Anthropology and the Formation of Humanities and Social Sciences; A Study from Philosophical Anthropology to Social Theories

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Abstract

This article investigates the foundational role of philosophical anthropology in shaping social, legal, and political theories across both Islamic and Western intellectual traditions. It argues that any theory in human sciences is necessarily rooted in an underlying conception of the human being. Drawing upon Aristotle's fourfold causality-efficient, final, material, and formal causes-the article demonstrates that philosophical anthropology is not merely a background assumption but the structural core of theory formation. The study has hired an analytical and intellectual method, systematically examining the internal logic of philosophical texts and ideas to identify how anthropological premises inform broader theoretical architectures.Through a comparative case study of Abu Nasr al-Farabi and Karl Marx, the article illustrates how divergent anthropologies—metaphysical and teleological in the former, materialist and historical in the latter—give rise to distinct visions of society and governance. Al-Farabi's conception of the rational soul and hierarchical faculties grounds his model of the virtuous city (Utopia), while Marx's notion of the human as a laboring, self-transforming species-being underlies his critique of capitalism and vision of emancipation. Despite methodological and cultural differences, both thinkers reveal that social and political systems are ultimately constructed upon philosophical understandings of human nature. By centering philosophical anthropology at the middle of interdisciplinary inquiry, the article calls for a renewed focus on the human essence as the necessary starting point for reforming or generating coherent knowledge systems in the humanities and social sciences.

Keywords: Anthropology, Philosophical Anthropology, Humanities, Social Sciences, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Karl Marx.

1. Introduction

The world of knowledge and the humanities is replete with a wide array of social, political, and legal theories. These include theories that emerged in the eighteenth century during the rise of the Enlightenment in the West and continued to evolve and proliferate into the current postmodern era, as well as those articulated by Muslim thinkers/scholars throughout the past fourteen centuries in various historical circumstances. All of these theories are grounded in a set of fundamental principles and foundational beliefs—at the forefront of which lies the concept of *philosophical anthropology*. Just as God is the Creator of the universe, of humanity, and of existence itself, so too, by divine decree, is the human being the creator of the social world and of collective life. It is the human who, within historical, social, and cultural contexts, undertakes the discovery of truth and the formulation of theories and intellectual schools in order to comprehend the surrounding world.This article, by focusing on the theme of *philosophical anthropology*, seeks to present evidence and indicators of the fact that major social, political, and legal schools of thought are inextricably linked to the underlying anthropological assumptions upon which they are built. Thus, there exists a clear and necessary relationship between philosophical anthropology and the theories and schools of the human sciences.The main claim of this article is to demonstrate this relationship and to argue that if it is aimed to change, revise, or found major theories and schools in the fields of social, political, and legal sciences, the most effective way to reach such transformation and innovation lies in paying close attention to philosophical anthropology—particularly through its reassessment, revision, and reconfiguration.

2. Philosophical Anthropology

The pursuit of knowledge concerning the main issue —or a set of interrelated subjects—forms the basis of a knowledge system and constitutes an academic discipline. As is commonly stated in the Islamic philosophical tradition, the subject matter of any science is defined as *that about which the essential properties are investigated*. Anthropology, or the science of the human, is a field of knowledge that is structured around the human as its central focus, aiming to analyze and explore the various dimensions of human existence. In Islamic philosophy, the term *'Ilm al-Nafs* (the science of the soul) is used to refer to this domain of inquiry, and it is defined as follows: *"'Ilm al-Nafs is a discipline that examines the soul and its attributes (or predicates), encompassing a set of issues whose subject and axis is the soul itself"*

(Fayyazi, 2010, p. 44). However, "Human" encompasses a wide range of aspects—from the physical body to the psyche, soul, intellect, and metaphysical individuality, as well as social presence. Moreover, each of these dimensions may be approached through different methodologies. This diversity in both the dimensions of the subject and the methods of inquiry—as well as the consideration of the ends and purposes of such studies—has led to the emergence of various forms of anthropology.

There are various types of anthropology, and if it is taken for granted the method of inquiry as the criterion, it can be at least identified four main forms: empirical, mystical, philosophical, and religious anthropology. "Some have approached the study of human being through empirical methods, thus laying the foundations of *empirical anthropology*, which encompasses all disciplines within human sciences. Others have considered the correct path to understanding human being to be through mystical wayfaring (*sulūk*) and intuitive perception. Through efforts rooted in this path, they have arrived at a certain understanding of mankind that may be referred to as *mystical anthropology*. A third group has employed philosophical reasoning and intellectual reflection to examine the various dimensions of human existence, producing what is known as *philosophical anthropology*. A fourth group has turned to religious texts and the transmitted tradition (*naql*) as their source of knowledge about human beings, thus giving rise to *religious anthropology*" (Yazdi, 2010, pp. 22-23). *Empirical anthropology*, which came to fruition during the Enlightenment era, is rooted in the positivist belief that the only valid method for acquiring the truth is through experience and sensory perception. Just as the natural sciences reached the peak of their development through this method, the human and social sciences, according to this view, must follow the same path by prioritizing empirical methods and modeling themselves on the natural sciences. This perspective was foundationally established by the French thinkers *Auguste Comte* that further developed by figures such as *Émile Durkheim*. According to this approach, the only legitimate method in any discipline, including anthropology, is empirical observation and sensory experience. However, other forms of anthropology—philosophical, mystical, and religious—have also continued to exist to varying degrees and have specially produced an enriched body of literature and scholarship in the Islamic world.

Each of the various forms of anthropology—empirical, rational, mystical, and religious—possesses certain strengths and capabilities that are not found in the others. However, *philosophical anthropology* holds a particular

advantage in terms of its comprehensiveness and integrative perspective. *Empirical anthropology* focuses exclusively on the material and outward aspects of human existence and thus falls into the serious error of *reductionism*, neglecting and denying the other essential dimensions of human being. Richard Schacht (1990) put it simply. "Human life, without any question, is both a biological and a socio-cultural affair" (Schacht, 1990,). *Mystical and intuitive anthropology* is highly elitist in nature and is typically accessible only to a limited group of individuals through specific paths of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) and inner discipline. *Religious and theological anthropology* can be profoundly illuminating for the adherents of a particular faith, yet it often lacks universality and struggles to attain a comprehensive applicability for all of humanity. In contrast, *rational and philosophical anthropology*, in addition to offering deep insights into the nature of human existence and attending to the metaphysical dimensions of human being, serves as a common language among all human beings. This is because it is grounded in logic and reasoned argumentation, allowing dialogue across different traditions, religions, and worldviews, and thereby inviting all perspectives to a shared intellectual table. Chin-Tai Kim (1998) insists that anthropology in its strictest sense "must be philosophical [because] philosophy undeniably affects the way of understanding human nature…." (Kim, 1998). Therefore, the main focus of this article is grounded in philosophical anthropology.

Philosophical anthropology has a deep historical background, and throughout the ages, both various definitions and accounts have been offered by great thinkers. Xenophon, one of the oldest Greek writers, refers to Socrates as the first person who ceased to focus on "nature in its totality" and instead placed the human being and matters related to the human at the center of his attention. However, Hans Diercks traces the roots of philosophical thought concerning the human back to the pre-Socratic period. "Yet Xenophon's view can be somewhat misleading from a historical perspective. Socrates was not the first philosopher to reflect on the human being; rather, it was the philosophers before him—especially the thinkers of the classical era, namely the Sophists—who engaged in such reflections. Socrates, without establishing a systematic doctrine in this regard, merely intensified this tendency and placed it at the center of focus." (Diercks, 2001, p. 1). "Philosophical anthropology has a distinct history and a distinct purpose. As with any field of study, it has its precursors going back for millennia. In its present form, it also exhibits disagreement as to purpose and method". (Harter,

2006). Thus, philosophical anthropology—both in terms of its possible objectives and its research methodology—encompasses a variety of perspectives. However, one of its most common definitions emphasizes the idea that philosophical anthropology seeks to understand the key elements that constitute human existence. Consequently, it aims to answer the fundamental question: *What is the distinguishing element that sets human beings apart from other creatures, especially animals?* H.O. Pappé (1967) wrote the entry for "philosophical anthropology" in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. As he explained that it "seeks to elucidate the basic qualities that make mankind what he is and distinguishes him from other creatures ″(Pappe, 1967, p. 16). Jan Krabbé maintains that *"philosophical anthropology is an understanding of human nature that reveals the principal cause for explaining human social behavior."* (Craib, 2003, p. 160). With this description, he explicitly links anthropology to social behavior and, in a sense, regards the outcome of anthropology as the way human behavior is explained. However, with the dominance of the empirical approach in the human sciences in recent centuries, philosophical anthropology has received less attention.

Philosophical anthropology has been a subject of interest in Ancient Greece, the Islamic philosophical period, and Scholastic philosophy. However, as Jan Krabbé expresses, *"in recent decades, interest in philosophical anthropology has declined."* (Craib, 2003, p. 160). Instead, emphasis has shifted towards positivist and empirical methods. "The term *"a theory concerning the human nature"* and its subject, in the sense commonly understood today (particularly in Germany), emerged between the 16th and 18th centuries—that is, between the Humanism movement and the Age of Enlightenment. The more precise term *"philosophische Anthropologie"* (philosophical anthropology) was later employed in the 20th century in the works of Max Scheler" (Diercks, 2001, p. 1). Scheler, by writing the book *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (*Man's Place in Nature*), laid the first cornerstone of modern philosophical anthropology and drew thinkers' attention to the significance of this subject. Max Scheler states that if one asks a cultivated European what he thinks about the word "human," (Mensch) three distinct intellectual frameworks simultaneously come to mind. The first intellectual framework pertains to the religious tradition—specifically the Judaic-Christian tradition—centered on the creation of Adam and Eve and revolving around the concepts of Heaven and Hell. The second framework is related to Ancient Greek thoughts, revolving around reason and *logos*. The third intellectual framework, which has recently become established, is based on modern science and Darwinian

genetic psychology, viewing humans as the ultimate and latest product of the Earth's evolutionary process. Scheler emphasizes that these three intellectual frameworks are isolated from one another and have no union or synthesis. Therefore, it can be said that humanity has never been as problematic in any historical period as it is today. For this reason, Scheler undertook the task of offering philosophical anthropology in its broadest possible sense. (Scheler, 2009, pp. 17-18) In the second chapter of his book, Scheler addresses in detail the distinctions between humans and animals. In response to the question of whether humans belong to the animal kingdom or are qualitatively distinct from animals, he insists on the view that humans possess an existential distinction from animals, and that this distinction is of a qualitative nature. In order to contrast what we share with animals from what we possess alone, he adopted the following terms. That which can be shared as he called "life". That which distinguishes us he called "spirit" (Scheler, 1961, p. 43). This can be considered the central point of Max Scheler's thinking. However, given its deep roots in Islamic philosophy, philosophical anthropology has also been revisited and reinterpreted by Muslim scholars in recent decades, who have offered new theories and perspectives.

Philosophical anthropology in Islamic wisdom centers on the concept of the "nafs" (soul) and is discussed within the broader framework of the science of psychology (*'ilm al-nafs*). The origins of the discourse on the soul can be traced back to the works of Plato and then Aristotle. However, with the transmission of this heritage to the Islamic world, Muslim thinkers added numerous refinements and subtleties to it. From Plato's perspective, *"the soul is the origin and essence of movement"* and *"it is the only entity that especially possesses reason, intellect, and invisibility, and although distinct from the body, it is influenced by the body."* (Copleston, 1983, pp. 239-240). Aristotle, after extensive preliminary explanations, ultimately defines the human soul in his specialized terminology as: *"the soul is the first actuality (or perfection) of a natural organic body."* (Aristotle, 1999, pp. 75-79) According to this, the natural human body has the capacity to receive a perfection that constitutes knowledge, life, awareness, and movement—and this perfection is the soul. Aristotle's use of the term *"first actuality"* indicates that, in philosophical terminology, perfections that pertain to the nature of the species are called first actualities, whereas those that are effects or consequences of the species are called second actualities. Accordingly, the natural human body can have the human soul as its first actuality, and then, as a result, phenomena such as thinking, sense or feeling, movement, and volition

manifest, which are regarded as second actualities. Mulla Sadra offers a valuable insight here: life in immaterial beings is identical to their essence. Accordingly, life for God or any other immaterial entity, including the immaterial human soul, is identical with the essence itself, not a second actuality (Ṣadrā, 1981, pp. 20-21) - a subject he elaborates in detail elsewhere. Among Muslim philosophers, various definitions have been proposed by Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 1357 SH (1978 CE), p. 13), Allameh Tabataba'i (Tabataba'i, 1427 AH (2006 CE)), Fayyazi (Fayyazi, 2010, p. 46), and others. Generally, regarding the definitions of the soul, it can be said: *"Plato sought to define the soul from the perspective of its origin (as the source of life and movement); Aristotle defined the soul from the perspective of perfection; and Ibn Sina emphasized its agency and its diversity. Some philosophers have characterized the soul in terms of its immateriality as its essence and its relation to matter; however, none have fully addressed the essence and true nature of the soul."* (Moallemi, 1394 SH (2015 CE), p. 26) What the true reality of the soul is remains one of the most complex philosophical issues, which significantly affects how the soul is defined. Nonetheless, aside from the essence and definition of the soul, extensive discussions have developed concerning the soul's characteristics and properties.

Discussions through sidewalks the soul (nafs) have been addressed by philosophers from various perspectives—some areas have been explored with depth and strength, while others remain underdeveloped and less elaborated. According to Yazdanpanah, *"Our analyses of emotions and feelings in philosophy are neither particularly strong nor rich. The reason lies in our confinement of the soul to the realm of rational cognition. This has allowed us to excel in domains related to perception, imagination, reason, and so on; however, in other areas, we neither possess a developed literature nor deep analyses".* (Yazdanpanah, 1394 SH (2015 CE), p. 153)*"* Nevertheless, within the philosophical and rational approach, a wide range of intellectual output has been produced, centered around key foundational questions such as:

✦ What is the true nature of the human soul?

✦ Is it identical with the body, a state of the body, or something altogether distinct from it?

✦ Is the soul changeable, and does it have the capacity for development?

✦ What is the relationship between the human soul and other types of cearures'souls, such as the vegetative or animals?

✦ Is the soul material or immaterial? And is it subject to motion?

✦ What are the faculties and degrees of the soul, especially the human soul?

✦ Is the soul a contingent being that came into existence at a certain point and will cease to exist, or is it eternal in terms of origination and subsistence?

These and many other related questions have generated a vast body of responses throughout history—some of which have served as the foundation for the emergence of entire philosophical and social schools of thought. The central claim of this paper is that no theory, school, or intellectual system can remain indifferent or directionless regarding these fundamental questions in philosophical anthropology—even if it lacks sufficient awareness or explicit reflection on them. Furthermore, any response to these questions inevitably influences and gives rise to corresponding social and legal systems. As Mesbah Yazdi states: *"All social and ethical systems will possess the necessary intellectual foundations only if they arrive at clear and accurate solutions to some of the fundamental anthropological questions on which those systems are based"* (Yazdi, 2010, p. 25).

In order to move closer to the main thesis of this research, it shall be next explored the matter through the works of two prominent philosophers. First, by focusing on the thought of Abu Nasr al-Farabi, known as the *Second Teacher* and the founder of Islamic philosophy, I will highlight key aspects of his philosophical anthropology that demonstrate how it leads to the formation of social and legal theory. Then, through an examination of selected ideas of Karl Marx—a Western philosopher from the modern era—it will follow the same approach and attempt to uncover the anthropological roots of his political, social, and legal thought. These two models—one rooted in Islamic philosophy and the other in modern Western thought—will illustrate the critical role and significance of philosophical anthropology in shaping social structures and legal theories. It must be emphasized, as previously stated, that the core argument of this paper rests on the claim that no social, legal, or political system can be designed or implemented without presupposing a particular conception of human nature. Even if the philosophical dimensions of human existence are treated implicitly or assumed unconsciously, this does not negate their foundational role—because every social system is devised by human beings, for the use of human beings, and aimed at managing human communities. Therefore, ignorance or neglect of the human being, as the central axis of such systems, is inconceivable. The aim of examining these two thinkers is to demonstrate the nature of the link between philosophical anthropology and social theory—to show *how* and through *what process* philosophical foundations are transformed into social, legal, and political structures.

3. The Implications of Philosophical Anthropology in the Social Sciences

The discussion here concerns the relationship between philosophical anthropology and social, legal, and political systems. This paper emphasizes the idea that every thinker, or any social and moral system—whether consciously or unconsciously—is built upon a certain conception of the human being. Given the rational and philosophical orientation that dominates most theoretical frameworks, philosophical anthropology occupies a particularly prominent position among the various types of anthropology. To substantiate this claim, here it will be hired an analytical–argumentative method, drawing on Aristotle's fourfold theory of causation, which includes: efficient cause, formal cause, material cause, and final cause. Allameh Tabataba'i categorizes these into internal and external causes. The material and formal causes are considered internal, as they constitute the substance and form that give rise to the existence of a thing. The material cause refers to the raw, potential matter which, by receiving form, comes into actuality. The efficient and final causes, on the other hand, are regarded as external, since they exist outside the effect: the efficient cause is that from which the effect originates, and the final cause is the purpose or end toward which the agent directs the effect (Tabataba'i, 1427 AH (2006 CE), pp. 11-12). In a similar fashion, if it considers scientific theories and conceptual frameworks within the realms of social, ethical, legal, and political thought, this fourfold causality can be applied to theoretical systems and schools of thought in order to clarify the foundational role and significance of philosophical anthropology.

Every school of thought or scientific theory originates and develops through the work of a scholar or group of theorists. These individuals are considered the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*), as they bring about such systems with a particular purpose or end in mind. In other words, each intellectual tradition seeks to address specific societal problems or to promote the development and advancement of the social structure; the realization of this goal constitutes its final cause (*causa finalis*). However, scientific theories and schools of thought do not emerge in a vacuum. They always arise from a pre-existing body of knowledge composed of propositions, facts, and earlier concepts. This legacy of accumulated data and insights functions as the material cause (*causa materialis*)—the raw material out of which new theories are shaped. When these inherited elements are reorganized, reinterpreted, or supplemented to form a coherent system, the resulting intellectual architecture represents the formal cause (*causa formalis*): the new structure, arrangement, and identity

imposed upon the earlier content.

Now, when it considers all four causes together, there must be crystal clear that each of them ultimately traces back to the human being and the nature of human existence. It is humans who create theories and construct social and legal structures. They do so in pursuit of resolving challenges in their lives or improving the quality of social interaction. Even the inherited knowledge that constitutes the material cause is itself the product of earlier human efforts, crafted to meet the needs and aspirations of past generations. The new forms and configurations are likewise shaped in accordance with the intellectual dispositions, characters, and structures of contemporary human agents. In short, social structures—from every angle (cause, end, matter, and form)—are grounded in the conception of the human being upon which they are built. Therefore, philosophical anthropology plays a foundational and central role in this domain.

In addition to the above argument regarding the centrality of philosophical anthropology in the formation of social, ethical, legal, and political theories and structures, it must be noted that most of these theories are grounded in rational and analytical thought. As such, the overarching philosophical perspective on the nature and identity of the human being, and the existential components that constitute human reality, plays a direct and undeniable role in structuring these systems. Therefore, philosophical anthropology not only aids in understanding existing schools of thought and social structures but also provides a powerful path for introducing change, reform, and even the creation of new theoretical frameworks and systems. In this paper, alongside presenting a rational and philosophical argument for the irreplaceable role of philosophical anthropology, we will examine the thought of two major figures: Abu Nasr al-Farabi (870–950), a prominent Muslim philosopher of the 9th and 10th centuries, and Karl Marx (1818–1883), a German thinker of the 19th century. We will demonstrate how their political and social theories are fundamentally rooted in their philosophical understanding of the human being. In other words, in addition to theoretical reasoning, the empirical examination of how philosophical anthropology serves as a foundation for scientific theories in the work of these two thinkers will reinforce and substantiate the central claim of the paper.

4. Abu Nasr al-Farabi

Abu Nasr Muhammad al-Farabi (870–950) was one of the greatest thinkers and philosophers of the Islamic tradition. Following Aristotle, he came to be

known as *"the Second Teacher"* (*al-Muʿallim al-Thānī*). His mastery over various branches of knowledge in his time, along with his innovations grounded in Islamic teachings, made him a prominent and widely referenced figure in the intellectual heritage of the Muslim world. Majid Fakhry maintains that "al-Farabi's unparalleled significance in the history of Islamic philosophy lies in three areas: logic, metaphysics, and political philosophy; in the latter, he has virtually no equal." (Fakhry, 2016, p. 150) Given the content of al-Farabi's works, it is evident that political philosophy in this context should be understood in its broad sense, encompassing various fields such as social sciences, politics, and civil science. In these areas, he stands unrivaled and continues to serve as a source of inspiration for scholars.

Al-Farabi's *Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City* (*Araʾ Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila*) is his most serious and comprehensive work in the field of civil and social sciences. The structure of the book clearly reflects the centrality of philosophical anthropology in these discussions. Al-Farabi begins the book with theology, dedicating the first nine chapters to the knowledge of God. He then devotes the next ten chapters to cosmology. Starting from chapter 20, he turns to anthropology, focusing on the human soul and its faculties. He continues the discussion on anthropology until chapter 25, and from chapter 26 to the end of the book (chapter 37), he addresses social and civil sciences. Thus, before embarking on his treatment of social sciences—which constitute nearly half the volume of the book—he presents and clarifies his understanding of human nature. This serves as a foundational framework upon which he builds his civil and social philosophy. Nonetheless, in what follows, here, the aim is to examine three key thematic areas in al-Farabi's thought where the role of philosophical anthropology is especially prominent. The aforementioned themes are as follows:

A) Human action as the subject and axis of the human sciences;

B) The faculties of the soul and their impact on the structure of society;

C) Society as a macrocosmic human being;

These themes will serve as entry points to explore how al-Farabi's philosophical understanding of the human being informs and shapes his broader vision of social and political order.

A) Human Action

Since the Enlightenment era, and with the rise of the natural sciences along with the emergence of inventions and technologies derived from them, the current of positivism gained influence in the social sciences. Auguste Comte,

the French sociologist, was a prominent proponent of this idea, attempting to establish the foundations of the human sciences and sociology on the basis of empirical science and positivism. However, over time—particularly from the second half of the nineteenth century—this approach to the social and human sciences came under critique. With the emergence of historicism in Germany and figures such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel, special attention was paid to the role of human consciousness and will in social actions.

In this interpretive approach, the social sciences became very distinguished from the natural sciences both in terms of their subject matter and their methods of inquiry, as well as in the aims of their research. While the positivist approach focuses primarily on identifying causal relationships between social phenomena, the interpretive approach emphasizes the understanding and interpretation of human action. Al-Farabi is also among those who consider the social sciences to be fundamentally distinct from the natural sciences. In fact, "non-human phenomena include natural and supernatural, or physical and metaphysical matters; whereas human phenomena are those that emerge within the domain of human life and through human behavior and action. Social phenomena are a subset of human phenomena—they encompass social actions and the consequences that follow from them, and they are realized through human social response." (Parsania, 2012, p. 53) What is crucial here is the centrality of human action in the formation of human and social sciences. In other words, it is the human being and his actions that gives rise to these sciences and constitute their subject matter.

Al-Farabi states: "As for civil science (al-ʿilm al-madanī), it examines the types of actions and voluntary norms, as well as the dispositions, morals, temperaments, and traits from which actions and norms arise. It also investigates the ends for which these actions are performed, how these elements ought to exist within the human being, the proper manner in which should be ordered within him, and the appropriate way of preserving them." (al-Farabi, 1996, p. 79) The centrality of the human being and of anthropology for the human and social sciences is clearly evident in these statements—especially given that they refer to the three essential elements of these sciences: subject matter, purpose, and method.

B) The Faculties of the Soul

In Farabi's perspective, the human soul possesses five faculties. Each of these faculties, in turn, includes subordinate faculties. The lowest faculty of

the human soul is the nutritive faculty, which is responsible for managing matters related to the nourishment of the body. The second faculty is the sensory faculty. Its primary function is to manage the perceptions of the five senses, including what is got by seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched. The higher faculty is the imaginative faculty, which is, in a sense, an advanced form of the sensory faculty. This faculty receives perceptual data from the sensory faculty and processes it by combining or decomposing the inputs in ways that may not correspond to anything existing in the external world. The next faculty is called the desiderative faculty. This faculty pertains to the realm of desire and aversion within the human being. It is the force that generates in humans either the eagerness and excitement to perform an action or the hatred and aversion to phenomena such as fear, anger, and fleeing. The fifth and highest faculty of the human soul is the rational faculty, which endows humans with the ability to reason as well as the capacity to distinguish beauty from ugliness. This faculty itself is further divided into two parts: the theoretical and the practical. (Al-Farabi, 1995, pp. 82-86) It is noteworthy that these faculties exist on different levels. In the introduction, Bumalham, the commentator of Farabi's works, explicitly states that the nutritive faculty is the lowest human faculty, while the rational faculty, following the imaginative faculty, is the highest faculty within the human soul (Al-Farabi, 1995, p. 9).

Although these five faculties differ from one another in various respects—for instance, "among the five faculties of the soul, the three faculties of sensation (*ḥiss*), imagination (*mutakhayyilah*), and rationality (*nāṭiqah*) are cognitive faculties, while the other two are non-cognitive" (Eshkevari, 2011, p. 225)—nonetheless, the rational faculty (*quwwa nāṭiqah*) is the distinctive and prominent feature of the human being, serving as the primary differentiator between humans and animals. One of the most significant questions in philosophical anthropology is the identification of the distinguishing feature of the human being in comparison with other creatures, especially animals. Al-Fārābī regards the existence of this faculty—which grants humans the ability to understand, analyze, reason, and evaluate—as the very basis of human distinctiveness. This anthropological foundation is clearly reflected on the formation of the human and social sciences from his perspective. "In al-Fārābī's worldview, the human being occupies a level higher than other beings. On the one hand, the human possesses the rational faculty and free will: they think and act. On the other hand, the human is a volitional being whose actions are carried out through thought, reason, and choice. Furthermore, the human being is one whose ultimate perfection lies in

attaining eternal felicity, not merely in worldly enjoyment. The influence and presence of each of these three elements can clearly be observed in al-Fārābī's views and explanations." (University, 2023, p. 29)

The outputs of the rational faculty (ʿaql) in the human being are numerous. Cognition, awareness, will emerging from knowledge, the capacity for evaluation, and creativity are among the manifestations and results of this faculty. On this basis, al-Fārābī places the rational faculty at the center of his design of the virtuous city (al-madīnah al-fāḍilah). From his perspective, "the structure of the virtuous society is entirely founded upon human cognition and awareness; and the more opposing societies lack this element, the more deprived they are of achieving felicity." (University, 2023, p. 29) Humans 'will is also one of the manifestations of the rational faculty. Al-Fārābī "makes a distinction between irādah (will) and ikhtiyār (choice), asserting that ikhtiyār is a motivation that arises from thought and reason, whereas irādah is an impulse originating in feeling and imagination. According to al-Fārābī, will exists in all animals, but choice is specified to the human being nature" (Al-Farabi, 1995, p. 100). This again refers to the fundamental distinction between humans and animals: humans possess rationality, and thus a form of will that stems from awareness. This rational will, empowered by the faculty of evaluation, leads to deliberate decision-making and purposeful human action. Accordingly, from al-Fārābī's perspective, social structures must be founded upon this uniquely human capacity. A virtuous and ideal society is one in which reason governs. Such a society possesses two essential characteristics: first, its people possess true awareness and knowledge; and second, they act with will and agency in accordance with that knowledge. This kind of human action is also closely connected to the attainment of felicity (saʿādah).

Attainment of perfection (kamāl) and the achievement of felicity (saʿādah) are among the central keywords in al-Fārābī's thought, playing a significant role in the shaping of social sciences and the structure of society. "In fact, it is will (irādah) that forms the foundation of virtue and felicity—the very framework of al-Fārābī's conception of society." (al-Fārābī A. N., 1995, p. 45) To widen the case, just as the social sciences and civil structures are the result of human awareness and will, their establishment must also be guided by a vision of the ultimate goal. It is the purpose and end of human life that determines the nature of social structures and systems. If the aim of human society is the felicity and perfection of its members, then social, political, and legal institutions must be designed accordingly. As al-Fārābī states: *"The*

subject of political science is the investigation of the ultimate end of human existence, which is perfection (al-kamāl), and then the inquiry into the means by which this perfection can be attained, namely the goods and virtues" (al-Fārābī A. N., 1995b, p. 46) In al-Fārābī's own expression, these structures and human society are instruments intended to lead the human being to ultimate perfection, encompassing both goods (*khayrāt*) and virtues (*faḍā'il*).

C) Society as a Macrocosmic Hman Being

In contemporary sociology, various metaphors and analogies are used to describe society. Some, like Karl Marx, use terms such as *infrastructure* and *superstructure*, portraying human society as a kind of building with a foundational base upon which a superstructure is erected. Others, like Herbert Spencer, liken society to a biological organism, using the metaphor of the human body to explain its functions and organization. Still, some more recent sociologists use the concept of a *network* to describe society—suggesting that society is a web of social connections among individuals, where everything takes form through interrelations and interconnectedness. Al-Fārābī is among those thinkers who liken society to the human body.

"Al-Fārābī likens the *virtuous city* (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*) to a body that is complete in all its parts (*al-badan al-tām al-aʿḍāʾ*), wherein all the organs are interdependent. By 'a body complete in its parts,' he means a body in which each organ fulfills its function for the sake of the survival and continuity of the whole." (Aramaki, 2010, p. 40) This expression echoes the well-known verse by the Persian poet Saʿdī:

Human beings are members of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.

Based on this understanding, all elements of society—despite their diversity and differences—work together, each fulfilling a specific role or function, such that the society as a whole maintains its vitality and health. Should any part of this societal body suffer harm or illness, it becomes the responsibility of the other parts to support and aid it.

If the model of society is the human being, whose various parts cooperate and engage in a division of labor, then it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of this human entity and the interaction between body and soul, limbs and organs. Just as the body is a whole composed of parts and can experience health or illness, society too can be sometimes healthy and at other

times afflicted. Just as the balance between the soul and the body is crucial for the human being, so too is the balance between the software (cultural, ideological, normative aspects) and hardware (structural, institutional aspects) of society important. Just as a human life and strives with hope and purpose, so does society persist and thrive with aspirations and the pursuit of higher goals. If individuals encounter failure, weakness, or hostility from others in their lives, society also experiences such challenges and adversities. In summary, this model demonstrates that philosophical anthropology significantly influences how social sciences and human societies are shaped.

5. Karel Marx

Karl Marx is one of the most influential figures of the modern era. During the first half of his life—before writing the *Communist Manifesto*—he was primarily a philosopher. Afterward, he changed his approach and became a revolutionary and political activist aiming to transform the world. Young Marx was engaged with three main intellectual currents: the industrial-economic ideas of England, the political-social movements of France, and the philosophical thoughts of Germany. Following Ludwig Feuerbach, Marx was a strong critic of Hegel, the leading figure of German idealism. Marx continued the path that Feuerbach had begun in his critique of Hegel by linking it to materialism and economic determinism. This synthesis had a profound impact on philosophical and social thought in the West, influencing both liberalism and socialism.

As Karl Löwith points out, this focus shifted from pure philosophy in the Hegelian era to philosophical anthropology in the works of Feuerbach and then Marx: "In German philosophy of that period, this focus on man, in the strict sense of the word, tended toward transforming pure philosophy into philosophical anthropology in Feuerbach's thought... From this starting point, both Feuerbach and Marx concentrated their critical philosophy on man in the strict sense of the term." (Löwith, 2019, p. 129) At the end of his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx offers an extensive critique of Hegel's ideas about man. Opposing Hegelian idealism, he asserts that "man is directly a natural being. Man, as a natural and living being, is equipped on the one hand with natural forces and life; that is, he is an active natural existence" (Marx, 1998, p. 222). However, Marx continues, "man is not merely a natural existence; he is a human natural existence. That is, an existence for himself. Therefore, he is a species-being and must affirm and manifest himself both in terms of his own existence and his consciousness" (Marx, 1998, p. 224). Thus,

the focus on man as the starting point of critical philosophy in Marx's thought is precisely the point at which one must pause and reflect.

Not only is philosophical anthropology the starting point of Marx's work but also its ultimate goal in the Marxist society and the final commune. "Man was both the starting point and the goal of Marx's endeavor." (Marx, 1998, p. 224) He begins his political and social theories with a definition of human nature and ultimately seeks to elevate humanity by proposing a model for an ideal socialist society. Although Marx was a severe critic of religion and religiosity, and attempted to demonstrate the illusory nature of religion by centering his critique on the concept of "ideology," the overall structure of his thought bears significant resemblance to religious frameworks and the thinkers committed to religious belief. His focus on an ideal society and teleological orientation is one such indication—Marx endeavored to create a kind of earthly paradise akin to the religious notion of heaven. As Roger Trigg puts it, "Marx awaited such a society in which we could all truly be human, because none of our talents would be left unfulfilled without reason." (Trigg, 2003, p. 164) Therefore, the nature of man, derived from Marx's philosophical anthropology, constitutes both the inception of his thought and the ultimate aim of his theorizing in shaping an ideal society.

From Marx's perspective, the nature of man is rooted in his capacity for consciousness and tool-making, which enables him to transform his environment through labor and to realize his human essence through work and production. As Jan Rehbein expresses, "According to Marx… human nature is such that man transforms his life, and this transformation results in fundamental changes in history. The distinguishing feature of man from other animals is that we do not merely change the environment; rather, we first change it and then adapt and harmonize ourselves with it." (Craib, 2003, pp. 160-161) This reproduced harmony of man through environmental transformation is what separates him from animals and grants him a distinguished status. Moreover, this process is not limited to passive adaptation to environmental changes. While man changes nature and his surroundings, he simultaneously alters his own nature. Marx emphasizes in *Capital* that "while man acts upon and changes external nature through this process, he simultaneously changes his own nature." (Marx, 2007, p. 209) These characteristics reflect Marx's understanding of human nature as a bio-social essence.

From Marx's perspective, human nature is bio-social, encompassing both fixed elements inherent in human existence and openness to social change.

"Marxism regards man as having a bio-social nature, meaning that a set of primary biological needs exist within human nature that are subject to social conditions and whose history is socially constructed. In other words, although human biological needs are instinctual, they are conditioned by social circumstances, and the manner of their expression changes according to social relations and contexts." (Mousavi, 1994, pp. 58-59) Although such account of human nature is highly debated and criticized, it contrasts with al-Fārābī's view, who posits a fixed human *fitrah* (innate disposition), meaning that humans have stable cognitive, motivational, and value-based predispositions. In other words, the constants and commonalities of human beings are not limited to their biological needs but extend far beyond them to include shared understandings of self-evident truths, the logical structure of the mind, inclinations toward good and virtue, and the capacity to discern right from wrong—although each society and culture may respond to these needs in different forms and expressions. It is notable that Marx was a contemporary of Darwin and, due to evolutionary theory, had a special interest in Darwin's ideas. Here, I do not seek to validate Marx's anthropology, as it has received extensive critique. Rather, the key point is how Marx grounds his social, political, and legal theories on his anthropology. This focus on anthropology is what enables Marx to develop the conceptual capacity for "alienation" (*Entfremdung*).

The concept of "alienation" (*Entfremdung*) is one of Marx's key notions in analyzing capitalist society. While the transformation of the environment through labor and production constitutes the foundation of human identity, the bourgeois class, by turning labor into a commodity and purchasing it cheaply, alienates workers from their human essence and causes their alienation. Marx believed that the defining characteristic (*species-being*) of man was conscious and free activity. As he assumed when the worker became alienated, human free activity would be undermined to a mere instrument. (Marx, 1998, p. 134) Under these conditions, it is necessary to lead people to liberation and freedom through self-consciousness. "To liberate man from his partial, abstract mental state and to overcome human alienation caused by specialization, Marx considers 'human liberation' essential—liberation that is not only political and economic but also fundamentally 'human.'" (Löwith, 2019, p. 135) According to Marx, this liberation and the genuine realization of humanity will be achieved in the ideal communist society. In summary, Marx's story begins and ends with man, although his definition of man differs considerably from that accepted among Muslim thinkers.

6. Conclusion

This article has argued that philosophical anthropology—the rational and systematic inquiry into the nature of the human being—is not only foundational but also structurally constitutive of all social, legal, and political theories. Drawing on the Aristotelian model of the four causes, it demonstrates that every theoretical system in the human sciences emerges from anthropological assumptions:

1) Efficient cause – the human thinker who produces theory based on their conception of man;

2) Final cause – the goal or telos of the system, which always relates to human flourishing or perfection;

3) Material cause – the inherited data, traditions, and conceptual materials, filtered through a human lens;

4) Formal cause – the theoretical synthesis or arrangement of these materials into a meaningful structure, itself shaped by a view of human rationality.

Each of which above is inherently anthropological; theories are produced by humans, for humans, based on human interpretations of reality and directed toward human ends. Thus, philosophical anthropology is not a peripheral discipline—it is the epistemological and ontological core of all normative systems in the humanities and social sciences.

The comparative analysis of al-Farabi and Karl Marx exemplifies how anthropology drives social theory across civilizations. Al-Farabi, rooted in Islamic metaphysics, builds a teleological model centered on the rational soul, moral volition, and the ultimate goal of felicity (saʿādah). His vision of the virtuous city reflects a harmonized social order that mirrors the soul's faculties. Marx, by contrast, articulates a materialist conception of man as a self-transforming, laboring being, whose historical alienation under capitalism becomes the central problem of modern life. Despite their divergent assumptions, both thinkers show that no coherent theory of society is possible without a prior theory of man.

Ultimately, the article concludes that reforming or constructing any sustainable system of law, politics, or society must begin with a renewed inquiry into the human essence. Philosophical anthropology—precisely because it engages the metaphysical, ethical, rational, and historical dimensions of the human being—offers the most integrative and dialogical foundation for such intellectual work.

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