

**THE PROBLEM OF
PERFECTION IN THE
SPACE OF ARAB-MUSLIM
CULTURE****Introduction**

The idea of excellence for many eras has been one of the driving motives and regulatory principles for cultural traditions. It deeply reflected both the consciousness of an individual and the nature of social structures. It is impossible to imagine society and culture (both eastern and western) without the image of moral perfection, shining on top of any harmonious concept (philosophical, religious, etc.). These concepts are considered in the framework of perfectionism, a special type of ethical teachings, based on the idea of perfection, while in achieving perfection, the ultimate goal of man.

The importance and definition of culture has always been relevant. People have always lived in culture, created it, but they did not immediately realize it (just as they always lived in history, but not always historians). Knowledge of a culture of much later origin than the culture itself [1, 9].

Culture is the way and result of self-generation and self-realization of man, the present world of his abilities and ancestral powers. Man becomes man through culture and through it. Culture is the way and the result of a person's penetration into other worlds within which he acts: the world of nature, the world of the divine, the worlds of other people, peoples and communities [2, 8].

Mankind has everything (civilization, culture, art), but this does not subordinate man to himself. He can always learn more about himself and change his essence. Man can not but be historical. The essence and integrity of man – in his history [3, 70].

Arab-Islamic medieval culture developed in the Arab Caliphate in the 7th-10th centuries. In the process of cultural interaction between the Arabs and the conquered peoples of Middle East, North Africa and South-West Europe.

In the scientific literature, the term “Arab culture” is used both to denote the culture of the Arab people proper, and to apply to the medieval Arabic-speaking culture of a number of other people that were part of the Caliphate. In the latter sense, the term “Arab culture” is sometimes equated with the concept of “Muslim culture” (the culture of Muslim people) and its use is conditional.

Methods of research

The article found application of historical, sociocultural, synergetic and axiological approaches to the study of culture. Also, the principles of socio-philosophical comparativistics were used, which allowed us to consider and analyze the problem of perfection in the cultural and philosophical space of the Arab-Muslim culture.

Literature review

The category of “perfection” is connected with the search for the ultimate bases of being. It is included in the range of problems characterizing the active nature of the spiritual life of man. Therefore, philosophers and scientists have addressed the problem of perfection to some extent. Among the thinkers who laid the foundations for understanding this problem and carried out a categorical analysis of the notion of perfection Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Thomas Aquinas, etc., contributed to the theoretical development of perfectionism in the West by I. Kant, F. Nietzsche, M. Ossovskaya, B. Spinoza, I. Fichte, E. Fromm, A. Schweitzer, A. Schopenhauer and others.

Among the Russian philosophers who gave perfection the status of the leading anthropological problem N.A. Berdyaev, V.S. Soloviev, I.A. Il'in, L.P. Karsavin, N.O. Lossky, P.I. Novgorodtsev, N.F. Fedorov.

The culturological approach to the study of the problem of perfection is represented by the works of M.M. Bakhtin, N.I. Voronina, L.S. Vygotsky, A.A. Gagaev, A.V. Gulyga, P.S. Gurevich, M.S. Kagan, L.N. Kogan, A.F. Losev, Yu.M. Lotman, D.S. Likhachev, B.M. Mezhuev, and others.

At the turn of the century, attempts are continuing to understand the existence of man and society through the prism of perfection.

Main part

In the period of antiquity and the Middle Ages, no special works on the problems of culture were created, but one can talk about the formation of the concept itself and its comprehension in theoretical works of philosophers and thinkers devoted to the general problems of the development of society and history. Ancient understanding of culture is humanistic, it is based on the ideal of a person, that is a man-citizen, subject to the laws of his policy and fulfilling all civil duties, a man-soldier who protected him from the enemy, a man who can enjoy the

beautiful (the latter is true only for Greek antiquity). The achievement of this ideal was the goal of culture. Therefore, culture was understood as certain moral norms, as well as the nature of the assimilation of these norms. By virtue of such representations, the first meaning of the term “culture” has become identified with education and education that can develop in a person a reasonable judgment ability and aesthetic sense of beauty, allowing him to gain a sense of proportion and justice in matters of civil and private. Such a system of education *paideia* existed in ancient Greece. Its result was not the formation of a professional in any field, but the improvement of a person as an individual. Thus the person did not lose unity with the nature which was understood as space – universal world order. At the heart of this order lie a law that exists both in nature and in society. Thus, the cultural man perceived his life as a natural extension of this natural order.

These representations corresponded to the cyclic experience of time, characteristic of antiquity. The Greeks were close to the notion of eternity, in history they saw constant repetition, the reproduction of general laws, independent of the specifics of society. This led to a cyclical pattern of development of history and culture, according to which the development of society represents a cycle that runs from the golden age to the silver, copper and, finally, iron. In this model, the golden age was in the past, therefore for the ancient world outlook, it is characteristic of the past to be considered an ideal. The current state of culture is only a certain degree of deviation from it. The maximum deviation of the Iron Age should lead to a culture crisis that, through upheavals and cataclysms, will restore society to a golden age, after which a new cycle of development will begin.

If the basis of ancient culture was the recognition of the eternity of the cosmos existing on the basis of the universal cosmic law that ensured the stability of the world order, which stood above the gods, also obeyed it, the Middle Ages lost this confidence and turned completely to God. Henceforth, God is considered the creator of the world, the only true reality, above the nature that he created. The meaning of the world is only in God, and the world itself is seen as a huge storehouse of symbols, all objects and phenomena of the material world are considered to be only inscriptions in the divine book of nature. In these conditions, culture is also beginning to be realized in a new way not as the education of a measure, harmony and order, but as overcoming the limitations of a person, cultivating the inexhaustibility and his constant spiritual

improvement. Culture turned into a cult, and the term “culture” was no longer used.

The Middle Ages brings a new understanding of happiness to culture. Antiquity approved the thesis “man is the measure of all things”. Man is the microcosm himself. When we recognize the microcosm, we know the macrocosm. The Middle Ages approaches this problem differently. Happiness is in the knowledge of God (the Absolute, the macrocosm). In antiquity, culture was understood as a measure, norm, “golden mean”, harmony, and in the Middle Ages culture is an eternal elevation, ascent to the ideal, the absolute, the boundless. Therefore, for antiquity, culture is something absolutely achievable, existing in a person and society, whereas in the Middle Ages culture for man is always something relative, receiving its justification only in God. Culture is the process of overcoming sinfulness and affirming sacredness, divinity, and this process is endless.

The main content of the history of medieval Arab philosophy was the struggle of the Eastern Peripatetics, stemming from the Hellenistic heritage, and supporters of religious and idealistic teachings. In Islam, the concept of knowledge has acquired a vastness, which there is no equal in other civilizations [4,325]. The history of the emergence of philosophical thought in the Arab East dates back to the second half of the 8th century. And is associated with the mutazilites, the early representatives of rational theology (*kalam*) who, starting with the discussion of questions about divine attributes and free will, ended up developing concepts that not only transcended religious issues, but also undermined faith in certain basic tenets of Islam. So, consistently pursuing the idea of monotheism, the Mutazilites rejected the presence of God’s positive attributes complementing his essence; Denying in him, in particular, the attribute of speech, they rejected the notion of the eternity of the Koran and on this basis made a conclusion about the admissibility of its allegorical interpretation. Mutazilites developed the concept of reason as the only measure of truth and the position of the creator’s inability to change the natural order of things. Among the Mutazilites, the idea of an atomic structure of the world was widespread. As a reaction to the ideas of the Mu’tazilites, the doctrine of the Asharites developed, which directed rational theology into the mainstream of the philosophical defense of dogmas about divine providence and miracle (it is with this doctrine that the term “*kalam*” is often associated, and mainly its representatives are called *mutakallims*). According to the teachings of the Ash’arites, nature was a heap

of unrelated and instantly recreated by God atoms and their qualities; In the world, they argued, there is no causal relationship, for the Almighty is able at any time to give any object any form and movement. In contrast to the speculation of theologians, and the teachings of the Peripatetics, Sufism developed. Using with the elements of the Muslim worldview the ideas of Gnosticism and Neoplatonism, the Sufis developed the doctrine of the ways leading man through renunciation of worldly passions and contemplation of God in mystical intuition and the final merger with him. At the same time, at some stages of its development, Sufi ideas were interpreted in the spirit of naturalistic pantheism. Mysticism of the Sufis, at first subjected to persecution by the Orthodox clergy, was legalized by al-Ghazali, the largest representative of religious and idealistic philosophy. In his criticism of the “heretical” and “opposing” views of the Peripatetics, Ghazali defended alongside mystical Sufism the positions of the Asharites, refusing, however, to accept their atomistic theory. One of the influential representatives of Sufism can also be considered Ibn al-Arabi. In the Muslim spiritual culture, knowledge was achieved, striking in its depth. To come to the understanding of obedience to Allah, surrender as the highest form of knowledge and the true goal of man is a great thing for religion with such a complex social function as Islam [5,32].

Eastern Peripateticism was based on the philosophy of Aristotle, which was transferred to the Arabs through the help of Syrian translators, partly in the interpretation of the Athenian and Alexandrian schools, as well as other ancient teachings, in particular the political theory of Plato. Aristotle’s interpretations of the eastern peripatetics opened the door to atheistic and even materialistic concepts. Thus, the clause about the dual truth, hidden in the teachings of the Mutazilites, presupposed allegorical interpretations of the dogmas of Islam.

The ninth and tenth centuries witnesses the translations of most of Greek scientific and philosophical literature into Arabic as well as the production of the first of the great Arabic commentaries on the philosophical and scientific writings of the Greeks and original Arabic discoveries (medicine, mathematics, astronomy and philosophy [6, 16].

The founder of eastern peripateticism was al-Kindi (about 800 – 879), who first in Arabic philosophy outlined the content of the main works of Aristotle. He also first presented (on the basis of the ascending to Alexander Aphrodisian classification of intellects) rational cognition as

the initiation of the mind of the individual to the universal, deities, reason. Deism of Kindi, his idea of God as an impersonal “distant cause”, developed within the framework of the Neoplatonic theory of the emanation of al-Farabi. Ontological and epistemological ideas Farabi deepened and detailed the largest thinker of the Middle Ages, Ibn Sina, who affirmed the eternity of matter and the independence of particular phenomena of life from divine providence.

According to R. Walzer, Al-Farabi’s theory of prophecy was only in part acceptable to Avicenna (980-1037). Since for Avicenna, the perfect man is identical with the prophet, he can not be satisfied with confine prophecy to imagination only and to subordinate it to philosophy. Being a philosopher and upholding the primacy of reason, Al-Farabi (though being nearer to Plotinus) identified the highest grade of philosophy with prophecy [7].

According to Smirnov A.V., Abu Nasr Al-Farabi was a major representative of falsafa [8]. Al-Farabi developed the concept of emanation consistent with Aristotle and Islamic traditions [9, 731]. In the 12th century the center of philosophical thought moves to the West of the Muslim world to Spain. Here in Andalusia, similar humanistic themes are being developed by Ibn Badzh, reflecting on the ability of man through purely intellectual perfection, without mystical illumination, to achieve complete happiness and merge with active intelligence, and Ibn Tufail, in a philosophical Robinsonade describing the history of exploration and cognition of nature by mankind, Allegorical form of the concept of dual truth. However, Andalusian, and along with it all medieval Arab philosophy, reaches its peak in the works of Ibn Rushd, who defended the idea of peripateticism from attacks of Asharites and Gazali and created an independent philosophical doctrine. Rejecting the teachings of Ibn Sina about the introduction of forms into matter from outside, Ibn Rushd made a thesis about the immanence of the forms of matter itself. He also denied the immortality of individual souls, regarding as eternal only human intellect, which is associated with the active divine intelligence, which embodies the ultimate goal of human knowledge. A great role in the history of medieval philosophy was played by Ibn Rushd’s development of the concept of dual truth. His doctrine of the highest cognitive ability of man – about reason Ibn Rushd develops, starting from the psychological theory of Aristotle. According to this theory, the capacity for rational activity in a person precedes this activity itself, representing itself as a pure board (tabula rasa), to which only the act

of thinking brings a certain content, derived from sensual images, – fantasy [10,112]. Another major thinker of the Arab West was Ibn Khaldun, rightly considered one of the founders of the philosophy of history. Arab philosophy has found a second life in Europe in the activities of the Averroists (followers of Ibn Rushd) and other fighters against the official ideology of Catholicism.

The features of the ideal of knowledge in Muslim culture were determined by Sharia, according to which faith and reason not only do not oppose each other, but also complement each other in the problem field of knowledge. Thus, medieval Muslim culture proceeded and was guided by such an ideal of knowledge, which can be called a single and integral, a kind of complex. For example, the work of the famous medieval thinker al-Ghazali (1058-1111) “Revival of Religious Sciences” can simultaneously be considered philosophical, and legal, and religious, and linguistic, and culturological, interdisciplinary in the modern sense.

It is not for nothing that the well-known philosopher Averroes spoke of al-Ghazali, that he is philosopher with philosophers, with Sufis-Sufis, with mutakallims-mutakallim. The character of the value orientation of the educated part of the medieval Muslim society can be judged from adabic literature. We are talking about adibs, who embodied the image of a cultured and educated person. Adab, that is, the totality of the norms of education and upbringing, presupposed knowledge of both secular and religious sciences, in particular philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and a certain pattern of behavior.

Important features for understanding the paradigm of Muslim culture are such features of Islam as the absence of the institution of the church and, accordingly, church ideology, the recognition of the legislative role only for God and, accordingly, the lack of orthodoxy and heresy in the sense that they were understood in Christianity, as well as religious and legal pluralism within the framework of a single Islamic worldview. In describing the paradigm of Muslim culture and civilization, it is important to distinguish at least two dominant components: Islam and Hellenism. In its history, this culture shows its “western face”, because it contains elements of Judaism, Christianity and Hellenism, and “Eastern” when it departs from the essence of these components. The consideration of the latter circumstance makes it possible to understand the humanistic character of Muslim culture, connected with the attempt to make a human being more humane and contribute to the discovery of his greatness[11].

The processes of synthesizing cultures have always taken place, manifesting themselves with greater or lesser strength, sometimes fading, sometimes giving bright flashes. The first meeting of the Greeks with the achievements of the East took place under the Achaemenids. The second wave of the synthesis of cultures in the region of interest and nearby is connected with the conquests of Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic era, when the cultural traditions of India, Iran, Syria, Armenia, Georgia, Central Asia, and the Middle East were closely intertwined. The third wave, close to the times of al-Farabi, is connected with the resettlement of Christians who brought Greek culture to the “gentiles”, the same ones turned out to be not only grateful recipients, but also talented followers. First, the Nestorian Syrians acquainted themselves with the achievements of the Greek genius of the Sassanid Persians. A great role in this was played by the Gundishapur school, in which translations from Greek works on logic, philosophy and medicine were carried out [12,7]. Alfarabi in the Latin West tradition, is one of the major thinkers in the history of Islamic philosophy. He wrote extensively on logic, philosophy of language, metaphysics, natural philosophy, ethics, political philosophy, philosophical psychology and epistemology. His teachings had a strong Aristotelian background and at the same time a significant Neoplatonic bent. One of the greatest Islamic thinkers, Avicenna (d. 1037), explicitly admits in his autobiography his intellectual debt to al-Fārābī through whom he was able to understand the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle. Overall, al-Fārābī became an important reference within the Islamic intellectual milieu as a source of both influence and contention [13]. The concept of the perfect man, the Virtuous City, created by al-Farabi and the eastern peripatetic, influenced subsequent representatives of medieval philosophy of the peoples of the Middle East, they remain relevant in our time [14,85]. Ibn Rushd also writes about “eternal reason” and ideal state. His doctrine of the highest cognitive ability of man – about reason – Ibn-Rushd develops, starting from the psychological theory of Aristotle. According to this theory, the capacity for rational activity in a person precedes this activity itself, representing itself as a pure board (tabula rasa), to which only the act of thinking brings a certain content, derived from sensual images, fantasy [15,112]. Ontological argument first formulated by Ibn Sina (370/980-429/ 1037), and thereafter reformulated by various Muslim philosophers throughout the centuries up to the present day [16]. Systematic account of the ideas of various philosophers and various trends

in Muslim thought from the earliest times until the present day was given by *Fakhry M.* [17].

Representatives of the eastern peripateticism Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd developed the ancient ideas and notions of moral and perfect personality. They developed a profound rationalist way of intellectual perfection, understanding it as a system with the element of creation, the binding of the micro and macrocosm, because of the nature of a man in the unity of body, soul and spiritual [18]. Indeed, the whole activity of education, in Al-Farabi’s view, can be summed up as the acquisition of values, knowledge and practical skills by the individual, within a particular period and a particular culture. The goal of education is to lead the individual to perfection since the human being was created for this purpose. The perfect human being (*al-insan al-kamil*), thought Al-Farabi, is the one who has obtained theoretical virtue—thus completing his intellectual knowledge—and has acquired practical moral virtues—thus becoming perfect in his moral behaviour. Then, crowning these theoretical and moral virtues with effective power, they are anchored in the souls of individual members of the community when they assume the responsibility of political leadership, thus becoming role models for other people. Al-Farabi unites moral and aesthetic values: good is beautiful, and beauty is good; the beautiful is that which is valued by the intelligentsia [19]. Al-Farabi was keenly aware of the value of language since he spoke several languages himself that allowed him to compare cultures and tongues. After languages comes logic, the instrument of the sciences and their methodology, and leads to sound reflection; it is also closely connected with language. Furthermore, the Arabic word for ‘logic’ (*mantiq*) includes both verbal expression and intellectual procedures, and this is why, in his opinion, language comes before rules about forming the mind, and prepares the way for it [20]. Ibn Baja, being heavily influenced by “Treatise on the views of the residents of the virtuous city” of Al-Farabi in the product “lifestyle retire”, developed the idea of the necessity of moral fortitude person under any circumstances. Al-Farabi’s influence, especially in the classification of “Cities”, there is a sociological works of Ibn Rushd, in particular in his comments to Plato’s “State” [21, 136].

Influence of Al-Farabi’s works on various philosophers (such as Ikhwan al-Safa, Masudi, Miskavayha and Abu Hasan Muhammad al-Amiri) was huge. Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Musa ibn Maimon (Maimonides Moses) are very highly valued Farabi. So the outlook Farabi had a huge impact,

and for a long time, his views were of fundamental importance [22]. The Enumeration of Sciences and the Book of religion enumerate the functions of political science, which in part correspond to the subject matter of the virtuous city and the Political Regime. Therefore, the division of the subject matter of these two works into cosmological and political is not precise. The political is assimilated to the cosmological, and the cosmological assimilated to the political [23, 9].

Pointing to the cause of bringing people together, al-Farabi emphasizes two important things: 1) because each needs the other, they are on an equal situation; 2) the activities of all people united in society to meet the needs of each, provides the basis for achieving excellence. So, according to al-Farabi, human society since the dawn pursues humane goals [24, 23].

To know the truth of life and science was an important moment of the philosophy of all time. Medieval Islamic culture has opened the world a lot of the scientific knowledge of the world and the universe. According to al-Farabi, a man in search of truth reaches perfection, knows himself, defines moral principles [25, 33].

Farabi says that every nation characterized by three characteristic features: a natural disposition (morality, tradition), the natural character (psychological characteristics) and the related language [26, 110].

Partnership and culture concerted and responsible decisions, produced on the basis of dialogue, where there is political stability and consolidation of all political forces in the name of prosperity and a decent life and where sustainable development becomes the key to the future [27].

Conclusion

The history of sciences, in particular, theology, shows that the Islamic society was an ideal environment for the development of various disciplines. And the Middle Ages, considered a gloomy period for the West, in Islamic history is known as the “golden age” of science [28, 12].

Mankind has everything (civilization, culture, art), but this does not subordinate man to himself. He can always learn more about himself and change his essence. Man can not but be historical. The essence and integrity of man – in his history [29. 70].

The philosophical teaching of al-Farabi proceeds from the theological view of God as the creator of the world. But it is very much corrected, because it is made the subject of independent reflection, the

subject of philosophy, which is based not on dogma and faith, but on reason

The word “perfection” from antiquity is revealed in two planes. Primary, its meaning consisted in describing the practical suitability of a thing for certain purposes, the attainment of the goal set, the perfection of the design. Later it began to be understood in the metaphysical sense, as the complete completeness of something, the highest degree of development and harmony of the world and man. The foundations of the study of perfection were laid by Plato. From his point of view, the source of the perfect is transcendental being. Perfection itself as the idea of good has an ontological status, and in its fullness and completeness is realized outside of earthly existence. But the idea of it is available to philosophers; It is correlated with the realm of the due. The perfectionist tradition was continued by Aristotle, and already in his philosophy there appears the concept of perfection – that is, the process of acquiring perfection. He reveals the idea of a perfect personality, the ways of achieving moral perfection. The highest manifestation of virtuous life, he believes contemplative life, subordinate to the activities of reason. Thus, the perfection of man – in his wisdom, which in itself is virtue and happiness, the peak of human development and the highest good. A characteristic feature of ancient ideas was the assertion of the mind as a divine principle in man, and the path of perfection was seen as a way of self-assertion of the mind in cognition. This tradition has been reflected in most of the perfectionist doctrines of European philosophy. In the Middle Ages, the ideal nature of perfection is supplemented by the fullness of its beingness, which brings it to a rapprochement with the divine principle, the highest existential principle. The full achievement of perfection by the soul was thought to exceed the limits of empirical existence. Perfection lies in God, so the religious-mystical meaning of the concept comes to the fore compared to the ethical one. Only from the medieval epoch the understanding of perfection and perfection is predominant as closely connected with the transcendent, otherworldly world that determines their content.

In the era of the New Age, Spinoza shares perfection into the divine (absolute) and human (relative). Behind man remains the moral duty to achieve earthly perfection (through reason and love of God).

Later, in the works of Nietzsche, Marx, perfection is reduced to empiricism and is put into the service of either an exceptional personality (the perfection of the superman is individualism

and strong will) or the collective (the collectivist's perfection is socially useful moral qualities).

In ethics we are talking about the perfection of man and about the ways to achieve his perfection. The overall result of the study of the problem – in this perspective was the definition of perfection as a value associated with an absolute, higher for human value. In the history of culture, there are quite stable traditions of perfectionist research.

According to the religious interpretation, which takes its basic origins in the philosophy of Plato, the idea of perfection is transcendental to man and is imputed to him in execution. From the theological point of view, God is the embodiment of perfection. God, who created man (in his own image), becomes for man the only true good, light, to which he must strive all his life. In the earthly life perfection manifests itself in the aspiration to God as a moral legislator and is realized in moral behavior. Actually, the moral perfection of man consists in the ascetic way of existence, the fulfillment of all the commandments under the guidance of love. It is the vehicle to the highest perfection – perfection as a complete coincidence with God. This ideal is obtained by deification-dying in the flesh and rebirth in the Divine; This higher form of religious experience is extramoral.

Secular, humanistic, ethic comes from the understanding of man as a self-determined individuality, in the nature of which lies the desire for perfection. Thus, perfection in ethics appears as an absolute humanity, the highest degree of development of spirituality. At the same time, the image of perfection is not set from the outside, but

is created individually, it is always unique (how unique each person is).

Moral perfection involves not simply following the moral norms accepted in a particular society, but the creative transformation of one's own essence. In the very concept of "perfection" there is a component of uniqueness and originality. In the process of unique creative self-realization, a person creates a different integrity, gaining a sense of his own completeness, harmony.

Modern philosophical interpretations of perfection agree that the desire for an unattainable ideal lies in the very nature of man. The desire for perfection can be explained by the desire for wholeness, since man himself is part of the universe or Divine being (this is also determined by his imperfection). All goals and ideals are relative, changeable, but in opposition to them there is an absolute goal, unchanging and indestructible – God possessing the attribute of true perfection. This goal can be realized and not realized, but is constantly present in a person, and he intuitively senses it.

Some methods of improvement are based on the support not on the mind, but on the subconscious structures of human nature. As a deeper structure of the human psyche, the subconscious contains in itself the whole spiritual-spiritual experience of individual human existence. This unknown area of the psyche is directly connected with the transcendent being, the being of the Absolute, and interaction with it makes possible not only the transformation of man, but also the activation of the process of Universal evolution.

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