

# A Comparative Study of the Relationship Between Happiness and Reason in the Views of Socrates and Plato, with Emphasis on the Interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Abu Nasr al-Farabi

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## Abstract

*This article presents a comparative study of the relationship between happiness and reason from the perspectives of Socrates and Plato, with an emphasis on the interpretations of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Abu Nasr al-Farabi. The primary goal of this research is to analyze and compare the views of these two Greek philosophers regarding the concept of happiness and the role of reason in achieving it. Additionally, relying on the interpretations of Alexander and al-Farabi, we aim to explore the influence of these ideas on Islamic philosophy. The research methodology involves textual analysis and comparative examination of the primary works of Socrates and Plato, as well as the interpretations of Alexander of Aphrodisias and al-Farabi. The results of this study reveal that, while Socrates views happiness as a moral and rational goal, Plato emphasizes the role of reason in attaining happiness through the knowledge of truth and the good. This research holds particular significance for understanding the interaction between Greek and Islamic philosophy, demonstrating how later interpretations can affect the continuity and evolution of philosophical thought.*

**Keywords:** *Happiness, Reason, Socrates, Plato, Al-Farabi, Alexander of Aphrodisias.*

## Introduction

Happiness and reason are two fundamental concepts that have consistently been central concerns for philosophers throughout the history of human thought. These concepts have long been regarded as keys to understanding the good life and the ultimate purpose of human existence. One of the earliest philosophical systems to seriously examine these notions was ancient Greek philosophy, particularly the ideas of Socrates and Plato. These two great philosophers proposed influential views on the nature of reason and its role in achieving happiness. Socrates, with his ethics-based approach and emphasis on self-knowledge, presented reason as a pathway to a virtuous and good life. Plato, with a more comprehensive philosophical system, emphasized the connection between reason and the knowledge of eternal truths, arguing that happiness is attained through understanding these truths. For both philosophers, reason was not merely a tool for knowledge but also a means to attain a life of happiness.

With the transmission of Greek philosophy to the Islamic world during the Middle Ages, these concepts were revisited and scrutinized anew. Prominent philosophers, especially Alexander of Aphrodisias and Abu Nasr al-Farabi, influenced by the works of Plato and Aristotle, sought to reconcile the concepts of happiness and reason with Islamic philosophical and religious traditions. Alexander of Aphrodisias, a follower of the Peripatetic school, and al-Farabi, recognized as a founder of Islamic philosophy, each offered distinctive analyses and interpretations of these concepts. Alexander emphasized a realist interpretation of reason, while al-Farabi, expanding on political and ethical philosophy, examined happiness as not only an individual concept but also a social and political one.

Socrates, as one of the founders of the philosophical tradition in ancient Greece, closely linked the relationship between happiness and reason with virtue. He believed that happiness was achieved through living a virtuous life, and reason was the tool that guided individuals toward virtue and self-knowledge. In his dialogues, particularly in *Apology* and *Gorgias*, Socrates emphasized that an unexamined life, devoid of

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reason, was not worthy of a human being. For him, true happiness was found through the correct use of reason and the pursuit of truth and self-knowledge.

Plato, Socrates' most prominent disciple, expanded these concepts and articulated them within his famous theory of Forms. In Plato's view, happiness depended on the knowledge of intelligible realities and the attainment of eternal truths. In *The Republic*, Plato argued that only those who grasp the truths of the Forms can attain true happiness. For Plato, happiness was also connected with inner justice and harmony within the soul, with reason serving as the force that harmonizes the various elements of the soul.

Alongside these two Greek philosophers, Peripatetic philosophers such as Alexander of Aphrodisias and Abu Nasr al-Farabi played a key role in the transmission and interpretation of these ideas by integrating Greek thought with the cultural and religious contexts of Islam. Alexander of Aphrodisias, known for his commentaries on Aristotle's works, sought to explain the relationship between reason and happiness based on Aristotelian ideas, though the influence of Socratic and Platonic thought cannot be overlooked. For Alexander, human happiness ultimately depended on the application of both practical and theoretical reason. He believed that theoretical reason led to the understanding of universal truths, while practical reason guided individuals toward virtuous living.

Farabi, another major Islamic philosopher, discussed reason and happiness more comprehensively in his works. Farabi, by merging Greek philosophy with Islamic teachings, particularly in his major works such as *Enumeration of the Sciences* and *The Virtuous City*, offered a comprehensive theory on happiness and reason. Farabi argued that ultimate happiness lay in intellectual knowledge of the world and God, attainable through theoretical reason and adherence to religious law. Farabi also emphasized that happiness was not only an individual pursuit but a social one, and that society must be governed by reason and virtue for individuals to achieve true happiness.

This study aims to conduct a comparative examination of the relationship between happiness and reason in the thoughts of Socrates and Plato, as interpreted by Alexander of Aphrodisias and al-Farabi. It seeks to demonstrate how these concepts evolved throughout the history of philosophy and were transmitted from ancient Greece to the Islamic world. On one hand, Socrates and Plato laid the foundation for a view that emphasized the role of reason in attaining individual and ethical happiness, a perspective that profoundly influenced later philosophers like Alexander and Farabi. On the other hand, Alexander and Farabi endeavored to adapt these ideas within their own philosophical frameworks, focusing particularly on their social and political dimensions.

One of the key aspects of this study is to highlight the similarities and differences between these philosophers in explaining the relationship between happiness and reason. While Socrates and Plato both emphasized the importance of reason in the pursuit of truth and happiness, their interpretations of these concepts varied. Conversely, Alexander and Farabi, drawing on these Greek philosophers and attempting to integrate them with the Islamic worldview, presented novel approaches to these issues.

Through a comparative approach, this research seeks to analyze these viewpoints and demonstrate how the concept of reason as a force for attaining happiness has been interpreted across different philosophical traditions, eventually transforming into new concepts within Islamic philosophy.

### *Conceptualization*

#### *Definition of Reason in Lexical and Technical Terms*

In lexical terms, the word "reason" (‘aql) comes from the root "‘a-q-l," meaning to bind or restrain. In Arabic, it refers to the ability to prevent wrongful actions and to control the self. The term signifies a force that prevents individuals from making mistakes and guides them toward understanding truths (Ibn Manzur, 1980, p. 34).

In technical terms, reason refers to an internal force that enables humans to recognize, comprehend, and think logically. In philosophy, reason is considered one of the main tools for understanding, not only in grasping empirical concepts but also in accessing non-sensory truths such as abstract and metaphysical ideas (Javadi Amoli, 2008, p. 55). The definition of reason varies among different philosophers and depends on their philosophical background and school of thought.

#### *Reason According to Farabi*

Farabi (870-950 CE), a prominent Islamic philosopher, paid special attention to the concept of reason. He divides reason into four types:

- **Potential Reason:** A force that exists potentially within every person but has not yet been activated.
- **Actual Reason:** The force that becomes active after learning and experience.
- **Acquired Reason ('aql bi-l-malaka):** The ability to analyze general principles and abstract concepts after practice and repetition.
- **Reason in Act ('aql mustafād):** The highest level of reason, where a person connects with the active intellect (universal reason) and attains direct understanding of truths (Farabi, 1999, p. 88).

Farabi was deeply influenced by Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy, and in his view, reason plays a fundamental role in guiding humans to happiness and perfection. He believed that reason enables individuals to discover truths and, through contemplation and thought, gain knowledge of the world. Ultimately, according to Farabi, reason in act represents the stage where a person achieves complete understanding and can unite with the active intellect, which is the source of all knowledge (Farabi, 1999, p. 90).

#### *Reason from the Perspective of Alexander of Aphrodisias*

Alexander of Aphrodisias (2nd-3rd century CE), recognized as one of the most prominent commentators on Aristotle, presented significant theories regarding reason. In his works, particularly in his commentaries on Aristotle's writings, he assigns a prominent role to reason. Alexander distinguishes between **active reason** (*nous poietikos*) and **passive reason** (*nous pathetikos*):

- **Passive Reason:** This refers to the capacity to receive and understand forms and concepts, but it is not active by itself. This type of reason gradually acquires the ability to know through the reception of knowledge and experiences via the senses.
- **Active Reason:** This type of reason operates independently of the senses and possesses the capability to comprehend general and abstract concepts. Unlike passive reason, active reason is eternal and immortal and is the source of motion and activity within passive reason (Alexander of Aphrodisias, 2001, p. 115).

Alexander believed that active reason is not an inherent part of human nature but rather something external and divine that aids passive reason in the process of knowledge and understanding. He articulated this view in line with Aristotle's interpretations, emphasizing the role of active reason in comprehending universals and metaphysical truths. For Alexander, active reason is a non-material essence that is perpetually engaged in understanding and plays a key role in rational cognition (Alexander of Aphrodisias, 2001, p. 117).

## Summary

### *Comparison of Farabi and Alexander of Aphrodisias's Views on Reason*

Both Farabi and Alexander of Aphrodisias were influenced by Aristotelian philosophy; however, their perspectives on reason exhibit notable differences. Farabi emphasized the diverse aspects of reason and sought to illustrate its role in achieving happiness and understanding the truth. He categorized reason into various stages and levels, ultimately leading to the *active reason* and its connection to the *active intellect* (Farabi, 1999, p. 95).

In contrast, Alexander of Aphrodisias focused on the distinction between *passive reason* and *active reason*, viewing active reason as a divine and immaterial essence that plays a crucial role in the process of knowledge. He considered active reason to be the primary agent in attaining understanding of universals and metaphysical truths, and he regarded it as separate from human reason (Alexander of Aphrodisias, 2001, p. 120).

Consequently, both philosophers emphasized the significance of reason in understanding; however, Farabi paid more attention to the stages of reason and its developmental journey in human life, while Alexander concentrated on the distinction between active and passive reason and their roles in comprehending universals.

### *Definition of Happiness in Language and Terminology*

Happiness, in linguistic terms, is derived from the root "س-ع-د" (S-A-D) and refers to good fortune, happiness, success, and prosperity. In Arabic, this term signifies a state in which an individual achieves lasting happiness and good fortune (Ibn Manzur, 1980, p. 125). In philosophical terminology, happiness is defined as the ultimate perfection and the goal of human life. This concept refers to a stable state of goodness and perfection that an individual attains through rational and moral activities throughout their life (Jawadi Amoli, 2008, p. 75).

### *Happiness from Farabi's Perspective*

Farabi (870-950 CE) is one of the most prominent Islamic philosophers who presented significant theories about happiness. From Farabi's viewpoint, ultimate happiness is the highest good and the primary goal of humanity. This happiness is realized when a person can attain knowledge of the truth through rational activities and act in harmony with the overall system of the universe. Farabi divides happiness into two categories: worldly happiness, which is the state in which a person achieves physical perfections and limited pleasures in material life, and otherworldly happiness, which is the highest degree of happiness and can only be attained through rational understanding and adherence to moral virtues (Farabi, 1999, p. 140). He emphasizes that ultimate human happiness is realized through reaching the *active intellect* and connecting with the *active reason*, achievable through rational activities and efforts to understand universal truths (Ibid, p. 145).

### *Happiness from the Perspective of Alexander of Aphrodesius*

Alexander of Aphrodesius, a prominent commentator on Aristotle, also placed significant emphasis on the concept of happiness. Like Aristotle, he viewed happiness as a product of rational activity and believed that individuals must cultivate moral and rational virtues to achieve happiness. Alexander emphasized that ultimate happiness lies in attaining the *active intellect* and understanding the universals of the world (Alexander of Aphrodesius, 2001, p. 152). He maintained that human happiness is rooted in rational thought and the understanding of the truths of the universe, which is attained through the *active intellect* (Ibid, p. 155).

*Summary: Comparing the Views of Farabi and Alexander of Aphrodesius on Happiness*

Both philosophers, Farabi and Alexander of Aphrodesius, regarded happiness as the culmination of rational understanding and spiritual development; however, their approaches exhibit differences. Farabi categorizes happiness into worldly and otherworldly, emphasizing the connection with the *active intellect* as the pathway to attaining otherworldly happiness (Farabi, 1999, p. 150). In contrast, Alexander highlights the significance of the *active intellect* as the essential substance of ultimate happiness, asserting that happiness can only be achieved through understanding the universals of the world (Alexander of Aphrodesius, 2001, p. 160).

*Relationship between Happiness and Reason According to Socrates and Plato*

It can be said that "if ethics before Socrates was a collection of wisdoms and advice flowing from the words of poets and sages, or if it consisted of statements on some moral aspects that did not reach a level of comprehensiveness and coherence that would make it a distinct science with its own methods and foundations" (Marhaba, 1981, p. 138), then accessing and uncovering the features of a specific approach to the theory of happiness during that early phase of Greek philosophical thought is not a simple task. This issue also applies to the philosophy of those who preceded Socrates, as their inquiries focused on cosmology and the interpretation of the origin of existence. Therefore, references to a definitive teaching concerning happiness are attributed to Socrates and subsequently to his student, Plato. In this section of the present study, the researcher will present the orientations of the discussion on happiness from the perspective of Socrates and then Plato, to determine the extent of the connection between happiness and the rational aspect in both philosophers' views.

*The Relationship between Happiness and Reason from Socrates' Perspective*

Plato's *Republic* is filled with numerous texts that illustrate Socrates' intention to connect ethics with reason. Socrates believes that reason is the foundation for adhering to general principles and that reason should guide the body. He states, "So if we first consider the analytical aspect, which is essential to reason, and then apply it to the needs of the body, and if we limit ourselves to observing the general principles, would we not reach our goal?" (Plato, n.d., p. 136). Furthermore, when Socrates speaks in his teachings about a noble and virtuous man, he asserts, "If a man of good character comes across the righteous in his stories, he is, in this case, a model of a virtuous man, and that is when he is accompanied by composure, reason, and so forth" (Ibid, p. 126).

From this point, the relationship between happiness and reason according to Socrates is established, as "Socrates is guided by reason toward fixed realities in the realm of knowledge, and it is through that he reaches them. In other words, reason relates to absolute values in the field of ethics" (Al-Tawil, 1978, p. 50). Socrates' theory of happiness aligns closely with this interpretation.

From Socrates' perspective, humans seek happiness, so if one understands purely through reason that virtue is the only path to happiness, they will not err in their pursuit, as they will not engage in actions that lead to their misfortune while being aware and free to choose (Marhaba, 1993, p. 105).

Therefore, according to Socrates, reason is what directs an individual toward happiness. He sees a close relationship between knowledge and virtue (which is the foundation of happiness) (Al-Tawil, 1978, p. 62). Socrates believes that "the pursuit of knowledge is the most important thing a person should care about; no one acts wrongly intentionally, so people need knowledge to be fully virtuous" (Russell, 2010, p. 165).

Consequently, the understanding rooted in reason, from Socrates' perspective, is the very path adorned with moral virtues that, in turn, lead to happiness. In essence, "Socrates builds ethics upon reason" (Al-Tawil, 1978, p. 57), thus framing his conception of happiness within this context.

Ultimately, the connection Socrates establishes between the desire for happiness and the activity of reason aligns with a significant part of his method, distinguishing his philosophy from the sophists' interpretations. This distinction arises from Socrates placing reason at the helm of various aspects of human behavior. His

focus on the study of the soul and human ethical conceptions naturally led him to employ rational methods and appropriate reflections in this discourse (Helmi Matar, 1968, pp. 144-145). Just as Socrates believed that a person's actions are solely determined by reason, and if they are correct, then that action must be undertaken (Walter Stace, 1984, p. 128).

### *The Relationship Between Happiness and Reason from Plato's Perspective*

Plato accepted the idea of happiness from his teacher Socrates and emphasized that the good is the happiness that is the end of every moral action (Al-Tawil, 1978, pp. 75-76). He added some details and other aspects to this theory that he considered in his philosophy, such as the issue of the soul and its relationship with the realm of Forms and the system of justice that he sought to establish in his Republic.

Plato considered the soul's desire for happiness in the higher world as evidence of the immortality of the soul. According to Plato, we desire happiness, and this desire is inherent in the soul. Since our desires in this life are unfulfilled, there must be another life where we can attain happiness (Al-Fakhouri, 1993, vol. 1, p. 77). Plato himself confirms in the Republic that "the soul always exists because it is not affected by evil and seeks the good" (Plato, n.d., p. 39).

According to Plato, the balance between the powers of the soul and its virtues is what leads to happiness. The virtues of the soul, according to Plato, are four: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. The duty of justice is to maintain order and harmony among the first three virtues. Therefore, if balance, or justice, is established among the powers of the soul and its virtues, the soul will attain happiness (Abu Rayan, 1973, p. 265).

From Plato's perspective, happiness is the product of reason; because if "the perception of truths, according to Plato, depends solely on reason" (Werner, 1962, p. 204). Thus, happiness represents one of the truths and is dependent on reason, as happiness, in one of its meanings according to Plato, is the practice of the highest virtue of the soul, which is wisdom, and wisdom is considered by this philosopher as the virtue of reason (Abu Rayan, 1973, p. 2).

This is also evident in the methods that Plato advanced, such as the way through which the soul attains happiness and reaches it through the activity of human reason. Therefore, reason is an element that controls the behavior of the soul. The reason for this is that "according to Plato, the soul does not understand virtue (which is the way to happiness) unless the body dominates it and submits it to its commands. The understanding of this goal is not possible unless reason is dominant" (Mahmoud Qasem, 1962, p. 62).

Therefore, reason plays a significant role in purifying the soul and consequently in the pursuit of happiness. Dr. Mahmoud Qasem comments on this inclination from Plato's perspective: "In purified human souls, reason can control will and desire, and thus the soul can ascend" (Mahmoud Qasem, 1970, p. 33).

If philosophy is understood as the attainment of reason to truth, Plato believes that the highest degrees of happiness lie within it, as the soul here diminishes material interests and enjoys spiritual perception; or as Plato holds, seeks to attain the ultimate good. "Thus, according to Plato, philosophy is not the knowledge of material things, whether natural or ethical, but rather the knowledge of the intelligible. Hence, man understands the rational truth to the extent that the individual reaches truth and good" (Al-Ahwan, 1947, p. 17).

What affirms that happiness, from Plato's perspective, is related to reason is that it appears from his ethical philosophy that there is a distinction between the sensible world and the intelligible world. Dr. Tawfiq Al-Tawil points to this distinction when he says: "This opposition in Plato has turned into a contradiction in values. In this sense, matter (or body) is the source of all evils, and reason is the foundation of all goods... Therefore, the sensory world appears completely evil, and the life of virtue requires philosophical contemplation and reflection on the sensory world and its aspects. If this is true, then philosophy, which is the knowledge of the Forms, is the only component of the ultimate good" (Al-Tawil, 1978, p. 77).

Thus, reason becomes the path to happiness, and the degree of the soul's happiness corresponds to the extent to which reason contemplates it. If Plato considers happiness related to philosophical thought, then, in his view, only philosophers achieve happiness. According to Plato, the knowledge of the Forms (the highest degree of happiness for the perfection of the soul) is not accessible to the general populace, and only the chosen philosophers attain it, as nature has granted them this potential over others (Halimi Matar, 1968, p. 185).

### *The Relationship Between Happiness and Reason According to Aristotle*

The issue of happiness is of great significance in Aristotle's philosophy, to the extent that a substantial portion of his ethical theory is devoted to this topic. Consequently, Aristotle begins his book "Nicomachean Ethics" with extensive discussions on this subject, presenting various opinions on the definition of happiness and discussing prominent theories regarding the nature of happiness. He then defines happiness and clarifies its relationship with human activity, the connection between happiness and virtue, and other related matters (Aristotle, 2007, pp. 53-84). It can be said that "Aristotle has done justice to the matter; thus, happiness appeared for the first time as a precise philosophical doctrine organized by him" (Al-Tawil, 1978, p. 83).

Among what Aristotle presents about happiness in relation to virtue, he states, "Therefore, happiness is an activity in accordance with virtue, meaning that it is an act of a specific kind" (Aristotle, 2007, p. 10). Happiness is that act of the soul that aligns with complete virtue (Ibid., p. 80), and a happy individual will remain joyful throughout their life, as they perform actions and reflections in accordance with virtue (Ibid., p. 76).

This implies that virtues are not desirable for their own sake, but rather sought after for the higher purpose of happiness, especially since "Aristotle declared that virtues are a means to achieve the goal of happiness, which is a point where Aristotle diverges from other ethical theorists who consider virtue the end of human action" (Al-Tawil, 2007, p. 89).

Regarding the aspect of the connection between Aristotle's inclination, the credibility of virtue-seeking for the purpose of happiness, and the activity of reason, this philosopher emphasizes that when an individual thinks, they are fundamentally acting in accordance with the highest virtue. According to Aristotle, "As long as it is a goal — in accordance with nature — it is a faculty of reason, and the best use of it is in contemplation and thought. A person should recognize all other things for the good that is inherent in them; from this collection of goods, they perform bodily actions for psychological matters and choose virtues for the sake of reason, as it is superior to all" (Aristotle, 1987, p. 37).

Here, rational thought represents the highest types of virtues that can be performed. According to Aristotle, this way of life deserves to be pursued by an individual, as true happiness is hidden within it. "Therefore, reason is the only thing that humans deserve to strive for. Thus, good and evil are inherently linked to philosophical thought above all else" (Aristotle, 1987, pp. 39-40).

The good that Aristotle refers to constitutes the ultimate good, which is the highest thing that a person seeks. "And this good alone is sufficient for human happiness, according to Aristotle" (Abu Rayan, 1999, p. 216).

If this good, from Aristotle's perspective, is intrinsically linked to philosophical thought, it indicates the connection between happiness and reason, as it is reason that brings it about. Thus, Aristotle explicitly states that happiness is a category of philosophy: "Anyone who wants to be happy must know philosophy" (Aristotle, 1987, p. 38), and those who choose a rational life are capable of living it (Ibid., pp. 60-61).

In this context, the researcher can stand at the intersection of the thoughts of Aristotle and Plato, as both philosophers believe that philosophy represents a life of eternal happiness. They regard this ultimate goal as indicative of a higher meaning of happiness, which naturally contrasts with the relationship of pleasure to happiness, given that pleasure is transient and limited.

However, if according to Aristotle, happiness must be based on reason, and the highest virtue within us is the virtue of theoretical reason because it is part of our nature and its subject matter involves the noblest topics, namely the immutable and eternal beings (Yusuf Karam, n.d., p. 236), then happiness is intrinsically related to divine subtleties. Aristotle emphasizes that "if a person is freed from irrational evil and clings to reason, then he becomes like a god" (Aristotle, 1987, p. 40). This rational activity (i.e., the activity of rational thought) is something only the gods are described with, and it is attributed solely to human reason (Ibid., p. 40).

Thus, reason in achieving happiness is akin to the life of the gods; as Aristotle stresses, divine reason does not lack virtue because it is eternal and unchanging. According to Aristotle, "Divine reason is better than what we possess," and its knowledge (i.e., divine reason) is enjoyable and virtuous in itself because the knowledge of divine reason is intrinsic... and it is truly life, by which I mean an eternal and virtuous life. God has a virtuous, eternal, and primordial life (Aristotle, 1978, p. 6).

Therefore, human reason seeks perfection from divine reason throughout its entire thought process; thus, its life is framed within this context. As Aristotle states, "If reason is divine in comparison to humanity, then that which proceeds according to reason is considered divine in relation to human life" (Al-Tawil, 1991, p. 135).

Since, according to Aristotle, happiness is associated with thought and reason, its essence is therefore divine: "The rational contemplation that culminates in human happiness includes a divine element, which is the life and constant activity of divine reason" (Abu Rayan, 1973, p. 217).

Thus, happiness takes on a specific meaning in Aristotle's philosophy; this connection between happiness and rational contemplation makes its attainment difficult for all humans, especially since Aristotle states that one who deserves happiness must possess natural and moral abilities and strive for goodness through learning. Those who lack this talent and preparedness cannot easily attain complete, eternal, and divine happiness (Histoire de la philosophie, 1972, p. 186).

Therefore, it becomes clear that the relationship between happiness and reason, as viewed by Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato, is nearly the same, aside from some details. The value of this perspective on happiness among these philosophers becomes apparent when we realize that this view evolved from that of the Sophists, who regarded happiness as sensory and considered pleasure to be the ultimate goal of virtuous actions (Al-Tawil, 1978, pp. 76-83).

#### *The Relationship between Happiness and Reason from the Perspective of Alexander of Aphrodesius*

Alexander of Aphrodesius also supported the divine nature of reason in human beings, following earlier philosophers. He stated that it is only among the beings of the world that humans possess this rational faculty, which they share with God, and it is the perfection of the soul (Al-Afrodisi, 1409 AH, p. 80).

However, Aphrodesius explains this from a different perspective. The divine body referred to by this commentator here is the sphere of the moon. Thus, the active intellect that Aphrodesius has described in some places as God or the First Mover directly influences both the sphere of the moon and the human soul (Mahmoud Qassem, 1962, p. 199).

In Aphrodesius's view, if the material (or human) intellect resembles the divine intellect in this way, it will be qualified for a connection to divinity. "The desire for higher things is dependent on the rational conception of objects in relation to it and to what is peculiar to it" (Al-Afrodisi, 1978, p. 255).

Thus, human happiness, according to Aphrodesius, is the comprehension of the creations of the divine intellect; and that "the divine intellect is a life with virtuous purpose accompanied by pleasure. If this is achieved, it alters the obstacles and veils through virtuous actions, and we call it eternal and joyful life" (ibid., p. 272). The effort of human reason to attain this is the complete happiness, and for this reason, Aphrodesius relates this happiness to a philosophical perspective. "This mover (i.e., the First Mover) is the



cause of life for people on Earth, and the greatest happiness encompasses all praises associated with reason. This occurs when true perfection for people is not only through philosophical contemplation... and the source of this philosophical view is the rational conception of all divine things" (ibid., p. 269).

Here, Aphrodesius, following earlier philosophers, particularly Aristotle, emphasizes that happiness is embedded in rational philosophical thought when considering divine matters. However, he also makes a serious reference to the subject of happiness and its relationship to the exercise of reason. He emphasizes the agency of humans in their actions and their capacity in them, considering them the source of the ability to choose things from the beginning, which signifies the potential power within them (Al-Afrodisi, 1971, p. 81). Thus, according to Aphrodesius, humans choose virtuous actions, and this notion is underscored by him, clarifying the meaning of freely acting in accordance with Aristotle's view, which he considers the source of virtuous action in existence. Among possible actions, humans strive to demonstrate their free will (Badawi, 1980, pp. 253-254).

Thus, the true choice of humans in the pursuit of happiness, which is attained through goodness, is the highest act that pertains to the divine essence. The genuine and virtuous choice (that is, for humans) is the love of goodness, for fundamentally, the choice to love goodness or what one thinks is good is the true choice, which is love for the good, and this is found only in the Almighty God. Furthermore, the chosen one is pleased with deeds, as he is the First Good (Al-Afrodisi, 1978, p. 268).

In this context, Aphrodesius became interested in highlighting an important meaning in Aristotle's theory of the First Mover. According to Aphrodesius, the free will of reason is connected with complete happiness. Everything moves voluntarily towards the Almighty God, for God is what is conceived by reason. He is the Beloved and is prior to all that is good. "The First Mover — as Aphrodesius states — is one who is perceived by reason, a source of longing for that which, when conceived, moves one towards Him with desire, just as a lover moves towards their beloved without the beloved having to move themselves, for He is not a body and lacks material elements. He is separate in every way; for if the beloved is the cause of the lover's movement, then what is essentially a source of desire is what causes movement, and that which is essentially desirable is the good" (ibid., p. 268).

Moreover, Aphrodesius believes that the circular motion of the heavens is completed out of desire and love for the perfect First Mover. This motion is foundational; Aphrodesius emphasizes that it is neither fast nor slow because this heavenly movement has a singular period (Al-Afrodisi, 1971, p. 22). I say that according to Aphrodesius, this movement is fulfilled with choice and intention. "With the mover (i.e., the First Mover) being what is longed for as a singular entity, thus all celestial bodies move in a uniform and eternal circular motion (referring to the celestial sphere), and these objects do not move without it; hence the cause must be the attention to things other than the celestial sphere, which prepares them for it" (Al-Afrodisi, 1978, p. 267).

It can be said that despite Aphrodesius's emphasis that true happiness is the happiness of reason connected with the whole truth, this commentator does not articulate the distinction between this happiness and sensory pleasure, as Aristotle says that pleasure cannot be the ultimate good for humans. In practice, excessive pleasure brings harm and therefore does not lead to happiness, as happiness comes from rational contemplation and wise living (Abu Rayan, 1999, p. 215). Although Aphrodesius mentions the meaning of pleasure, he associates life with pleasure and virtue with the meaning of the happiness of divine reason, which is what one should pursue: the act of reason (i.e., divine reason) is life, and an actualized reason is eternal life, and the faculty of reason is something virtuous; whenever this is accomplished, it is performed without hindrance. If the pleasure derived from the functioning of the natural faculty is not passive, then rational life must be a life characterized by virtue and purpose, pursued without obstacles or problems (Al-Afrodisi, 1978, p. 273). Therefore, the pleasure that Aphrodesius refers to here has no connection to the sensory meaning of this phrase or the sensory awareness of human emotions; rather, it is pleasurable for reason in that it unites with its intelligibles, and this is the characteristic of the divine intellect that Aristotle presents, which Alexander of Aphrodesius also follows.

Regarding how human reason manifests that rational pleasure leading to happiness, according to Aphrodesius, it relates to the conception of types of intelligibles and is determined by it. Aphrodesius divides intelligibles into material (hylomorphic) and immaterial (separate) and states that material intelligibles are found in matter but ascend to the level of spiritual entities through rational perception and spiritualization (Farabi, 1345 AH, pp. 2-3). Their existence is in actual and intuitive reason and is not like human reason, as they are not perceived in time and by sense; thus, they are with the Divine, which perceives these eternal and everlasting intelligibles (Majid Fakhri, 1999, p. 150).

These are spiritual intelligibles, and Aphrodesius, in another treatise, considers them to be spiritual entities that are merely forms and lack hylomorphic intellect (Al-Afrodisi, 1978, pp. 291-292). The intelligibles of the divine intellect become one with them. When the active intellect constructs intelligibles in the soul, it connects with the hylomorphic (human) intellect to facilitate rational perception within it (Mahmoud Qassem, 1962, pp. 198-199). Thus, the active intellect becomes the intermediary in the human effort for the perfection of happiness, and the knowledge of the active intellect is eternal and is in the form of knowledge of spiritual matters. Aphrodesius elaborated on this and assumed that the active intellect is God or the First Mover, which was previously mentioned.

#### *The Relationship Between Happiness and Intellect from the Perspective of Abu Nasr Al-Farabi*

Al-Farabi extensively studied the theory of happiness, as this theory forms the backbone of his philosophy (Hamed Taher, 2012, p. 72). He authored two independent books on this subject titled "Attaining Happiness" and "A Treatise on the Path to Happiness." However, he did not limit himself to theoretical study; he also sought to practically experience happiness and reached the state of inspiration and divine illumination, as Plotinus had previously achieved (Madhkur, 1976, p. 41).

Al-Farabi defines happiness as the highest goal that a human seeks. Therefore, happiness, according to him, is the good that nothing greater can be desired for happiness (Al-Farabi, undated, p. 80). He states that its effectiveness is intrinsic and not extrinsic; thus, happiness is the highest good and the most perfect of all (Al-Farabi, 1987, p. 179). This state means the liberation of the soul from material dependencies and its impurities. Al-Farabi believes that when the soul reaches the degree of happiness, it attains existential perfection, meaning it no longer needs matter, and it becomes one of those entities that are immaterial and, like spiritual essences, remains in that condition forever (Al-Farabi, 1991, p. 105).

If, according to Al-Farabi, the human soul reaches happiness while possessing such characteristics, then it also reaches it from the aspect of thought, which is intellect; the intellect that receives meanings from the higher realm. Al-Farabi believes that "the human soul receives intelligibles, which are immaterial essences that are neither particular nor possible, cannot enter into imagination, and are not perceived by the senses because they belong to the realm of command" (Al-Farabi, 2007, p. 221). The part responsible for receiving truths is the theoretical intellect. "Thus, the human soul is capable of conceptualizing the meaning in its essence and reality... and this is through a power called the theoretical intellect" (Ibid, p. 86). This soul is like a mirror, and this theoretical intellect is akin to polishing it, and the intelligibles that can be understood come into it through divine grace, just as images are reflected in polished mirrors (Al-Farabi, 2007, p. 216).

Al-Farabi's eagerness regarding the connection between happiness and intellect is evident in his remarks about the means through which happiness is achieved. He states that a human must possess a distinguishing faculty to recognize all things (Al-Farabi, 1987, p. 220), and this quality of discernment leads to an inclination towards aesthetic appreciation (Ibid, pp. 222-223). This is an artistic philosophy whose goal is to gather beautiful things, or wisdom (Ibid, p. 222).

If this is the case, then Al-Farabi considers philosophy to be the path to happiness; "because happiness is achieved for us when beautiful things are among our possessions, and they are accessible through the art of philosophy. Therefore, philosophy must be that through which happiness is obtained, and this is the result of our distinguishing ability" (Ibid, pp. 225-226).

Al-Farabi emphasizes this reality in several places in his other works. In his book "Attaining Happiness," he demonstrates that philosophy is the path to happiness. "The aim of this science (meaning philosophy) is the ultimate happiness and the final perfection that a human attains" (Al-Farabi, 1995, p. 86). In the book "Separate Chapters," he proves that wisdom is contingent upon true happiness, affirming that reasoning is something worthy that must be accomplished to attain happiness (Al-Farabi, undated, p. 62).

Dr. Ibrahim Madhkur provides an analysis from his perspective regarding the stages of human intellect development and shows the close relationship between intellect and happiness in the hierarchy of knowledge according to Al-Farabi: "The human intellect (according to Al-Farabi) gradually passes through stages that are higher than each other while traversing various paths. Initially, it is the potential intellect, and when it comprehends a substantial amount of general knowledge and universal truths, it becomes the actual intellect. At times, its scope may expand, encompassing most universals, and it reaches the highest degree attainable by humans, which is the 'acquired intellect' or the degree of 'inspiration and illumination.' Then, the human becomes qualified to receive divine lights and directly connects with the Tenth Intellect (the Active Intellect), and from this point, the human achieves the greatest possible happiness" (Madhkur, 1976, p. 40). This is the intellectual happiness that is presented in Al-Farabi's thought; thus, happiness is the highest good that intellect seeks, and for this reason, Al-Farabi does not give importance to sensory happiness, believing that the attainment of sensory pleasures is easy and quick (Abu Rayan, 1973, p. 259).

In any case, this claim by Al-Farabi that happiness is a form of knowledge and good attained through reason necessitates an acknowledgment of the transmission of knowledge from the active intellect to the human intellect, in that this sign of happiness is from that intellect. Therefore, human reason benefits only from its perceptions and from something else that transitions it from potentiality to actuality, like the light that the sun provides to the eye for vision; this is what causes the forms of objects to be represented in the material intellect through the active intellect (Al-Farabi, 1999, pp. 102-103).

Since this active intellect is spiritual and possesses the characteristics of celestial beings, its knowledge becomes of its kind, as it includes divine knowledge related to higher beings, which is exalted and eternal. Therefore, Al-Farabi believes that "a human cannot directly connect with the active intellect; rather, they must possess an inherent aptitude for knowledge to actually reach the level of actualized reason." From this level, they move to derived reason, which is the fundamental principle upon which the famous theory of connection of Muslim philosophers, followers of Neoplatonism, and among them Al-Farabi is based (Mahmoud Qassem, 1990, p. 42).

Obtaining knowledge from the active intellect, which signifies happiness and the higher good, according to Al-Farabi, is not uniform for all humanity but is significant for those whose souls have liberated themselves from matter and strive towards truth. The extent to which the light of the knowledge of the active intellect shines upon their souls is impactful; "According to Al-Farabi, in addition to sensory and rational knowledge, there is also illuminative knowledge, and these truths manifest from the active intellect, only attainable through the grace of the active intellect. This illumination manifests to anyone who dedicates themselves to contemplation and has freed themselves from material constraints; they no longer need matter, reaching the degree of celestial and sacred immaterial beings, connecting to the light of lights and achieving complete happiness..." (Marhaba, 1993, p. 103).

Thus, the highest degree of intellectual happiness, according to Al-Farabi, is attained only through the taste of wisdom: "Therefore, when the active intellect illuminates the reason with all intelligibles, it reaches the highest degree of wisdom" (Al-Nassaj, 1425 AH, p. 30). Consequently, the place of intellectual happiness is defined according to Al-Farabi, and no sensory happiness or anything else intervenes in it; it is attained solely through that.

This process later became a general doctrine in the Islamic philosophical space, so much so that many philosophers of the Peripatetic school and Muslim thinkers followed Al-Farabi. Ibn Sina believes that happiness is not only in physical pleasure but also constitutes spiritual happiness and a moral elevation (Makdoor, 1976, p. 52), and the realization of happiness is through observation and contemplation, asserting that ultimate happiness may be achieved through the relationship between the servant and his

Lord, through illumination and by employing the active intellect, just as Ibn Maskawaih believes that happiness pertains to someone who gathers wisdom from its utmost (Yusuf Moussa, 1994, p. 27). Al-Ghazali argues that true happiness does not lie in sensory pleasures but in a person's attainment of their own perfection, which is the understanding of the realities they are involved with and awareness of divine truths (Ibid, p. 205).

However, if this is the case, and according to Al-Farabi's theory, that illumination which the soul obtains through connection with the active intellect—representing happiness—is the hallmark of ultimate happiness; therefore, this is the starting point for discussions about illuminative knowledge or that grace which descends upon humans as a result of purifying the soul, which is the idea that emerged among Sufi philosophers like Suhrawardi and others (Hamed Taher, 2014, p. 71). Al-Farabi's views regarding the meanings and functions of the divisions of intellect and how reason plays its role are the philosophical foundations upon which the sects of Shi'ism, especially Ismailism and Twelver Shi'ism, built their theories of prophecy and leadership, establishing the connection of intellects and considering the active intellect as a mediator between God and the world (Al-Nassaj, 2014, p. 40).

I say that if Al-Farabi's influence regarding the connection between happiness and the Active Intellect among Muslim thinkers is such, then overall, we cannot affirm the views of Muslim thinkers on this matter and say that happiness revolves within the framework of Aristotelian philosophy. This is because Al-Farabi has been aligned with Aristotle in all these details, as will be discussed. In comparison to many discussions about the issue of happiness, thinkers such as Abu al-Hasan al-Amiri and Ibn Mas'ud have echoed many of Aristotle's opinions on this subject. For this reason, Muslim thinkers who have researched ethics have reached a consensus that "ethical principles based on belief in the Almighty God, as mentioned in the Holy Quran, are in agreement. In Aristotelian ethics, God is not mentioned because the concept of God is beyond existence and transcends genus... Muslim thinkers insist that ethics can never be valid without God and the attributes that emanate from Him, and without belief in immortality and resurrection" (Al-Tawil, 1978, pp. 160-161).

Thus, Islamic ethical thought has reached the highest levels of true or ultimate happiness, which is the happiness of the hereafter, attainable only for a virtuous person in the afterlife. This is a topic agreed upon by other Muslim thinkers (Qabeel, 1984, p. 305).

Even the Muslim philosophers who adhered to the Peripatetic school were similarly inclined, and their views on happiness contrasted with the Islamic concept of eternity. Therefore, Al-Farabi, for instance, expresses Islamic terms, describing the soul that attains happiness: "And the soul that reaches this degree praises in the realm of the kingdom, and the seal of the world of the Divine is imprinted upon it" (Al-Farabi, 2007, p. 208). Just as Al-Farabi's doctrine of happiness is associated with Sufi orientation, Sufism was indeed part of Al-Farabi's philosophy; however, it is not purely spiritual but rather an intellectual Sufism that believes the purification of the soul is not solely achieved through the body and physical actions but first occurs through intellect and intellectual endeavors (Madkour, 1976, p. 39). Furthermore, Al-Farabi considered the happiness of the hereafter, but in a philosophical manner. "He viewed happiness and virtue as life separate from material interests and sensual pleasures, tending towards the path of grace, while yearning for life in that realm, especially after death—after some pure souls unite with others and attain ever-increasing happiness" (Abu Rida, 2011, pp. 54-55).

## Conclusion

Based on the mentioned points, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **Commonality in Rational Happiness:** Alexander of Aphrodesius and Al-Farabi share commonalities regarding rational happiness, which is based on contemplation and reflection. Both philosophers emphasize the importance of supreme happiness as the highest good that connects the human soul to the higher realms and spiritual beings.

- **Comparative Research Insights:** A comparative study between these two philosophers reveals that their views on the nature of happiness, the means to achieve it, and the ultimate form of happiness are closely aligned. Both see happiness not as a means to achieve another goal but as an intrinsically significant end. They view the path to happiness as one that requires thought, continuous contemplation, and adherence to intellectual virtues. In other words, from the perspective of these two thinkers, practicing philosophy is the same as the path to happiness.
- **Common Source of Inspiration:** This alignment in meanings related to happiness points to a shared source from which both philosophers drew inspiration. This source is essentially Greek philosophy, which began with Socrates and reached its zenith with Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle, in particular, had a significant impact on the views of Al-Farabi and Alexander of Aphrodesius regarding happiness.
- **Socrates and Plato's Influence:** Socrates and Plato also believed in a close relationship between reason and happiness. From their perspective, philosophy, as the pursuit of truth, is the path to happiness. Aristotle emphasizes this connection as well, considering reason to be the highest form of virtue that leads a person to happiness. These influences are evident in the views of Alexander of Aphrodesius and Al-Farabi concerning happiness. Alexander sees happiness in rational and philosophical thoughts related to divine matters, while Al-Farabi considers happiness to be a result of the divine meanings from the higher realm impacting the human soul.
- **Greater Influence of Aristotle:** However, Aristotle has exerted a greater influence than Socrates and Plato on the views of Alexander of Aphrodesius and Al-Farabi, particularly in the realm of rational discussions. Both Alexander and Al-Farabi have expanded upon many of Aristotle's ideas regarding happiness. For instance, Alexander emphasizes that happiness lies in resembling the divine intellect and connecting with it, viewing this intellect as the prime mover in the world. On the other hand, Al-Farabi believes that true happiness is attained through rational thought and approaching the spiritual realms.
- **Connection Between Philosophy and Happiness:** Al-Farabi pays particular attention to the relationship between philosophy and happiness, and his view in this regard is quite similar to that of Aristotle. While both philosophers draw inspiration from Aristotle, there are also differences between them. Unlike Alexander of Aphrodesius, Al-Farabi is influenced by Plato and seeks to reconcile the views of Plato and Aristotle in ethical philosophy. Al-Farabi shows a special interest in Plato's ethical philosophy and even relies on Plotinus's theory of emanation in his rational discussions.
- **Integration of Emanation Theory:** At the same time, when Al-Farabi describes the Active Intellect, he integrates the theory of emanation with a Plotinian perspective. He introduces the Active Intellect as the Tenth Intellect within the system of emanation, while Alexander views the Active Intellect as a direct source of happiness with divine attributes. It appears that Al-Farabi does not assign this divine role to the Active Intellect; instead, he sees it as an intermediary between the spiritual Intellects and humans through which knowledge is imparted to humanity.
- **Differences in Views on the Active Intellect:** These differences in the views of the two philosophers regarding the role of the Active Intellect in achieving human happiness are evident. On the other hand, although both philosophers regard the Active Intellect as a source of happiness, they have differing opinions on the nature and manner of this relationship between the human soul and the Active Intellect. Alexander considers the Active Intellect to be divine and a direct source of happiness, while Al-Farabi sees it as an intermediary that transmits knowledge from the divine Intellect to the human intellect.
- **General Agreement and Differences:** Overall, while both thinkers agree on the importance of reason and its role in human happiness, there are differences in their interpretation and nature of

this relationship. Alexander emphasizes the divine attributes of the Active Intellect and recognizes it as the rational deity that bestows happiness upon humanity, whereas Al-Farabi presents the theory of emanation and the mediating role of the Active Intellect in transmitting knowledge and achieving human happiness.

- **Comparative Analysis Conclusion:** Ultimately, this comparative study shows that although Alexander of Aphrodesius and Al-Farabi both emphasize the importance of reason and philosophy in attaining happiness, they hold differing views regarding the role and nature of the Active Intellect and the manner in which it relates to the human soul.

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