

Human/self existence & quiddity

Abdoreza Jamalzadeh¹, Seyedeh Sareh Tavassoli²⁺

^{1,2} Humanity Sciences Department, Khorramabad branch, Islamic Azad University
Khorramabad, Iran

Abstract. Human existence and quiddity are two major concerns of human beings that are discussable theoretically and can affect and organize human attitudes, interactions and movements as they form human worldview to a large extent. A person who has found some answers to the two issues can take significant measures in self-improvement and finally in forming a complete civil society. The two questions and their subsequent problems have challenged scholars for several years, some of whom devoted their entire life on finding answers to them, but found no good solution. This article is a summary survey of the viewpoints of philosophers and divine mystics like Molavi, Ibn Arabi and Ghonavi.

Keywords: human being, perfection, self-knowledge, aim of creation

1. Introduction

Molavi holds that the base of all the sciences is self-knowledge and if this knot is undone successfully, a myriad of others will be undone. Molavi regrets that people go after different sciences but don't know their own value, place and status and calls it a grave cruelty.

Knows a thousand scientific topics But, doesn't know himself out of cruelty [Mathnavi Maanavi, 3rd Book, verse 2648] Islamic mystics and philosophers hold that human truth depends on self-knowledge and those who fail in exploring themselves are unaware and their knowledge is superficial and ephemeral [Mollasadra, Three Principles Thesis, pp. 13-14].

They hold that a wise person is who that knows his/her status and an ignorant person is who that doesn't know his/her value.

Divine philosophers believe that self-knowledge is the gate to the supernatural world and knowledge of God. They hold that it doesn't need any proof or reasoning as it is an intuitive phenomenon that bestows a special worldview to human and saves people from absurdity, dereliction and aimlessness and converts aimless world to purposive world.

From Molavi's perspective self-ignorance causes self-alienation, loss and collapse in a situation contrary to what s/he is created for [Mathnavi Maanavi, 4th Book, verses 803-805].

2. Self-confirmation

Divine and non-divine philosophers prove clear-sighted and purposive human in different ways. Even some of them believe that there is no need to prove it as it is crystal clear. Descartes, a great occidental philosopher, proposes a well-known rule "I think, therefore I am" and "I doubt, therefore I am". He infers actor from thinking or doubt. Some others like Avicenna, one of the greatest oriental philosophers who is famous in the west, proposes one of the most important experiential proofs for proving self. He suggests to

¹⁺ Corresponding author. Tel.: +989161619026; fax: +986616200007

E-mail address: ar_jamalzadeh@yahoo.com

suppose yourself in an initial state of creation, with no stress, in a free space, free from heat, coldness, sadness, pleasure, and pain; suppose yourself in a state of not receiving any training by parents, in this state you notice only yourself, not anything else, even you don't notice your components, only notice yourself. [3] Some of philosophical scholars such as Khajeh Nasieddin Tousi hold this kind of knowledge as a scientific knowledge made only through experiential tests. Maybe the West knows Avicenna due to his being experiential.

3. Self quiddity

The truth of self is a very important and complex problem that has challenged many scholars. Sometimes they hold it merely material, sometimes merely abstract and at times a combination of the two of them. They sometimes hold it to be the substance and sometimes adventitious. Some scholars like Alexis Carrel who devoted his entire life on self-knowledge composed a book titled "Man, the Unknown".

The relationship of soul or self and body raises challenging questions:

Is there any interconnection so close that separation between them means ruin of either of them?

Is there an interconnection, but a weak one, so that separation leaves dependency, such as dependency of objects to their places?

Is the relationship of dominion and control type surpassing the dependency of lover and beloved?

Islamic philosophers use the simile of captain and ship to describe the relationship between body and soul and hold that soul is an independent self that enters the body and manages it.[4]

3.1. Specifications of self

For understanding self or soul, you should attain a status free from any impediment or dust. Divine prophets attained this level and understood its truth.

Molavi says:

You don't know him unless you become him

No matter he is light or darkness

If you become wisdom you will comprehend wisdom

If you become love, you will comprehend its flames

However, human soul is 1. A valuable gem, 2. Is not limited by time and place, 3. Soul affects body, 4. It is lasting and is not ruined with the death of the body.

As for the fourth specification it should be said that all those who hold that soul is abstract including disciples of Plato or Aristotle, prove survival of soul by proving its abstractness. First, they prove that soul is abstract: human soul understands sciences and knowledge and soul is the place of knowledge and since knowledge and perception may not be divided, thus, their places cannot be divided and indivisibility means abstractness and thus human soul is abstract. [5]

Knowledge is indivisible → anything which is indivisible is abstract → knowledge is abstract

Place of an indivisible thing is indivisible → soul is the place of an indivisible thing → soul is indivisible

Fifth, soul can rise or decline

Human soul passes through different or even infinite levels. Sohrevardi was an Iranian philosopher and a great oriental scholar who, in his Partonameh, writes that any element or object has a special pleasure and pain. He holds that the pleasure of vision is seeing mild things and its pain is seeing harsh things. Pleasure of nose is sensing pleasurable odors and its pain is sensing bad smells. Other senses are the like. He holds that the pleasure of soul is understanding the cause of all things, wisdoms and souls and its connection to human and divine senses and its pain is disconnection with the world of ethics and supernatural beings. [6]

Well-known mystic Molavi holds that human soul belongs to heaven that enjoys abstract and bright nature full of abstract souls and bright intellects. Since soul relates to body and manages it, little by little it

has forgotten its origin and has lost its fortunes of religion, faith and ethics to some degree. 2 Drowning in carnal affairs, wishes, allusions, dependence on physical things and excessive mingling with people are among the factors destroying human soul.[8]

4. Perfect human in the view of some of mystics

Ibn Arabi was among the renowned mystics and a perfect human being who lived in the 11th Century. He enjoys a great fame in mysticism and his teachings have been always guidelines for his disciples. He put special emphasis on perfect human. Whenever he mentions human being he means perfect human being. He addresses perfect humans from two completely distinctive views as he distinguishes between their divine truth and their very existence in the earth.

William Chittic, a contemporary famous scholar, says that based on Islamic cosmology in general and Ibn Arabi's teaching in particular, God created human after all other living beings and used all other creatures to create human being as the last ring in the great chain of being. Human is the integration of all previous creations in whom all of them are coordinated and realized.

Human not only has the mineral, vegetative and animal factors in him, but also is a duplicate of the entire hierarchy of the heaven and intuition, beginning from the original wisdom to the original matter to the divinity, cosmos, planets and the four elements. Each human being is a miniature of all the things to be found in the world. [7]

Ibn Arabi holds man as microcosm and the entire world as macrocosm. In general he uses the term micro human for man and macro human for the world as human is part of the world and the world without human is not a complete visage of the God. Simultaneously microcosm and macrocosm are the two sides of a coin: macrocosm, due to infinite diversity, is unaware and passive, but microcosm, including all divine qualities, is aware and active. In his view, human knows the world and can change in along his objectives and purposes, but the world doesn't know the human as it is a passive tool in the God's hands and cannot interfere with Him.

Among the pillars of mysticism is Sadreddin Ghonavi who concentrates on perfect human as well. By perfect human he doesn't mean human being but the true human being who is perfect human in action. In any era perfect human is the intermediary between God and others, a path through which graces of God reach people.

In Ghonavi's view perfect human being is a copy of two visages: God's visage that is the spiritual and the world which is the visage of macrocosm and the world of diversity.[9]

5. Conclusion

- Human is a combination of body and soul and soul is his true reality.
- Perfect humans are exemplars of human philosophy, goodness and all ethical and spiritual virtues.
- Perfect human is the cause of creation.
- Human can rise or fall infinitely in terms of levels.
- Perfect human comes to know God through knowing himself and human being in animal level has not known himself.

6. Acknowledgements

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