

## Ethical Health of Organization and Society in al-Farabi's Theory

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### Abstract

Ethical health of society is one of the most important issues in the contemporary world. The ethical health of society depends on many factors, one of which is occupational health. Occupational health relies on correct labor division, meritocracy and correct professional performance, toward which organizations are more responsible than individuals nowadays. Therefore, ethical health of society is based on the business organization-health. But, often the problem of mischief and non-compliance with ethical requirements occurs in profession, organization and society, which can threaten their health. This problem raises the following question: What should be done with such persons to keep the profession, organization and society healthy? So, the main problem of this research is to investigate the impact of personal development and soul's perfection of citizens and HR on prevention, decrease and treatment of ethical dilemmas in profession, organization and society. By presenting the problem to al-Farabi (872-950), the researchers sought to solve it with a critical-analytical method.

Al-Farabi has two approaches toward the problem. In the first approach, seeking the elements of ethical actions, he believes that ethical actors could be divided into three different categories, each of which acts due to one of the followings: (1) external requirement, (2) inner obligation, (3) and virtue. The first category is subject to some criticisms, including the possibility of reducing the ethics to rules, the necessity of ethical assessment of rules in formulation, interpretation and implementation, and lastly, the "external requirement" is the last step of ethical development process/project. The "inner obligation" has a particular effectiveness threshold; it is condition-dependent; and it could be deviated by unaware wrong rationalization. Nevertheless, "inner obligation", whether interpreted as reason or conscience, has the capability to be developed and cultivated. Having much higher effectiveness threshold, and more resistance in hard conditions, virtue-based ethical action is preferred to two previous categories. It makes the citizens and HR more

predictable; it could be trusted without supervision; and is an important element in choosing managers. Virtue-based ethical action is based on perfection of soul, al-Farabi mentions. Perfection of soul has two theoretical (mental development) and practical (grow in virtues) aspects, and its achievement depends on the status of person in the process/project of perfection and the stability of his/her "virtues".

The second approach focuses on the reaction toward immoral persons, mostly performed by managers/politicians. Al-Farabi, meaningfully regardless of "external requirement", suggests three steps: (1) try to make their souls perfected, (2) making them having "inner obligation", (3) and exile (or sack) them if the former steps were useless. The last step could somehow be criticized: It is not essentially impossible to make the immoral persons act well. There is only the problem of ethical growth technologies. Therefore, by developing these technologies the problem of ethically incorrigible persons will be solved as well.

The research concludes that al-Farabi's theory of "perfection of soul", by emphasizing on "virtues", can solve the problem of social, organizational and professional health fundamentally. However, if a short-term program is considered, the "external requirement" must be applied. Finally, promoting the technologies related to ethical development is suggested.

**Keywords:**

Al-farabi, Perfection of soul, Ethical health, Social health, Organizational health





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