

## **Ethical Management and Leadership in the Framework of Farabi's Work "El-Medinetu'l Fazila" (The People of the Virtuous City)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Ethical leader is someone whose management style is based on moral power and who has a dramatic impression on his subordinates and other followers in the realization of organizational / institutional objectives. He intends to elevate the society to the highest possible level with his honesty, reliability and fairness. In El-Medinetu'l Fazila (The People of the Virtuous City), the work of Farabi, who is a well-known scholar in logic and philosophy, it is seen that the concepts of virtue and happiness are based on ethical management. According to him, the ultimate goal of the state should be to establish virtue and happiness.*

*In this study, certain inferences will be made to indicate the achievability of an ethical management under the ethical leadership of the manager, who has a decisive role within the scope of Farabi's work, El-Medinetu'l Fazila (The People of the Virtuous City)*

**Keywords:** Ethical leadership, Farabi, virtuous city, public administration

### **INTRODUCTION**

The definition of ethics in the western world dates back to Plato and Aristotle. The word ethics originates from the Greek *ethos*, meaning character, behavior, custom and habit. In this context, that individuals act in accordance with the moral principles and values that are considered agreeable by the society is the indication of their behaving in ethical terms. The other meaning of the term has more realistic lines: Ethics is the set of values which helps a person to decide what is right or wrong in any situation (Rowe and Guerro, 2013: 490.)

Bauman (2001:21) comes up with an ideal definition of ethics in the form of a legal code that distinguishes the good from evil and defines the right behavior which is universally regarded as appropriate. Pieper (1999:4), before making a moral move in ethics, makes a critical assessment from a critical point of view. Brenkert (1998:17) defines ethics as the process followed by a person, as he is contemplating on morality, its foundations and nature or the ultimate result of this contemplation process.

Ethical leadership is a scope that takes into consideration the situations encountered by the leader and other people, the methods and skills of the leader as well as the final outcomes, and it comprises not only the leader himself, but also his subordinates as well as those who benefit from him. Leader's goals, his vision and values are all to the benefit of the whole organization and all its leading stakeholders (Freemann and Stewart, 2006:3).

The leader in Farabi's El-Medinetu'l Fazila (The People of the Virtuous City) is a figure that impresses, directs, performs and constructs. He is the symbol of high proficiency in terms of both morality and character. Only with the leader is the constitution of a moral and virtuous state possible. As a result of this, the system to be founded by him denotes a model which is internalized and followed by those who are managed. Ethical management to be formed by

the ethical leader will eventually turn a group of people who have come together around the principles of morality and honesty to attain happiness into a virtuous society.

In this study, certain evaluations as regards the formulation of ethical management in the framework of managerial discipline practiced by the governor of the virtuous city in Farabi's work, namely the ethical leader, will be depicted.

## **ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

Ethical leadership is a relative concept that gathers its followers through social interactions. Being an ethical leader also means being an ethical individual as well as being an ethical manager. Leadership always requires a relationship between the leader and his followers and it is important to focus on the leader as an ethical manager. Leadership is an important aspect of an organization's ethical culture and an effective element that will establish morality upon organizational agenda. Decent managers encourage ethical behaviors in their followers, by forming basic roles (rules) so as to determine moral standards and expectations and thus bring about moral behaviors (Van der Akker et al., 2009: 103).

In the context of leadership, who actual ethical leaders are and what their traits and deeds are like can only be conceived through their actions and behaviors (Rowe and Guerro, 2013: 490).

In the eyes of citizens, an ideal manager should have the character of a result-oriented businessman who is ambitious, competitive and aims to yield returns for what he has done. However, in reality, most managers are those who expect to be effective in their works, hope to raise the world as well as their businesses to higher levels and thus create a value for those whose lives they will affect (Freeman and Stewart, 2006: 2).

Moral leaders make ethics an explicit part of their leadership agenda. They take ethical behavior as their role model and send messages openly and consciously by using the reward system (reward and punishment) effectively to make their followers accountable towards the ethical management. This kind of ethical behavior helps the ethical leader to establish an organizational medium to attract the attention of followers through ethical leadership (Brown and Trevino, 2006: 597).

Ethical leader does not solely focus on results, but he also closely follows the whole process right from the very beginning. He observes to what extent followers comply with the ethical directives that have been put into effect. In the case of detecting any kind of violation, he takes necessary measures through penal sanctions to prevent the recurrence of such violations. At this point, it is important that reward and punishment method be carried out in an effective manner for the establishment of ethical management. The most important of emphasis here is on the morality of the leader.

Theories of ethics are divided into two categories: Those related with leader's behaviors and those concerned with leader's character. The ones related with leader's behaviors are of two types: First type are the ones related with leader's behaviors and their results, and second are those concerned with the rules and duties which envision leader's prescriptive behaviors. The theories which are related with results are called teleological theories. These theories that are in question put an emphasis on whether the leader's deeds, behaviors and/or management style bear favorable results. This makes it clear whether the results of one's deeds are ethical or not. Theories regarding duties or rules are called deontological theories. These theories focus on whether the leader's deeds are good or bad. The approaches related to the leader's character are the second category of ethical theories and are called virtue-based hypotheses (Rowe and Guerro, 2013: 490).

There are three approaches within the context of teleological theories to assess the results and whether these results are regarded as ethical. First of all, ethical egoism defines the leader actions that have been designed to obtain the best results. Secondly, utilitarianism defines the leader's actions that have been designed to obtain the best results for the maximum number of people. Third, altruism, though it falls against the benefits of leaders, refers to leader actions that have been designed to show concern for other people's benefits (Rowe and Guerro, 2013: 490).

From a teleological point of view, what is more important is that the results of leader's deeds should ethically be "good" or even "the best". On the other hand, deontological theories base ethics in an action upon the intention of that action, which the leader marks as a moral objective and justifies it morally from his point of view. Hence, one needs both teleological and deontological theories to be able to see whether leaders act ethically or not. In this context, ethical leader is someone who yields utmost benefit by acting according to the requirements of the task and thus aims to actualize the best results (Ciulla, 312).

## **ETHICAL MANAGEMENT IN FARABI'S "EL-MEDINETU'L FAZILA"**

### **City or State Issue**

Farabi tackles the issue of the city structure on an organism-based axis. He resembles the virtuous city to a fully healthy human body. According to him, all the organs in a body cooperate to function well. Organs of a body differ from one another in terms of their responsibility, function and superiority. In this context, he classifies the organs in a body according to their functions. He confers the highest managerial role to the heart. The heart has a dominating role which affects all other organs. He then comes up with a hierarchical profile in which organs with secondary managerial roles come after the heart, which assist the heart in the implementation of its functions, and then those tertiary elements which are fully dependent on the organs in the first and second groups, and finally those without a managerial role which solely fulfill orders and instructions.

The biological organism, which is formed as a hierarchical scheme by Farabi in accordance with the importance and functions of organs from top to bottom, looks very much like a city (state) in this respect. Similarly, elements constituting the city all have qualities and structures that are different from each other. A city organization is made up of an individual with a managerial position and his close subordinates who fulfill his orders. The common duty of these subordinates is to utilize their current knowledge and experience so as to fulfill the leader's objectives. The managerial chain includes those who are hierarchically ranked in this secondary position, the sub-managers who are under the management of the former and finally those on the last link of this chain who do nothing more than fulfilling orders and instructions (Farabi, 1990: 80, 81).

Tasks are listed from top to bottom according to their nature. The tasks of those who are very close in rank to the city governor are upper-level tasks; however, the tasks fulfilled by lower level managers remain in the backburner (Farabi, 1990: 82-83).

The dominant organ in the human body is the one which is more qualified and superior to others. In like manner, the leader of a city is someone with the highest rank among others and superior in managerial skills. Managers and qualified personnel work under his directions (Farabi, 1990: 82).

If the heart, among all other organs in the body, comes into being before all others and positions them according to their status, and activates the elements that will repair possible

deformities that may arise in any organ, the city governor should also act in like manner. It is the duty of the leader to solve a problem that may arise among the members of city council (Farabi, 1990: 82).

Everybody in a virtuous city, no matter what their positions and roles are, should aim at accomplishing the goals of the leader. The governor of the virtuous city should not be an ordinary person, but, to the contrary, he should have high leadership skills as well as a decent character and strong will, and thus teach what will lead people to happiness (Farabi, 1990: 84-85).

Leader is a prototype who is closely followed by people and whose behaviors are taken as a role model. Accordingly, when the leader carries out a moral management, this will not only shape the structure of the system to be followed by his successor, but it will also enable those who are managed to internalize the moral principles set by the leader and thus perform virtuous behaviors within the framework of these principles.

### **Cities Those Are Contrary To the Virtuous City and Behaving Unethically**

Farabi categorized the anomalous cities which sheered away from ethical behaviors under four titles as the ignorant city, the sinful city, the corrupt city, the deviant city and the baffled city (1990: 90, 95). He then gave appropriate names to these cities in accordance with their experience of happiness or congruency in their behaviors towards happiness (Arkan, 2020: 392).

According to Farabi, the people of the *ignorant city* are those who do not know what true happiness is, and therefore refuse to believe it even if they are told what it actually is. Their sole purpose in life is having good health, fortune, lust, respect and prestige. Bad luck, illnesses, poverty, not being able to fulfill their wishes, losing prestige are all conditions that eliminate happiness. They tend to have a mentality which relates happiness by an individualistic approach to a worldly benefit. They are generally ruled according to the wishes of their absolute monarchs. Ignorant city is divided into these sub-categories: *a. The of City Basic Needs:* It is the city the people of which aims to make do with the basic physical needs of life like food, clothing, housing and sex and assist each other to obtain these things. *b. City of Prosperity:* The purpose of its people is to obtain wealth and increase this wealth. This is their sole purpose in life. *c. City of Meanness and Immorality:* Its people overindulge in the material pleasures of life. Eating, drinking, making sex, teasing each other and having fun are above all other things in life. *d. City of Glory:* It's the city the people of which are respected, commended, admired and cited by the people of other nations. The people of this city help each other to achieve pride and dignity. They want to be seen as reputable people both within themselves and by other nations. *e. City of Superiority:* It's the city the people of which aim to establish sovereignty over others, but try to prevent others from establishing sovereignty over them. All the joys and pleasures in life for the people of this city consist of winning victory and being superior to others. *f. Collectivist City:* The people of this city hope to live and act freely in life.

**The Sinful City** is the one whose people in fact know all that are known by the people of the virtuous city, yet they do not practice what they know. In this respect, they look like the people of the virtuous city in terms of their knowledge about virtue and happiness, but their behaviors are very much like those of the ignorant city.

In the **Corrupt City**, people have gradually edged away from happiness and become corrupt under the influence of others, while they were once very much like the people of the virtuous city with their thoughts and deeds.

The people in the *Deviant City* have misconceptions about happiness. They are virtually pushed into this position. The images and symbols presented to them are far from being real and the deeds recommended for them do not yield happiness. The first leader of the deviant city is someone who thinks he is equipped with the knowledge of virtue and happiness, though he is not, and fools his people by tricks and deceits (Arkan, 202: 393).

As it can be seen here, Farabi's categorization of cities is mainly based on the individuals and the state. In this context, he argues that the purpose of social and political organizations should be to lead people to happiness through moral deeds in life. He categorized those who lead an immoral life as the peoples of ignorant, corrupt or deviant cities in accordance with their thoughts and behaviors. Farabi regards them as people and governments that are far from happiness. According to Farabi, happiness can only be attained by virtuous people and governments (by setting up virtuous cities).

### **The Ethical Leader of the Virtuous City and His Management Style**

It is possible to define ethical leadership as a process that is assessed through a set of values (Ciulla, 318). Leaders are important role models and function as a guide for their followers. Ethical leaders continuously lead their followers to morally proper behaviors by rewarding good deeds, while at the same time punishing wrong deeds (den Akker et al, 2009: 104). Effective and inspiring leaders motivate their followers with their idealism, confidence, vision and persuasive communicative styles. However, the leader's reliability and potential is important for the ethical behavior to have a significant effect (Piccolo et al, 2010: 260). Kant's view, "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end" overlaps with Farabi's views (Sen, 1998: 87).

Farabi attributes 12 qualifications to the first leader and governor of the virtuous city, who stands as a significant ethical role model and is above all others in position and capacity (1990: 87-89).

1. The organs of the city must be complete for him to do his job well,
2. He should be capable of understanding,
3. He should have a strong memory,
4. He should be vigilant and intelligent,
5. He should have the ability to express himself well,
6. He should love to teach and learn so as to be able to teach and learns things easily,
7. He should not be indulgent in eating, drinking and sexual desires,
8. He should love the truth and justice, and shun from lies and liars,
9. He should not value worldly materials like gold, silver and the like,
10. He should love justice and equitable people, hate tyranny and tyrant people and be fair to everybody without protecting his friends and relatives,
11. He should care for balance. When asked for justice, he should not act violently. When asked for oppression and maliciousness, he should do vice versa.
12. He should be determined and committed. He should not act cowardly while trying to accomplish his goals; instead, he should act with gallantry.

In this context, it is clear that leader's competency in terms of both physical and moral aspects are being accentuated here. On the other hand, since it is unlikely to embody all these capabilities in one person, the successors of the first leader should pursue the established

system and laws even if a new leader equipped with expected qualities has not been found (Farabi, 1990: 89).

Establishing an ethical management is for the manager or leader to set up a new system. It is possible to form an ethics-based model through an “administrative will” which has adopted the principles of ethical behavior and with the help of a society that follows and affirms the leader’s practices. Leader, with his attributes, is someone who can affect and manage others. Therefore, he should have a formula to get his ideas to the entire organization, using the instruments of ethics either with a secular and positivist approach or by systematizing it with religious references. In this context, it is necessary for the system to identify the moral standards without discriminating and criminalizing anyone and impose these standards to the state-individual-society triangle in the form of rules/orders.

In his work, Farabi mentions about a systematic structure. “When the life of a society which has attained happiness eventually comes to an end, new generations with equal position and values come to life after them and they lead their lives decently as did their ancestors before them (1990: 95). As a result, the ethical management practiced by the ethical leader will always survive there even if the people living in that area leave that place.

Heifetz (1994) focused on the values of followers and the organizations and societies they live in in the formulation of an ethical management. For Heifetz, the most important responsibility of leaders is to create a work medium that is characterized by empathy, trust and morality, and to guide his followers through hard times (Rowe and Guerro, 2013: 491). According to Farabi, even if the virtuous city is governed by different leaders at different times, it looks as if the city has been governed by a single leader right from the very beginning. This is closely related to creating common values. Leaders and others (those who are ruled) – whether a chief or an official – look very much like each other and have similar state of mind and personality structure (Farabi, 1990: 93). Hence, the stage of happiness can be reached through synergy, which adheres the individual to the group he belongs to and the members of that group.

The people of non-virtuous cities develop negative skills in time, as whatever they are doing is mostly wrong. The ill-doings of people living in these cities are eventually reflected in their characters in the form of evil intentions. This state takes the form of a disease in their souls and they begin to take pleasure from it. “Just as the patients of malaria take pleasure from unpleasant things due to their psychological breakdown, and hate and tend to avoid sweet and pleasant things, those who are psychologically ill tend to take interest in wicked faces and ill-doings as a result of ill feelings they have acquired through bad will and bad habits. They are disgusted by good and pleasant things; what’s more, they even can’t stand thinking about them” (Farabi, 1990: 97).

## CONCLUSION

The recent rise in the search for ethics in international grounds is seen as a reaction towards corruption. The corrosion of moral values in a society is the sign of a sociological reality indicating itself in corruption and immorality. The failure of institutions, mechanisms, norms and values within a society to function in accordance with the requirements of cultural norms and the weakening in social bonds between central organizations turn the society into a dysfunctional structure.

Farabi maintains in his work, *El-Medinetu'l Fazila* (The People of the Virtuous City), that an ethical management could be established with a leader-oriented management style. According to him, there are two types of societies or states: Those that are virtuous and those that are not. He evaluates the people of non-virtuous cities by categorizing them into mental

and behavioral dimensions. Those who consciously adopt the evil, those whose good deeds become corrupt in time, those who befool people with their misconceptions, those who are not aware of what happiness is are all put into categories, and different forms of city pictures are drawn under the names of deviant, corrupt, baffled and ignorant cities. The leaders of such cities are actors who do not favor virtue and morality.

On the other hand, the virtuous city is the city which in the first place has a decent, honest, intellectual and talented leader. According to Farabi, a leader who has adopted morality as a philosophy of life and internalized it in this context can establish an ethical management, because what is important at this point is the system to be established by the leader and the individuals and society who will get integrated to this system. Ethical leader develops a moral and virtuous life style for the administrators and people with his inherent ability to influence and guide other people. As a result of this, the people of the city who are under the rule of an ethical leader adopt morality as their philosophy of life and embrace an ethical management.

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