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EXISTENTIAL-ETHICAL IDEAS IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF AZIZIDDIN NASAFI

Based on the works The Perfect Man (Insān al-kāmil) and Unveiling of Truths (Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq)

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Abstract

This article analyzes the essence of the human being, the relationship between soul and body, self-knowledge, freedom, destiny, moral maturity, and perfection in the philosophical anthropology of Aziziddin Nasafi. The analysis draws on the views expressed in The Perfect Man and Unveiling of Truths and reveals the existential-ethical content of Nasafi's conception. In the thinker's view, the human being is not merely a structural part of existence but an active being who strives toward perfection through self-knowledge, knowledge, and spiritual education.

Keywords

Aziziddin Nasafi, philosophical anthropology, perfect man, existentiality, ethics, freedom, destiny, self-knowledge, enlightenment, Sufism.

The place of the human being in existence, the meaning of life, freedom, moral choice, and spiritual perfection have always been among the enduring subjects of philosophical inquiry. In the context of globalization, digital transformation, and intercultural integration, questions concerning the spiritual image and moral responsibility of the human being have become even more pressing. From this standpoint, it is important to reexamine the views of those thinkers within the Eastern philosophical heritage who interpreted the human being in the unity of the ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions. In his works The Perfect Man (Insān al-kāmil) and Unveiling of Truths (Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq), Aziziddin Nasafi treats the place of the human being in existence, the meaning of existence, perfection, the purification of the self (nafs), spiritual development, and the comprehension of truth as interrelated questions. [1,13]

One of the important aspects of Nasafi's philosophical anthropology is that he views the human being as a unity of soul and body. In The Perfect Man, the thinker interprets the human being as a creature composed of a body belonging to the "world of creation" and a spirit belonging to the "world of command." [2,107] This approach differs from one-sided explanations that reduce the human being either to a purely material or to a purely spiritual being. Human existence appears as a complex phenomenon that expresses the connection between two worlds.

Although for Nasafi the spirit is the fundamental and highest aspect of the human being, the body is also a necessary condition of human existence. He regards the spirit as that which bestows life and is linked to the human capacity for perception. [3,108] At the same time, the central factor that defines the distinctiveness of the human being is reason and knowledge. In Nasafi's interpretation, reason distinguishes the human being from other creatures, while knowledge, as the power of reason, manifests itself in a person's outward activity.

The relationship between the human being and existence holds particular significance in Nasafi's conception. The thinker emphasizes that the perfection of existence is bound up with the appearance of the human being. As a being capable of comprehending existence, the human being stands at the center of the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. [4,62] However, this status does not turn the human being into a creature endowed with a ready-made and unchanging perfection. On the contrary, the human essence changes in connection with the development of knowledge and of the capacity to know.

In this respect, self-knowledge is one of the fundamental concepts that define the existential content of Nasafi's philosophy. By comprehending his or her own essence, the human being seeks to understand not only the inner world but also his or her place in existence. Nasafi links the highest degree of perfection with self-knowledge and the recognition of divine truth. [5,21] Thus, knowledge and enlightenment are not limited to broadening a person's conception of the external world; they also serve the person's inner transformation.

The question of destiny and free will was one of the important problems of medieval Eastern philosophy. Nasafi considers this question within the framework of the human being's entire life process. In his view, destiny and human will are interpreted not as mutually contradictory phenomena but as interrelated processes. [6,45]

For Nasafi, freedom is not absolute limitlessness. The human being approaches freedom by recognizing the existing conditions, necessity, and natural limits, and by governing his or her own possibilities accordingly. As noted in the dissertation, the thinker explains the unity of freedom and necessity through the concept of measure: understanding the measure of necessity is an important condition for liberation from dependence. [7,301] For this reason, freedom in Nasafi can be interpreted as an active state that is connected with existential choice and demands responsibility.

In Nasafi's philosophy, the idea of the perfect man is bound up with the supreme purpose of human existence. The perfect man is described as a person who has attained perfection in sharia, tariqa, and haqiqa, and who unites knowledge and morality within himself. [8,320] His perfection is not determined by the abundance of knowledge alone; qualities such as fine speech, good character, a good state, and education and upbringing are also constituent parts of perfection.

Nasafi links perfection with the inner transformation of the human being. Maturity and freedom are presented as important stages of human development. The degree of a person's self-knowledge corresponds to his or her degree of spiritual perfection. [9,301] In this process, the transition from imitative knowledge to independent inquiry and the comprehension of essence is crucial. In addition, qualities such as patience, composure, asceticism, and renunciation of what is superfluous are required of the free and perfect person.

This approach makes it possible to understand perfection not as a static condition but as a process of continuous self-improvement. By controlling his or her inclinations of the self, deepening knowledge and enlightenment, and developing moral virtues, the human being gives meaning to his or her existence. In this respect, Nasafi's concept of the perfect man reveals the unity of the existential and ethical dimensions.

In Nasafi's interpretation, the self-knowledge of the perfect man is not confined to personal experience. A person who has come to know himself or herself and divine truth understands the value of helping others. [10,217] Hence, spiritual perfection leads to social responsibility. This is an important feature of Nasafi's ethics: a person's inner purification must be manifested in his or her relations with those around, in conduct, and in virtuous deeds.

Nasafi criticizes blind imitation and calls on the human being to grasp the meaning and essence of outward forms rather than the forms themselves. [11,98] In this sense, enlightenment becomes the primary means that serves a person's self-knowledge. The criterion of perfection is not ritual or outward appearance alone, but the moral and spiritual transformation of the human being.

The analysis shows that in Aziziddin Nasafi's philosophical anthropology the question of the human being is interpreted in the organic unity of its ontological, epistemological, existential, and ethical aspects. The human being exists as a unity of soul and body, and his or her human essence develops through reason, knowledge, enlightenment, and self-knowledge. Freedom, for its part, is not a condition wholly detached from destiny and necessity, but a process connected with the human being's understanding of necessity and conscious governance of his or her own possibilities.

Nasafi's concept of the perfect man defines the spiritual and moral improvement of the human being as an important direction of the meaning of life. Virtues such as good character, knowledge, patience, composure, asceticism, and doing good to others connect a person's inner perfection with social responsibility. For this reason, the existential-ethical ideas in Nasafi's legacy can be regarded as a source of theoretical and spiritual significance for present-day philosophical anthropology as well.

Footnotes

1. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Komil inson [The Perfect Man]. Translator: Akbar Madrahimov. Tashkent: Fan, 1995. p. 13.

2. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Komil inson. Tashkent: Fan, 1995. p. 107.

3. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Komil inson. Tashkent: Fan, 1995. p. 108.

4. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Komil inson. Tashkent: Fan, 1995. p. 62.

5. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Zubdat ul-haqoyiq. Edition cited in the dissertation text. p. 21.

6. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Komil inson. Tashkent: Fan, 1995. p. 45.

7. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Zubdat ul-haqoyiq. p. 301.

8. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Kashf ul-haqoyiq. Tehran, 1365 [AH]. p. 320.

9. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Zubdat ul-haqoyiq. p. 301.

10. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Maqsad ul-aqso. Tehran. p. 217.

11. Zarrinkub, Abulhusain. Justuj dar tasavvuf-e Iran. Tehran, 1357 [AH]. p. 98.

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1. Aziziddin Nasafiy. Komil inson [The Perfect Man]. Translator: Akbar Madrahimov. Tashkent: Fan, 1995.

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6. Mukhammadkhodzhaev, A.M. Naqshbandiya mafkurasi [The Ideology of Naqshbandiyya]. Dushanbe, 1991.

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8. Mahammadjonova, M.T. Jaloliddin Rumiyning axloqiy qarashlari [The Ethical Views of Jalaluddin Rumi]. Dushanbe, 2001.