābī holds the view that ultimate happiness is achieved when a human being has perfected imaginations, practical faculties, and theoretical faculties, thus achieving the status of *al-ʻaql al-mustafāḍ* (Bakar, 2025; Walker, 1994). In the words of al-Fārābī himself, the highest rank of happiness is achieved when the soul is "*united as it were with the Active Intellect*" (Al-Fārābī, 1964, pp. 79.5-79.15; Al-Fārābī, 1985, pp. 15.11).

In *'Ihsâ' al-ʻulûm*, al-Fārābī suggested that happiness constitutes four virtues, namely theoretical virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-naẓariyah*), deliberative virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-fikrīyah*), artistic virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-ṣinā'īyah*), and ethical or moral virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-khuluqīyah*). These virtues are related to the states of the soul by which a person does good deeds (Bakar, 2019). For example, theoretical virtues belong to the theoretical part of the rational faculty, while deliberative as well as artistic virtues belong to the practical intellect part of this faculty. Finally, ethical or moral virtues occur when the appetitive faculty heeds the practical intellect, giving rise to other virtues, such as temperance, generosity, courage, and justice (Bakar, 2019).

Al-Fārābī believes that happiness can be attained through integrating *al-taʿakkul* or thinking and reasoning activities with *al-afʿal al-iradiyah* or motivation. Thinking can remove the mind-object from the material entering the substance, reaching a state known as *al-kamal fi al-wujud*, or existentially complete, in which there is no psychological dependence on materials (Najati, 1993). This is what he meant in *Kitāb taḥṣīl al-saʿādah* when he stated that true happiness arises when the soul attains its highest state of perfection, in which it no longer relies on material things to feel complete or whole.

Al-Fārābī further posited that humans, as social beings, rely on the help, support, and cooperation of others to survive and thrive in life, as well as in their endeavour towards attaining a perfect life and happiness. For this reason, he emphasised the importance of having good relationships with others, as a good moral balance among people can foster the soundness of society.

THE NATURE OF THE SOUL ACCORDING TO AL-FĀRĀBĪ

So, how is the soul formed according to al-Fārābī? Discussions in previous sections indicate that he views the universe and all its contents as eternally dependent on the First Cause for their existence; of which the process comes forth by undergoing emanation (*fayd*) in a procession of intellects corresponding to the spheres of the heavens, ending at the sphere of the moon, with each body having its own soul. The final, immaterial entity called Active Intellect (*al-ʻaql al-fa''āl*), resides with responsibility for the world below the sphere of the moon, including a special responsibility for the rational beings, namely, humans. Human beings,

however, do not naturally possess all that is needed to be rational and knowing. Therefore, they depend on *al-'aql al-fa''āl* (Active Intellect), which originates from the First Cause, to realise their nature as intellectuals, endowed with the rational faculty (Taylor, 2012).

Having gained an understanding of the ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions that underpinned al-Fārābī's thoughts and works, we can now discuss his conceptualisation of the soul. As one of the forefront of the Islamic peripatetics, al-Fārābī was in alliance with the Greek predecessors in their understanding and discussion of the soul. For instance, similar to Aristotle, he describes the soul as the form or actualisation of a natural organic body that potentially has life, and he believes that the soul is responsible for the capacities or operations of the human body (López-Farjeat, 2024). He also asserts that immaterial things, such as the soul, can be studied and understood through the senses. While the body is measurable, has different faculties, belongs to the world of Creation, and is limited by time and space, the soul has unique qualities that set it apart from the body.

Al-Fārābī did not explicitly discuss whether or not he believes that the human soul has an innately pure, immaculate, or good nature (*fiṭra*). Nor did he contend that psychological state and mind need to be harmonious with *fiṭra*. However, he did regard the human soul as the first completion or perfection (*kamāl awwal*) for the physical body, which is natural, mechanistic, and with life energies (López-Farjeat, 2024; Najati, 1993). Al-Fārābī points out that human beings have a higher faculty, i.e., the intellect or rationality, which enables them to attain intelligibles in the act. This rational part of humans can realise itself to such a degree of perfection that it no longer requires the body and can come very close to reaching the status of a separate being (López-Farjeat, 2024).

On this point, there is a debate over whether al-Fārābī regards the soul as immortal. Records of his works, such as *Risālah fi'l-'*aql and *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah*, demonstrate his views on the soul's ability to detach itself from the sensitive, appetitive, and imaginative faculties and exist independently of the body. This process, in turn, transforms the rational soul into an eternal, imperishable intellect that can survive after death. On the other hand, in *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*, he does not make any clear distinction between the soul and the body. For him, the body is matter, and the soul is form. The form cannot exist without matter, and the soul cannot exist by itself; hence, it perishes with the body. From this perspective, it seems that al-Fārābī regards the soul as not existing separately or independently from the body.

THE STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUL ACCORDING TO AL-FĀRĀBĪ

Al-Fārābī sustains that all living beings have a soul and constructs a hierarchical model comprising five types: *al-nafs al-nabatiah* (vegetative soul), *al-quwwat al-ḥāssah* (sensitive soul), al-*nafs al-nāṭiqah* (rational soul), *al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah* (imaginative soul), and *al-quwwat al-nuzū'iyah* (appetitive soul).

In *Fuṣūl al-madani* (Aphorisms of the Statesman), al-Fārābī stated that the lowest, vegetative soul is the part of the soul that has eight sub-faculties: (i) nutritive, (ii) digestive, (iii) attractive, (iv) retentive, (v) distinguishing, (vi) expulsive, (vii) growth, and (viii) reproductive or generative. Nutritive faculty (*al-ghadziyah*) refers to the process of nourishment of living beings. It has a ruling faculty located in the heart, which governs other auxiliary and subordinate faculties distributed in other bodily organs (Ali & Qin, 2020). The

digestive faculty (*al-hāḍima*) breaks down and converts nutrients from the food we eat into the blood that is capable of nourishing the whole body. These nutrients are transported around the body via the attractive faculty (*al-ǧāḏiba*). While the retentive faculty (*al-māsika*) preserves the nutrients that our body needs, the distinguishing faculty (*al-mumayyiza*) differentiates the amount and types of nutrients to meet the needs of the body. Excessive or unwanted nutrients that are not needed by the body are then flushed out in the form of waste products by the expulsive faculty (*al-dāfiʿa*). The whole nutriment process subsequently stimulates growth (i.e., *al-munammiyah*, the faculty by which our body develops in size) and reproduction, in which descendants are produced through the generative faculty (*al-muwallidah*).

The second type of the soul is *al-quwwat al-*ḥāssah or the sensitive soul, which concerns the part that senses objects in the world via the five sense organs. It is the source of moral sentiments such as our perceptive (*al-quwwat al-mudrikah*) and motive (*al-quwwat al-muharrikah*) faculties. *Al-quwwat al-mudrikah* is further divided into two: *al-hawas al-kharijiah* (external sensation) and *al-hawas al-dākhiliyah* (internal sensation). Like the vegetative soul, the sensitive soul has a ruling faculty, which is the heart, together with the five senses as its auxiliaries (Ali & Qin, 2020).

Al-nafs al-nāṭiqah or the rational soul represents the third type in the model. Residing in the heart and encompassing all faculties, including the brain, it has the functions of deliberation (*rawīyah*) (Ali & Qin, 2020; Bakar, 2019). Humans use the rational faculty to receive the images of intelligibles - thus acquiring the sciences (*al-'ulūm*) and the arts (*sinā'āt*), which, in turn, enable them to distinguish between good and evil (Wain, 2012). In other words, the rational soul can receive the imprints of intelligibles and rule other faculties of the soul.

The rational soul is partly theoretical (*naẓarī*) and partly practical (*'amalī*). The theoretical part is the faculty by which we acquire the knowledge of the things that can neither be created nor altered by human beings. It plays a role in the reception of the forms of intellectual objects as well as in the acquisition of ultimate truth (Bakar, 2019). In contrast, the practical part deals with the things that can be created and changed by human agency. This includes the acquisition of new skills (*mihnīyah*) and reflection *(fikrīyah*), which involve deliberation (*rawīyah*) and the making choices and decisions about possible courses of action. It is through the practical mind that we know what should be done, what to be avoided, or whether "it is possible or not, and if it is possible, how it must be done" (Dunlop, 1952, p. 98).

Al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah (the imaginative soul) combines the impressions of the sensibles gathered by our sense organs and processes them by associating and dissociating the data in many different ways (Ali & Qin, 2020). For example, the eyes provide sensory information. When sensation is no longer present, the perception will not be there either; however, the image remains in the *al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah* so that it can be retrieved or recalled. Therefore, we can deduce that al-Fārābī formulates the imaginative soul as performing three functions. First, it retains the images captured by sensory organs and continues their existence even after they no longer appear to the senses; second, it composes and divides the retained images to form new images; and third, it represents objects with the images of other objects, which may encompass bodily temperaments, emotions and desires, and immaterial realities (Ali & Qin, 2020; Black, 1996). From this perspective, we can imply that the imaginative soul bridges the sense-perception faculty to a symbolic representation of the thought impression, and to some extent, behavioural actions. However, unlike other parts of

the soul, it does not have auxiliaries or subordinates other than the sense-organs that it governs. Nevertheless, it too resides in the heart (Ali & Qin, 2020).

Finally, *al-quwwat al-nuzū'iyah* or the appetitive soul is best understood as the part of the soul that deals with desires, feelings, and emotions. It provides the motive power that enables the soul to activate the body, thereby producing actions such as seeking what the soul considers desirable and avoiding what it perceives as harmful or adverse (Black, 1996). Things acquired through sense-perception, representation, or reason, as well as the actions that follow thereafter, will not be executed unless the appetitive faculty desires them. The heart houses the ruling faculty of the appetitive soul - it decides which desires have priority and which responses best suit them. Whatever decisions are made, they are to be executed by bodily organs that represent the subordinates of the ruling faculty (Ali & Qin, 2020).

In summary, we attempt to illustrate the stages and development of the soul according to al-Fārābī in Figure 2.

THE STAGES OF THE SOUL ACCORDING TO AL-FĀRĀBĪ

From our discussions of al-Fārābī's structure and development of the soul, we can see that he emphasises the importance of knowledge to the extent that he regarded the level of intellect, i.e., rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*), as the highest soul in humans. For him, the lowest soul was merely vegetative, embracing life, nutrition, and growth. Above this were the sensitive and appetitive souls, embracing cognitive functions such as sensation, perception, and memory for the former, whereas desires, pleasure, and pain for the latter. At the same time, the imaginative soul serves as an intermediary between the sensitive and rational souls (Bakar, 2019).

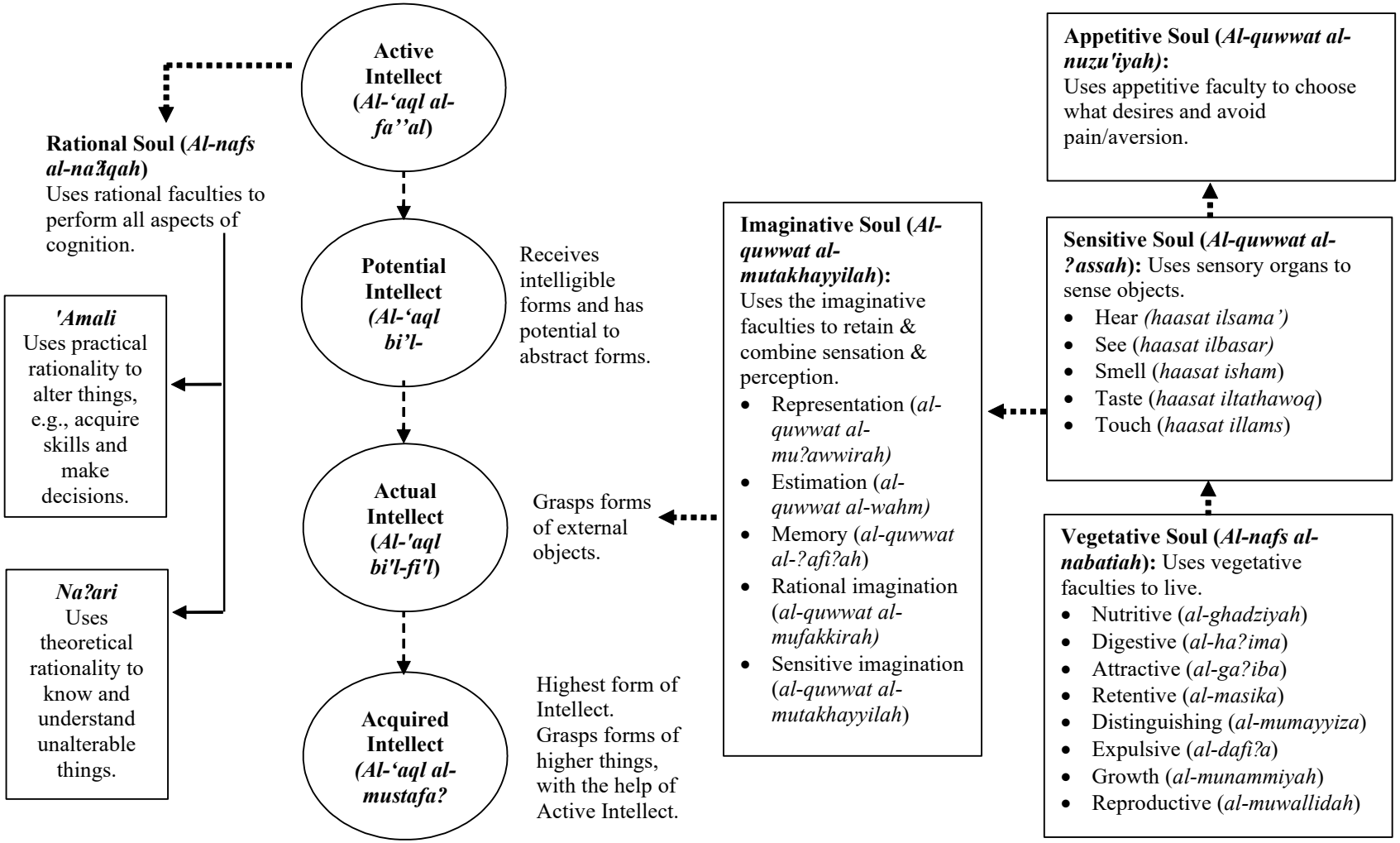

Figure 2: The soul according to al-Fārābī

In *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah* and *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah*, al-Fārābī compares the living body to a virtuous city (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*). Specifically, he says that a city is determined by the moral habits of its people, emphasising that there can be no virtuous city without virtuous citizens and no virtuous citizens without virtuous souls. We can further extend this theory to imply the different stages of the soul. According to him, having acquired some knowledge, a person can decide whether to pursue the righteous life or live the unrighteous one. Only by reflecting on what is right and virtuous can a person come closer to the Active Intellect, the truth, and perfection. When a person gains theoretical virtues, intellectual knowledge, and practical moral values, he or she becomes a virtuous citizen who is becoming perfect in moral behaviour and soul (*al-insān al-kāmil*).

In a virtuous city, al-Fārābī believes that happiness is achieved when citizens live in cooperation, support, and harmony with themselves, with other people, and with nature. To survive in this city, the citizens must be capable of higher knowledge and act on this higher knowledge to live morally and virtuously. Al-Fārābī posits that philosophy and religion provide the correct knowledge and actions that can lead people to become virtuous citizens, and that such knowledge and actions will lead to ultimate happiness (*refer to previous discussions of this paper for an explanation of this knowledge*). According to him, only virtuous citizens will achieve eternal happiness, and only the soul of a thinking and righteous person can live forever. Accordingly, only wise, virtuous people understand the concept of happiness.

As complex as it seems at first glance, al-Fārābī believes that all people are capable of perfection and suggests that everyone ought to acquire knowledge about everything (Al-Fārābī, 1985). The ruler's duty, therefore, is to establish a virtuous society by healing the souls of the people, establishing justice, and guiding them towards true happiness (Bakhtiar, 2019). In this regard, he insists that the rulers of a virtuous city must be wise and morally upright, as well as capable of leading people to happiness in such a way that they support one another and collectively work to reduce evil in society. In short, he believes that a virtuous society can emerge only under the leadership of individuals who themselves embody wisdom and virtue.

When it comes to rulers and leadership, al-Fārābī is unequivocal - ruling is not a matter of mere power or strategy, but of moral and intellectual excellence. He outlines a clear vision of the kind of person a ruler must be - one who not only holds authority but also possesses a natural disposition toward justice, wisdom, and virtue. Put differently, the ideal ruler, in al-Fārābī's view, is guided not by ambition or coercion, but by the innate quality of a virtuous character and a sincere commitment to the good. Again, central to his philosophy is the notion of the perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*), i.e., a figure who has fully actualised both theoretical and practical virtues. Theoretical virtues complete one's intellectual understanding, while practical moral virtues perfect one's conduct. Together, they shape a leader not only fit to govern but also to inspire. In such a society, these virtues must not remain abstract ideals. Instead, they must be embedded within the souls of those who assume responsibility for political leadership, thereby transforming them into role models for other people (Tanabayeva et al., 2015). In this light, al-Fārābī's concern is not just about political organisation but also about personal as well as social perfection within his vision of the virtuous city.

In addition to the virtuous city, al-Fārābī identifies three other broad categories of cities that stand in stark opposition to the virtuous one. These include (i) the ignorant city (*al-madīnah al-jāhilah*), (ii) the immoral city (*al-madīnah al-fāsiqah*), and (iii) the erring city (*al-madīnah al- ḍāllah*); with each having corresponding characteristics of the soul. In the ignorant

city, the citizens are unaware of the First Cause and have a lack of knowledge about virtue and happiness. Their souls are contaminated and will decay into nothingness. More troubling is the immoral city. Here, the citizens do know the virtues and good but wilfully choose otherwise. They follow the aims of the ignorant cities and succumb to desires such as pleasure, wealth, or domination. The souls of the people who inhabit immoral cities are contaminated, making them unable to attain happiness. Within the ignorant and immoral cities, al-Fārābī posits six sub-types of cities, as depicted in Table 1.

Al-Fārābī also adds a further category: the erring city, in which citizens were given an imitation of happiness and virtues that diverged from the true representations of happiness. This distortion occurs because the rulers of such cities deceive their citizens into pursuing goals that differ from the virtues (Khalidi, 2003). Here, the rulers are immoral while the citizens are ignorant. In all these cases, al-Fārābī emphasises the moral consequences of the soul becoming contaminated and incapable of reaching its highest end. For citizens of these non-virtuous cities, the ultimate destination is not happiness but misery. Although al-Fārābī did not specify their final metaphysical fate, it is clear that without the cultivation of virtue through right knowledge and righteous leadership, the soul is left to perish in confusion and despair.

Table 1: Al-Fārābī's theory of virtuous city (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*)

City	Characteristics
Virtuous city (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*)	Citizens of this city have theoretical virtues, intellectual knowledge, and practical moral values. Correct knowledge and actions lead people to become virtuous citizens; hence, a perfect human being or soul.
Ignorant city (*al-madīnah al-jāhilah*)	Citizens of this city tend to focus on the pleasures and riches. They lack knowledge of virtue and happiness. The souls of the people who live in this city are contaminated and will decay into nothingness.
Immoral city (*al-madīnah al-fāsiqah*)	Citizens of this city know the virtue and good but choose to pursue the aims of the ignorant city. The souls of the people who inhabit this city are contaminated, making them unable to attain happiness.
Erring city (*al-madīnah al- ḍāllah*)	Citizens of this city have been given incorrect imitations of happiness by their rulers. The souls of the people who live in this city missed the right path due to faulty judgments.
Sub-Set of Ignorant and Immoral Cities	
Indispensable city (*al-madīnah al-ḍarūrīyyah*)	Citizens of this city tend to focus on acquiring the bare necessities for subsistence and safeguarding the body.
Vile city (*al-madīnah al-nadhālah*)	Citizens of this city tend to pursue wealth and prosperity. They aspire to acquire the excesses of what is needed for subsistence and safeguarding the body. The souls of the people in this city face moral deprivation due to the desire to obtain wealth, material prosperity, and an abundance of things.
Base city (*al-madīnah al-khissah*)	Citizens of this city tend to seek sensual pleasures (e.g., food, drink, and copulation) or imaginary pleasure (e.g., play or amusement) or both. Those

	who possess more resources and wealth for play and pleasures are regarded as the best and the happiest people.
Timocratic city (*al-madīnah al-karāmīyyah*)	Citizens of this city respect those persons who gain honour, glory, and fame. Al-Fārābī asserts that this city is the best among the ignorant cities. However, their love of honour and fame will eventually turn their city into a despotic city.
Despotic city (*al-madīnah al-taghallub*)	Citizens of this city tend to pursue domination and subjugation. They love to achieve domination over others.
Democratic city (*al-madīnah al-jamā'īyyah*)	Citizens of this city seek multiple objectives, mainly to attain freedom and safeguard that freedom. Because it is a free, non-homogeneous society, there will be citizens who excel in good character as well as those who excel in evil deeds.

SO, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We started this paper by questioning the meaning of the soul. The dictionary definition of the nonphysical aspect of a human being that is considered responsible for the functions of the mind and individual personality (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023) requires critical reflection. From our perspective, the soul should be understood from the viewpoints of Muslim scholars, in this case, al-Fārābī, as they traverse distinct aspects, ranging from body-soul-spirit to selfhood and virtues. In this section, we discuss two reasons why this is so.

First, modern science typically regards human beings as material organisms and reduces consciousness, thought, and emotion to mere byproducts of neural activity within the brain. This reductionist view, while powerful in explanatory scope, leaves little room for metaphysical dimensions of human existence. In contrast, al-Fārābī envisions the soul not as a neural phenomenon but as an immaterial substance emanating from the First Cause through a hierarchy of intellects. For him, the human being, who comprises body, soul, and spirit, attains true perfection and happiness through the cultivation of virtue and the actualisation of the rational faculty.

Yet, al-Fārābī does not propose a radical dualism. According to him, the soul, while immaterial, cannot exist separately or independently from the body. Rather, humans are understood as "embodied consciousness" who need form, matter, body, soul, and spirit to exist. This body-soul-spirit view resonates with what Noor and Ahmad (2020; 2025) describe as the "outward-in-between-inward" structure of human nature. Their interpretation challenges the assumption that the soul is a singular, uniform entity. Instead, they present it as a subtle substance that bridges the corporeal and the spiritual, drawing qualities from both.

Describing the soul as "the in-between," Noor and colleagues (Noor & Ahmad, 2020; Noor & Ahmad, 2025; Noor & Berisha, 2025) highlight its paradoxical nature. Like the body, which is made from the earth, the soul can be heavy, unaware, and ignorant. On the other hand, like the spirit, which comes from the divine, the soul is full of light, awareness, and intelligence. As such, human nature reflects this in-between state, constantly shifting between opposites and never fixed. This framing not only expands our understanding of al-Fārābī's metaphysics but also invites a more integrative reflection on the complexity of the human soul, one that neither science nor traditional theology fully captures in isolation.

Second, al-Fārābī's view about attaining perfection (*al-insān al-kāmil*) as the ultimate goal of human existence implies the need to return to one's primordial disposition (*fiṭra*). As humans live their lives, they draw out and develop the soul's potential by acting in accordance with their original disposition. The peak of this actualisation is attained when an individual is spiritually sound, awake, and conscious of God. Because contemporary psychology has, for the most part, left out these aspects of human condition, it must bring back the transcendent, spiritual heart experience into the field, particularly the part where we need to remember the spark that God breathed into Adam (Qur'ān 15:29, 32:9, 38:72) and which is imprinted onto his heart that makes us human in the highest sense of the word. It is within this context that Noor and Berisha (2025) assert that the modern conception of the self is fragmented and urge for reintegration of spiritual insights by returning to the religious traditions. Without acknowledging the vertical dimension of transcendence, our understanding of the self and soul will remain incomplete.

Furthermore, the Islamic traditions in general, and al-Fārābī's view in particular, tend to focus on "virtues" rather than on "values". The former refers to good moral traits or qualities that shape a person's character and behaviour, whereas the latter are the beliefs a person has about what is right and wrong and what is most important in life. Focusing on virtues over values matters because virtues are stable, can shape who we are, and provide moral boundaries to guide behaviours. In contrast, values are subjective, abstract, and personal, and can vary widely between individuals and cultures. Nevertheless, being virtuous does place limits on personal freedom. Virtue demands self-restraint, guided by conscience and a sense of responsibility. However, this is not a loss but a refinement. Virtue turns freedom into something meaningful, i.e., the freedom to choose what is right over what is easy. In this way, the limits virtue imposes elevate humans, helping us live with purpose, integrity, and moral clarity.

CONCLUSION

Recent efforts in Islamic psychology, such as Rothman's refined Islamic model of the soul (2018; 2022), the Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy framework by Keshavarzi et al. (2021), and the role of the *nafs* in Islamic psycho-spirituality by Rassool and Keskin (2025), represent promising attempts to bridge the gap between modern psychology and Islamic understandings of the human psyche. However, even these authors acknowledge the limits of such efforts, especially when dealing with something as vast, complex, and infinite as the soul. This is where recourse to Muslim scholars such as al-Fārābī becomes essential. His conception of the soul as an immaterial substance that strives toward perfection through reason and virtue offers not only philosophical depth but also a coherent framework that could enrich the emerging psychological and therapeutic models. By revisiting al-Fārābī's thoughts and works about the soul, this paper contributes to the ongoing effort to provide a more robust, theologically grounded framework for Islamic psychology that is both spiritually resonant and intellectually rigorous.

In this paper, we begin with al-Fārābī's life and influences, followed by a discussion of his scholarly contributions and notable works. His ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions are also discussed to contextualise his thoughts on the nature, structure, development, and stages of the soul. Finally, the implications of his works for Islamic psychology are presented. To this end, it is hoped that al-Fārābī's life, ideas, and works, especially on the soul, have been summarised and discussed in a structured manner.

Scholars have noted that al-Fārābī's various views and works are not always consistent with each other, perhaps purposely because of the target audience of his work or because of subsequent developments in his thinking, or for other reasons (Davidson, 1992; Taylor, 2012). Nevertheless, what is consistent in his thinking is that the existence of the soul is acknowledged, with the notions that internal and external senses, imagination, and rationality/intellect give accurate impressions of reality. Recognition of the perceptual knowledge and primacy of feelings in understanding the world leads to the appropriate interpretation of rational knowledge. Rationality/intellect, in turn, acts as the organiser of the soul.

How the soul is conceptualised and taught in schools and universities can significantly influence the way individuals perceive their being, experience their social reality, and live their lives. When contemporary psychology stripped out the soul in its approach and curricula, a proper understanding of this concept was lost, thereby creating difficulties in explaining why humans behave and think in a certain way. By including the works of Muslim scholars, such as al-Fārābī, into psychology, a more comprehensive explanation of the human mind, behaviour, and emotions is provided that can support the development of a sound human psyche. A word of caution, however, must be emphasised. This effort is not an attempt to rewrite the history of psychology. It is instead an invitation to consider al-Fārābī's ideas when discussing psychological concepts and theories, or even to revive his ideas with renewed contemporary practices.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Part of this study was funded by the International Institute of Islamic Thought - IIIT East and Southeast Asia (Grant Number: SPI21-053-0053). The author declares no conflict of interest.

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