

## THE ESSENCE OF HUMANITY IN THE FIRST THREE VERSES OF SURAH AL-INSAN: A PHILOSOPHICAL EXEGESIS

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### ABSTRACT

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This study departs from the question of how the Qur'an depicts humans not only as biological beings but also as beings with existential, epistemological, and moral dimensions. This study examines the nature of humans in verses 1–3 of surah al-Insan through a philosophical interpretation approach. The research aims to uncover the ontological, epistemological, and moral dimensions of humans in surah al-Insan verses 1–3. The method used is qualitative research with a library research type, employing a philosophical interpretation approach and content analysis techniques on the verses of the Qur'an and relevant Islamic interpretation and philosophy literature. The research results indicate that the essence of humans in surah al-Insan is understood as beings that originate from non-existence, thus being contingent and dependent on God as *wājib al-wujūd*. Humans are also endowed with sensory and intellectual potential as the basis of knowledge, as well as the freedom to choose between gratitude and ingratitude accompanied by moral responsibility. In the view of Surah Al-Insan, humans are seen as beings who have biological existence as well as consciousness, rationality, and moral responsibility. This research contributes to enriching the study of Quranic exegesis through a philosophical approach to comprehensively understanding humanity's nature.

**Keywords:** surah Al-Insan; philosophical exegesis; essence of humanity

## INTRODUCTION

Humans are one of God's creatures who hold a special place in the Quran. Their uniqueness is due to their creation, intellect, will, and moral duties. The Quran explains extensively the process of creation, the purpose of life, and the potential that distinguishes humans from other creatures (Fajhirah & Kumalasari, 2025), thus making humans an object of study that is never exhausted for research, both theologically and philosophically. In various literatures on philosophy, Sufism, Islamic education, and tafsir, the concept of humankind has various interpretations according to the perspectives of each discipline. Discussions about the essence of humankind are indeed timeless, constantly generating new questions and fresh insights every time we examine this unique creature of God. (Aulia et al., 2025).

Islam presents a concept of human nature that is derived directly from the revelation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, enriched by the explanations of scholars. This concept is consistent across time and culture, with an emphasis on the spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of human nature. (Ghofur et al., 2026). According to Ibn 'Arabi, humans are creatures of Allah, possessing the highest level of perfection compared to other creatures. This conclusion is because humans are endowed with divine attributes (*rahbaniyah*) that enables him to live, think, have a will, and exercise various abilities, such as speaking, hearing, seeing, and making decisions. Meanwhile, according to al-Ghazali, humans are creatures created by Allah, composed of two elements: the physical and the spiritual. In his view, humans should prioritize the spiritual or psychological aspects so that their lives remain in line with the natural disposition that has been given. This balance is a characteristic that distinguishes humans from other creatures. (Nuryamin et al., 2021).

Several previous studies have discussed the concept of human beings from the perspective of Islamic philosophy and the Qur'an. Muthmainnah et al. (Muthmainnah et al., 2023), explain that humans consist of physical and spiritual elements and have a gradual existence and function as God's vicegerents on earth. Nuryamin et al. (Nuryamin et al., 2021), emphasized that the terms Al-Insan, *al-Basyar*, and An-Nas describe the biological, social, and spiritual dimensions of humans as servants and caliphs. Ali Rahmat (Rahmat, 2016), In a comparative study, Ibn Sina and Al-Ghazali show differences in the elements of human nature, but both position humans as creatures with the potential to achieve perfection. Ahmad Farid et al. (Farid et al., 2023), explain that the term "human" in the Qur'an includes complex physical, mental, and spiritual aspects. Abidin et al. (Abidin et al., 2024), describing the other side of humanity through the despicable traits in Al-Insan, such as blasphemy against blessings and following desires. Rahmi Damis (Damis, 2014), discusses the concept of human beings in the Qur'an from a philosophical perspective by discussing human nature, its constituent elements, and its role as God's vicegerent on earth. The difference is that previous studies have generally, comparatively, or thematically explored the concept of humanity in the Quran and, therefore, have not focused on a single surah as a whole. Meanwhile, the research to be conducted will more specifically examine the nature of humanity in Surah Al-Insan with a philosophical interpretation approach. Based on this, this research is important to conduct. Surah Al-Insan was selected as the object of this study because it offers a comprehensive portrayal of human existence. The chapter discusses not only the origin and creation of human beings but also their intellectual capacities, freedom of choice, moral accountability, and

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ultimate destiny. Such characteristics render Surah Al-Insan particularly relevant for investigating the nature of humanity through the lens of philosophical exegesis (*tafsir falsafi*).

This study aims not only to understand the nature of humanity as depicted in the Qur'an but also to uncover its deeper meaning through a philosophical interpretation approach. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to enriching the study of interpretation, particularly in understanding humanity comprehensively, from an existential, moral, and spiritual perspective.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study positions philosophical exegesis as an interpretive approach to uncover the philosophical dimensions embedded in Surah Al-Insan. This study does not aim to impose external philosophical categories upon the Qur'anic text, nor does it merely compare the Qur'anic concept of humanity with classical Islamic philosophy. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate that Surah Al-Insan presents a Qur'anic conception of humanity that contains rational and reflective dimensions concerning human existence, knowledge, moral choice, and responsibility before God. In this sense, philosophy is employed as an analytical lens to clarify the conceptual depth of the verses while remaining grounded in the meaning structure of the Qur'anic text.

## METHOD

This research is a qualitative study using library research. The data sources consist of primary data, namely the Qur'an, particularly Surah Al-Insan verses 1–3, and secondary data in the form of commentaries, books, scientific journals, and relevant previous research. Data were analyzed using content analysis. Through this method, the study seeks to achieve a more profound understanding of human existence, creation, and status as portrayed in these verses (Saeed, 2006), so that a complete understanding of the nature of human beings in the surah is obtained.

The analysis was conducted through five stages. First, relevant data were identified and collected from Surah Al-Insan verses 1–3, which constitute the primary focus of this study, followed by linguistic analysis of key terms related to human existence, creation, guidance, and moral choice. Second, the interpretations of these verses by various mufassirūn were examined through relevant tafsīr sources, with particular attention to the philosophical orientation of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's tafsīr. Third, the philosophical themes contained in the verses were extracted, especially those related to human origin, the process of creation, human potential, knowledge, and freedom of choice. Fourth, these themes were constructed into ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions. The ontological dimension concerns the origin and existence of human beings; the epistemological dimension concerns guidance, knowledge, and human awareness; while the ethical dimension concerns freedom, responsibility, and moral accountability. Fifth, the findings were synthesized into a philosophical interpretation in order to uncover the philosophical meanings concerning the nature of humanity embedded in Sūrah Al-Insan verses 1–3.

In this study, the philosophical interpretive approach denotes the tafsīr falsafī model formulated by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, which amalgamates rational reasoning, philosophical contemplation, and theological scrutiny in the interpretation of the Qur'anic verses (Al-Razi,

1420). This approach is employed as an analytical framework for examining Sūrah Al-Insan verses 1–3, particularly in uncovering concepts related to the nature of humanity. Al-Rāzī was chosen because his exegetical model provides an important example of how rational and philosophical reflection can operate within the framework of Qur'anic interpretation without detaching the analysis from the authority of the Qur'anic text.

The analysis focuses on human existence, the process of human creation, the potentials endowed to human beings, and their freedom to make choices. These aspects are treated as philosophical concepts pertaining to human nature and are used to explain the relationship between the Qur'anic text and broader philosophical discussions concerning humanity. Therefore, the philosophical approach adopted in this study does not focus on al-Rāzī's interpretation as the primary object of inquiry; rather, it utilizes the analytical model he developed to explore the philosophical dimensions embedded in the selected verses. The use of Ibn Sīnā, al-Fārābī, and general philosophical literature in the discussion serves to clarify the conceptual dimensions identified in the verses, particularly the ontological, epistemological, and ethical aspects of humanity. These philosophical references serve as a secondary source of authority and are intended to support, not replace, the Qur'anic text and the tafsīr tradition. Rather, they function as supporting conceptual references to deepen the analysis of human existence, creation, knowledge, freedom, and moral responsibility.

This study is confined to a textual and philosophical analysis of the concept of humanity in Sūrah Al-Insan, verses 1–3. It neither empirically tests the concept of humanity nor aims to conduct a comparative study among philosophers. The philosophical approach is used as an interpretive tool to uncover the rational and reflective dimensions of the verses, while the Qur'anic text remains the primary basis of analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Human Terminology in the Qur'an

In the Qur'an, humans are expressed using several terms that reflect the dimensions of their existence, including *al-nās*, *al-basyar*, and *Al-Insan*. The term '*al-nās*' in the Qur'an is mentioned about 240 times (Al-Baqi', 1945) and is generally used to describe humans in the universal sense as social beings, namely as beings who live in relationships and interactions with others. This emphasises that humans cannot live independently but rather require a harmonious collective life. Additionally, the term '*an-nas*' illustrates the dynamic nature of humanity, as some individuals are able to harness the potential of their faith while others choose to ignore or oppose it. Thus, humans have a dual tendency: as creatures capable of achieving glory but also as creatures with the potential to fall into evil. (Rizal, 2017).

Furthermore, the term '*al-basyar*' refers to the external dimension of humans as biological beings. Etymologically, this word is related to the meaning of skin or the visible outer part of the body. The term '*al-basyar*' in the Qur'an underscores the tangible and material dimensions of human beings. This term also relates to humans' basic needs and limitations as biological beings, such as their five senses and dependence on the environment. Therefore, in this dimension, humans share similarities with other living creatures. (Al-Rasyidin, 2008). The word '*al-basyar*' implies that humans will reproduce through the process of sexual

reproduction, continue to strive to fulfil their biological needs, depend on space and time, and are subject to the laws of nature, both *sunnatullah* (social law of society) and divine destiny (the law of the universe). (Tanjung, 2020). Ibn Faris in *Mu'jam Maqayīs al-Lughah* explains that the word '*al-basyar*' comes from the root word ب ش ر, which shows the meaning of 'Shayra الشيء مع حسن وجمال (it seems something is good and beautiful). (Ibn Faris, 1979). This meaning is related to the external aspects of humans that are visible on the surface of their skin. In addition, Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abd al-Baqi in *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz the Qur'an al-Karīm* (Al-Baqi', 1945) and Muhammad al-Muqaddisi in *Fath Al-Raḥman li Ṭālib Āyāt al-Qur'an* (Al-Maqaddisi, n.d.) noted that the word '*al-basyar*' and its derivatives are mentioned 37 times in the Qur'an. The term's use generally refers to the biological dimension of humans as physical beings with bodily needs and subject to natural laws.

As for the term '*Al-Insan*' in the Qur'an, it is mentioned about 70 times. (Al-Baqi', 1945). The term '*Al-Insan*' indicates a more complex dimension, namely humans as creatures who have consciousness, intellectual potential, and moral responsibility. Linguistically, the word '*insan*' is often associated with the word '*uns*', which means familiarity, harmony and visibility, although there is also an opinion that connects it with the word '*nasiya*', which means 'forget', as stated by Ibn Abbas. However, the meaning referring to '*uns*' is considered to better reflect human character in the Qur'an. The use of the term "*Al-Insan*" is also related to humans' position as caliphs on earth and shows the combination of physical and spiritual dimensions. This combination makes humans unique creatures and gives them the ability to carry out their mandate consciously and responsibly. (Rizal, 2017).

### Human Nature in Surah Al-Insan

Surah Al-Insan is the 76th surah in the Qur'an, which consists of 31 verses. The majority of scholars agree that this surah is classified as Madaniyyah (Al-Syaukani, n.d.). The main theme of Surah *al-Insan* emphasises a reminder to humans about the origins of their previously non-existent existence, while also emphasising their obligation to worship Allah. Furthermore, this surah also explains the consequences of human life choices in the form of rewards and punishments for both those who obey and those who disobey. According to Sayyid Qutb, this surah contains a call delivered with immense gentleness to humans to return to obedience to Allah, seek refuge in Him, and hope for His pleasure. In addition, humans are also reminded to be grateful for the blessings they have been given, avoid His punishment, and be alert to various forms of life's trials. Meanwhile, Al-Biqai' explains that the main purpose of this surah is closely related to the discussion in the previous surah, namely al-Qiyamah, which emphasises the meeting of humans with Allah to receive rewards for their deeds. This purpose is emphasised by naming this surah as al-Insan and by directing attention to the origin and purpose of human creation. In addition, other names such as '*ad-Dahr*' and '*al-Amsyaj*' also strengthen the explanation regarding the process of human creation and the journey of its existence. (Shihab, 2002).

Surah Al-Insan describes the nature of humankind through an explanation of its origins, potential and freedom. This is evident in the following three opening verses: Al-Insan: 1:

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا

Translation:

"Has there not come to man a time from which he was not yet anything that could be called?"

Quraish Shihab's view is that verse 1 serves as a warning to all humans about the origin of their existence on earth so that they do not fall into arrogance. This verse emphasises that humans originally had no form or existence whatsoever, and therefore, they are unworthy of being arrogant or turning away from Allah. Because humans are unable to create themselves from nothing, their existence is entirely dependent on Allah's will. Therefore, it is understandable that all the blessings humans experience would not have been realised without Allah's permission. (Shihab, 2002). Meanwhile, Ibn Kathir, in his interpretation, explains that this verse informs humans about the process of their creation, namely from a previously unknown and worthless condition, which shows the weaknesses and limitations of humans as creatures. (Muhammad, 2004). Meanwhile, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi emphasised the philosophical aspects of human origins and existence. The phrase "*lam yakun syai'an madzkūrā*" is understood as the state of human beings before creation, namely, not having any existence and not being known at all. Al-Razi then discussed the metaphysical issue of the creation of human beings from nothing (*al-ījād min al-'Adam*) and the relationship between the body and the soul. According to him, humans cannot be called fully human until the soul is breathed into their bodies. Thus, this verse shows that the essence of humans is not only material but also has spiritual and existential dimensions. (Al-Razi, 1420).

Wahbah Zuhaili explains that a time has passed when humans had no existence and were completely unknown. In the early stages, neither the Prophet Adam nor his descendants were created and had not yet become something that could be mentioned or known by other creatures, such as angels and jinn. This indicates that initially humans were in a state of nothingness. Thus, this verse serves as an affirmation that human existence is new and not eternal. Furthermore, this verse also serves as an introduction to the following verses, while also reinforcing the content of the previous surah which emphasises the nature of human creation. This view is in line with scientific findings stating that humans appeared on earth after a long period of time since the creation of the earth itself. In the context of interpretation, Al-Farra' and Tha'lab explain that what is meant by humans in this verse is a form of body that does not yet have an identity and is not yet known. At that stage, humans were still material and had no value until Allah breathed a spirit into them so that they became creatures that have existence and can be mentioned. Thus, the word "human" in this verse refers to the human species in general, namely the descendants of Adam, as emphasised in the following verse regarding the process of human creation. This shows that humans are understood as creatures who go through a gradual process of creation, from nothingness to complete existence. (Zuhaili, n.d.).

Next, Allah explains the initial stages of human reproduction after the creation of the Prophet Adam. Allah explains that Adam's descendants were created from a drop of semen, a combination of male and female elements.

Al-Insan: 2:

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إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

Translation:

"Indeed, We have created man from a drop of mixed semen. We intend to test it (with commands and prohibitions) so as to make it able to hear and see."

This process of creation also serves as a test for humans, both through virtue and evil, as well as through various provisions of sharia that come into effect when a person reaches the age of taklif and is ready to accept the burden of law. Humans are also endowed with various potentials, such as the ability to understand, differentiate, and know, which are manifested through hearing and sight. With these provisions, humans are able to carry out the mandate of taklif, listen to the verses of Allah, contemplate the signs of His greatness in nature, and consider the evidence that demonstrates the oneness of the Creator. Through hearing, sight, heart, and all the other senses, humans have the opportunity to choose between obedience and disobedience. All of this arrangement is a decree of Allah, who then complements it with two primary gifts: hearing and sight. Both serve as essential means for understanding and distinguishing various things, as well as being the most noble tools for attaining high and profound knowledge. (Zuhaili, n.d.).

As for verse 2, Al-Razi focuses his interpretation more on the process of human creation and the purpose of it. The phrase "*min nuṭṭatin Amsyā'*" is interpreted as a mixture of elements that form humans, both male and female, as well as physical and spiritual elements. According to Al-Razi, this creation process demonstrates God's wisdom and power in creating humans in stages. Furthermore, this verse also emphasises that humans were created to be tested (*nabta'ih*), so Allah equipped them with hearing and sight so that they could receive guidance, use reason, and distinguish between truth and falsehood. Thus, the main focus of the second verse lies in human potential and the moral purpose of his creation. (Al-Razi, 1420). The use of the phrases *سَمِيعًا* (*samī'an*) and *بَصِيرًا* (*baṣīran*) in the verse is a form of mubalaghah that serves to emphasise the intensity of meaning. The choice of this form indicates that humans are endowed with special hearing and sight abilities, even surpassing other creatures in terms of their development potential. Furthermore, this affirmation also implies that some of the sensory abilities humans possess are actually sufficient to lead them to awareness when understanding and implementing God's guidance, even though not all of this potential is optimally utilised. (Shihab, 2002).

Allah explains that He has guided mankind to the right path. This means that Allah shows the direction of life and clearly explains which path leads to salvation and which path leads to destruction. Thus, humans can distinguish between the path of guidance and the path of error, as both have been clearly explained by Allah in the following verse.

QS. *Al-Insan*: 3:

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

Translation:

"Indeed, We have shown him the (straight) path; there are those who are grateful and there are also those who are very ungrateful."

In addition to bestowing upon humans extensive potential in hearing and sight, both physically and spiritually, God also emphasised that, in the context of life's trials, humans have been given guidance on a straight and clear path – one that has no alternative truth. In this context, humans are then divided into two tendencies: those who are grateful for God's blessings and guidance, and those who deny the truth and close themselves off from the blessings that have been bestowed.

Say هَدْيَانَا comes from the word 'هداية' (*hidāyah*), which contains the meaning of providing guidance in a subtle and gentle way towards something that is hoped for. The forms of guidance given by Allah are varied. In a religious context, apart from the basic potential that humans possess, Allah also provides guidance through revelation, holy books, and the sending of apostles as bearers of Divine messages. This verse also shows the use of the form 'mubalaghah' (emphasis of meaning) when referring to a person who is very ungrateful, namely with the word 'كُفُورًا'. On the other hand, when referring to grateful humans, the form is used شَاكِرًا (*syākirān*) without hyperbolic assertion. This difference suggests that the number of people who achieve a high level of gratitude is relatively small. This is in line with Allah's word in Surah Saba'/34:13: This verse not only emphasises the existence of freedom of choice but also describes the tendency for a majority of people to be more easily led into an attitude of denial than gratitude. (Shihab, 2002)

Ultimately, humans are divided into two groups: those who are grateful for Allah's blessings and have faith and thus receive His guidance, and those who deny these blessings and turn away from obedience. This division is in line with Allah's word in Surah al-Balad/90:10, which states that humans have been shown two paths, namely, the path of righteousness and evil. Furthermore, the majority of scholars' views emphasise that humans are not forced to believe or disbelieve. Instead, humans are given the freedom to choose the path they want. This idea is emphasised in Allah's word in Surah Fussilat/41:17 explains that the people of Thamud were given guidance, but they chose misguidance instead. Thus, human happiness or misery depends on the choices they make. (Al-Syaukani, n.d.)

### **Humanity Between Ontological Dependence and Existential Awareness**

Verse 1 of QS. *Al-Insan*, which states that humans have been in a condition "not mentioned", shows that human existence is not something eternal but rather has a beginning. From a philosophical perspective, this leads to the understanding that humans are contingent creatures (*mumkin al-wujūd*), that is, their existence is not necessary and is entirely dependent on a cause outside itself, namely God. Thus, humans do not have ontological independence but exist as a result of divine will.

*Wājibul Wujūd* is understood as a necessary existence, which is the origin and cause of the emergence of *Mumkinul Wujūd*, namely everything whose existence depends on Him. (Nasution, 1983). The concept of *wujūd* (existence) in Islamic philosophy is explained systematically by Ibn Sina through the distinction between *wujūd* (existence) and mahiyyah (essence). He classifies existence into three categories, namely *al-wujūd* (the impossible), *mumkin al-wujūd* (which may exist and depend on other causes), as well as *wājib al-wujūd* (which necessarily exists and does not depend on anything). (Jawasun, 1995). In this

case, God is the only *wājib al-wujūd*, while all creatures are included in the category of *mumkin al-wujūd*. because its existence depends on external causes. Furthermore, Ibn Sina distinguishes between *wājib al-wujūd* (necessarily due to its own essence) and *bi ghayrihi* (necessarily due to other causes). God is included in the first category as the source of all existence, while creatures are in the second position because they do not have existential independence. (Poerwantara et al., 1994) Thus, existence (*wujūd*) has a more fundamental position than essence (*mahiyyah*), because only through existence does something become real. Furthermore, such awareness of origins carries the philosophical implication that humans cannot fully understand themselves without referring to the source of their existence. In other words, human existence is relational, that is, always related to God as the first cause. This understanding also serves as the basis for human existential awareness to avoid arrogance, because in essence, it comes from nothing and depends entirely on Divine will.

Thus, Surah Al-Insan verse 1 affirms that human existence is not independent and is entirely dependent on the will of God. This verse does not merely explain the beginning of human existence but also builds the awareness that human beings are limited creatures who originate from non-existence. In this context, the concept of *mumkin al-wujūd* is used to clarify the ontological dependence of human beings on God as the source of existence, not to replace the meaning of the verse with philosophical categories. Awareness of this origin becomes the basis for human beings to understand their limitations and to avoid an arrogant existential attitude.

### Hearing and Sight as the Foundation of Qur’anic Epistemology

Surah Al-Insan verse 2 emphasises that humans are endowed with the ability *سَمِيعًا* and *بَصِيرًا*, which from a philosophical perspective is not only understood as a sensory function but also as the basis of human epistemological potential. These two abilities demonstrate that humans possess the initial tools to acquire knowledge through interaction with reality. From an Islamic philosophical perspective, humans' ability to acquire knowledge is inseparable from the structure of their intellect and senses. Al-Farabi explained that human reason has levels, ranging from potential reason to active reason, which function in understanding the basic principles of reality and ultimately lead humans to knowledge of God. (Firdaus et al., 2025) In line with this, Ibn Sina developed a theory of four levels of reason: material reason, reason in action, actualised reason, and acquired intellect. Through this structure, the human mind is able to process sensory data into rational knowledge, even transcending the physical realm to metaphysical and spiritual understanding. (Parlaungan et al., 2021)

In this process, the senses serve as the primary conduit to knowledge. The five senses, such as sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste, are the primary means by which humans perceive empirical reality. This sensory data then becomes the basis for the formation of initial knowledge, which is *al-mahsūsāt az-zhirah*, namely sensory knowledge about the outside world. (Harahap, 2021). However, in Islamic epistemology, sensory knowledge is not final. Mujamil Qomar emphasised that the senses only produce knowledge at an initial level, while reason and the heart have a higher degree of power in attaining truth. (Qomar, 2024) On the other hand, there is a view that emphasises the superiority of humans over other creatures due

to their intellectual capacity and will. Ibn Arabi stated that humans have the ability to know, think, will, and make decisions, which makes them the most special creatures in the structure of creation. (Al-Hamimy & Barlaman, 2025)

So, it is understood that Surah Al-Insan verse 2 mentions that humans are endowed with the basic ability or potential to acquire knowledge. This potential is the ability to receive information from reality through the senses of hearing and sight, which is the starting point for the formation of knowledge. From this potential, humans are not merely passive recipients of stimuli but have the ability to process them through reason to become a more structured and meaningful understanding. Thus, this verse emphasises that humans have epistemological potential, namely the basic ability to know, understand, and develop knowledge gradually from sensory experience to intellectual awareness. Thus, Surah Al-Insan verse 2 from a philosophical perspective can be understood as an affirmation that humans have epistemological tools in the form of senses and reason that work hierarchically, from empirical experience to rational and spiritual understanding.

The use of Islamic philosophical concepts in this discussion is intended to clarify the epistemological depth of the verse, not to replace the Qur'anic text as the primary source of meaning. The Qur'an provides the basic anthropological structure: human beings are created, tested, and endowed with faculties that enable them to know and respond to guidance. Philosophy helps explain how these faculties may be understood conceptually through the relationship between sense perception, reason, and spiritual awareness. In this regard, Surah Al-Insan verse 2 presents human beings as epistemological subjects who are not passive recipients of stimuli, but active beings capable of processing sensory experience into structured understanding and moral consciousness. Thus, hearing and sight become the foundation of Qur'anic epistemology because they connect empirical perception, rational reflection, and responsibility before God.

### **Human Freedom and a Critique of Determinism**

Surah Al-Insan verse 3 presents human beings as moral subjects who are given guidance, tested, and endowed with the ability to make choices. This verse explains that God has shown human beings the path, after which they may choose to become either *syakir* or *kafur*. From a philosophical perspective, this verse shows that human existence is situated within a space that brings together divine determination (*qadar*) and freedom of choice (*ikhtiyar*). Human beings are not portrayed as creatures whose actions are absolutely determined without consciousness and will. On the contrary, they are given the ability to understand guidance, consider choices, and determine their attitude toward the path that has been shown to them.

The provision of “the path” in this verse indicates that human freedom is neither absolute nor directionless. God provides normative orientation through guidance, while human beings are given the responsibility to respond to that guidance. Freedom in Surah Al-Insan verse 3 is not absolute freedom, but moral freedom that is always bound to ethical consequences. The choice to become *syakir* or *kafur* does not merely indicate an individual tendency, but also reflects human awareness, responsibility, and accountability before God.

This verse may be understood as a critique of absolute determinism, namely the view

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that human beings are entirely determined by factors outside themselves and therefore have no space for choice and moral responsibility. If human beings were understood as creatures whose actions are completely and mechanically determined, then the distinction between *syākir* and *kafūr* would have no ethical significance. Surah Al-Insan verse 3 instead shows that guidance has been given, while the human response to that guidance still possesses moral value. Thus, the Qur'an constructs an anthropological framework that positions human beings neither as creatures with unlimited freedom nor as creatures who completely lose their will. Human beings exist within an ethical space that combines divine guidance, consciousness, choice, and responsibility. Within this framework, human beings are understood as creatures who possess reflective consciousness, namely the ability to consider, evaluate, and determine actions based on the knowledge they possess. Freedom is not only related to the ability to choose, but also to the ability to understand the consequences of that choice. Human freedom is also influenced by two main factors: internal and external factors. Internal factors include intellectual and spiritual conditions as well as the capacity of reason, which shape the basic human ability to make decisions. External factors include the social environment, education, culture, and life situations that become the space in which human actions take place. The interaction between these two factors forms the level of ability (*al-qudrah*) and possibility (*al-yasar*), which ultimately gives rise to moral capacity (*al-wus'*) as the basis of human accountability (Effendi, 1984).

Thus, Surah Al-Insan verse 3 philosophically affirms that human beings live in a balance between limitation and freedom. Human beings are not completely and mechanically controlled by fate, but they also do not possess absolute freedom detached from guidance and responsibility. Human beings are moral subjects who receive guidance, make choices, and bear the consequences of their decisions. The philosophical approach helps clarify this ethical structure, but the Qur'anic text remains the primary basis for understanding human freedom. Through this verse, human beings are understood as responsible creatures whose moral identity is formed through the relationship between divine guidance, knowledge, will, and accountability.

### **The Contribution of Philosophical Exegesis to the Study of the Humanities**

Overall, Surah Al-Insan verses 1–3 explain the essence of humanity in a gradual, systematic, and interconnected manner. The first verse portrays human beings as creatures who once existed in a state of being unmentioned or having no recognized existence. This statement does not merely indicate the temporal origin of human beings, but also contains an ontological meaning that humans are not independent beings. Human existence depends entirely on God as the source of creation. Awareness of this origin forms an important basis for human self-understanding, namely that human beings are creatures marked by limitation, dependence, and the need to acknowledge the source of their existence.

A philosophical reading of these three verses shows that Surah Al-Insan does not merely contain concepts that can be aligned with Islamic philosophy. Rather, this surah constructs its own distinctive Qur'anic anthropological framework. Human beings are understood as creatures who are created, who know, who choose, and who are responsible. These four elements form a conceptual unity which shows that human beings cannot be

understood from only one dimension. Humans are not merely biological beings, not merely rational beings, and not merely social beings. They are beings whose existence originates from God, whose knowledge is formed through faculties granted by God, and whose freedom is directed toward accountability before God.

This Qur'anic anthropological framework has an important distinction from a purely rational philosophical reading. Islamic philosophy helps explain the ontological, epistemological, and ethical aspects of these verses, but it does not become the primary source of interpretive authority. The Qur'anic text remains the main foundation, while philosophy functions as an analytical tool to clarify the conceptual depth already contained in the verses. Thus, the relationship between exegesis and philosophy in this study is dialogical. Exegesis preserves the attachment of interpretation to the revealed text, while philosophy helps elaborate the rational and reflective dimensions of the message contained within the text. The boundary between exegesis and philosophy must be emphasized so that the philosophical approach does not become an imposition of external categories onto the Qur'an. Concepts such as ontological dependence, epistemological potential, and moral agency are used not to replace the meaning of the verses, but to explain the structure of thought that can be found through a deeper reading of the text. In this way, philosophical exegesis does not position philosophy as an authority higher than revelation, but places it as an interpretive instrument that helps broaden the understanding of humanity in Surah Al-Insan.

The contribution of philosophical exegesis to the study of the humanities lies in its ability to present a more comprehensive understanding of human beings. In many contemporary discourses, human beings are often understood reductively, for example merely as biological, economic, social, or psychological beings. Surah Al-Insan verses 1–3 offer a more holistic view by positioning humans as existential, rational, spiritual, and moral beings. Human beings have an origin of creation, epistemological potential, freedom of choice, and ethical responsibility. These four aspects provide a basis for understanding humanity that is not separated from the divine dimension. Therefore, this study shows that the concept of humanity in Surah Al-Insan remains relevant to contemporary humanities discourse. Amid modern tendencies that often overemphasize human autonomy or reduce human beings to biological and social factors, Surah Al-Insan presents a balanced concept of humanity. Human beings possess freedom, but that freedom is not detached from guidance and responsibility. Human beings possess the ability to think, but their knowledge remains directed toward moral and spiritual awareness. Human beings possess existence, but their existence remains dependent on God. Thus, the philosophical exegesis of Surah Al-Insan verses 1–3 makes an important contribution to constructing an understanding of humanity that is not only rational, but also ethical and transcendental.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that Surah Al-Insan verses 1–3 construct the concept of humanity through the interrelation between existence, knowledge, and freedom. The first verse presents human beings as creatures who originate from non-existence, thereby affirming their ontological dependence on God as the source of creation. The second verse explains that human beings are endowed with hearing and sight, which function as epistemological faculties

for receiving guidance, recognizing reality, and developing knowledge. The third verse completes this construction by presenting human beings as creatures who are given the freedom to choose between gratitude and ingratitude, with each choice carrying moral responsibility. Thus, human beings in Surah Al-Insan are not understood merely as biological entities, but also as beings who possess ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions. These dimensions are formed through the relationship between the origin of creation, the capacity to acquire knowledge, freedom of choice, and moral accountability before God.

Academically, this study contributes to the development of philosophical exegesis (*tafsir falsafi*) by showing that philosophical reflection can be used as an interpretive tool to uncover the rational and reflective dimensions embedded in the Qur'anic text. This study also contributes to the discourse of Qur'anic anthropology by demonstrating that Surah Al-Insan offers its own framework for understanding human nature. This framework does not merely align Qur'anic verses with concepts in Islamic philosophy, but shows how the Qur'an constructs a holistic view of human beings as created, knowing, choosing, and morally responsible creatures. In this regard, the philosophical approach enriches Qur'anic interpretation while maintaining the Qur'anic text as the primary source of meaning and authority.

This study is limited to a textual and philosophical analysis of the first three verses of Surah Al-Insan. It does not examine the surah as a whole, does not empirically test the concept of humanity, and does not conduct a comparative analysis between philosophical and non-philosophical tafsir traditions. Future research may expand the analysis to the entirety of Surah Al-Insan in order to examine the broader structure of its anthropological message. Further studies may also compare philosophical exegesis with non-philosophical interpretations or place the Qur'anic concept of humanity in dialogue with contemporary philosophies of the human person, particularly in discussions of human autonomy, moral responsibility, and the relationship between reason, revelation, and human existence.

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