

A Philosophical Approach to Explaining Divine Revelation in Farabi's Thought

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Abstract: Revelation is one of the sciences and teachings that many people are not able to understand and comprehend this knowledge due to its divine and metaphysical origin. Therefore, many philosophers and thinkers have studied and explained this mysterious consciousness and have tried to interpret it rationally and logically. Farabi is one of the philosophers who studied revelation for the first time and provided a detailed explanation of this divine knowledge. He believes that this divine knowledge is revealed to the prophet directly or through the mediation of the Tenth Intellect. The study of divine revelation as a science of inhuman origin, in the opinion of Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, can solve many problems of people regarding the lack of understanding or misunderstanding of divine revelation and answer many of their questions and doubts in the field of divine revelation. In this article, through descriptive-analytical method and with the help of library sources, we first try to define revelation and examine what revelation is from the point of view of Farabi, and then discuss the relationship between the prophet and Tenth Intellect and the quality of revelation. Farabi believes that the eloquent and imaginative power of the prophet has reached sufficient and faithful perfection and the prophet, due to his supreme spiritual perfection, is able to receive and convey revelation to the people in words and deeds.

Keywords: Revelation; Farabi; Prophet; The Tenth Intellect

1. Introduction

One of the sciences that no one other than the divine prophets has access to it, is revelation. Revelation is a knowledge that has occupied the minds of many believers and atheists from the very beginning of its revelation to the divine messengers, so that many atheists have reduced it to the level of poetry and sermons and considered it taken from the imagination of the prophets and they have spoken about revelation that has made people doubt this divine knowledge. Therefore, the greatest philosophers and mystics of the divine religions, before others, have taken action to remove doubts about this divine knowledge.

Farabi, as one of the great philosophers of Islam, whose words and thoughts have been considered and cited by thinkers of the world throughout the ages, has studied the subject of revelation and presented a precise and logical result of this metaphysical knowledge in such a way that even his intellectual opponents have accepted his opinions. Farabi considers revelation to have a divine origin and believes that the prophet, through the perfection of his eloquent and imaginative powers and by the grace of God, is able to receive revelation directly or indirectly and after receiving the revelation, prophet

is responsible for communicating it to the people so that they too become aware of these divine sciences and use it to guide them in life.

1-1 Discussion Background

Revelation is one of the central teachings of the heavenly religions, especially Islam. Therefore, from the beginning of the revelation to the prophets of the divine religions, this issue, which has supernatural and divine origins, has been considered by thinkers and philosophers and has forced them to study and research in this regard. Farabi is one of the philosophers who has studied revelation for the first time and provided a comprehensive and complete explanation of this subject. His views and analysis were initially opposed, but over time and with further research and study in this regard, most philosophers accepted his view and considered it one of the most rational analyzes of this mysterious consciousness and even in the contemporary era, some philosophers cite his view and use it as the basis for many of their researches on revelation and prophecy.

So far, no research has been written that fully and comprehensively examines Farabi's view on revelation and what he has emphasized about the revelation and in researchs such as "Philosophical explanation of revelation from the point of view of Abu Nasr Farabi, written by Gholam Hossein Ebrahimi Dinani and Najmeh Sadat Radfar" from the point of view of Farabi, the beginning of revelation and the four types of imaginative powers that play a key role in receiving and communicating revelation have not been mentioned in the slightest. Also in works such as "Revelation from the point of view of Farabi and Ibn Sina, written by Mohammad Hadi Mollazadeh" or "The role of imagination in the phenomenon of revelation from the point of view of Farabi and Mulla Sadra, written by Ali Turani and Masoumeh Rahbari", Farabi's point of view has been studied along with the point of view of other philosophers, therefore, the contents have been presented in a concise and limited way. The distinguishing feature

of this article is first a detailed explanation of the nature of revelation in Farabi's thought and then a study of concepts and topics such as active intellect, rational power and imagination in a broad and purposeful way, from his point of view, which play an essential role in receiving and communicating revelation.

1-2 Problem Statement

Ever since the divine messengers came into contact with the source of knowledge (God Almighty) and received teachings from God about the guidance of the servants and the administration of the utopia, many questions have been on the minds of man. And it made him curious about the truth of revelation and led thinkers to research and study to answer questions such as what is the nature of revelation and how is it revealed? Is it of the type of mystical discoveries and intuitions, or does God Himself subject anyone He deems worthy of this grace? Farabi, the prominent philosopher of the Islamic world, has studied the subject of revelation and provided an acceptable analysis of this subject, so that it can answer many questions and doubts of people about divine revelation. He believes that revelation is a divine science that prophet, due to the purification of the soul and the perfection of his eloquent and imaginative power, receives and communicates it to the people and God, due to the perfection of his soul, considers prophet worthy of communication with the active intellect and gives His knowledge to prophet to guide the people. Therefore, revelation is not revealed to the prophet only because of divine grace, but the prophet has perfections that others do not want to receive these perfections and merits.

In this article, the aim is to study and explain Farabi's thought about the revelation with the help of reliable library sources in order to answer such questions;

What is the truth and nature of revelation? Where does revelation come from? How does the prophet communicate with God? What qualities in prophet lead him to receive revelation? What is the quality of revelation? Is revelation in the form of human words from the very beginning of revelation? What is the level of revelation?

2.The Nature and Truth of Revelation

In his works, Farabi has tried to explain revelation based on the relationship of the prophet with the active intellect, and on the other hand, the imaginative and eloquent power of the prophet. Farabi was the first Islamic philosopher to explain the nature of revelation through active intellect, linking the impartiality of rationalities to potential intellect with their impartation to the imaginative power. Farabi believes that prophet uses imagination in receiving and communicating revelation from the two areas of receiving revelation from the active intellect and inducing it to the people, and he believes that the imagination of prophet is sufficient and faithful to be able to play a role in this stage.

Farabi has used the theory of imagination to explain the concept of revelation for two reasons; one is because of perceiving and receiving revelation from the active intellect and the other is because prophet conveyed the revelation to the people.

In his works, after proving the existence of God, Farabi discusses the attributes that can be attributed to Him. Among these attributes is "knowledge", which is the basis for the revelation of the first being. This attribute can only be said to be immutable; because the "first being" has knowledge of objects with rational means and rational science does not change, but science that uses sense is variable (Norouzi and Hossein Ghasemi, 1996, 6). Also, this knowledge is a simple rational knowledge that does not cause multiplicity and is the impart of the world and the relationship that it establishes with each of the details: "God's knowledge is a rational and simple science, and the little knowledge that a person has is also given to him, is by God and does not cause multiplicity". An example of this is that there is a debate between a wise person and his friend and his friend says a long word and the wise person remembers that long word to bring the answer to everything that his friend has said, without having to answer his points in detail beforehand (Farabi, 1938, 24). Of course, Farabi states that the knowledge of God cannot be compared to the knowledge of other beings, because the intellect and reason of God are different from other beings (Ibid 16-17). In Farabi's philosophical system, the first existing science with such characteristics is the source of revelation (Ebrahimi Dinani and Radfar, 2010, 141).

Farabi has defined revelation as "the process of degrading knowledge from God to prophet" and also "the descent and degradation of divine truths from the position and rank of general reason in the imaginary world for the person of the prophet" (Farabi, 1981, 269). Farabi has also defined revelation as the impartation of active intellect to passive intellect through the mediation of used intellect (Farabi, 1938, 79- 80).

According to Farabi, revelation is a kind of divine grace that God deems the prophets worthy of being ejaculated by the active intellect due to their high level of intellect and spirit and this ejaculation, which is at the level of the

narrators of the prophets, must reach the level of their imagination so that it can be understood by human beings so that they can cling to it and be guided.

Farabi connects the doctrine of revelation to its political aspect and considers it as one of the characteristics of the boss of the utopia and says: "The head of the utopia is a person who does not need anything and God has given him everything and he knows many sciences that a person cannot find those sciences with material means and the head of utopia has become aware of those sciences through divine revelation and words" (Farabi, 1981, 49). It is obvious that in this sense, the head of the utopia in Farabi's thought is the same prophet connected to the revelation and the word of God, and because he is connected to the source of divine knowledge, this is what realizes the prosperity of utopia.

The important point in explaining revelation in Farabi's thought is the role of active intellect or, in religious terms, the angel of revelation. Farabi believes that after the orthodox and imaginative power of prophet, he reached perfection and exaltation and was subjected to receiving the divine word from God, the prophet will gain more blessings due to his connection with the active intellect, which will receive him in receiving the divine word.

According to Farabi, the revelation of the ejaculation of truths and knowledge from God to the prophets, which is done through intermediate or direct means and the important aspect in defining revelation is the "sending" by God and the "receiving" by prophet.

3.The Relationship of the Prophet with the Active Intellect in Receiving Revelation

One of the most important concepts used in explaining the divine revelation in Farabi's thought is the active intellect. An important part of explaining revelation in Farabi's thought depends on the concept that he used to try to explain how revelation was revealed and also received by prophet.

Farabi states: "The task of the active intellect is to take care of man and strive to bring him to the perfection that is attainable for man. This is the ultimate happiness and is the human endeavor to reach an active intellect. This can be achieved only by separating him from the body and not needing anything else for his survival, and in this state perfection remains forever. In addition, the active intellect should be called the Holy Spirit" (Farabi, 1938, 3).

Farabi is the first Islamic philosopher to discuss the divine revelation. In explaining the doctrine of divine revelation from Farabi's point of view, active intellect has a significant role and he has tried to explain revelation in the light of the prophet's relationship with active intellect.

According to Farabi, the prophet, due to the perfection that he has acquired in his spiritual dimensions, finds it worthy to communicate with the active intellect, and as a result of this connection, he is added to the perfections of the prophet and acquires more merits. Farabi believes that this connection with the active intellect depends on the completion of the spiritual dimensions and the rational and imaginative powers of the prophet in order to be able to rise to a degree where he can also speak with the active intellect. Due to the connection with the active intellect, the spiritual level of the prophet is completed and he also finds it worthy to receive the word and divine revelation.

In explaining how the prophet relates to active reason, Farabi places great emphasis on the power of reason, especially the imagination of the prophet, and believes that it is due to the great perfection of the imagination of the prophet that he can receive divine revelation and communicate it to the people. According to Farabi, the imagination of the prophet must be exalted to such an extent that he can easily receive grace from the active intellect and communicate the divine word and revelation to the people through the stages that take place in the imagination.

Farabi believes that if the imagination of the prophet is perfected, he can acquire knowledge and virtue in his sleep and wakefulness, and be informed of the past and future conditions and become aware of the course of affairs. According to Farabi, the prophet must be perfect in all fields so that he can communicate with the active intellect and receive the divine word, but not all matters are related to the perfection of the prophet, but in addition to perfection, divine grace must also be included in the prophet and may God give this degree to the prophet so that he is worthy of receiving divine revelation.

Farabi believes that human beings are at the lowest levels of rational and imaginative power, but the prophet is at the highest level and these perfections are increased due to the connection with the active intellect.

According to Farabi, the prophet is the philosopher who can receive revelation both through contemplation and meditation, and through the power of imagination, which can communicate with the active intellect in sleep and wakefulness and receive the divine word from him. Therefore, from the point of view of Farabi, the prophet who is associated with active intellect has the highest human and spiritual degrees and is the head of the utopia, which is added to his perfection by connecting with active intellect and receiving revelatory words.

4.How Is Revelation Revealed?

What is evident from Farabi's writings is that he considers the prophet to receive revelation from God in three stages, which are:

1.Connection to active intellect:At this stage, the prophet succeeds in receiving grace from the active intellect. Farabi considers this success apart from the study of formal sciences by the prophet and he believes that this success in receiving divine revelation and grace from the active intellect is the divine grace and blessing on the prophet, who considered his soul worthy of receiving his words and teachings.

Explaining this stage of receiving revelation, Farabi says:"When a person acquires the principles of science through the imagination, he does not need anything in explaining its principles because he has received this knowledge from the active intellect "(Farabi, 1938,12-13).

It is at this stage that the orthodox power of the prophet has passed from the monstrous and actual level and has reached the highest degree that the intellect is used, and is able to comprehend the different things from sense and matter.

Farabi believes that the revelation received by the active intellect by the prophet is not acquired but divine grace and says:"When a person leaves the potential intellect and moves towards the actual intellect, and then acquires the necessary levels in the actual intellect and moves towards the used intellect, all this is a grace and forgiveness from God and due to the high intellectual and spiritual levels of that person,God considers him worthy of receiving a revelation that no one can reach such a level except the Prophet "(Farabi,1969, 10).

In fact, this aspect of Farabi's statements can be considered as the ejaculation of revelatory verses by Gabriel to the prophet, which the prophet receives revelatory verses from the angel of revelation or, in Farabi's words, active intellect.

2.The emergence of revelation in the imagination of the prophet:Farabi believes that in order to receive divine revelations and revelatory teachings, the imagination of the prophet must have reached the highest degree of human perfection in order to be able to understand those teachings.After receiving the divine teachings by connecting the prophet to the active intellect, those teachings appear in the imagination of the prophet, and it is here that the imaginative power of the prophet, with the power and capability he has acquired through the attainment of perfection, turns the general intellects into parts.

From Farabi's point of view, the imagination of the prophet is completely obedient and submissive to the power of reason, and whatever the power of reason in general receives, must be manifested in part in the power of imagination.

Farabi considers the imaginative power of the prophet as active as the rational power connected to the active intellect, and for this reason, in his opinion, no mistake is made in converting this general knowledge into partial knowledge in the imaginative power of the prophet (Farabi,1938,18- 19).

3.Revealing revelation to the sense of appearance and creation of words:Since the rational and imaginative power of human beings is at the lowest levels of perfection, and like the rational and imaginative power of the prophet, it cannot comprehend the teachings; hence, that knowledge must be reduced to the form of imaginary forms in order to be understood through the external senses, such as what is read or heard.

Farabi states that what is degraded from the active intellect in the form of imaginary forms and then enters the stage of the prophet's senses, is ultimately perfection, beauty and good (Farabi,1981, 93- 94).

One of the most important missions of the prophet is to convey the message and the word of God, and this is what gives meaning to guidance and the philosophy of revelation of knowledge and revelatory verses.It is in this

stage of revelation that the teachings adopted by God and by the active intellect, which are first entered in the orthodox power of the prophet and then in the imaginative power, are communicated to human beings in the form of words and speech, so that human beings can gain a comprehensive understanding of the divine revelations with their external senses, in order to be guided.

In fact, the words of the prophet, while having an unseen origin and originating from God, appear in the form of words and phrases in order to be perfectly appropriate to the ears of the people who live in this world. It is here that we can say that the word of the prophet is "two-sided". The two-sidedness of the word of the prophet means that "revelation" is the word of God and this word reaches the people through his message and at the same time it is appropriate for the people of this world and appears in time and space. Also, revelation is dependent and continuous on the origin of existence, that is, God, and is considered a sign of the unseen and transcendental world (Ebrahimi Dinani and Radfar, 2010, 133).

Farabi considers the soul of the prophet as a sacred thing that can receive divine knowledge and the word of revelation and says: "The prophet has a holy soul that receives divine grace and mercy at the beginning and has a high rank that always receives from God Almighty and receives all its knowledge from God, which is either directly or through intellect" (Nowruzi and Hossein Ghasemi, 1996, 8).

Farabi believes that all intellects enter the intellect of the prophet through the active intellect and then are imparted to his imagination, and thus the soul of the prophet is not empty of any intellects and has all perfections in every sense.

According to Farabi, the imagination of the prophet is perfect and this has two benefits; The first is that it causes the external sensations that enter the imagination not to overpower the imagination in such a way as to pervade its entire field, and the second is that in this way the imagination does not fully serve the rational power and can have its own actions.

5.Revelation Levels

Before dealing with the revelation from the point of view of Farabi, it should be noted that Farabi divided the inner senses, which play a key role in receiving revelation from the prophet, into four categories;

1. Illustrated Power: This power stores the perceptible forms that it sends from the external senses to the common sense. Common sense is the sense that lies between the external sense and the internal sense.
2. Imaginative: This power perceives and stores meanings that are not understood by the illustrated power.
3. Memory: This power is the storehouse of illusory perceptions and its relation to the power of illusion is like the relation of the illustrated power to the common sense and tangible forms.
4. Thought: This power includes both the reserves of the illustrated power and the reserves of the memory power and combines and decomposes them together (Farabi, 2000, 60).

Farabi believes that revelation is in fact a reasonable degradation of the imaginary. He has tried to explain the quality of the revelation in the light of the imagination, which plays an essential role in explaining the concept of revelation and prophecy in his mind. Farabi believes that only the imagination of the prophets and some wise men goes beyond the animal level and that the general and the majority of people cannot develop their imagination in order to receive divine knowledge and because their imagination and their imaginative power do not progress, as a result, their rational power does not progress and rise, and because their perception and rational power are at a low level and they are not able to understand those teachings; therefore, there is no other way than for the prophet to convey the teachings of revelation to him from a rational form to an imaginary one.

One of the differences between the imagination of the prophet and the imagination of other human beings is that the power of the prophet, while sleeping and waking, receives the concepts and details of things from the active intellect and is always engaged in acquiring meanings and concepts from the world of the soul.

Farabi, in terms of the rational aspect of the prophet's understanding of revelation, first places the level of intellect in the "material intellect", which is merely the talent and readiness to comprehend the rationals, "actual intellect" which is when the human soul acquires sciences and generalities and the issuance of rationalities are gathered in it and become actual from the potential state and the "used intellect" states that the intellect is able to comprehend the different forms of matter, and considers the rational aspect of the prophets to be related to the "used intellect" which is able to separate from the material world and finds things that are separate from the characteristics of the world of

the senses, and so is the nature of the divine word. Farabi believes that the perception of revelation depends on having the rank of used intellect in terms of rational power, and from other aspects also requires its own characteristics, which ultimately, by bestowing grace from God, the heart and soul of the prophet are worthy of receiving words and concepts.

In terms of the imagination, if the human imagination is so perfect that it can make free itself from the clutches of other powers in the state of awakening and engage in rational imitations, then it is close to receiving revelation. According to Farabi, the imaginative power of the prophets is dominated by the power of their intellect and covers what it receives from the intellect, and it even creates an image of different beings in the surrounding space, which is an example of predicting the future and informing about past events, the details of which are unknown.

According to Farabi, the perfection of the imaginative power is to be completely obedient to the rational power and to be attracted to it, and to perceive the teachings that the rational power receives by connecting to the active intellect in a human way and in the full meaning and concept and be able to make it comprehensible to other people who are at the lower levels of imagination, to become aware of the divine knowledge.

6. Conclusion

Revelation is one of the cases that many philosophers have stated, this issue is the basis of the principle of prophecy, as one of the principles of monotheistic religions. Therefore, the followers of monotheistic religions, especially Muslims, have paid much attention to this issue and have studied and analyzed the subject of revelation from various aspects in order to provide a broad view of revelation and convince the human race in this regard.

Farabi is one of the famous philosophers of Islam who has considered the subject of revelation for the first time in the Islamic world and has spoken about it. He considers revelation to have a divine origin and believes that revelation is the divine truths and sciences that are revealed to the prophet by God, but this ejaculation by the Almighty God can be done directly or indirectly. He believes that revelation is a kind of divine grace that God deems the prophets worthy of due to the highest level of the soul and the highest levels of intellect, and that He reveals His knowledge about the material world and others through the angel of revelation or himself directly reveals to the prophet. Therefore, the prophet cannot attain the degree of receiving revelation only through austerity and self-purification, but in order to receive the revelation and communicate it to the people, the divine grace must include the state of the prophet. In addition, Farabi in his political philosophy also referred to the subject of revelation and did not consider the head of the utopia to be deprived of this divine grace. In this regard, he stated that the head of the utopia is aware of many sciences that can not be achieved through material means, and God transmits those sciences through revelation to his prophet to manage the affairs and guide the people. Therefore, it can be said that Farabi considered revelation as one of the basic needs of every society and nation and assigned this divine knowledge to the prophet who should be the head of the utopia so that he could become aware of the divine sciences and to use this knowledge in various matters that the ordinary man can never achieve with the help of his little knowledge.

One of the concepts that Farabi has paid much attention to in revelation and has given it an important role in this regard is active intellect. He believes that the prophet, due to the perfection of his eloquent and imaginative powers, can reach the highest spiritual levels and be worthy of communicating with the active intellect and thus receive the divine message. He also stated that through communication with the active intellect, the perfections of the prophet are increased. Therefore, it can be said that according to Farabi, the prophet is at the highest levels of spiritual, and imaginative powers, which can be considered the superiority of the prophet, who is the head of the utopia, over other people. Therefore, with the help of these merits and the grace of the Almighty God, the prophet can communicate with the active intellect and receive and communicate the divine word to the people through the power of speech or the power of imagination and in the imaginary world, as well as the divine words that are supreme and aware is the most guiding, to get enough interest to run the utopia.

Farabi has considered receiving revelation from God in three stages; connection to the active intellect, appearance of revelation in the imagination of the prophet, reduction of revelation to the sense of appearance and creation of words and he believes that at each stage, the revelation changes and by passing through the various powers of the prophet, it is finally revealed to the people in the form of words. In addition, Farabi has also considered a level for the revelation, which has also been explained in the light of the imagination, which has a fundamental role in explaining the concept of revelation and prophecy in his thought.

He believes that the revelation is a reasonable degradation to the imaginary, which means that the imaginative power of the prophets is dominated by their intellect and covers what it receives from the intellect, and even creates an image of different beings in the adjacent space. Therefore, the imaginative power of the prophets is at a much higher level than the imaginative power of others, so that it can communicate with the active intellect and receive divine knowledge and verbally provide it to people so that they too can be guided by these divine sciences and choose the right path in every field. Farabi has tried to explain revelation based on the principles of Islamic philosophy, and for this reason he knows it from God that not everyone can receive it, and only the prophet can receive it.

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