

The Perfect City by al-Fārābī and Ibn Bājjā

Autor: Pavlína Kopecká

Abstract

Ctnostná obec al-Fārābīho a Ibn Bādždži. – Článek chce prezentovat dva modely ctnostné obce, tak jak byly diskutovány slavnými středověkými islámskými filosofy al-Fārābím a Ibn Bādždžou v jejich politických úvahách: *O ctnostné obci a Řízení osamoceného*. Oba se vrací k moudrosti Platóna a Aristotela a opět uplatňují starý princip, že lidská bytost je od přírody politická a nejlepší způsob života pro jednotlivce je čestný život usilující o štěstí. V tomto kontextu se oba filosofové snažili navrhnout koncept, jaká by obec měla být, aby byla ctnostná a přinášela štěstí svým obyvatelům. Přesto že Ibn Bādždža souhlasil s al-Fārābiovým nejvyšším cílem zamýšleným pro lidské bytosti v dokonalé ctnostné obci, popsal také život samotáře snažícího se dosáhnout štěstí v samotě, což se zdá jako neobyčejný individualismus, a tím se zdá být porušena politická orientace jeho filosofie, která následovala dávný princip zmíněný výše.

Keywords: Aristotle, Plato, *The Republic*, neoplatonism, emanation, al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājjā, perfection, virtue, happiness, righteous, philosophers

Klíčová slova: Aristotelés, Platón, *Ústava*, novoplatónismus, emanace, al-Fārābī, Ibn Bādždža, dokonalost, ctnost, štěstí, spravedlnost, filosofové

This article deals with two theories about ideal organization of the society, righteous city or, we can say, perfect state arrangement, which was presented in the works of two medieval Arabic philosophers: Al-Fārābī and Ibn Bājjā. Both authors are currently very often quoted by Arabic scholars, and not only by them, in the context of philosophical and political debates regarding the appalling situation in the Middle East area last couple of years.

Briefly about al-Fārābī and Ibn Bājjā

Al-Fārābī (in latin Alpharabius) was identified to the Arabic scholars as the ‘Second Master’ (after Aristotle). He was well known philosopher, logician and musician across generations. Unfortunately, he has left us no autobiography and therefore is lot about his life relatively uncertain.¹ His philosophical legacy, however, is large. He is the author of

¹ There is a lots of uncertainty about al-Fārābī’s place of birth and his early years, but we safely claim that he was born in about 870 beyond the Oxus River – either in Fārāb (Kazakhstan) or Faryāb (Turkestan), because of his nisba (“attribution”) al-Fārābī = from Fārāb/Faryāb. (His full name is Abū Nasr Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Tarkhān Ibn Awzalagh al-Fārābī). He was the son of an army officer in the service of the Samanids. We can be also sure about some of his residence: Bukhara (place of his study of Islamic jurisprudence and music), Marv (where he studied Aristotelian logic with Nestorian Christian monks Yūhannā Ibn Haylān), Harran, Baghdad (study of philosophy by following the courses of the famous Nestorian Christian translator of Aristotle Mattā Ibn Yūnus and study of Arabic with the prominent philologist Ibn al-Sarrāj), Aleppo, Cairo, and Damascus – where he died in 950.

numerous titles² and however he was saturated with Aristotelianism, e.g. he organized the vocabulary of Aristotle, we can designate him as a ‘Father of Islamic Neoplatonism’, because especially this doctrine dominates much of his corpus. Among his most popular work belong treatise *On the Perfect City* (*Al-Madīna al-fādila*; written between 915 and 941). One of most famous medieval political works, which refers to Plato’s *Republic*. In his admittedly complex theories of epistemology, al-Fārābī has both an Aristotelian and Neoplatonic dimension, neither of which is totally integrated with the other. His influence was wide and extended not only to major Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā (980–1037) but also to major thinkers of Christian medieval Europe including Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).

Ibn Bājjā (among Latin scholars known as “Avempace”) was a celebrated medieval philosopher of 12th century from Spain well-known for his original works in philosophy as well as the natural sciences and the arts.³ He is among western thinkers who continued the work of recovering the writings of Plato and Aristotle begun in the East of the medieval Arabic world. It is reported that Ibn Bājjā wrote numerous treatises on a huge range of topics but only few manuscripts remain. Among his extant works, the short treatise titled *Governance of the Solitary* (*Tadbīr al-mutawahhid*; written circa 1100), is the only one with political themes.⁴

Contemporary scholars (e.g. S. H. Nasr) usually deny or underestimate the centrality of political teaching on the virtuous city and are prone to read the *Governance* as a work in metaphysics or mysticism and focused on individual human being. But the problem of the solitary presented in the Ibn Bājjā’s treatise can be understood only in connection with the problem of the perfect virtuous city. Because if you consider the text as a whole it’s easy to recognize that crucial question of the treatise is what enables the best governance of the city, not what constitutes the best life for the individual. (The title of Ibn Bājjā’s work is therefore sort of misleading.)

Al-Fārābī’s *Perfect City*

Al-Fārābī combined the insights of Plato and Aristotle to formulate a particular description of a “perfect city” whose foundation requires the cooperation of all its citizens and the firm leadership of a virtuous ruler whose knowledge has led him, step by step, through the

² Major titles by al-Fārābī voluminous corpus included the *Epistle on the Intellect* (*Risāla fī l-‘aql*), *The Book of Letters* (*Kitāb al-hurūf*) and *The Book of the Enumeration of the Sciences* (*Kitāb ihsā’ al-‘ulūm*). He became an expert not just in philosophy or logic, but also in music: one of his works is entitled *The Great Book of Music* (*Kitāb al-mūsīqā al-kabīr*).

³ Ibn Bājjā (in full name Abū Bakr Muhammad Ibn Yahya Ibn al-Sā’igh al-Tūjībī Ibn Bājjā) was born in Saragossa, Spain towards the end of the 11th century. He was appointed vizier around 1110 to the local governor Ibn Tifalwīt, soon after the Almoravid dynasty defeated the Banū Hūd in Saragossa. He had to escape to Xàtiva, small town near Valencia in 1118 after Christians conquered Saragossa. There he was prisoned for a couple months because of his “heretical opinions”. After his releasing he served as vizier for about twenty years probably in Seville and Granada. He died in Fez, Morocco in 1138 or 1139, a death supposedly hastened by a poisoned fruit.

⁴ Ibn Bājjā’s works are mostly available only in fragments or in quotations whose reliability varies. Among the most important belong *Letter of Farewell* (*Risālat al-widā’*), *Conjunction of the Intellect with the Human Being* (*Ittisāl al-‘aql bi-l-insān*), *Book on the Soul* (*Kitāb al-nafs*) and *The Governance of the Solitary* (*Tadbīr al-mutawahhid*).

ascending degrees of knowledge.⁵ Al-Fārābī conceived his *Al-Madīna al-fādila* as a comprehensive study of human being. Described the nature of man as *zoon politikon* and animal rationale. Presented the concept of perfection that can be achieved only in accordance with right acting and proper thinking. In particular, Plato offers al-Fārābī the idea that the leader of the perfect state has to be a self-realized philosopher. And Aristotle's ideas can be found in al-Fārābī's claim that "happiness" is the only good without qualification and it is the ultimate end which each political organization should follow.

Human desire to live in a society by his nature, because only by living among others could be attained *sa'ada* – happiness,⁶ which is result of human way toward perfection. This way is gradual and ought to involve the use of all human desires and passions as well as moral character and intellect. Like Plato and Aristotle, al-Fārābī thinks of the human soul as a unity in difference: "The soul is one, and that its unity is the basis for certain differences of powers. The powers of the soul are multiple but can be reduced to three: vegetative, sensitive and intellective." (Walzer ed. chap. 20; §1) And later he presents six specific faculties: the faculty of nutrition, the senses, the imagination, the appetites, and the rational faculty, which is subdivided into: (1) theoretical reasoning, by a person attains knowledge; and (2) practical reasoning, which aims to direct a person's actions. All faculties of the soul are arranged in a hierarchical order.

According to al-Fārābī there are three alternative explanation of the nature of *sa'ada*: (1) happiness as purely theoretical activity; (2) as exclusively practical activity; (3) as a harmonious combination of theory and practice. In accordance with Plato and Aristotle, he continues with conclusion that the study of philosophy used to achieve theoretical perfection, which then leads to practical perfection. Human perfection is achieved only by approximating the two approaches. In short, then, the pursuit of happiness is, says al-Fārābī, a strict rational endeavour and one of the purpose of the perfect city is in fact to produce philosophers.

Al-Fārābī's model of pursuing happiness is a long progression starting with the senses and ending with the connection of human intellect with Active Intellect, i.e. ascension from the typically less perfect to the truly perfect. But since people differ in numerous ways, there are also different degrees of happiness and also various ways of achieving it, accordingly. Therefore not every citizen of the perfect city will achieve the same level of happiness. Particular degrees of happiness correspond to the level of knowledge, which could be gain by individual and this is also determined by a place of individual in society. Individuals are not self-sufficient beings and all citizens of perfect state have to cooperate with another in order to achieve true happiness and self-realization, according to their own function or place in society.

"In order to preserve himself and to attain his highest perfections every human being is by his very nature in need of many things which he cannot provide all by himself; he is indeed in need of people who each supply him with some particular need of his. Everybody finds

⁵ It refers to the emanational cosmology, common doctrine among medieval Islamic philosophers. Emanationist hierarchy consists of the ten Intellects representing intermediaries between heavenly and terrestrial worlds.

⁶ *Sa'ada* is Arabic equivalent for *εὐδαιμονία*. In contrast with *hana'a*, which means rather fortune or luck. Term *sa'ada* has connection to Hebrew *tsaddik* (Cf. *Lamed vav tsaddikim* = "36 righteous men"; i.e. the minimal number of anonymous righteous men living in the world in every generation) and also the Arabic word *sadik* means righteous.

himself in the same relation to everybody in this respect. Therefore man cannot attain the perfection, for the sake of which his inborn nature has been given to him, unless many (societies of) people who co-operate come together, who each supply everybody else with some particular need of his, so that as a result of the contribution of the whole community all the things are brought together which everybody needs in order to preserve himself and to attain perfection. Therefore human individuals have come to exist in great numbers, so that human societies have come to exist in great numbers, and have settled in the inhabitable region of the earth, so that human societies have come to exist in it, some of which are perfect, others imperfect..." (Walzer ed. chap. 26; §1)

How the ideal constitution of a perfect city looks like? What exactly determines whether is the city perfect or not? "The excellent city resembles the perfect and healthy body, all of whose limbs cooperate to make the life of the animal perfect and to preserve it in this state." (Walzer ed. chap. 26; §7) Al-Fārābī describes the organization of the perfect city by using the term *tadbīr* = order and harmony. First, he presents how is the *tadbīr* manifested in the space (in the structure of the cosmos) and also in somatic level (in the functional organization and the harmony of the human body) and then deduce the perfect administration of the city.

Al-Fārābī developed Plato's division of human society into classes and offered the model of five level city: (1) at the top of the hierarchy of the city organisation stand virtuous people – scholars and academics, i.e. philosophers, who lead city to prosperity; (2) speakers or eloquent people – religious leaders, rhetorician, poets, musicians and bureaucrats; (3) experts in practical sciences – mathematicians, engineers, physicians and astronomers, who could develop city; (4) warriors and guardians; (5) and the bottom of the perfect city consists of people engaged in profitable things, i.e. sellers, peasants and herdsmen.

Originality of al-Fārābī's five level division is based on relation between first and second group of citizen. He puts philosophers to the highest position, because only they are able to recognize the real nature of fact, resp. the eternal truths. They gain this highest level of knowledge by using the demonstrative syllogisms and in connection with the Active Intellect. Only their knowledge is evidential and apodictically correct. Speakers and religious leaders speak about eternal truths without such rigorous logical proofs. They use the language of images and symbols, nor reason, and therefore they stand below the philosophers. Members of the second group reveal truths (in sermons, poems, songs, etc.) only in the symbolic and metaphorical way.

Hence it is only partial expression of the eternal truths, which are fully accessible only for philosophers. The validity of their statements is therefore only partial, such as validity of symbols and images. Sometimes it even seems that the philosophical arguments contradict religious doctrine. But this is only a wrong impression, says al-Fārābī. Both worlds, philosophical and religious, are in accordance. But this accordance is not evident to common citizens at lower levels, because of their lack of intellectual abilities,⁷ that's why al-Fārābī strongly advises philosophers to not reveal the philosophical truths to common citizens.⁸

⁷ For al-Fārābī, people differ in three basic ways in their intellectual abilities. "The people of the excellent city have things in common which they all perform and comprehend, and other things which each class knows and does on its own." (Walzer ed. chap. 29; §10) Hence there are three levels of individuals: (1) philosophers, who know things as they actually are; (2) followers or disciples of philosophers, who can achieve true knowledge by

Virtuous political society has responsibility regarding to its citizens and is focused on the preservation of the souls of all its inhabitants, through the exercise of virtuous qualities and the pursuit of happiness. Happiness achieved by one group of citizens helps higher class of inhabitants with their pursuit of happiness. Only the above mentioned organizations of the city resembles the harmony that exists in a healthy body and in the whole cosmos. Only such order makes the city perfect, because only this arrangement is righteous and natural.⁹

Next, following the Plato, al-Fārābī focuses on the fundamental role of the virtuous leader in the perfect city. He explains his role in the city with a parallel between the leader and the heart in the human body. The purpose of this analogy is to complete his Platonic idea that the harmony of the perfect city requires not only the cooperation of all its citizens performing their tasks accordingly, but it also demands the firm guidance of a virtuous leader. Ruler whose knowledge has led him, step by step, through the ascending degrees of knowledge acquired by the senses, the imagination and the passive intellect, until he has fully realized his active intellect.¹⁰ This seems to be the crucial characteristic of the most perfect virtuous leader. “He holds the most perfect rank of humanity and has reached the highest degree of felicity. His soul is united as it were with the Active Intellect, in the way stated by us. He is the man who knows every action by which felicity can be reached. This is the first condition for being a ruler...” (Walzer ed. chap. 27; §24–25)

The virtuous leader of the al-Fārābī’s perfect city resembles a Plato’s philosopher-king, who is responsible for providing the essential environment in which each inhabitants can achieve happiness. His role is to provide the essential context in which the citizens of the perfect city can fulfil their spirituality and wellbeing.

Al-Fārābī wants to construct a society based on reason, governed by a philosopher-king who has ability to introduce among the citizens of the perfect city the precepts of perfect harmony, so the citizens can achieve the highest level of happiness, which is possible for them accordingly to their places in society. Like Aristotle, al-Fārābī supposes that the state must be regarded as responsible for providing for all the needs of the people, both material and spiritual ones.

learning from their teachers; (3) general mass, those who simply follow the social symbols and traditions without understanding or knowledge. Therefore the realization of happiness in the city may vary. Most of the citizens can only attain a moral, virtuous life, i.e. some level of happiness, but only a small selected number of philosophers will achieve the ultimate good, absolute happiness.

⁸ Their access to eternal truths is assured by religion. For al-Fārābī it is an ideal means to impart eternal truths to common citizen without any risk of diminishing of God’s Law.

⁹ Contrary to the virtuous city al-Fārābī puts: (1) ignorant city, where citizens have no possibility to gain true knowledge; (2) immoral city – these citizens could achieve true knowledge, but they do not follow it in their actions; (3) errant city – its citizens have only partial knowledge of eternal truths, their opinions are distorted and misleading, so they couldn’t become virtuous.

¹⁰ Al-Fārābī’s conception of Active Intellect follows closely on Aristotles’ *De anima*. There are several stages in the human intellect as it becomes actualized. Like Aristotle, al-Fārābī defines human intellect in four aspects: (1) intellect in potency (pure disposition to abstract forms from mental images); (2) intellect in act (after acquiring of forms for intellectual knowledge); (3) fully actualized intellect or intellectus adeptus; (4) active intellect (after the fully actualized intellect (or acquired intellect) possesses all cognitive forms and all the knowledge that man can achieve). Human active intellect becomes a pure form that has the same rank as other intellectual substances in the hierarchy of beings, together with the Active Intellect, and it is of the same or a similar genus. In connection with this, it may contemplate not only itself and the previously acquired forms in intellect knowledge, but it may also contemplate the Active Intellect and other separate spiritual substances.

Ibn Bājja's *Governance of the Solitary*

In *Governance of the Solitary*¹¹ Ibn Bājja continues the al-Fārābī's legacy of perfect and imperfect city, but he also presents his unique political arrangement. For him like for al-Fārābī, the best life for a human being is in the virtuous city, where "affection (*al-mahabba*) is wide-spread among the citizens". (Fakhry ed. 41.4) "It is evident that in the perfect virtuous city, every human being is given the best of what he is prepared for. All of its opinions are true, and there is no false opinion in it. Its actions alone are unqualifiedly virtuous. (...) These matters have been summarily treated in the Nicomachean Ethics." (Fakhry ed. 41.17–42.2) However in case of absence of the virtuous city the Ibn Bājja's answer is the life of the isolated solitary.¹²

The Ibn Bājja's *Governance* discusses the act of governing in two most politically salient forms: 1. the virtuous city governs by a select group of human beings; 2. the solitary in the imperfect cities who governs only himself. This reveals the essential problem of Ibn Bājja's treatise; i.e. the tension between the public and the private life of the individual. How to reconcile the human being as a citizen (member of the city, one part among many) with the human being as a solitary (self-sufficient being with the possibility to divine connection and thus transcend life)?

Ibn Bājja solves this problem by equating the virtuous life of human being with complete happiness in the perfect city. But if he speak about the solitary acquiring knowledge of the divine for the attaining of happiness it is not only for a solitary alone. Solitary's goal is to deliver the knowledge of "true opinion" (*ra'y sādīq*) to the imperfect city to bring its correct governance and thus the complete happiness for all its inhabitants. The life of the solitary embodies the hope of complete happiness for the city as a whole.

In *Governance* is distinctly affirmed the Plato's and Aristotle's political teaching that "the human being is political (*madanī*) by nature". (Fakhry ed. 91.1–2) But Ibn Bājja also states that "this is what is so by essence; accidentally, it is good, as that occurs with most of what is according to nature". (Fakhry ed. 91.2–3) He continues with example that the medicinal properties of something which is not normally healthy to use (e.g. opium), can prove helpful if it is taken because of disease, i.e. when the body is under "unnatural conditions". Similarly isolation can be beneficial for beginning to restore "the natural state of the soul", i.e. to remove the unnatural matter, which constrains a perfection of the human intellect. (Fakhry ed. 91.10)

Ibn Bājja understands to the isolation of individual as a restoration of the human soul to the intellectual health as it was intended by nature. However isolation leading towards the soul health cannot be aimed by the most inhabitants of the imperfect cities. It is "prescribed"

¹¹ The treatise is divided into three seemingly disparate parts. First one discusses the meaning of governance, resents a description of the virtuous city and includes an introduction to the idea of solitary governance. Second part describes human actions generated from rational opinion in the soul. Part three is mainly about spiritual forms culminates in the explanation of why isolation is not contrary to the political nature of the human being.

¹² Term "solitary" (*al-mutawahhid*) combines three meanings in Ibn Bājja's philosophy: 1. unified existential being, when the parts of his soul and its goals are united into one, the intellectual form that transcends other faculties of the soul; 2. human intellect conjunct with the divine intellect; 3. social meanings as a "stranger" among other inhabitants, who is within the city but in solitude, because he seeks the nobility of the high-minded not the material goals nor corporeal pleasures.

only for the “very best existence”, i.e. philosopher, the one and only, who aim to achieve conjunction with divine intellect and thus take the idea of perfecting the city and direct toward the highest human good, i.e. complete happiness.¹³

The conjunction of the philosopher’s intellect with the divine is the satisfaction of his deepest desire to know things as they really are: “If he achieved the ultimate goal, and that because he intellects the simple substantial intellects (...), then he would be on account of that one of those intellects and it would be true about him that he is divine only. The mortal sensible characteristics and the refined spiritual characteristics would be removed from him. The description of simply divine befits him.” (Fakhry ed. 79.18–80.2) The described conjunction brings about ultimate happiness to philosopher,¹⁴ but the goal of conjunction is not sufficient cause of complete happiness. “If it were possible for those who are happy to exist in these [imperfect] cities, they would have only the happiness of the isolated individual.” (Fakhry ed. 43.9–10) The goal that remains to reach the complete happiness, the virtuous city, cannot be achieved by the solitary alone but only with the city.¹⁵

What does solitary lead to isolation? “It is necessary to befriend people in the sciences. However, people in the sciences are few in some ways of life (...) So that it happens in some of them that they have disappeared.” (Fakhry ed. 90.18–19) In that case is the solitary obligate to “... isolate from people altogether as much as he can. So that he will not have close contact with them except in necessary matters, or to the extent that is necessary, or he will emigrate to the ways of life in which the sciences exist, if they are to be found.” (Fakhry ed. 90.20–22)¹⁶ Ibn Bājja also warn against people hostile to philosophy. He discourages solitary to philosophize openly and publicly, because it may bring about his demise. Solitary’s death caused by the city is the first sign of the end of philosophic activity, which is necessary to achieve virtue in the city. This confirms the political role assigned to solitary by Ibn Bājja as it was mentioned above: to bring about virtue in the city. Hence Ibn Bājja does not advocate isolation for the survival or health of the solitary alone, but in order to hold on to the probability of perfection for the city.

How does the isolation of solitary look like? Ibn Bājja advises to “emigrate to the ways of life in which the sciences exist”. It is not easy to understand. It may be complete isolation from others within the city (focused on inner being) or emigration to another city. In both ways it does not necessary mean the solitary’s end of political life. The way of life of the sciences is reliant on the conditions of the city. To meet bodily needs of solitary, to generate new “people in the sciences”, to preserve philosophy as a way of life etc. that is also depend

¹³ For Ibn Bājja, only the rationality is source of happiness, not any religious enlightening nor mystical experience. (On contrary al-Fārābī’s teaching about prophet-philosopher on a throne.)

¹⁴ Ibn Bājja relates the philosopher’s happiness to the conception of the soul. The soul needs to actualize itself away from the corporeal and the material things, thus gives priority to the spiritual forms.

¹⁵ Plato sees the happiness of the individual as incidental to the happiness of the city: “It wouldn’t be surprising if these men, as they are, are also happiest. However, in founding the city we are not looking to the exceptional happiness of any one group among us but, as far as possible, that of the city as a whole.” (*Resp.* 420b) But Ibn Bājja points out that attainment of ultimate happiness by the solitary is a critical part of bringing happiness about in the city.

¹⁶ Ibn Bājja admits to the solitary the individual interest to find like-minded friends to exchange ideas about matters that are not immediate interest of the city. He recommends the solitary to socialize with those who seek the intellectual forms (men of knowledge, philosophy or sciences). But those are very rare and may not exist at all.

on surrounding city. Ibn Bājja wants to point out that even if the solitary's political nature is in conflict with his intellectual nature in the imperfect city hostile to philosophy, he is not capable of living without the city. There is no medicine for the conflict between the solitary and the imperfect city, only the opiate of isolation to diminish all possible negative outcomes of this tension. "But all imperfection could be a catalyst for the perfect city arising." (Fakhry ed. 43.4)

"Correct governance is only the governance of the isolated individual, whether it is a single isolated individual or more than one, as long as a nation or a city does not agree upon their opinion." (Fakhry ed. 43.10–12) That is the end point of Ibn Bājja's life of solitary, i.e. agreement by the city on the true opinion of solitary. Ibn Bājja seeks to harmonize what is healthy for both the city and the individual by concentrating his treatise on the basic ingredients of healthy governance common to both: true opinion and correct action. Hence the agreement upon true opinion and thus the correct action is essential to the perfection of the city, rather than rulership by the philosopher-king; unlike Plato (e.g. *Resp.* 473d) or al-Fārābī.

In the perfect city, the human being and the whole of the city aim for the same goal: the attainment of happiness by means of living virtuously. Ibn Bājja does not require a monarchy ruled by philosopher-king as the best political regime for the perfect city. He does not describe the solitary's life as a superior form of life nor the salvation of the city. It is only the exemplary life of individual who looks for the best way how to bring the true opinion in the city, among its inhabitants who need to govern their souls truly for the common sake of complete happiness.

How does Ibn Bājja describe the perfect city? "If a human being is part of a city, then the goal of all of his actions is the city. That is so if he is in the virtuous city only." (Fakhry ed. 62.8) In the perfect city live inhabitants as a solitary individuals. For Ibn Bājja, the virtuous city has no physicians, because its citizens have true opinion, thus live according to the highest level of harmony of the soul and practice, what is necessary and healthy for human beings and the city. And hence the citizens of perfect city have correct action, there is no judges or courts. They follow the highest standards of moral codes, thus they do not have conflicts, enmity, or hatred. Since the citizens of the perfect city live virtuously and keep the path of truth, there are no lies nor falsehoods. All in the city is organized to perfectly match the skills, knowledge, and qualifications of its inhabitants.¹⁷

Both above presented models of the perfect city have lots of common and many analogous arguments. But the originality of each work lies in the concept of "perfection". Unlike Ibn Bājja, al-Fārābī includes the weeds as part of the virtuous city, i.e. perfection is not a precondition for al-Fārābī's city being virtuous. For Ibn Bājja is the virtuous city perfect by definition, i.e. it contains only true opinions and correct actions, whereas al-Fārābī allows some kind of imperfection in his virtuous city, resp. level of knowledge. Ibn Bājja do not involve weeds in his model of the perfect city, because "...their existence is a reason for the

¹⁷ Ibn Bājja presents also short examples of the imperfect cities, where: "...their inhabitants are estranged from them by another goal, whose pleasure they prefer." (Fakhry ed. 62.9–10) E.g. the city of dignity (*madīnat al-karāma*), where citizens cooperate in order to live in dependence, fame, and dignity; the conquering city (*madīnat al-taḡhallub*), where inhabitants desire only to defeat other nations; the city of the commoners (*al-madīna al-jamā'iyya*), where everybody follows the dictates of their own desire and pleasure, with no order, and everybody is equal to each other and none is better than another.

perfect city arising – as has been explained elsewhere.” (Fakhry ed. 43.4) “Elsewhere” could mean Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* but most likely al-Fārābī’s *On the Perfect City*. We should say, that Ibn Bājjā tries to solve the problem of inherent imperfection in al-Fārābī’s virtuous city by eliminating the apparent source of its faultiness, i.e. false opinion.

If the virtuous city and its inhabitants all possess truth, there remains no cause for disagreement in the city and hence the weeds will not exist at all. That is, the fundamental tension between the city and the individual is resolved, once the common good of the city equals the highest good of the human being. Ibn Bājjā reveals through the idea of the solitary the need for the philosopher to accommodate himself to the predominant way of life in the city, so the city and the solitary can cooperate on achieving what is good for both. He is emphatic that no exception is made for the goal of the solitary. The solitary’s end is pursued for the sake of the political goal of the virtuous city. In my opinion this, i.e. the emphasis on the way of life of each individual and the responsibility of the individual to the society as a whole, is the Ibn Bājjā’s most important ideas, which could offer a right direction to satisfactory solution to the political situation in the Middle East.

SEZNAM LITERATURY

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- (Mgr. Pavlína Kopecká je interní doktorandkou na Katedře občanské výchovy a filosofie UK PedF.)