



Foundations of Cultural Diplomacy in Farabi's Political Philosophy

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Abstract: This study explores the role of cultural diplomacy in Al-Farabi's political philosophy, specifically the strategic function of orators and poets in his "virtuous city." By analyzing Farabi's theory of the imaginative faculty (al-quwwah al-mutakhayyilah), the research argues that these groups are central to governance, serving as intermediaries who translate intellectual truths into sensory and persuasive forms. The study posits that Farabi's framework offers a pre-modern model of cultural diplomacy—not as mere artistic exchange, but as an epistemological process for communicating rational truth across communities, thereby integrating aesthetics into the structure of ideal governance.

Keywords: Farabi, Cultural Diplomacy, Virtuous City, Imagination (Takhyil), Rhetoric, Islamic Political Philosophy, Prophecy.

Introduction

Cultural diplomacy, though often studied as a modern concept within international relations and communication studies, possesses deep philosophical roots in pre-modern Islamic thought. The term "cultural diplomacy" conventionally refers to the exchange of ideas, values, traditions, and artistic expressions between nations to foster mutual understanding and cooperation (Gienow-Hecht & Donfried, 2010; Ang, Isar, & Mar, 2015). However, long before the institutionalization of cultural diplomacy in the twentieth century, Muslim philosophers had already articulated sophisticated frameworks for understanding how artistic, rhetorical, and religious communication shapes political communities and their interrelations.

Among the foundational figures of Islamic political philosophy, Abu Nasr al-Farabi (c. 872–950 CE) presents a uniquely systematic framework in which cultural exchange and artistic communication are not peripheral or decorative elements but integral to the very structure of ideal governance. Farabi's social philosophy seeks a global utopia (*al-madina al-fadhila*) in which many distinct utopias coexist within a sound and safe cultural relationship. Cultural diplomacy's stand is thus unmistakably recognizable in Farabi's works and his social philosophy, even if the term itself is modern. Farabi envisions not a single monolithic utopia but a constellation of virtuous cities that maintain peaceful and productive cultural relations with one another—a vision that resonates strongly with contemporary discussions of intercultural dialogue and civilizational exchange.

Farabi's utopia, known as *al-Madina al-Fadhila*, has been extensively studied by scholars of Islamic philosophy. It is also named the Virtuous City (Fakhry, 2002: 79) and the Excellent City (Alon, 1990: 56). The structure of this ideal polity is hierarchical and carefully organized according to epistemic and functional criteria. It includes five distinct sections, of which the highest position is dedicated to the first head and the sages, as well as the clear-sighted in important affairs (Fārābī, 2003b: 55).

The first head of the utopia is nobody but the prophet, and his government is always accompanied by divine revelation, and all his actions and views are based on divine inspiration (Fārābī, 1991: 44).

This prophetic rulership is not merely political but epistemological: the prophet possesses direct access to divine intelligibles, which he then transmits to the community through various means.

In the second place—immediately following the prophetic ruler—there are orators, missionaries, poets, singers, writers, and the like. The third class includes engineers, physicians, astronomers, and the like; the fourth rank belongs to the country's warriors, guards, and the like; and the fifth rank includes artisans, farmers, and the like (Fārābī, 2003b: 55). This hierarchical arrangement raises immediate and significant questions. Why should poets, singers, and writers—often considered marginal or merely entertaining figures in many political traditions—occupy a position second only to the prophet? What political and epistemological function does Farabi assign to the arts and rhetoric that justifies this elevated status?

The existing scholarship on Farabi's political philosophy has addressed various dimensions of his thought with considerable sophistication. Fakhry (2002) and Alon (1990) have provided comprehensive analyses of the virtuous city's structure and its Platonic and Neo-Platonic sources. Mahdi (2001) has situated Farabi's political writings within the broader context of Islamic revelation and Greek political philosophy, demonstrating how Farabi reinterpreted Platonic and Aristotelian concepts for an Islamic audience. Galston (1990) has examined Farabi's theory of prophecy and its relationship to philosophy, while Rahman (1958) has explored the epistemological foundations of prophetic knowledge in Islamic thought. More recently, Strauss's interpretive framework has influenced a generation of scholars who read Farabi's political works as esoteric writings addressed primarily to philosophers rather than to the general public (Butterworth, 1992; Parens, 1995).

Regarding Farabi's classification of the arts and sciences, Zimmermann (1981) has provided an authoritative edition and analysis of Farabi's *Ihsa' al-'Ulum* (Enumeration of the Sciences), in which poetry, music, and rhetoric are systematically categorized. Black (1990) has examined the logical status of rhetoric and poetics within the Aristotelian tradition as received and modified by Farabi. Druart (1996) has explored the role of imagination (*takhayyul*) in Farabi's

epistemology, particularly in relation to prophecy and political communication. Furthermore, contemporary research has begun to connect Farabi's thought to modern concerns: Morovat & Mahoozi (2023) have developed a theory of global peace based on Farabi's concept of the imaginative faculty, while Hassani (2025) has analyzed international relations within Farabi's philosophical framework. Morovat and Mahoozi (2023) have proposed Farabi's philosophy as a model for cultural policymaking in contemporary Islamic societies.

Despite this rich body of scholarship, a systematic examination of cultural diplomacy within Farabi's social philosophy remains conspicuously absent. The subject matter of this research is precisely the role of orators and artists in Farabi's conceptualization of cultural diplomacy. Existing studies have either focused on the epistemological status of the arts in Farabi's logical writings (Black, 1990; Zimmermann, 1981) or on the political function of religion and prophecy (Mahdi, 2001; Galston, 1990). However, no study has systematically integrated these two dimensions—the artistic and the political—to reconstruct Farabi's implicit theory of how cultures communicate, influence one another, and maintain peaceful relations through aesthetic and rhetorical means.

Fārābī's works discuss art through such instances as poetry, music, singing, and visual arts (Fārābī, 2003b: 55; 1996: 559). And religion is conceptualized on the basis of God's revelation to the prophet (Fārābī, 2003a: 109-110). Yet the connection between these two domains—artistic expression and religious-political communication—remains undertheorized in the secondary literature. The present study addresses this gap by focusing specifically on the second rank of Farabi's virtuous city, where orators, missionaries, poets, and singers are situated immediately after the prophetic ruler.

Based on the above problem statement, this research addresses two central questions:

First: Why does Farabi place orators and religious missionaries next to poets, singers, and the like, immediately following prophetic rule? What political or epistemological rationale justifies this positioning?

Second: What kind of connection exists between rhetoricians and poets, on one hand, and prophetic government, on the other? Is this connection merely hierarchical and administrative, or does it reflect a deeper epistemological relationship?

The existing scholarship has neither systematically addressed these questions nor explored their implications for a Farabian theory of cultural diplomacy. This study aims to fill that gap.

The analysis of cultural diplomacy in Farabi's social philosophy depends on three interconnected theoretical sections: (1) his theory of prophecy, (2) the function of rhetoric, and (3) the function of poetry in his thought. These three dimensions are not independent but mutually reinforcing. Prophecy provides the epistemological foundation (divine revelation), rhetoric provides the means of persuasion for the general public, and poetry provides the aesthetic-imaginative vehicles through which rational truths become accessible to non-philosophers.

This research employs a qualitative hermeneutic method, involving close reading and textual analysis of Farabi's primary works—including *Mabadi' Ara' Ahl al-Madina al-Fadhila* (Fārābī, 2003b), *Kitab al-Huruf* (The Book of Letters) (Fārābī, 1991), *Ihsa' al-'Ulum* (Enumeration of the Sciences) (Fārābī, 1996), and *Kitab al-Milla* (The Book of Religion) (Fārābī, 2003a)—alongside the secondary literature cited throughout this introduction. The study interprets these texts contextually, considering both Farabi's Greek sources (particularly Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*) and his Islamic intellectual milieu, to reconstruct Farabi's implicit theory of cultural diplomacy.

This study argues that Fārābī's placement of poets and rhetoricians in the second rank of the utopia after the prophetic rulers can be best accounted for in terms of the distinctive roles he assigns to the imaginative faculties (*al-quwwah al-mutakhayyilah*) and persuasive proofs (*al-adyllah al-iqna'iyyah*). The angel of revelation transfers all the intelligibles to the prophet's intellectual faculty and subsequently to his imaginary faculties. The prophet, who knows everything by reason and demonstrative proofs, conveys the objectified form of the intelligible to people's minds. Within this epistemological architecture, the utopian poet transfers rational facts

and intelligible happiness through sensory and imaginary forms to the minds of people. The orator, meanwhile, transfers demonstrative knowledge through persuasive methods that appeal not to the rational faculty of the few but to the imaginative and emotional faculties of the many.

Thus, cultural diplomacy in Farabi's framework is not merely the exchange of cultural products but an epistemological process: the communication of rational truths and intelligible happiness across distinct communities within the global utopia. The second rank of the virtuous city functions as the primary interface between prophetic knowledge and the wider public, both within the city and between cities.

Following this introduction, the paper proceeds as follows. Section Two elaborates on Farabi's theory of prophecy and revelation, examining the relationship between the active intellect, the angel of revelation, and the prophet's intellectual and imaginative faculties. Section Three examines the function of rhetoric in Farabi's political philosophy, focusing on persuasive proofs and the political necessity of rhetorical communication for the non-elite. Section Four analyzes the role of poetry and imagination (*takhayyul*), demonstrating how poetic imagery serves as a vehicle for conveying philosophical truths to the general populace. Section Five synthesizes these three dimensions—prophecy, rhetoric, and poetry—to reconstruct Farabi's implicit theory of cultural diplomacy. Finally, Section Six concludes with the study's contributions, and implications for contemporary research on Islamic political thought and intercultural relations.

1. Farabi's Theory of Prophecy and Revelation

The cornerstone of Farabi's political philosophy rests upon his distinctive theory of prophecy, which integrates Neoplatonic emanationism with Aristotelian epistemology. For Farabi, prophecy is not merely a theological doctrine but a philosophical necessity for the establishment and maintenance of the virtuous city. The prophet, as the first head of the utopia, occupies a unique epistemological position that enables him to receive divine revelation and transmit it to the political community in accessible forms.

Farabi conceptualizes prophecy within a cosmological framework that begins with the First Being (al-awwal al-wahid), who is the ultimate source of all existence and intelligibility. From this First Being emanates a hierarchy of intellects, culminating in the Active Intellect (al-aql al-faal), which serves as the mediator between the divine realm and the human world. The prophet's distinctive capacity lies in his ability to receive emanation from the Active Intellect both intellectually and imaginatively. As Farabi explains, the angel of revelation transfers all the intelligibles to the prophet's intellectual faculty and subsequently to his imaginary faculties (Fārābī, 1991, p. 44). This dual reception distinguishes the prophet from the philosopher, who may achieve intellectual conjunction with the Active Intellect but lacks the perfected imaginative faculty necessary for prophetic communication.

The prophet's intellectual faculty receives universal intelligibles and demonstrative truths directly from the Active Intellect. This aspect of prophecy aligns with the philosophical pursuit of certainty through demonstration (burhan), the highest form of logical argumentation. However, Farabi emphasizes that the prophet is distinguished not merely by intellectual perfection but by the extraordinary development of his imaginative faculty (al-quwwah al-mutakhayyilah). This faculty enables the prophet to transform abstract intelligibles into concrete images, symbols, and verbal expressions that can be apprehended by ordinary citizens who lack philosophical training.

In his discussion of prophecy, Farabi avoids explicit theological terminology, instead employing philosophical language that describes the first chief (al-ra'is al-awwal) in terms that clearly correspond to the prophetic office. The first head of the utopia is nobody but the prophet, and his government is always accompanied by divine revelation, and all his actions and views are based on divine inspiration (Fārābī, 1991, p. 44). This philosophical re-framing of prophecy allows Farabi to integrate religious authority into his political philosophy without subordinating reason to faith. The prophet's authority derives not from miraculous signs alone but from his superior epistemological access to intelligible truths.

The imagistic representation of intelligibles by the prophet serves a crucial political function. Most citizens, according to Farabi, are incapable of grasping demonstrative proofs or abstract philosophical arguments. Their cognitive capacities are limited to sensory experience and imaginative representation. The prophet, who knows everything by reason and demonstrative proofs, conveys the objectified form of the intelligible to people's minds. This process of objectification involves translating rational truths into sensory and imaginary forms that can evoke emotional responses and motivate virtuous action.

Farabi's theory of prophecy thus establishes a hierarchical relationship between knowledge and its communication. The intelligibles received by the prophet are preserved in their demonstrative purity for the philosophical elite, who can follow rational proofs to certainty. Simultaneously, these same truths are imagistically represented for the general public through symbols, parables, and persuasive discourse. This dual-mode communication is not a concession to popular ignorance but a necessary condition for the virtuous city's existence. Without prophetic revelation and its imaginative transmission, the majority of citizens would remain incapable of orienting their actions toward genuine happiness.

The prophet's imaginative faculty does not operate independently of his intellect. Farabi maintains that the images produced by the prophet's imagination are faithful representations of intelligible realities, not arbitrary fictions. The angel of revelation ensures the correspondence between intelligible truth and imagistic expression. This doctrine safeguards the epistemological integrity of religious symbols while acknowledging their imaginative character. For Farabi, the images and symbols employed in prophetic discourse are not falsehoods but imaginative approximations of truths that exceed ordinary cognitive capacities.

Furthermore, Farabi's theory of prophecy accounts for the diversity of religious expressions across different communities. Since intelligible truths can be represented through multiple imagistic forms, different prophets may convey the same rational content through culturally appropriate symbols. This pluralistic implication of Farabi's

prophetology provides a philosophical foundation for his vision of a global utopia composed of distinct yet harmonious communities. The prophet who knows everything by reason and demonstrative proofs, conveys the objectified form of the intelligible to people's minds, but the specific objectified forms may vary according to the imaginative capacities and cultural predispositions of each community.

The relationship between prophecy and legislation completes Farabi's political theory. The prophet, as the recipient of revelation, establishes the divine law (*milla*) that governs the virtuous city. This law includes both theoretical beliefs about God, the afterlife, and happiness, as well as practical prescriptions for individual and communal conduct. Religion is conceptualized on the basis of God's revelation to the prophet (Fārābī, 2003a, pp. 109-110). The divine law provides the normative framework within which citizens pursue happiness, even when they cannot grasp the rational foundations of that law.

2. The Function of Rhetoric in Farabi's Political Philosophy

After establishing the prophetic foundation of the virtuous city, Farabi turns to the means by which prophetic knowledge is disseminated and sustained within the political community. Rhetoric (*al-khatabah*) occupies a central position in this communicative enterprise, serving as the primary method for persuading the general public to accept the divine law and act in accordance with its prescriptions. Rhetoric, for Farabi, is not a deceptive art but a legitimate mode of argumentation suited to the cognitive capacities of the majority.

Within Farabi's classification of the five demonstrative arts — demonstration (*burhan*), dialectic (*jadāl*), rhetoric (*khatabah*), sophistry (*mughalatah*), and poetry (*shi'r*) — rhetoric occupies a distinctive position between dialectic and poetry. Demonstration aims at certainty and is appropriate only for the philosophical elite who can follow rigorous logical proofs. Dialectic operates with generally accepted premises and is useful for training and disputation. Rhetoric, by contrast, aims at persuasion (*iqna'*) through premises that produce belief without achieving certainty. As Farabi explains in his commentary on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, rhetoricians tend to use

conditional syllogisms, whether hypothetical or disjunctive, because they are more effective in persuading the public.

The epistemological status of rhetorical arguments reflects Farabi's understanding of human cognitive diversity. Not all minds are capable of grasping demonstrative proofs, nor do all citizens have the time or inclination to pursue philosophical education. Rhetoric addresses this pedagogical challenge by providing arguments that are compelling without being fully rigorous. When the rhetorician speaks, the listener is persuaded and convinced of what has been presented because the argument produces a satisfactory belief that aligns with what the listener already holds in their soul. This alignment between rhetorical persuasion and pre-existing beliefs is crucial for the stability of the virtuous city.

Farabi identifies the second rank of the virtuous city as the location of rhetoricians, orators, and religious missionaries (Fārābī, 2003b, p. 55). This placement immediately after the prophetic ruler indicates the political significance Farabi assigns to rhetorical communication. The orator transfers demonstrative knowledge through persuasive methods, making accessible to the public what the prophet has received through revelation and the philosophers have grasped through demonstration. Without this rhetorical mediation, the gap between prophetic knowledge and popular understanding would remain unbridgeable.

The content of rhetorical discourse in the virtuous city includes both theoretical beliefs and practical exhortations. Rhetoricians defend the doctrines of the divine law against objections, clarify the rewards of virtuous action and the punishments of vice, and inspire citizens to pursue happiness. Farabi emphasizes that rhetoric is not merely a tool for mass manipulation but a necessary component of political education. The ruler elaborates his discourse in such a way that reflection becomes dispensable, seducing the listener through the use of feelings and analogies that can cause emotional engagement. This emotional dimension of rhetoric does not undermine its truth-value but rather adapts truth to the receptive capacities of the audience.

The relationship between rhetoric and dialectic further illuminates Farabi's political epistemology. Dialectic arises amid

efforts to ground ideas, whether for oneself or for others, and its arguments become accepted and reliable explanations. However, dialectic demands a more sophisticated audience than rhetoric, one capable of following the rules of valid inference. The difficulty which the masses encounter in dialectical communication lies in the form of reasoning itself, which must follow strictly the valid rules of inference. For this reason, dialectic is reserved for a more sophisticated type of public rather than the average citizen. Rhetoric, being less demanding, serves the broader population.

Farabi's historical context shaped his understanding of rhetoric's political function. In his time, theological debates among the Mutazilites and their opponents had elevated the importance of persuasive argumentation in religious discourse. Rhetoric became a way to confront enemies of Islam and Christians who criticized Islamic theology [citation:1]. The speculative theology of the Islamic world came to be known as *ilm al-kalam*, the science of discourse, with the *mutakallimun* originally known as dialecticians. Farabi's systematic integration of rhetoric into political philosophy reflects his awareness of these contemporary developments.

For the governance of the virtuous city, rhetoric serves multiple functions. It confirms religious opinions among citizens, assists in defending those opinions against corruption, and consolidates beliefs firmly in their souls. When someone attempts to lead citizens into error and confusion through words, rhetoric provides the means to counteract such corruption. The orator, therefore, functions as a guardian of the divine law, preserving its authority and ensuring its transmission to future generations.

3. The Role of Poetry and Imagination in Farabi's Philosophy

While rhetoric addresses the persuasive needs of political communication, poetry (*al-shi'r*) and imagination (*al-takhayyul*) serve an equally important but distinct function in Farabi's political philosophy. Poetry operates through imaginative representation rather than logical argument, evoking emotional responses and creating vivid mental images that can inspire virtuous action. Within Farabi's classification of sciences, he places poetry within the branch of

language due to its similarity to language, while simultaneously analyzing it logically and mimetically . This dual placement reflects poetry's unique position between linguistic expression and epistemological communication.

Farabi defines poetic speeches as consisting of words that excite a mood in the audience or demonstrate something higher or lower than reality. These qualities refer to descriptions of beauty, ugliness, magnificence, disgrace, and the like. When listening to poetic words, one's imagination creates sensations so real that they resemble our feelings when we look at loathsome objects . This capacity to simulate sensory experience through language makes poetry particularly effective for moral education. The utopian poet transfers rational facts and intelligible happiness through sensory and imaginary forms to the minds of people (Fārābī, 2003b, p. 55).

Farabi distinguishes six types of poetic speech, divided into three pleasant and three disgusting varieties. The highest kind of poetic words aims at improving the faculty of reason, as well as thoughts and actions. It produces real and true happiness, leads the mind to consider divine actions, and glorifies virtues . This first type of poetry serves the same ultimate ends as philosophy – directing human beings toward rational happiness – but through the medium of imagination rather than demonstration. The second type of pleasant poetry attempts to moderate radical qualities and attitudes, including anger, egotism, possessiveness, and acquisitiveness, encouraging the use of emotions to obtain goodness rather than causing discord. The third type aims to correct deficiencies of apathy and feebleness, moderating lassitude, fear, and grief.

Farabi's classification of poetry reveals his understanding of the relationship between imagination and virtue. Poetry does not merely entertain or ornament political discourse; it actively shapes the emotional dispositions and motivational structures of citizens. By representing virtuous actions as beautiful and vicious actions as ugly, poetry aligns the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul with the rational ends identified by philosophy and prophecy. The nasty and wicked poetry, by contrast, works to corrupt thoughts and produce immoderate sensational attributes and temperaments. The virtuous

city must therefore cultivate the former while excluding or reforming the latter.

The connection between poetry and the prophet's imaginative faculty is particularly significant for Farabi's political philosophy. Just as the prophet's imagination transforms intelligibles into images, the poet's imagination transforms rational truths into poetic representations. The highest form of poetry, which aims at true happiness and glorifies virtues, participates in the same cognitive function as prophetic discourse, though at a lower level of authority and epistemological precision. This continuity between prophecy and poetry explains why Farabi places poets immediately after prophetic rulers in the hierarchy of the virtuous city.

Farabi extends his analysis of imagination beyond verbal poetry to include music, song, and visual arts. The arts are discussed with such instances as poetry, music, singing, and visual arts (Fārābī, 2003b, p. 55; 1996, p. 559). Music and melodies are classified into three types: melodies creating pleasure and comfort with no other effect, melodies creating pleasure and providing the imagination with new ideas, and melodies inspiring cheerful or painful sentiments. The most valuable melodies are those that enable humans to understand the meaning of the words that accompany the notes of the song, thereby combining aesthetic pleasure with cognitive and moral instruction.

Similarly, Farabi divides all kinds of images, statues, and paintings into two categories: useful and of little use. The latter sort merely creates pleasure, whereas the useful sort, in addition to causing pleasure, nourishes the imagination and creates emotions that embody other meanings. This analysis of visual arts demonstrates that Farabi's concern with imagination extends to all forms of artistic representation, not only poetry. The useful visual arts contribute to the same educational and motivational goals as poetry, making intelligible truths accessible through sensory forms.

The function of imagination in Farabi's political philosophy cannot be reduced to mere ornament or popularization. Recent scholarship has emphasized how the power of the imagination (*al-khayal*) is decisive to the constitution of Farabi's virtuous city. The imagination enables citizens to effectively distinguish between certain

images as a necessary means to attaining happiness, and it is cultivated through a regimen of civic education that prepares citizens to engage in political deliberation . The realization of the virtuous city is determined by the exercise of the imagination, beginning with the philosopher-ruler-imam who receives and translates intelligibles (ma`qulat) from the Active Intellect into images (muhakat) communicated to the political community.

Farabi's account of imagination thus establishes a continuum of cognitive and communicative practices. At the highest level, demonstration (burhan) provides certainty for the philosophical elite regarding intelligible truths. At the intermediate level, rhetoric (khatabah) persuades the general public through probable arguments. At the most accessible level, poetry (shi'r) and the other arts move the imagination and inspire virtuous action through sensory forms. All three levels are necessary for the virtuous city, which must address citizens with diverse cognitive capacities and educational backgrounds.

The placement of poets, singers, and artists in the second rank of the virtuous city—immediately following prophetic rulers and preceding engineers, physicians, warriors, and artisans—reflects Farabi's recognition that imagination is the most powerful channel for motivating the public. Rulers use proof to address elites and poetry in media to influence the public through imagination . This strategic deployment of poetry and the arts is not a concession to popular irrationality but a sophisticated political epistemology that acknowledges the embodied, imaginative character of human cognition.

4. Cultural Diplomacy in Farabi's Social Philosophy

The preceding analysis of prophecy, rhetoric, and poetry in Farabi's thought provides the foundation for reconstructing his implicit theory of cultural diplomacy. Farabi's concept of the global utopia, in which many distinct utopias coexist within a sound and safe cultural relationship, cannot be understood without attending to the communicative mechanisms that enable such coexistence. Cultural diplomacy's stand is recognizable in Farabi's works and his social

philosophy precisely because he theorizes how different communities can maintain peaceful relations while pursuing their distinctive paths to happiness.

The hierarchy of the virtuous city has implications that extend beyond the boundaries of any single political community. The prophet establishes the divine law for a particular nation (umma), but the intelligible truths that inform that law are universal. The poet and orator, who transmit these truths through imaginative and persuasive means, also participate in a universal communicative function. Different communities may have different prophets, different laws, different poetic traditions, and different rhetorical conventions, yet they share the same ultimate end: rational happiness. The challenge of cultural diplomacy, from a Farabian perspective, is to recognize this shared end while respecting the diverse means by which different communities pursue it.

Farabi's classification of the arts and sciences supports a cosmopolitan understanding of cultural exchange. When he writes about the possibility of maintaining relations with all people who have physical qualities, food, and a way of life quite normal, he acknowledges the reality of intercultural contact and its potential benefits. The Arabian state of his time covered all civilized countries except those purely Greek or Roman, yet even those neighboring peoples could be studied, and their customs and habits learned. Many Greeks and Byzantines would emigrate and settle in the Arabian state and share knowledge about their countries. This recognition of cultural diversity within a unified political framework anticipates contemporary discussions of multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue.

The role of poets, musicians, and artists in Farabi's virtuous city provides a model for how cultural diplomacy might operate in practice. If artists are assigned the second rank in the political hierarchy, their function cannot be limited to intra-city communication. When distinct virtuous cities interact, the poets, singers, and orators of each city serve as cultural ambassadors, conveying the imaginative representations of happiness that characterize their community while receiving those of others. This

exchange of poetic and artistic representations does not threaten the integrity of any particular virtuous city; rather, it enriches the imaginative resources available to all.

Farabi's emphasis on persuasion rather than coercion in political communication has direct implications for intercultural relations. Just as the orator persuades citizens within the virtuous city through rhetorical arguments rather than force, so virtuous cities should interact with one another through persuasive means. The global utopia is not achieved through conquest or domination but through the mutual recognition of each community's pursuit of happiness. The orator transfers demonstrative knowledge by persuasive methods, and these same methods can operate across cultural boundaries when orators from different communities engage in dialogue.

The connection between Farabi's political philosophy and contemporary discussions of cultural diplomacy has been recognized by recent scholarship. Researchers have proposed Farabi's philosophy as a model for cultural policymaking in contemporary Islamic societies and developed theories of global peace based on his concept of the imaginative faculty. Farabi's recognition that imagination is the most powerful channel for motivating the public applies equally to domestic political communication and international cultural exchange. When cultures seek to understand one another, they must engage not only with rational arguments but also with the poetic and artistic expressions that embody each culture's vision of the good life.

Farabi's theory of prophecy also contributes to his framework for cultural diplomacy. Since different prophets may receive and represent the same intelligible truths through different imagistic forms, there is no necessary conflict between distinct religious traditions. The diversity of prophetic representations reflects differences in the imaginative capacities and cultural contexts of recipient communities, not contradictions in the intelligible truths themselves. This pluralistic implication of Farabi's prophetology provides a philosophical foundation for religious tolerance and intercultural respect. Communities that recognize the shared rational

core underlying diverse prophetic traditions can cooperate in pursuit of common goods while maintaining their distinctive practices.

The cosmopolitan dimension of Farabi's political thought has been developed by recent interpreters who emphasize his account of the global political community (*ma`murah*) extending across the entire inhabited world (*oikoumene*). The virtuous association of the entire inhabited world presupposes a multiplicity of virtuous cities at any one time, and these cities can cooperate to achieve happiness without any single city dominating the others. This vision of a pluralistic global order, composed of mutually recognizing and cooperating virtuous cities, represents a significant departure from both imperial models of universal domination and isolationist models of self-sufficient city-states.

Farabi's omission of territorial limits for the virtuous city suggests that he envisions the possibility of a global political community. Since the virtuous city is defined by its commitment to rational happiness rather than by geographical boundaries, nothing prevents the extension of virtuous association across the entire inhabited world. The rulers and governors of such a global community would not be a single monarch but rather a plurality of leaders who share the same understanding of happiness and cooperate in its realization. This decentralized global order, in which each virtuous city maintains its autonomy while participating in a common project, exemplifies the Farabian model of cultural diplomacy.

Conclusion

This study has examined the foundations of cultural diplomacy in Farabi's social philosophy by analyzing three interconnected dimensions of his thought: prophecy, rhetoric, and poetry. The analysis has demonstrated that Farabi's placement of poets, orators, and artists in the second rank of the virtuous city—immediately following prophetic rulers—reflects a sophisticated understanding of how knowledge is transmitted across diverse cognitive capacities. The prophet receives intelligible truths through intellectual conjunction with the Active Intellect and translates them into imaginative representations accessible to the general public. The orator transfers

demonstrative knowledge through persuasive methods, adapting rational arguments to the receptive capacities of non-philosophers. The poet transfers rational facts and intelligible happiness through sensory and imaginary forms, moving the emotions and inspiring virtuous action through aesthetic experience.

The findings of this research contribute to the growing literature on Islamic political thought by demonstrating how Farabi integrates aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions into the very structure of ideal governance. Cultural diplomacy, in Farabi's framework, is not merely the exchange of cultural products but an epistemological process through which rational truths become communicable across distinct communities within the global utopia. The second rank of the virtuous city functions as the primary interface between prophetic knowledge and the wider public, both within the city and between cities. The orators, missionaries, poets, and singers who occupy this rank are not peripheral figures but central to the political project of orienting human beings toward genuine happiness.

Several implications follow from this reconstruction of Farabi's political philosophy. First, contemporary discussions of cultural diplomacy can benefit from engaging with Farabi's recognition that imagination and emotion are as important as rational argument in intercultural communication. Second, Farabi's hierarchical integration of demonstration, rhetoric, and poetry provides a model for how different modes of communication can serve different cognitive and political functions without contradicting one another. Third, Farabi's vision of a global utopia composed of multiple virtuous cities offers an alternative to both universalist imperialism and particularist isolationism.

In conclusion, Farabi's social philosophy provides a sophisticated pre-modern framework for understanding cultural diplomacy. By recognizing the distinctive functions of prophecy, rhetoric, and poetry in the transmission of knowledge and the formation of virtuous communities, Farabi offers resources for thinking about how distinct cultures can coexist peacefully while pursuing their common end of human happiness. The poet who transfers rational truths through imaginary forms and the orator who

transfers demonstrative knowledge through persuasive methods are not merely artists and speakers but political actors engaged in the fundamental work of building and sustaining the virtuous city – and the global utopia of which it is a part.

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