



## THE CONCEPT OF THE PERFECT HUMAN BEING IN SUFI PHILOSOPHY

**Yokubov Sukhrob Firdavsovich**

Doctoral Researcher, Samarkand

State Institute of Foreign Languages

**Abstract.** This article offers a comprehensive philosophical examination of the concept of the Perfect Human Being (*al-insān al-kāmil*), which occupies a central position in Sufi philosophy. The study is grounded in the works of Mahmud Shabistari, Ibn al-‘Arabi, and ‘Aziz al-Din Nasafi [1–4]. Within this framework, the Perfect Human Being is interpreted as the ontological telos of existence and as the most complete manifestation of the divine names and attributes. The paper also explores the epistemological scope of this concept, its aesthetic dimensions, and the problem of knowledge as articulated through the symbolic notion of “light.”

**Keywords:** Sufism, tasawwuf, Perfect Human Being, philosophical anthropology, ontology, epistemology, light, divine beauty.

**Introduction.** Throughout the history of Islamic philosophy, the problem of the human being has consistently remained at the center of intellectual reflection. In the Sufi tradition in particular, the human being is understood not merely as a moral agent or a bearer of religious responsibility, but as a being that embodies the spiritual essence of the entire cosmos [2]. Sufi thinkers describe the human being as a “microcosm,” asserting that the full meaning and structure of the universe are reflected within human existence.

In this context, the concept of the Perfect Human Being emerged as the highest theoretical achievement of Sufi philosophical anthropology. Rather than confining human perfection to ethical conduct or religious observance alone, this concept enables an analysis of human fulfillment on ontological, epistemological, and aesthetic levels. The Perfect Human Being does not refer to a specific historical individual; rather, it represents an ideal model of ultimate human realization.

### **Philosophical and Ontological Foundations of the Concept of the Perfect Human Being.**

According to Sufi ontology, existence is not accidental or chaotic but constitutes a purposeful and hierarchically ordered system directed toward a definite end. Within this system, every level of being strives toward its own state of maximal perfection [3]. This universal principle finds



its most complete expression in the human realm through the idea of the Perfect Human Being, which embodies the culmination of existential development and spiritual actualization.

In the works of **Mahmud Shabistari**, being is portrayed as a continuous process of gradual perfection [1]. He describes an uninterrupted progression that extends from inanimate nature to living beings, from life to the human level, and finally from the human being to the individual who has attained spiritual completion. Within this dynamic process, humanity is plural, whereas the Perfect Human Being is singular, embodying the ultimate spiritual purpose of all existence.

According to Shabistari, the entire cosmos serves as a necessary precondition for the emergence of the Perfect Human Being. In this view, the human being is not positioned as the center of the universe in a literal sense; rather, the Perfect Human Being represents the highest potential inherent within human existence itself. Consequently, all human beings function as means within the trajectory of perfection, while the Perfect Human Being constitutes its final outcome.

### **The Perfect Human Being and the Idea of Involution and Evolution.**

In Sufi philosophy, the movement of existence unfolds along two complementary trajectories: involution (*nuzūl*, descent) and evolution (*‘urūj*, ascent) [4]. Divine light initially descends into the material realm and subsequently seeks to return to its transcendent source through the human being.

The Perfect Human Being stands at the apex of this ascending movement. Having transcended the domination of the ego, desire, and material attachments, such a person is capable of integrating divine attributes within their own being. For this reason, the Perfect Human Being is not merely an ethical exemplar but represents the final link in the cosmic process itself [2].

### **The Perfect Human Being and the Problem of Cosmic Hierarchy.**

In the doctrine of **‘Aziz al-Din Nasafi**, existence is structured according to a strict hierarchical order [3]. He advances the idea of a hierarchy of saints, at the summit of which stands a single figure—the Perfect Human Being.

According to Nasafi, the Perfect Human Being functions as the “pillar” of the universe. It is through this presence that cosmic equilibrium is maintained. Should such a figure depart from the world without a successor to assume this role, existence would lose its spiritual foundation [3].

This perspective vividly illustrates the exceptionally elevated ontological status accorded to the human being in Sufi thought. Here, the human is not a passive creature but the central locus through which divine will is realized within the cosmos.



### **The Image of the Perfect Human Being in the Doctrine of Ibn al-‘Arabi.**

In Ibn al-‘Arabi’s metaphysical system, the Perfect Human Being is understood as the most complete manifestation of the divine names and attributes [2]. According to his view, God contemplates His own beauty precisely through the Perfect Human Being, since only this being is capable of encompassing all levels of existence within itself.

Ibn al-‘Arabi famously characterizes the Perfect Human Being as a “mirror.” This mirror is not a passive surface that merely reflects, but a conscious reality that comprehends the divine essence and renders it manifest once again. For this reason, the Perfect Human Being functions as a mediator between God and the world.

### **The Perfect Human Being and the Epistemological Problem.**

Within Sufi epistemology, the question of knowledge occupies a central position. The defining feature of the Perfect Human Being lies in the possession of true knowledge. However, this knowledge is neither rational nor sensory in nature; it is attained through divine inspiration and inner contemplation [4].

Mahmud Shabistari explains the process of knowing through the symbolism of “light” (*nūr*) [1]. Along the path of spiritual perfection, the seeker perceives different degrees of light. At the highest stage, this light becomes so intense that it appears as darkness to human perception. This paradoxical experience signifies the ultimate limits of cognition.

### **The Perfect Human Being and the Aesthetic Dimension.**

The beauty of the Perfect Human Being is not external or physical, but inward and spiritual in character. Sufi thinkers interpret this beauty as a form of “hidden beauty” [1; 3], invisible to the ordinary individual and disclosed only to those who have attained spiritual maturity. In this context, aesthetics is inseparably linked with ethics and epistemology: the perception of beauty requires the purification of one’s inner world. In this sense, the Perfect Human Being also represents an aesthetic ideal.

**Conclusion.** In Sufi philosophy, the concept of the Perfect Human Being constitutes one of the most profound and comprehensive teachings concerning the nature of the human being. It presents humanity as the spiritual center of existence and as the most complete reflection of divine beauty [1–4].

By transcending the limits of individual moral development, this concept elevates human perfection to a cosmic and ontological level. From this perspective, the idea of the Perfect



Human Being retains significant theoretical relevance for contemporary philosophy, religious studies, and anthropology.

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