

The Concept of Ruler in al-Farabi's Political Philosophy

Summary

The paper analyzes the concept of ruler (al-ra' is) in al-Farabi's political philosophy. The recurrent problem of different and sometimes contradictory conceptions of ruler's qualities and prerogatives in different al-Farabi's treatises are analyzed. The paper tries to reveal how both the Islamic and Hellenistic problematic are intertwined in the political conception of ruler in al-Farabi's philosophy. It is shown how for the first time in the history of political philosophy a philosopher tries to tackle the challenges posed by the re-

vealed religions to rationalist philosophy by bestowing prophetic abilities to the Platonic Philosopher-King. The paper also reveals how al-Farabi's understanding of the concept of the first ruler helps shed some light on how the thinker understood the notion of political power itself. The study shows that holding political power should be not considered as something prerequisite for being the first ruler but rather as something that can in fact be detrimental to the aims and goals of al-Farabi's Philosopher-Prophet.

Keywords: al-Farabi, first ruler, shi'ism, Islamic political philosophy, Neoplatonism.