**Minimus Onomastica Graeca Alpharabius**

 One of the treatises that is attributed to al-Farabi is ***tafsir asma al-hukama*** that has a place among the writings of al-Farabi in Brockelmann’s GAL supplement I 377 (Franz Rosenthal 1942, 73). Without entering into authenticity of this attribution, this treatise shows the positive tendency and interest of its author in the interplay of philology and philosophy - a theme that we can see its first outstanding appearance in Plato’s *Politeia* Book IX, 582e, 8, though, such an issue is not explored by Platonic scholars (J.K. Newman 2002-2003, 197. In this noteworthy diachronic paper, we can read the transformation of the friendly relation of these two spheres of knowledge into an opposition in Plotinus).

 Now I want to examine this one-page text which contains a shorthand inventory of fourteen Greek proper names. The result of such an exploration will be a *Maxima in minimis* ora hologram in a very imperfect scale (Zuckermann 2006, 238). Let’s begin with the terms that make the title.

 1- **The Meaning of *tafsir***

 To explore and extract the justifiable and acceptable meaning(s) of the word ***tafsir*** as the initial word of the title, I will consider its relation and specific signification with ***asma*** (until finding a justifiable English equivalent I will use the same Arabic word), and at the same time, the content of al-Farabi treatise. With regard to the absence of al-Farabi specific definition of this word in his writings, according to Jirar Jihami 2002; and Ilai Alon 2002, I will continue my exploration in indirect and heuristic ways.

 In relation with this word, I initially begin with the literal lexical meaning of ***tafsir***. In Lane, lexicon ***tafsir*** as a general word is an infinitive noun from f-s-r and basically means “discover, detection, revelation, development, or disclosure of a thing that was concealed or obscured” (Lane 1863, Book I, 2397). Therefore, within this writing, we expect to read those *asma* that are unclear for us and al-Farabi wants to make them clear and the length of this clarification is not important because it can be long or short (for example, in a few words). Moreover, on the one hand, the core of *tafsir* is clearly distinct from some Arabic terms such as definition; narration; interpretation; information; explanation; pronunciation; orthography; telling history; notes; construction; commentary and the like. On the other hand, its relation with some Arabic words such as translation; understanding; meaning; extraction; etymology; origination and the like is indistinct and somehow fuzzy. In other words, lexical meaning of ***tafsir*** shows both affinity with some Arabic terms; and distance from others.

 As a result, for a curious philological/philosophical mind such as al-Farabi, some or all of these Greek proper names can be obscure and if we take ***tafsir*** in this literal meaning, we see that according to the content of this manuscript his doings even make some of them more obscure or mysterious. For example, his metaphorical semantic of colors in relation of the color of heaven for Porphyry; blue for Glaucon; and gold for Chrysaorios.

 With regard to such a situation, I go beyond “lexicon” and broaden my field of research and explore the “classical and medieval Arabic literature”, before and in al-Farabi’s time in the tenth century, in order to reach a general perspective about the word ***tafsir*** and then, extract appropriate implications for our discussion about al-Farabi’s possible conception of this term. Thereby, I want to say that though, al-Farabi’s background is in philosophy and medieval formal logic, and definition has a specific position in such an enterprise, it is strange that there is no explicit definition of ***tafsir***. But with regard to his attention to the friendly interplays of philosophy and philology and the existence of the word ***tafsir*** in the classical and medieval Arabic literature, we are justified to refer to such a literature and figure out some pertinent clues to communicate with al-Farabi.

 In reviewing the classical volumes two, eight and nine of *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* / GAS, we see that the word ***tafsir*** as a specific or general term is used and applied for many different topics such as Quran; Tradition; dreams; words; poems; and names/nouns (that itself is divided into many subtitles.) Although, all pertinent Arabic manuscripts are not extant and we have only the titles of some of them, through reviewing the content of the extant manuscripts, it becomes evident that ***tafsir*** has a minimal shared meaning on the one hand, but with regard to the specific title of each writing this meaning becomes more detailed and technical on the other hand (for example, definition and application of ***tafsir*** in regard to both “Quran”; and “names/nouns”). On the whole, we can say that the content of the manuscript, the use and habit of writers in a specific subject, and the nature of the topics lead us to the meaning of tafsir in the title of the extant writings (compare such a conception with Bayard Dodge 1970, Vol. 2, 909,925).

 Now with regard to the above-mentioned account and the three volumes of GAS, what can be the meaning of ***tafsir asma*** when it is used in the titles of the classical and medieval Arabic literature? It is noteworthy that such a title is in minority with the nouns / names that on their own terms are divided and explored in different subtitles such as God / Prophet of Islam; Poets; Things; Swords; Camels; Wars; Days; Winds; Clouds; Horse; Lion; Places; Tribes; and the like.

 Now with regard to al-Farabi preoccupation with the “human” names or anthroponym in the form of ***asma hukama***, I narrow down my exploration in classical and medieval Arabic literature to those manuscripts that have “tafsir asma of humans” in their titles. As a result, two core books from Ibn Ginni, *almabhaj fi* *tafsir asma shoara al-hamasah*(GAS 1975, Vol.2, 69); and abu Umar az-Zahid, *tafsir asma shoara* (GAS 1975, Vol.2, 100) take our attention. In the first lines of Ibn Ginni’s treatise *Delight in the Tafsir of the Names of the [Arabic] Poets in Epic*, as a literary outstanding scholar with interest in etymology of Arabic personal proper names, he mentions clearly to his conception of tafsir asma, “mentioning to the conditions of these proper names, the way they have been made, how many forms they have found, and into how many forms they have been divided” (Ibn Ginni 1987,5). According to these wordings and in the context of medieval Arabic literature, he understands four interrelated things from tafsir in relation to the proper names of the Arabic poets. First, he considers poets names as “proper names” that in Arabic are called “*a’lam* / "اعلام , therefore, he wants to work on a specific class of names that he recognizes them as such in distinction of the other grammatical classes of noun. Then, in such a texture he considers the way they are shaped and constructed. And how in the process of formation, according to Arabic syntax, they took different forms.

 But such understanding of tafsir in relation to proper names has distance from what al-Farabi as philosopher-philologist does in his treatise about non-Arabic proper names that majority of them belong to Greek human beings. Existence of “Greek” personal proper names makes it necessary to search for those writings of al-Farabi that can cover this aspect too. And I think in this relation his treatise called “*The Philosophy of Plato, Its Parts, the Ranks of Order of its Parts from the Beginning to the Ends”* should be taken into account. Here in his summarized narration of Plato’s philosophy according to the arrangement of his dialogues, al-Farabi considers the meaning and content of the dialogues’ “titles”, and it is much better that most of them are Greek human names and I want to explore and see, whether it is possible to deal with them by exploring al-Farabi, so that we can understand his possible meaning of tafsir asma - Greek proper personal.

 **3- An Interlude**

 As was mentioned, here as a heuristic way I want to consider al-Farabi’s treatise, *The Philosophy of Plato, Its Parts, the Ranks of Order of its Parts from the Beginning to the Ends*, in which he deals with the Greek anthroponomic names and I will extract his possible meaning and understanding of tafsir and then, apply it to the same word in his so-called manuscript *tafsir asma hukama*.

 Through, readingal-Farabi mentioned-above manuscript (Badawi, 1974, 5-27; Mahdi 1962, 53-70) about philosophy of Plato, we explore and consider his dealings with those dialogues that contain Greek personal proper names with specific attention to the different words he uses or those ones which are inserted and attributed to him by these two outstanding scholars and editors. Thereby, it will be described his doings apart from the issue whether his proposed short content and information is right or wrong.

* … Alcibiades - that is to say, model, … [all English equivalents are from Mahdi].
* … Theaetetus (and) meaning: voluntary.
* …. Philebus (and) meaning: beloved.
* … Protagoras – [ meaning: the carrier/maker of bricks] - …
* … as Meno – meaning: fixed- ….
* … as the Gorgias - meaning service.
* …. Parmenides [meaning compassion].
* … Hipparchus [observation].

 - … Theages - that is to say, experience- ...

 - … Laches - meaning preparation.

 - … Phaedrus [ and the meaning of this word in Arabic is shining or illuminating].

 - …. Critias - meaning separating out the truths- ….

 As we see, sometimes al-Farabi does not use any word for describing his doing, but when he does he uses two Arabic terms that their English equivalents are “meaning” and “namely”. What do they mean? Whether a name-noun has a meaning similar to a word or they have only homonymy? Does by “namely” he want to say something special/propria/ onymic about these Greek proper names? To reach the answers, we should go further and clarify the meaning of ism/name-noun in al-Farabi because the meaning of tafsir is dependent on the meaning of asma/name-noun.

 2- ***asma/ Names-Nouns***

 When we read the content of al-Farabi’s treatise ***tafsir asma al-hukama,*** we say that by *asma*, the plural form of *ism* (s-m-a), as the second and core word, he means a specific and limited category that is the “proper [Greek] names” and for such a combination technical Arabic terms are *ism a’lam* or *a’lam.* At the same time, it is noteworthy to add that bringing *asma* and not personal proper names in the title can be attributed either to the un-usefulness of such categorization for al-Farabi or he is influenced by Aristotle and Thrax because dichotomy of noun into common and proper is not explicit and salient in the former, and are unified under the general title of noun by the latter (Ernest Eichler 1995, Vol. 1. 385).

 Moreover, al-Farabi in general shows his specific philo-logical/philosophical interests and concerns with *ism* by titles such as *Names of the Sects in Philosophy*; *From* *the Names of Scholars who are Philosophy Masters*; *Names of the First Existent; Names of the Categories; the Names of Sciences; Names that are Transformed into Philosophical Meanings.* Besides, there are his scattered theoretical discussions that can be found mainly in *Kitab al****-****Huruf / Book of letters*; *Kitab al****-****Alfaz al****-****Musta'mal fi**l****-****Mantiq/ Book of Utterances Employed in Logic; Kitāb al'Ibārah/* commentary on De *interpretatione; and Kitab al****-****madkhal / Isagoge*. As a result, we should expect to read his different considerations and explorations of *ism* in the mentioned writings, and reducing them to one monolithic conception and definition is not right and just.

 With regard to the above-mentioned diversity of al-Farabi manuscripts in relation to *ism* and our concern with finding his conception and meaning of this word, in order to understand and translate it, I choose his commentary on Aristotle *peri hermenias*. According to the Arabic tradition before al-Farabi and also in his time, *ism* has the capacity and can be translated into name / noun that are interchangeable (Zimmerman 1988, XXV), but there is a nuance that should be mentioned in order not to take al-Farabi working as a mere grammatical or lexical notion. It means that in the texture of classical and medieval thought, where there is no belief in the identity of knowledge and its object or thought and language in order to know and communicate our knowledge about things on specific rationale and philosophy, we need to name these things, and thereby, names come into existence. From grammatical perspective, when a grammarian looks into the final result of the process, he or she calls it noun. In other words, the main concern of the Arabic grammarians in the classical and medieval Arabic literature toward personal proper names or *a’lam* or *ism a’lam* is with agnomen, relative, lineage, pseudonym, nickname and nom de plume (K. Versteegh, 2008 vol. 3, 717) and primarily he is not concerned with the rationale and process of naming and its product that is proper names. But when in the title of the intended manuscript as a philologist/philosopher al-Farabi writes ***asma*** he means “nouns” that are the product of “naming” process and action, and as a result the word ***asma*** contains both meanings at the same time.

 Through al-Farabi’s distinctive approach, now we can show the reasons of his interest and concern with [proper personal] names/nouns. He considers *ism* as a category that can be explored from philo-logical and philosophical aspects that somehow have interplays with each other. By philology in its Greek, not Arabic branch that includes grammar and lexicography (Makdisi 1990, 120), I mean that *ism/ اسم* is distinct from “word/ کلمه” as a broad category that has relation with speaking because it goes together with the act of speaking or logos/کلام . At the same time, he does not mean ism / اسم in distinction of verb because the latter is a “grammatical” category and as usual it is defined in relation with time and its dependency on a doer. By philosophical aspect, I mean that where there is non-identification between knowledge and its object for bringing them into presence human beings go toward nominating those things and in this regard, they name them. And in logic, what is named will be considered “subject” and some “predicate” will be attributed to it and a proposition can be made about them.

 Thus, where there is distance between mind and things with no overlapping, noun as a mediation is necessary in order to make such a relation through naming them (Ernest Eichler et al. 1995, vol. 1 368). Therefore, for classical and medieval thinkers, names are very important in order to recognize things. In other words, here al-Farabi as a name scholar seeks the content of the names-nouns of a few selected Greek wise men (except two of them that are not human) who are outstanding in different branches of wisdom. And we see that he is interested both in the reference and meaning aspects of these fourteen exonymic names-nouns. It means that al-Farabi interconnects two aspects of names-nouns that is their appellative and proper dimensions and somehow integrates them. For on the one hand, he is not thinking merely on their referent aspect if he was doing so, there was no need for seeking and presenting their contents, and on the other hand he is not only seeking their content if he was doing so, he should not seek their proper writing as exotic non-Arabic nouns.

 Now we can consider what he exactly means by names - nouns. I already mentioned that he has no inclination toward bisecting nouns to common and proper. But there are some places that he speaks of such a division and when we consider his definition we see that it is something different from a grammatical division and as a result, we should understand his specific conception because in relation to the intended treatise it can be useful and functional. Name *per se* as a singular word signifies meaning that can be understood in itself and by itself can be divided into common and particular kinds, in which common noun is somehow a genus that some kinds participate in it; and proper name is a title that signifies the nature of that kind (Jihami 2002, 42,43).

 Therefore, with referring to such a notion we can speak of “proper” noun in al-Farabi and then consider his accessible resources for indexing the selected Greek proper names/nouns. According to the minimal content of the treatise, it seems that he provides information for proper names of wise men from different sources such as accounts of another scholar, the idea of scholar’s master, his belonging to a specific circle, his famousness for something special, informal reports, semantic of colors and the like. And all these make his doing different from a strict etymologist, lexicographer, logician, and name-expert and as a result makes him similar to the efforts of a rhetorician, pragmatics, humanist, indexer, folk-etymologist and the like.

 4- **Tafsir asma: A Composite Practice**

 With regard to this background, I want to suggest the specific hypothesis of this article about al-Farabi practices in the under-examine treatise. But before that the position and importance of names/nouns in al-Farabi will be re-considered. On the one hand, from ontological and Alexandrian commentaries on Aristotle *peri hermeneias,* al-Farabi moves from existents and conceptions to language and more specifically, act of “naming” and its outcome “noun”. And in such a context, “when a quiddity is named [*tasmiyya*] by some kind term [for our purpose, *al-ism*], its referent in the mind is formally [putatively] identical to the quiddity of an individual existent [*al-mussama*] which belongs to that natural kind” (Kukkonen 2010, 55, 59,61).

 On the other hand, from the perspective of the thought and language relation, al-Farabi explores and considers the topic of noun/name too. He wants to say that in perfect intellection or speculative thought, where there is an absolute identity among the being who intelligences, the intellect, and the intelligible language is not needed. But when there is “nonidentification” among these three categories we face with imperfect or discursive thought and the language is needed in order to know something and communicate our knowledge to others. Thereby, here the appropriate relation of thought/maqul and language/mantuq becomes the issue.

 More precisely, in the First Section of *Kitab al-huruf/Letters,* Al-Farabi considers language from the perspective of word and the different aspects and meanings that it can take. What is important for our concern here is the stage at which we reach to “expression” and “conception” that on the former level, “word” is distinct of the sensible objects and at the same time have expressive relation with them; and on the latter level, denomination or creative activity of “names” proper, is situated, for it is here that name becomes the very object of thought, or even in a certain sense, its content (Roger Arnaldez 1977, 59). Then the derivative / non-derivative relation of these two aspects of the word, concrete and abstract, becomes al-Farabi’s concern.

 Here, with regard to these two broad panoramas about name/noun in al-Farabi, his doing should be considered very seriously and not as amusement or fantasy. Then, I will explore his doings in this one-page treatise in order to make them meaningful and understandable. According to the title of al-Farabi’s treatise, we expect that the mentioned personal proper Greek human names share and have direct connection with “wisdom” (he does a comparable thing in his consideration of the four “names” of Prince, Philosopher, Legislator and Imam in his treatise *Attainment of Happiness* too, Mahdi 2001, 189,190). It means that he has selected outstanding names of the Greek “wise” men with regard to this shared quality. Of course, with the exception of two proper names “Hermes” and “Asclepios” that do not pertain to human beings but to a “daimon” and “god” respectively.

 Therefore, we should consider al-Farabi definition about this shared and connecting quality. There is a definition by him about the wise person that covers and can be applied to what he means in the writing under consideration: “he who is extremely component in an art is said to be wise in that art. Similarly, a man with penetrating practical judgment and acumen maybe called wise in the thing regarding which he has practical judgement. However, wisdom without qualification is this science (i.e. philosophy) and the mastering of it”. (Alon, 2002 vol.1 90-91; vol2. 760). Accordingly, we expect and read in his indexical minimal onomasticon a list of proper Greek human (with two exceptions) names who are outstanding in theoretical, practical, and technical knowledge: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Porphyry, Chrysaorios, and Glaucon in Philosophy or theoretical knowledge; Galen, Hippocrates, Rufus, and Asclepiades in Medicine or technical knowledge; Plato, and Themistius in Rhetoric or practical knowledge; and Aristotle and Alexander in Ethics or practical knowledge. With regard to this indexing and classification, when we re-read the intended manuscript we see that different practices come under the general concept of *tafsir*, a word that up to here is not translated into English:

1-Common / Special Parlance or Epithet. We have here the name of Plato as “the sincere eloquent one”. In distinction from Rosenthal 1942, 73, I think “sincere eloquent” and not “broadness of shoulders” has more relevancy with a kind of practical wisdom of course, if we take broadness in its usual and customary aspect and not metaphorical one; Aristotle as “the one of perfect virtue”; Galen as “the one working wonders”; Hippocrates as “the one holding fast health”; Socrates as “the one adorned with wisdom”; Rufus “the mine of wisdom”; Alexander as “the very brave one”; and Themistius as “the one of elegant expression”. These short identifications/differentiations are usually the conceptions of the common or special individuals about some ancient Greek wise men that become as their epithets. Thereby, they shape one meaning of al-Farabi understanding of *tafsir*.

2-Metaphorical Semantic of Colors. It is interesting that both Greek *chroma* and Latin *color* have some relation with covering and surface and it seems that al-Farabi is exploring what lies under these surfaces or proper Greek names. Besides, al-Farabi metaphorical (non- psychological) semantics show that there are different conceptions of color at work in comparison with our contemporary one. In this regard, color is a “relational notion” in connection with multiple abstract and concrete ideas that have relation with each other and on the whole shape the meanings of a color term though for us it can denote to a limited and specific field. Therefore, here the colors are used not in a modern simple pure sense but function as metaphors and somehow move between chromatic and achromatic aspects and for many reasons this makes their understanding challenging and ambiguous (Clarke 2017, 10, 21).

 In this relation we read names of Porphyry as the “color of the heaven”, according to M. Platnauer (1921 156,159) in comparison with the other color-words this and the color blue are very puzzling in the Greek texture; Glaucon as “the Blue one”, it is its real etymology and I mention it in the next title; and Chrysaor / Chrysaorios as “the color of gold” (it is a semi-complete etymology because the first part of this name χρυσός means “gold” but in al-Farabi there is no trace of its second part. Perhaps he considers the second part that is “sword” not suitable in the name of a wise man! [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/ entries/der-neue-pauly/chrysaor-chrysaorios-e233880](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/%20entries/der-neue-pauly/chrysaor-chrysaorios-e233880). Besides, it is only in relation to this name that he mentions to its nomination */ sama* / سمی as the “excellent reasoning” and thereby, al-Farabi shows that he has not exclusively physical conception of this color (the same relation between gold and good/fine/wise exists in Cratylus 398a) and we as readers should not expect this of the other color-names too.

# 3-Real (non-fantastic) Etymology. It is interesting that among these ancient outstanding Greek proper names (of course one of them in incomplete way) three proper names are etymologized*/ i****shtiqaq*** in real terms. In relation to the proper name Asclepiads, al-Farabi writes “the one derived from / *al-mushtiq / المشتق* the divine power”. When we consider this proper anthroponym as a derivation of the theonym Asclepios that means the “one negating dryness”, we can see that there is a kind of meaningful relation between both. It means that the god of medicine has the power and a name that means negation of dryness as a specific sickness and Asclepiads as a proper anthroponym of a physician can heal the dryness because he has derived his name and healing power from the god he is homonymous with. Consequently, his name is the true derived meaning/ etymon (neuter singular of etumos ‘true”) of the god. It is noteworthy that in ancient Greek context and in al-Farabi, etymology has no relation with the origin or development or the like concepts. Accordingly, the physician has the nature of the god of the medicine that functions as the principle/arche and as a result, the name of the physician that is a homonymous name is truly a secondary /derivative name. For specific understanding of al-Farabi as a philosopher/philologist from etymology / al-Ishtiqaq, we can refer to his First section of *Kitab al-Huruf* /letters. Besides, for shaping his conception he has access to different sources such as non-Arabic sources like Plato’s focused dealing in the 46 pages out of 85 pages of *Cratylus*; scattered notes of Aristotle; writings of stoics and Alexandrian school (Vincent Blanár 2009 4,5) about etymology; and Arabic literal conception of etymology in great scholars of the Arabic golden age such as Ibn Qutaybah (9th); Ibn Qutrub (9th); al-Asma’i (8th); Ahmad Ibn Hatim (9th); al-Mubarrad (9th); al-Zajjaji (10th); al-Sarraj(9th); al-Rummani (10th); Ibn Khalawayh (9th); al-Ausat (9th); al-Bahili (8th); Ibn Faris (10th); Ibn Duraid (10th) (Sezgin 1982 Vol. 8; and Ibn al-Nadim 1970 Vol. 1 in multiple places); and Ibn Ginni (10th – 11th) (Kees Versteegh, la grande etymologie d’Ibn Ginni (Sylvain Auroux 1985, 44-50) that each one of them on the minimum has a manuscript on etymology or *al-Ishtiqaq*.

#  Finally, there is the name Glaukon for which al-Farabi brings the “blue one” that refers to the correct real etymology of it (though in Greek texture it also means light green, grey, or yellow too.)

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| With regard to the above account, we can say that the compound term *tafir asma* in al-Farabi title essentially refers to the common and special parlance that function as epithets for the personal names of selected outstanding Greek wise men. Beside this basic and maximum meaning, for Al-Farabi *tafsir asma* has metaphorical connotations in connection with colors that here with regard to his focus on the wise men we can infer that all of them have some relation with wisdom and its different branches among non-Arabs. And lastly, at the minimum*, tafsir asma* means real and true etymology/al-Ishtiqaq in its classical and medieval version as the correct meaning of the personal proper names.  Consequently, al-Farabi as a philosopher/philologist wants to give his reader a “holistic”, condensed and indexical information that is somehow pragmatic, rhetorical and emotional about the “identity” and at the same time “differentiation” among these selected “exotic” proper / propria names that all share in the praisable quality of “wisdom” in its broad meaning.**References** 1-Franz Rosenthal, A Short Treatise on the Meaning of the Names of Some Greek Scholars, Journal of the American Society, Vol. 62, No. 1. 1942.2-Abd al-Rahman Badawi, Aflatun fi al-Islam, Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1980. |  |

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