



The Role of the Virtuous City in the Acquisition of Moral Virtue According to Farabi

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article Article history: Received: 11 April 2025 Received in revised form: 20 May 2025 Accepted: 01 June 2025 Published online: 23 September 2025 Keywords: <i>Active Intellect, Agency, Ethics, Farabi, Innate Disposition, Virtue, Virtuous City.</i>	In Farabi's philosophical framework, theoretical virtue constitutes the foundation of the four cardinal virtues, with moral virtue occupying a central role. However, acquiring moral virtues depends on human agency, as actions performed unintentionally are not considered virtuous. Moreover, the attainment of primary intellectual principles necessary for theoretical virtue is not universally within human control. Consequently, achieving virtue appears inaccessible to all individuals. Using a descriptive-analytical method, this study examines the different types of virtue in Farabi's philosophy, highlighting the foundational role of theoretical virtue and exploring whether moral virtue can be attained despite its dependence on theoretical virtue and the involuntary nature of acquiring its principles. The analysis focuses on innate disposition (<i>fitra</i>) and the Active Intellect as key obstacles to universal virtue. Natural differences in innate disposition and in individuals' capacities to engage with the Active Intellect indicate that virtue cannot be achieved solely through personal effort. To address these limitations, Farabi proposes a political solution: the establishment of a virtuous city governed by a ruler of high theoretical and practical virtue. Through education, training, and legislation, the ruler can guide citizens toward moral virtue. Education transmits theoretical concepts via persuasive and imaginative discourse, while training cultivates virtuous behavior through practice and reinforcement. This civic and political framework enables the attainment of moral virtue and varying degrees of happiness, compensating for natural disparities among individuals without eliminating them.

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1. Introduction

Theoretical virtue serves as the basis for other virtues in Farabi's thought, particularly moral and practical virtues. Since moral virtue relies on theoretical virtue, and theoretical virtue depends on factors such as the Active Intellect and innate disposition, which lie beyond human control, a central question arises: how can individuals attain moral virtues? This study examines the role of involuntary factors in acquiring theoretical virtue and investigates how a political and educational framework—the virtuous city—can facilitate the attainment of moral virtue and human happiness.

2. Methodology

This research employs a descriptive-analytical method, drawing on textual evidence from Farabi's works. The study first identifies relevant texts and interpretations, then analyzes them to formulate a research question, and finally derives responses based on Farabi's philosophy.

3. Findings

In Farabi's philosophy, human happiness—the ultimate purpose of life—is achieved through the acquisition of virtues, with theoretical virtue as the prerequisite. Innate disposition and the Active Intellect are fundamental in acquiring theoretical virtue, yet their effects vary across individuals, limiting universal access.

Innate disposition refers to differences in individuals' capacities to grasp rational concepts and their inclinations toward virtuous actions. The Active Intellect provides primary rational concepts but operates differently depending on an individual's capacity. As a result, theoretical virtue, and by extension moral virtue, is not equally attainable for all.

Farabi addresses this limitation through a political solution: the virtuous city. The ruler, possessing both theoretical and practical virtue, guides citizens via education, training, and legislation. Education imparts theoretical knowledge through persuasive discourse, while training cultivates practical skills and virtuous behavior. Legislation ensures these processes are structured and effective. This civic framework compensates for natural differences, enabling all citizens to achieve moral virtue and happiness to the extent possible.

4. Conclusion

Farabi's framework highlights the tension between theoretical foundations of virtue and natural limitations. The study demonstrates that, although individual agency is constrained by innate disposition and access to the Active Intellect, civic and political mechanisms led by virtuous rulers can facilitate moral virtue and happiness for all members of society. The virtuous city thus serves as a practical solution to natural inequalities in moral development.

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