Scientific analysis of cognitive processes in Al-Farabi’s Teaching

Fakhriddin Abduvasitovich Yuldashev
Doctor Of Philosophy Degree (Phd) Of Philosophical Sciences
Ferghana state university, Uzbekistan
Email: f.yuldashev73@mail.ru

Abstract

The problem of cognition in the philosophical system of al-Farabi follows from his General teaching about man and is connected with the consideration of man as a being remote from nature, as a subject in relation to nature — object. In relations with the surrounding nature, man acts as a knowing subject, and nature — as an object of knowledge. The article examines the role of the great encyclopedic scientist Abu Nasr al-Farabi in the development of medieval science and, in particular, his psychological theories, which remain relevant in the modern era. Such psychological concepts as the soul, thinking, and intelligence are extremely important for us today. The article shows how the thinker’s treatises outlined and developed qualitatively new directions of medieval science, which today can be attributed to separate sections of modern social, ethnic, pedagogical and medical psychology.

Keywords: creation, theory of cognition, intelligence, epistemology, power of spirit, cognitive processes.

1. Introduction

During the years of independence, large-scale reforms have been carried out in our republic, and powerful mechanisms have been developed to further strengthen the importance of the human factor in society. As the uzbek psychologist M.B Yuldasheva notes: “From this point of view, we consider the tasks of forming a psychological image of human, which is of particular importance in the consistent implementation of work to ensure a decent life with a firm belief in the future”¹. As part of the improvement of this process, the implementation of ways to make reasonable use of the scientific heritage of our great ancestors has begun. It is in this understanding that, based on a deep study of Farabi’s legacy, using it in democratic reforms is one of the most important and urgent tasks that scientists face today. And this, in turn, requires a deeper study of not only the rich heritage of Farabi, but also the study of the spiritual and cultural heritage of other thinkers of the East. In particular, this is directly related to what steps are taken to implement scientific, practical, and socio-philosophical problems that are solved within the framework of a civil society created in our sovereign state, where a person and his interests are elevated to the rank of the highest value. The image of our great ancestor - the thinker and philosopher Abu Nasr Farabi, his mind and intellect, as well as his views on the art of creation, the concepts of the mind and the knowledge of the individual play a major role as the historical foundation of the new civil society [8, 12 p.].

2. Theoretical materials

Abu Nasr al-Farabi is one of the founders of philosophical and psychological thought that originated in the Near and Middle East [5, 97 p.]. His teachings had a great influence on the development of the spiritual culture of the peoples of Central Asia. Farabi is the author of numerous treatises on psychology. His main works on psychology are: “Treatise on the essence of the soul”, “the tale of the dream”, “the power of the soul, the Mind and the notion of”, “the word of the young mind”, “the Word on the minds of adults, On temperament” and others [3, 27 p.].

The psychological ideas of the great thinker are also contained in many of his works that are not directly related to psychology. In this regard, his works are of great interest, such as “A treatise on the views of the inhabitants of the virtuous city” [2], “The Essence of questions”, “On the Essence of Reason”, “On the Origin of Sciences”, “The Foundations of Wisdom” [4] etc.

Many pages of his psychological works are devoted to the problem of the soul and body. According to al-Farabi, the soul and the body are in absolute unity. In his treatise “The Essence of Questions”, he opposes Plato, who considered the soul to be primary and prior to the body. “The soul” Farabi wrote, “cannot exist before the body, as Plato claims [7, 43 p.]. The soul arises simultaneously with the body, there cannot be two souls in one body, and it cannot move from one body to another. The state of the body affects the state of the soul. To maintain the normal state of the soul and perform its functions, a healthy body is necessary.

The scientist claimed the eternity of the soul, believing that it does not die with the body, but remains eternally alive. He believed that although the body decays, the soul does not disappear, it goes into eternity and never returns or reincarnates. Leaving the human body, the soul unites with the same other souls, and all the spiritual things acquired by them unite, making up the world soul. The souls of virtuous and knowledgeable people are immortal, while the souls of ignorant people are mortal.

The main merit of al-Farabi in the interpretation of this problem is as follows: speaking against Plato’s teaching about the soul, he makes an attempt to defend the foundations of the materialistic theory of reflection, correctly explaining the essence of the process of development of mental life, unlike Aristotle [1], he inclines to the idea that the brain is to some extent involved in the management of human mental activity, that is, emphasizes the dependence of the mental forces on the bodily organ.

Farabi considers the center of the human soul not the brain, but the heart. The heart is the main organ that is not controlled by any other organ of the body. Then comes the brain. It is also the main organ, but its dominion is not primary, but secondary, because, controlling all other organs, it is itself controlled by the heart. In the brain, al-Farabi isolated individual nerve centers. “By means of one of its parts (the brain) balances the warmth that promotes imagination; by means of another, that which promotes thinking; and by means of a third, that which promotes memory and recollection” [6, 78 p.].

Differentiating nerves by their function, al-Farabi distinguished between two types of nerves: sensory and motor. Apparently, he knew about the existence of nerve nodes in the heart and spinal cord, which can explain his statements in the “Treatise on the views of the inhabitants of the Virtuous City”: many of these nerves in the heart have roots, through which they draw from the brain what preserves their strength. Many other rootsoriginate in the spinal cord, the upper part of which is connected to the brain. According to Farabi, the soul is divided into an active, or moving and knowing force. The driving forces are inherent in all living nature (plants, animals, people), since they all have the ability to move. Cognizing forces are available only in humans and animals,
they are able to reflect the world around them in the brain. Plants do not have this ability, so they are not included in this group. A person, Farabi believes, first of all takes possession of the nourishing force, by which he means the bodily structure of the body. People also have mental strength, which is divided in turn into two types:

1. The first of these he calls the “external soul force” or “force of sensations”, which occurs when external objects directly affect the sense organs (touch, taste, hearing, sight, smell).
2. “Inner soul power” refers to the power of imagination (memory, representation, imagination), striving or impelling, and intelligent or thinking power [8, 91-93 p].

According to al-Farabi, the process of cognition consists of two stages (sensation and thinking), which reflect the different sides of objects: the first reflects their external, changeable properties (accidents), the second – the essence of objects (substance). Relying on Aristotelianism in his teaching, al-Farabi holds the opinion that it is completely possible for a person to know the outside world. Al-Farabi sees the advantage of man over the animal in the fact that man, unlike other animals, has special mental abilities, the highest form of which is speech and reason. Cognitive processes associated with the sensory stage of cognition are different forms of reflection of objects and phenomena of the surrounding reality. Soul forces do not exist in isolation from matter, they are not introduced into the human body from the outside. The cognition of specific things is carried out through sensation, perception, imagination, memory, and other mental functions. Here is what he writes about the nature of feelings: “we feel there along with other qualities that are learned in these bodies feeling like heat and cold, dampness or dryness, and what follows from them or some of them, such as hardness and softness, smoothness and roughness; or attain taste are having one tastes: sweetness, bitterness or others; or attain vision – these are with a view… But what is perceived by touch is related to heat, cold, or other tangible things, and what is perceived by sight is related to whiteness, blackness, and other kinds” [8, 103 p].

Attention is drawn to al-Farabi’s interpretation of the conditioning of sensations by physical stimuli and those physiological processes that take place in the sensory nerves. Such stimuli he calls light for vision, atmospheric vibrations for hearing, etc. Farabi characterizes our cognition as a direct reflection, as an imprint of a real object in the form of concrete images. Sensations are the initial and necessary source of knowledge [8, 103 p.]. (“He who does not feel knows nothing and understands nothing”). Their truth lies in the correspondence of the emerging images to real objects that exist outside and independently of the human consciousness. The stronger the irritation, the longer the images of sensations remain, the diversity of human sensation depends entirely on the versatile features of the property of being and the external world.

Under the function of perception, al-Farabi understands the structure of particular concrete objects in the form of images, then the resulting disparate sensations are formed into a single whole. The act of perception is not conceived without a special anatomical apparatus consisting of the peripheral and central parts and the nerve conductors connecting them, the perceived qualities are recognized as belonging to the things themselves.

With the sensory stage of cognition, al-Farabi connects memory and representation, which occupy an intermediate place between sensation and reason, i.e., the thought process. Memory preserves the received materials from thinking and representation, with its help a person increases the stock of his knowledge, enriches his life experience. It helps him to avoid the harmful and strive for the useful. However, relying only on memory often leads a person to delusions, incorrect conclusions, since it is based on private things.

In thinking, a person learns the deep essence of the perceived objects. Thinking is closely
related to speech. Thinking is universal; it cannot be influenced by religious, racial, or national characteristics. Mental activity is the highest manifestation of a person’s creative activity. Thinking is able to organize and discipline the natural instincts and affects of man. In contrast to sensory perception, thinking “is characterized by understanding, and not just the reflection and consolidation of reflected images, since understanding is an action associated with the knowledge of the essence, general rules and laws”. In thinking, al-Farabi prefers the process of understanding. “To understand better, - he wrote, - than to learn by heart, so as to learn by heart is associated with many words and names of people and it’s forever, no use to anyone...consciousness has to do with generalizations (identifying) the nature and laws...to understand you better than you know by heart” (from the treatise of al-Farabi “Questions and answers”).

3. Result

The ideas of al-Farabi had a great influence not only on the formation of the worldview of the thinkers of the East (Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldun, Nizami, Navoi, etc.), but also on the development of progressive philosophical thought in Europe (Bacon, G. Galiley, R. Descart, B. Spinoza, etc.). The teachings of al-Farabi influenced the subsequent development of psychological and psychological thought of the peoples of Central Asia. His influence was multi-faceted and lasting. In the works of Makhmud Kashgari and Yusuf Khas Khajib, written in the Turk language, traces of the rationalistic and humanistic ideas of al-Farabi are clearly visible. So, in the treatise of Yusuf Khas Khajib “Kutadgu bilig” (“Gracious Knowledge”), many pages are filled with psychological reflections on the place of a person in society, on the character and strong-willed qualities of people, on the benefits and harms of the word, on the psychology of rulers of different ranks, on the peculiarities of certain professions, on the art of communication, on the psychology of various strata of society, etc. And in the works of another scientist, Makhmud Kashgari (“Divan lugat at turk” – “Collection of Turk dialects”) you can learn a lot of valuable statements about the psychology of the Turk peoples, about their language, about their songs, riddles, proverbs and sayings, customs, religious beliefs. It also contains numerous ethnonyms and toponyms, samples of the national calendar, astronomical, medical, military and religious terms, which are so important historiographical and factual material for modern ethnopsychological research.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that in the field of psychology, Al-Farabi was one of the first to write about the concept of social psychology, which is a person's need to communicate with other people in order to survive. The scientist also wrote and published a treatise on dreams, which still remain relevant in the field of psychology.

For the thousand years progressive side of the psychological heritage of al-Farabi is constantly evolving, finding a ready response in the hearts of new generations of leading scientists, not only the East but from the West, which, to some extent prepared the “European Renaissance” and served as the basis for further development of scientific thought, which has its distant roots in the writings of the ancient Greek and medieval Arabic thinkers.

REFERENCES