

## Philosophy and Man: From Metaphysics to Philosophical Anthropology

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### Abstract:

This article examines the relationship between philosophy and the human being as a foundational relationship rather than a relationship with an external subject. Philosophy does not appear only when the human being asks about the world, but when the question turns back to the human being himself: Who am I? What does it mean to exist? How do I know? How do I distinguish truth from illusion, good from evil, and freedom from submission? Hence, the human being is not merely one of the subjects of philosophy, but its living center, because every inquiry into existence, knowledge, or value ends, in one way or another, in a human question.

The article proceeds from a fundamental hypothesis that philosophy is the critical consciousness that enables the human being to move beyond automatic living toward understanding, to shift from accepting the familiar to questioning it, and from submission to habit to constructing a responsible meaning of life. Therefore, the article attempts to analyze the image of the human being through major themes: the rational human being, the moral human being, the free human being, the social human being, and the contemporary human being in the face of science, technology, and alienation.

**Keywords:** philosophy, human being, reason, freedom, ethics, existence, meaning.

### Introduction:

There is no doubt that the Arab researcher, when seeking to study the idea of the human being and philosophy, finds it difficult to speak about philosophy in isolation from the human being; because philosophy, in its profound origin, is neither an intellectual luxury nor a linguistic ornament, but rather the human being's attempt to understand himself, his destiny, and the world in which he lives. If the animal lives within its environment driven by instinct, the human being is not satisfied merely with living, but asks about the meaning of his life. He is the being who transforms wonder into a question, the question into inquiry, and inquiry into a position. Hence, philosophy has been associated since its earliest beginnings with the question of the human being: How can one live a virtuous life? How can one know the truth? And how can one realize oneself without falling into chaos or alienation?

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Aristotle saw that philosophy begins in wonder, and that the human being by nature desires knowledge; this desire is not an incidental detail, but rather a sign that the human being is a being who transcends immediate need in the pursuit of meaning, order, and understanding (Aristotle, trans. 2014) Likewise, the Islamic philosophical tradition did not regard reason as an adversary of religion or life, but considered it an instrument of reflection, contemplation, and the attainment of wisdom, as is evident in Averroes' defense of the legitimacy of philosophical inquiry and his linking of wisdom with Islamic law (Ibn Rushd, 1983).

The importance of the topic "Philosophy and the Human Being" stems from the fact that it is a subject that brings together ontology, epistemology, ethics, sociology, and politics. The human being is not understood merely in terms of the body, nor solely in terms of reason, nor only through social belonging, but rather as a composite being who lives between necessity and freedom, between nature and culture, between the individual and society, and between question and answer. Therefore, the article is not limited to a historical presentation of ideas, but rather seeks to construct an analysis showing how philosophy makes the human being conscious of himself, his limits, and his responsibility.

Accordingly, the problematique of the article may be formulated in the following question: How has philosophy contributed to shaping the human being's conception of himself, and what are the limits of this conception in light of the transformations of the modern and contemporary age? From this central problem emerge subsidiary questions: What does it mean for the human being to be a rational being? How is his freedom determined? What is the relationship between ethics and human dignity? And can the contemporary human being preserve his humanity in the face of the pressures of technology, consumerism, and alienation?

### **First: Philosophy as the Human Being's Questioning of Himself:**

Philosophy does not arise when the human being possesses a ready-made answer, but rather when he discovers that the ready-made answer is insufficient. In his daily life, the human being receives many meanings from the family, school, religion, custom, and language, yet at a certain moment he pauses to ask: Is what I believe true? Is what I do just? And is what I desire the result of my own will or of external pressure? This moment is philosophical par excellence, because it moves the human being from submission to criticism.

From this perspective, philosophy is not merely theoretical knowledge, but a practice of consciousness. It makes the human being realize that his existence is not a final given, but an open project. Philosophy questions the self-evident notions that appear natural: the meaning of justice, the value of truth, the limits of authority, the nature of goodness, and the source of knowledge. And when it questions these self-evident notions, it does not destroy life, but rather reveals the foundations upon which it stands. Therefore, it can be said that philosophy liberates the human being from "sleeping within the familiar" and places him before the responsibility of understanding.

This idea was manifested in the Arab-Islamic heritage through works such as Hayy ibn Yaqzan, where the human being appears alone in nature, yet does not remain imprisoned within sensory perception, but rises through rational contemplation to an understanding of the levels of existence. The story of Hayy symbolizes the human being's capacity to move from

sensory perception to rational knowledge, and from natural isolation to metaphysical questioning (Ibn Tufail, 2011). Thus, the human being here is not merely a living body, but a searching consciousness. In this sense, philosophy becomes the mirror of the human being. Yet it is not a mirror that reflects the image as it is, but rather a mirror that reveals what lies behind the image: its motives, contradictions, possibilities, and illusions. And the human being in philosophy is not studied as inanimate objects are studied, because he is the only being who participates in defining himself; he is both the subject of the question and its agent at the same time.

### **Second: The Rational Human Being and the Limits of Reason:**

The definition of the human being in classical philosophy has been associated with being a “rational animal.” This definition, despite its apparent simplicity, carries a profound conception of the human being: he shares with living beings the body and need, yet differs from them through the capacity for thought, abstraction, judgment, and planning. Reason is not merely an instrument of calculation, but a capacity to organize experience, construct meaning, and distinguish between appearance and truth.

However, philosophy did not regard reason as an absolute power without limits. Reason may err, may submit to desire and interest, and may become an instrument of justification instead of an instrument of disclosure. Therefore, philosophical thinking is not content with praising reason, but rather trains it in criticism. Philosophical reason is a reason that examines itself, questions the conditions of its knowledge, the limits of its judgments, and the sources of its certainty. This is what led modern philosophy, especially in the thought of Immanuel Kant, to shift the question from: What do we know? to: How is knowledge possible? And what are its limits?

In modern Arab thought, Zaki Naguib Mahmoud sought to defend the necessity of scientific reason and rigorous methodology as conditions for the renewal of Arab culture. He did not view reason as the opposite of heritage, but rather as an instrument for understanding both heritage and reality, provided that heritage does not become an authority that prevents questioning (Zaki Naguib Mahmoud, 1970). On the other hand, Fouad Zakaria emphasized that scientific thinking is not merely information, but a pattern of discipline, methodological doubt, and resistance to superstition (Fouad Zakaria, 1987).

Thus, the question of reason reveals a central paradox: the human being cannot be human without reason, yet at the same time cannot place blind trust in his reason. Therefore, philosophy came to educate reason in methodological humility that is, to think, while knowing at the same time that one’s thinking always remains in need of revision, criticism, and correction.

### **Third: The Moral Human Being and Dignity:**

If reason distinguishes the human being in terms of knowledge, then ethics distinguishes him in terms of value. The human being does not ask only: What is truth? but also: What is good? What is duty? And how should I deal with others?

Here ethics appears as the sphere in which human dignity is manifested. The human being is not a thing to be used, nor a means for fulfilling the desires of others, but a self that possesses value in itself.

This meaning becomes especially clear in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, where the human formulation of the moral imperative affirms that the human being must always be treated as an end and never merely as a means (Kant, 1785/2012). This means that moral value is not founded solely upon utility, because utility may justify the exploitation of human beings in the name of interest. Dignity, however, prevents reducing the human being to an instrument, whether in economics, politics, or social relations.

In contemporary Arab-Islamic thought, the modern thinker Taha Abderrahmane strongly emphasizes the centrality of ethics in the formation of the human being. He argues that the crisis of modernity does not lie merely in technological progress, but in the separation of technical power from the ethical dimension. Therefore, it is not enough for the human being to be capable of acting; he must also ask: Is his action responsible? And does it preserve the humanity of the human being? (Taha Abderrahmane, 2000).

The importance of philosophy appears here in its role in preventing the reduction of the human being to utility, production, or pleasure. The moral human being is not a being who merely calculates gain and loss, but a being who bears responsibility toward himself and others. And whenever the human being loses this ethical dimension, he becomes more susceptible to being transformed into a number, an instrument, or a function that is, into a thing among things.

#### **Fourth: Freedom and Responsibility:**

The question of freedom appears to be one of the questions most closely tied to the human being. The human being wants to be free, yet discovers that his freedom is surrounded by many constraints: the body, society, law, customs, history, and economic conditions. Therefore, freedom in philosophy does not mean that the human being does whatever he wants, but rather that he possesses the capacity to become conscious of his actions, choose them, and bear their consequences.

In existential philosophy, freedom takes on a radical character. The human being does not possess a pre-given essence that determines his fate in advance, but rather creates himself through his choices. Hence Sartre's famous statement that existence precedes essence; that is, the human being first exists, and then defines himself through action, stance, and commitment (Sartre, 1946/2007). However, this freedom is not a form of comfort, but rather a burden, because it makes the human being responsible for his own image and for the world he helps to build.

The thinker Abdel Rahman Badawi was deeply concerned with existential philosophy as a philosophy that returns the human being to his anxiety, uniqueness, and freedom, rather than to abstract definitions. In this perspective, the human being is not merely an element within a cosmic or social system, but a subject who lives through time, choice, death, and anxiety (Badawi, 1980). Hence, the human being cannot be understood except from within his lived experience, not only from the outside, but also from the inside.

However, freedom requires a precise distinction between genuine freedom and impulse. True freedom requires awareness and responsibility, whereas impulse is submission to a fleeting desire. Therefore, philosophy does not defend an unrestrained freedom, but rather a mature freedom one that recognizes that every choice creates an impact on the self, on others, and on society.

#### **Fifth: The Human Being as a Social and Historical Being**

The human being does not live alone. Even when he thinks about himself, he does so through a language he did not create alone, and within values, symbols, and a history that preceded him. Therefore, the human being cannot be reduced to an isolated individual. He is a social being formed within the family, community, institution, and culture. From here, the philosophical question about the human being becomes a question about society as well: How does a community form a free individual? And how does it prevent itself from becoming a power that crushes the individual?

Ibn Khaldun emphasized that human conditions can only be understood through “umran” (civilization), that is, through human social organization and its laws. For him, the human being does not achieve his existence except through cooperation, since his needs exceed his individual capacity. Thus, history and society are not external frameworks to the human being, but rather part of his very formation (Ibn Khaldun, 2001).

However, society carries a paradox. It grants the human being language, security, and belonging, but it may also impose conformity and submission. It may give him identity, but it may also turn him into a follower. Therefore, philosophical political and ethical thinking emerged to question justice, authority, rights, and law. The human being does not seek mere survival, but dignified life within a just system.

Philosophy here reveals that the human being is not fully human unless he maintains a balance between individuality and belonging. If the individual is completely dissolved within the group, he loses his freedom; and if he is entirely detached from it, he loses the conditions of meaning. Thus, the human question is always a question of relation: the relation of the self to itself, to others, to institutions, and to history.

#### **Sixth: The Human Being and Knowledge Between Truth and Illusion**

Knowledge is a deep human need. The human being does not merely see things, but seeks to know why they are as they are. Yet in the path of knowledge he encounters illusion, haste, bias, and inherited belief. Therefore, philosophy has made the critique of knowledge a central axis. The human being does not become a knower simply by possessing information, but by acquiring the ability to examine the sources of his information and the criteria of its truth.

From here, the value of method can be understood. Method is not a mere school procedure, but rather a protection of reason from slipping into unfounded claims. When Fouad Zakaria calls for scientific thinking, he defends an organized mind that knows how to distinguish between opinion and argument, between impression and evidence, and between scientific explanation and superstitious interpretation (Fouad Zakaria, 1987). This does not mean eliminating philosophy in favor of science, but rather that philosophy and science share the task of resisting organized ignorance. However, philosophy adds another question to science:

What does truth mean for the human being? And should everything that can be known be used? Science tells us what we can do, whereas philosophy asks: Should we do it? This gap between ability and duty preserves the human dimension of knowledge.

Therefore, the contemporary human being, despite the abundance of information, may be more exposed to illusion if he loses critical awareness. The problem is not only a lack of information, but also its unorganized excess. Hence philosophy remains necessary because it teaches the human being how to question before believing, and how to understand before judging.

### **Seventh: The Human Being and Existence Anxiety, Death, and Meaning**

The human being does not raise the question of existence as a purely abstract question, but because he lives the experience of fragility. He knows that he is mortal, that his life is limited, and that time passes irreversibly. From here emerge the questions of anxiety, death, and meaning. Philosophy does not evade these questions; rather, it confronts them because they reveal the depth of the human being.

In the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, the human being is not understood as a present object among other objects, but as “Dasein” a being open to the world, understanding itself through its possibilities and its relation to time and death (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Here, death is not merely a biological event, but a limit that makes the human being aware of his uniqueness and responsibility for his life.

Anxiety, in this context, is not a permanent illness, but rather a moment of disclosure. It awakens the human being from superficial living and places him before the question: Am I truly living my life, or am I merely repeating what others want? Here existentialism meets the core of the philosophical question: How can I be myself without falling into isolation or absurdity?

The search for meaning does not imply possessing a final answer, but rather refusing to live without awareness. The human being does not always choose his circumstances, but he can give his experience meaning through understanding, action, and relation. Philosophy, in this sense, is not a recipe for happiness, but a training in conscious living within the limits of the human condition.

### **Eighth: The Human Being Between Nature and Culture**

The human being belongs to nature through his body, instincts, and needs, yet he transcends nature through culture, language, and symbols. He eats like other living beings, but he transforms eating into habit, taste, and social ritual. He also inhabits a dwelling, but transforms it into a home, identity, and memory. This means that the human being does not merely live nature as it is, but culturally reshapes it.

Humanist philosophies have shown that culture is not an external ornament, but rather the way in which the human being becomes human. Language, for instance, does not only transmit ideas, but also constructs a world of meanings.

Without language, the human being cannot preserve history, establish law, or transmit experience. Therefore, the human being is a symbolic being as much as he is a biological being.

However, culture can also become a field of conflict. In the name of culture, domination may be justified, and in the name of tradition, criticism may be prevented. Here philosophy intervenes to ask: What should be preserved? And what should be overcome? Not every tradition is a value, and not every modernity is progress. Therefore, Zaki Naguib Mahmoud called for the renewal of Arab thought not through a blind break with heritage, nor through rigid sanctification of it, but through a critical reading that distinguishes the living from the dead within culture (Zaki Naguib Mahmoud, 1970).

Thus, the human being exists between nature and culture: he cannot deny his body, nor can he reduce himself to it. What distinguishes him is his ability to transform need into meaning, instinct into system, and time into history.

### **Ninth: The Contemporary Human Being and the Question of Technology**

The contemporary human being lives within an intense technological world. Technology is no longer a merely external tool, but has become a mediator in work, knowledge, communication, and memory. It has granted the human being enormous capacities: speed of production, expansion of knowledge, treatment of diseases, and the overcoming of distances. Yet at the same time, it has raised new questions about control, alienation, privacy, and the loss of meaning.

The philosophical problem lies in the fact that technology may turn from a means into an end. In that case, the human being no longer asks: Why am I using this tool? but rather uses it simply because it is available. Quantitative progress thus replaces the value question. The ability to act does not necessarily imply the legitimacy of action, just as speed does not imply depth, and connection does not imply understanding.

Critical philosophies have warned against reducing the human being to function, production, and consumption. When the human being is measured only by what he produces, what he owns, or what he consumes, his ethical, spiritual, and social dimensions are lost. Therefore, the question of the human being today is no longer only: How do we control nature? but also: How do we prevent the tools of control from becoming a power that controls us?

Hence emerges the need for a human philosophy of technology one that does not reject technology in a romantic way, nor worship it blindly. What is required is that technology remains at the service of the human being, not that the human being becomes raw material for technological systems, markets, and surveillance. This can only be achieved through critical and ethical awareness.

### **Tenth: Philosophy as Education of the Human Being**

Philosophy is not a subject to be memorized, but a way of forming the human being. It educates him to question, to listen to arguments, to accept difference, and to revise himself. Therefore, the teaching of philosophy should not be reduced to names and doctrines, but should become a training in free and responsible thinking.

When philosophy fulfills its educational function, it protects the human being from fanaticism. The fanatic holds one answer to all questions, whereas the philosopher knows that an answer requires argument, that argument requires examination, and that truth is greater

than emotion. Philosophy thus does not produce a person who speaks excessively, but a person capable of thinking before speaking.

Philosophy also cultivates humility. The deeper the human being goes into questioning, the more he realizes the limits of his knowledge. This does not lead him to negative skepticism, but to a deeper openness to learning. Hence Socrates said that awareness of one's ignorance is the beginning of wisdom. True knowledge does not begin with arrogance, but with acknowledging the need for understanding.

In the university context, philosophy gains particular importance because it gives students the ability to analyze concepts, construct problematics, critique discourses, and link knowledge with values. Society does not only need technicians, but also minds capable of ethical, political, and human questioning.

### **Eleventh: Philosophy and the Human Being in the Arab-Islamic Heritage**

The Arab-Islamic heritage contains rich models of philosophical thinking about the human being. The question of the human being has been linked to reason, the soul, knowledge, happiness, politics, and religious law. Muslim philosophers were not merely transmitters of Greek philosophy, but reworked it within the questions of their own civilization: the relationship between reason and revelation, the limits of interpretation, the meaning of happiness, and the levels of knowledge.

Ibn Rushd represents an important model in defending rational inquiry, as he considered that wisdom does not contradict the Sharia when each is properly understood within its proper domain, and that demonstrative interpretation becomes necessary when there is an apparent contradiction between the text and rational understanding (Ibn Rushd, 1983). This position does not concern only a religious issue, but reveals a conception of the human being as a being capable of demonstration and understanding.

As for Ibn Tufail, through "Hayy ibn Yaqzan," he presented a symbolic experiment of the human being seeking truth outside social instruction. The human being can begin from sense perception, then ascend to reason, and then to contemplation of existence. Thus, the story becomes a lesson in the human capacity to construct knowledge, and at the same time in his need for communication with others (Ibn Tufail, 2011).

Ibn Khaldun adds an important social and historical dimension, as he does not limit himself to the individual human being, but studies him within civilization, group solidarity (asabiyyah), the state, economy, and society. Thus the conception becomes complete: the human being is reason and spirit, but also a social and historical being affected by environment, power, and work (Ibn Khaldun, 2001).

### **Twelfth: Toward a Synthetic Conception of the Human Being**

After this trajectory, it can be said that the human being in philosophy cannot be reduced. He is not only reason, nor only body, nor only individual, nor only social member. He is a multi-dimensional being: he thinks, feels, chooses, errs, learns, loves, fears, and searches for meaning. Any philosophy that reduces the human being to a single dimension ends up with an incomplete image.

Therefore, understanding the human being requires a synthetic conception that brings together reason, ethics, freedom, society, and history. Reason without ethics may turn into an instrument of domination. Ethics without reason may become empty moralizing. Freedom without responsibility may become chaos. Society without freedom may become oppression. Hence appears the role of philosophy in establishing balance among these dimensions.

The human being is not born fully human; rather, he becomes human through education, culture, knowledge, and responsibility. This process of becoming is what makes philosophy necessary. Philosophy does not give the human being a Readymade identity, but helps him construct his identity consciously. It does not provide a final meaning, but teaches him how to seek meaning without deceiving himself.

Accordingly, the relationship between philosophy and the human being is a relationship of life. Whenever philosophical questioning weakens, the risk increases of transforming the human being into a follower, a consumer, or a number. And whenever this questioning grows stronger, the human being's capacity increases to resist triviality and alienation, and to build a more conscious and dignified life.

### **Conclusion:**

The article concludes that philosophy and the human being are inseparable. Philosophy arises from the human being's need to understand himself and the world, and the human being does not achieve the depth of his humanity except when he questions, thinks, criticizes, and chooses. Hence, philosophy is not a theoretical luxury, but a human necessity, because it helps the human being move from spontaneous existence to conscious existence.

It has been shown that the human being, in the philosophical perspective, is a rational, moral, free, social, and historical being. He seeks knowledge, yet needs a critique of reason; he seeks freedom, yet cannot be separated from responsibility; he lives in society, yet must preserve his dignity and individuality; and he engages with technology, yet is required to make it a means rather than a master.

The article has also shown that both the Western and Arab-Islamic traditions have offered diverse conceptions of the human being: from the human being seeking happiness and virtue in Aristotle, to the human being as an end in himself in Kant, to the anxious and free human being in Sartre and Heidegger, and finally to the rational, contemplative, and social human being in the Arab-Islamic heritage in Ibn Rushd, Hayy ibn Yaqzan, and Ibn Khaldun.

In the end, it can be said that the task of philosophy today is to defend the human being against all forms of reduction: reducing him to a body, a function, a number, a consumer, or a follower. It reminds him that he is more than his needs, more than his tools, and more than his social image. The human being, in his deepest sense, is an open question; and philosophy is the noble art of keeping this question alive.

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