

Al-Farabi's Thoughts on the Meaning of Life and Freedom: Its Relevance to The Existential Crisis in The Digital Era

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Abstract: *The digital era presents new existential challenges for individuals, such as identity crises, the loss of life's meaning, and dependence on digital validation. These issues reflect how modern humans often fall into artificial forms of existence and lack ethical orientation. This article aims to examine how Al-Farabi's thought, particularly his concepts of happiness (al-sa'ādah), the active intellect (al-'aql al-fa'āl), and freedom accompanied by moral responsibility, offers an alternative framework of existential philosophy in addressing such issues. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature review approach on Al-Farabi's significant works, such as Tahṣīl al-Sa'ādah, Risālah fī al-'Aql, and Kitāb al-Millah. The findings reveal that although Al-Farabi is not classified within Western existentialism, his philosophical perspectives provide ontological and ethical foundations that can be contextualized to foster self-awareness, autonomy, and the pursuit of a meaningful life amidst digital disruption. This article contributes a fresh discourse in contemporary Islamic philosophy by positioning Al-Farabi as a philosophical reference in facing existential challenges in the digital age.*

Kata Kunci: *Al-Farabi, existential crisis, active intellect, digital age, Islamic existential thought, self-awareness.*

Abstract: *Era digital membawa tantangan eksistensial baru bagi individu, seperti krisis identitas, kehilangan makna hidup, dan ketergantungan pada validasi digital. Permasalahan ini menunjukkan bahwa manusia modern sering kali terjebak dalam eksistensi yang artifisial dan kehilangan orientasi etis. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana pemikiran Al-Farabi, khususnya konsep tentang kebahagiaan (al-sa'ādah), akal aktif (al-'aql al-fa'āl), dan kebebasan yang disertai tanggung jawab moral, dapat menawarkan kerangka filsafat eksistensial alternatif dalam menghadapi persoalan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi pustaka terhadap karya-karya utama Al-Farabi seperti Tahsil al-Sa'ādah, Risalah fī al-'Aql, dan Kitab al-Millah. Temuan dalam artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa Al-Farabi tidak secara eksplisit termasuk dalam aliran eksistensialisme*

sebagaimana dikenal di Barat, namun pemikirannya menawarkan landasan ontologis dan etis yang dapat dikontekstualisasikan untuk membangun kesadaran diri, otonomi, dan makna hidup di tengah disrupsi digital. Artikel ini memberikan kontribusi baru dalam wacana filsafat Islam kontemporer dengan menempatkan Al-Farabi sebagai rujukan filosofis dalam merespons problematika eksistensial era digital.

Kata Kunci: *Al-Farabi, krisis eksistensial, akal aktif, era digital, pemikiran eksistensial Islam, kesadaran diri.*

Introduction

In the 21st century, technological advances have provided many conveniences for humans in living their lives. The invention of advanced technology, as a result of the development of science, has undeniably accelerated this process.¹ However, behind these advances, there is a dark history that should not be forgotten. For example, World Wars I and II were global tragedies that, although born from advances in science and technology, had unavoidable adverse effects.² These events continue to overshadow human life in the 21st century, given that the present is inseparable from the past. The existential experience of events such as world wars also influences the way of modern human perception.

Along with the times, modern humans are increasingly dependent on technology in their daily lives. Daily activities in the modern era cannot be separated from the role of technology that makes various activities easier.³ Especially after the advent of digital technology, which replaced many aspects of manual power with computer-based automated systems. This ever-evolving digital technology creates a new space, namely cyberspace, which has a major impact on human life, especially in the social aspect.⁴ Now direct

¹ Syarif Hidayatullah, Stella Alvianna, and Estikowati, *SINERGI GENERASI DIGITAL Mendorong Inovasi Milenial Dengan SIM* (Sidoarjo: Uwais Inspirasi Indonesia, 2024).

² Rudi Resnawan Ansyari, "Sejarah Modernisasi Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Berbagai Bidang Kehidupan Masyarakat," May 20, 2021.

³ Muhammad Hilmy Aziz, "Model Pariwisata Digital Dalam Pengembangan Pariwisata Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi* 22, no. 3 (November 2, 2022): 2279.

⁴ Maulidya Ulfah, *DIGITAL PARENTING: Bagaimana Orang Tua Melindungi Anak-Anak Dari Bahaya Digital?* (Tasikmalaya: EDU PUBLISHER, 2020).

interaction is increasingly replaced by communication and interaction in cyberspace, so that distance and time are no longer obstacles in social interaction. These changes in social interaction patterns significantly affect the social life of modern humans.⁵

But this change also brings its own consequences. Modern human life now seems to have lost substantial dimensions because their existence is subordinated to industrial machines. According to Van Cleve Morris, modern man is nothing more than a small part of a larger industrial system.⁶ The main challenge that arises in this digital era is how individuals can find meaning in life amidst the abundant flow of information. Social media and digital platforms often create the illusion of freedom; Individuals feel connected, but at the same time, they experience alienation that can trigger a crisis of identity and a deeper search for meaning.⁷ In this context, Al-Farabi's thought can be a guide in understanding how individuals can find authentic meaning in life.

The influence of digital technology has given rise to new identities, namely digital or virtual identities, which have an impact on real life. Human identity and self as individuals become fragmented and lose wholeness.⁸ In cyberspace, the process of identity formation may be able to represent the creator, but it is still not completely intact. This is because man

⁵ Hendro Setiawan, "Mencari Makna Terbaik Pandemi Bagi Hidup Manusia, Melalui Filsafat Eksistensial Soren A. Kierkegaard," *RERUM: Journal of Biblical Practice* 1, no. 1 (October 20, 2021): 21–45.

⁶ Zaskia Putri et al., "Pengaruh Teknologi Digital Terhadap Persatuan Dan Kesatuan Bangsa Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* Volume 5 N (2021): 9232–9240.

⁷ Nurdin, Difa Restiti, and Rizki Amalia, "PENGARUH MEDIA SOSIAL TERHADAP PENGETAHUAN TENTANG QUICK RESPONSE CODE INDONESIAN STANDARD (QRIS)," *Jurnal Ilmu Perbankan dan Keuangan Syariah* 3, no. 2 (December 31, 2021): 157–173.

⁸ Nur Fatwiningisih, *Teori Psikologi Kepribadian Manusia*, ed. Marcella Kika (Yogyakarta: ANDI Publisher, 2020).

can only be considered whole if his soul and body are united; Man is the unity of the soul with a body or a body with a soul.⁹

Existentialism as one of the schools of philosophy that emphasizes the search for the meaning of life, includes aspects such as absurdity (the illogical meaning of life) and solitude (the individual as an entity isolated from the world).¹⁰ Every individual experiences this existential crisis, regardless of how well they live in the material world. Humans, in general, feel universal anxiety due to an existence that is considered meaningless. The interaction between the existential aspects and other aspects of life, such as mental health, becomes very important.¹¹ Mental health, which is an essential aspect of achieving well-being, is often overlooked in many developing countries, including Indonesia.¹²

However, it should be noted that not all approaches to human existence can be simply equated with Western existentialism. In the tradition of classical Islamic philosophy, especially in the thought of Abu Nashr Al-Farabi, we find a fundamentally different approach. Al-Farabi does not view human existence as a struggle against absurdity, but as a process of purifying the mind and soul to achieve al-sa'adah, which is the highest happiness that is the existential goal of man.¹³ The concept of happiness in Al-Farabi's philosophy is not something subjective and relative, but something that is objective and can be achieved through the development of the intellect directed to the knowledge of truth and union with the active intellect (*'aql fa"āl*). Freedom in Al-Farabi's framework of thought also does not

⁹ Diana Rahmasari, "Peran Filsafat Eksistensialisme Terhadap Terapi Eksistensial-Humanistik Untuk Mengatasi Frustasi Eksistensial," *Jurnal Psikologi Teori dan Terapan* 2, no. 2 (February 19, 2012): 141.

¹⁰ Margareta Mandiri Sari, Yunus Selan, and Sri Dwi Harti, "Kajian Terhadap Patung Pantulak Sebagai Perantara Komunikasi Dengan Arwah Leluhur," *Jurnal Luxnos* 7, no. 1 (2021): 48–63.

¹¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹² Ralph Adolph, *Pemberdayaan Generasi Muda & Pola Hidup Sehat Dalam Pencegahan Stunting*, 2016.

¹³ Al-Farabi, *Risalah Fi Al-'Aql* (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 2018).

mean absolute freedom as in Western philosophy, but directed freedom, which is the ability of man to choose good based on reason.¹⁴ Thus, Al-Farabi presents a more harmonious and structured view of existence, bridging the rational, spiritual, and social dimensions of human beings.

Existentialism, which developed rapidly in the 19th and 20th centuries, had a great influence in the field of education, both globally and in Indonesia. This philosophy emphasizes the importance of individual existence and freedom in the search for the meaning of life.¹⁵ According to William Barret in his work “*Existentialism as a Symptom of Man’s Contemporary Crisis*” (1966: 792), existentialism as a philosophy aims to increase human awareness of the realities of life, including aspects such as death, fear, choice, love, freedom, guilt, and consciousness, as well as accepting uncertainty. In the context of mental health, existentialism can be associated with the understanding that human beings need to face and understand the complex emotional aspects of their lives.¹⁶

In Rahmasari’s research, the application of the concept of existentialism in psychological therapy, namely how the existential approach can be used to help individuals find a deep meaning in life, especially in the face of existential crises that often arise due to life uncertainty. Rahmasari emphasizes that this approach is effective because it is rooted in the idea of freedom, responsibility, and the search for authentic meaning in life—all of these elements are key to understanding and overcoming psychological problems.

Existentialism emphasizes that human beings are not only rational beings, but also as individuals who feel and permeate emotions such as fear and freedom. By highlighting the emotional aspect, this philosophy provides a foundation for a deeper understanding of mental health. The search for self-meaning, self-awareness, and acceptance of life’s uncertainties

¹⁴ Al-Farabi, *Risalah Fi Al-’Aql*.

¹⁵ Ismail Zaky Al Fatih, Rachmatsah Adi Putera, and Zahri Hariman Umar, “Peran Algoritma Media Sosial Dalam Penyebaran Propaganda Politik Digital Menjelang Pemilu,” *Jurnal Kajian Stratejik Ketahanan Nasional* 7, no. 1 (June 25, 2024).

¹⁶ Suharsono, *Eksistensi Manusia : Perspektif Tasawuf & Filsafat Mengatasi Problema Eksistensial Manusia Jalaluddin Rumi Sampai Filosof Kontemporer* (Jakarta: Perenial Press, 2000).

can be relevant elements in the context of mental health, helping individuals to cope with stress, anxiety, and other emotional challenges. Existentialism refers to the desire for peace of mind, purity of conscience, and efforts to overcome despair and guilt. The need for experience is also related to the belief that adversity can help a person find purpose and meaning in his or her life. According to Kierkegaard, the existential or spiritual dimension in human beings can be defined as an individual's awareness of themselves. A person's self-awareness involves interacting with the concepts of life and death, as well as connecting oneself with the past and future.¹⁷

One of the relevant thinkers in this study is Al-Farabi, an Islamic philosopher who combines Greek philosophy with the concept of divinity in Islam, especially through the thought of the philosophy of form or existence. According to Al-Farabi, human existence is not only present in the world, but also closely related to the search for higher meaning and relationship with the Creator. In Al-Farabi's view, humans are not completely free to act as they please; individual freedom is balanced with moral responsibility based on an awareness of God and the principles of virtue. Al-Farabi teaches that man must develop a deeper self-awareness in order to achieve perfection, namely by understanding the essence of his existence in the cosmic order created by God.¹⁸

Al-Farabi's view of existence can provide a unique perspective on identity and freedom. While modern existentialism tends to emphasize man's complete autonomy in creating the meaning of his life, Al-Farabi emphasizes that true freedom can only be achieved through a directing to Divine principles.¹⁹ This view opens up a new discussion of how modern individuals can maintain their authentic identities and find deeper meaning in life amid an instantaneous and often superficial digital age.

¹⁷ Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*.

¹⁸ Siti Maisaroh, "KESEMPURNAAN JIWA MANUSIA PERSPEKTIF AL-FARABI DALAM KITAB AL-SIYASAH AL-MADANIYAH" (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2022).

¹⁹ Yoyo Hambali and Siti Asiah, "Eksistensi Manusia Dalam Filsafat Pendidikan: Studi Komparatif Filsafat Barat Dan Filsafat Islam," *Turats* 7, no. 1 (2011): 41–56.

The main question that will be discussed in this study is: How can Al-Farabi's philosophical thinking about individual freedom and responsibility be applied to understand the existential challenges facing humans in the digital age? This study aims to explore how Al-Farabi's principles can be applied in the analysis of digital identity crises and to identify the relevance of the concepts of freedom and responsibility in Islamic philosophy to contemporary existential challenges.

Thus, the problem of existence really gets the top priority in this digital era, the individual identity in the virtual and real world becomes an individual figure who 'loses' his identity, usually this individual who loses his identity becomes a figure who cannot dig into the essence of his life, so that if he is confronted with a problem he quickly despairs and gives up because he sees the problem and doubts his potential. Therefore, thinking about existence is urgently needed in this era of digitalization.

This paper aims to explore how existential thinking in Al-Farabi's philosophy can be used as a conceptual alternative in understanding the meaning of life and individual freedom, especially in the midst of the challenges of the digital age. By making a critical comparison between Western existentialism and Al-Farabi's approach, it is hoped that a more complete and contextual understanding of the existential conditions of contemporary human beings will be created, including issues of identity, freedom, and mental health in today's fast-paced and distracted world.

Method

The research method in this study is a literature review, which refers to the collection and review of relevant literature to build a theoretical argument regarding the philosophy of Al-Farabi's form. The criteria for selecting data sources include credibility, direct relevance to the theme of Al-Farabi, especially in the context of the concept of form, and depth of analysis in discussing its ontological views. Data sources are obtained from indexed journals, philosophy books, and scientific articles through databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and PubMed with related keywords. The data analysis technique uses a critical analytical approach, where data is analyzed to understand and interpret Al-Farabi's views on the existence of Al-Farabi systematically. This research focuses on mapping the main concepts in the philosophy of form, including the categorization of form, the relationship between

form and essence, and its implications for the understanding of reality. Through this process, the integration and synthesis of relevant concepts will be carried out, allowing researchers to draw conclusions about the contribution of Al-Farabi's thought to Islamic philosophy and contemporary understanding of existence.

Result

Existentialism: An Overview

Existentialism is a school of philosophy that emphasizes individual existence, freedom, and responsibility. This school emerged in the 20th century and is increasingly popular in the modern context. In general, existentialism focuses on subjective experience and human existence, which is central to the thinking of its characters. According to Thomas,²⁰ existentialism can be defined as the search for meaning and identity in an often uncertain and random world, where individuals are faced with the freedom to choose and take responsibility for those choices.

The basic concept of existentialism includes several important elements. First, freedom and responsibility are at the heart of this thinking. Each individual not only has the freedom to determine his or her life path, but must also be responsible for the consequences of his or her choices. Second, absurdity is a theme that is often discussed in existentialism. Absurdity includes the inability of humans to find meaning in seemingly random worlds, as well as the struggle to understand existence in seemingly irregular circumstances.²¹ Third, authenticity, that is, the need for individuals to live according to their own values and beliefs, becomes very important in existentialist thought. Individuals must dare to live an authentic life, regardless of social pressures and existing norms.²² In this context, existentialism challenges

²⁰ Thomas Flynn, *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford, 2006).

²¹ Slamet Thohari and Indhar Wahyu Wira Harjo, *Teori Sosial: Antara Individu Dan Masyarakat* (Malang: Universitas Brawijaya Press, 2021).

²² Susiba Susiba, Herlina Herlina, and Syarifuddin Syarifuddin, "Eksistensialisme: Peran Dan Rekonstruksinya Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Pendidikan Islam" 9, no. 2 (2023): 1–20.

individuals to struggle to find the meaning of their own lives in the midst of existing challenges and absurdities.

Major figures in existentialist thought include Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus. Sartre is the best-known pioneer of existentialism in the Western world. In his work *“Being and Nothingness,”* Sartre explored the idea of individual freedom and responsibility. Sartre argued *“Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does”* meaning that humans are not only created

without purpose, but have the freedom to create meaning and purpose in their own lives.²³

Simone de Beauvoir, often seen as Sartre’s partner, made an important contribution through her feminist view of existentialism. In her book *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir revealed the condition of women in society and called for women’s freedom to determine their own destiny. She said: *“It is perfectly natural for the future woman to feel indignant at the limitations placed upon her by her sex. The real question is not why she should reject them: the problem is rather to understand why she accepts them”* meaning that women have to

reject the roles set by society and fight for their rights.²⁴ Albert Camus was also a central figure in existentialism, although he was better known for his views on absurdism. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus stated *“The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy”* meaning that even though life is absurd, individuals must find meaning through their actions and experiences. He emphasized the

importance of courage to face absurdity with an attitude of rebellion and acceptance.²⁵

The concept of existentialism in Islamic philosophy is not entirely in line with the West. Nonetheless, there is a similar thought, especially in terms of how humans are seen as having responsibility for their lives. Existence in Islam emphasizes more on spiritual awareness,

²³ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Being and Nothingness,” *Central Works of Philosophy v4: Twentieth Century: Moore to Popper 4* (2015): 155.

²⁴ Simone De Beauvoir, “The Second Sex,” in *Social Theory Re-Wired* (Routledge, 2023), 346–354.

²⁵ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Penguin UK, 2013).

where humans are seen as beings who have a life task to get closer to God.²⁶ In this view, individual freedom must always be in line with the moral guidance and values that religion teaches. Al-Farabi was a medieval Islamic philosopher, giving a profound view of the role of freedom in achieving the highest happiness or *al-sa'ādah*. For Al-Farabi, freedom is a means to achieve intellectual and spiritual perfection. Freedom in this context is not unlimited freedom, but freedom that is aligned with a higher ethical and moral purpose.²⁷

Al-Farabi's thought on freedom is closely related to the concept that human beings are sentient beings, and therefore responsible for their actions. According to him, true happiness can only be achieved when individuals are able to understand moral principles and strive to realize them in daily life.²⁸ This means that human freedom is not only manifested through freedom of choice, but must also be accompanied by wisdom in choosing a way of life that is in accordance with ethical principles. Freedom in Al-Farabi's view is inseparable from responsibility; It is the ability to choose that is accompanied by a full awareness of the moral consequences of that choice.

In today's digital age, Al-Farabi's thoughts on freedom and responsibility are regaining their relevance. Individual freedom of expression on social media is often not accompanied by adequate moral responsibility. Many individuals feel free to say anything without considering the impact on others or society at large.²⁹ Al-Farabi with his concept of freedom of reason, reminded that freedom in expressing opinions or expressions should still be accompanied by moral considerations. He taught that human beings should use their freedom

²⁶ Ali Daud Hasibuan and Hadis Purba, "Tujuan Penciptaan Manusia: Perspektif Ilmu Kalam, Tasawuf, Filsafat, Dan Implikasinya Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *ALACRITY: Journal of Education* (July 13, 2024): 330–341.

²⁷ Abu Nashr Al-Farabi, *Tahshil Al-Sa'adah* (Libanon: Dar wa Maktabah al-Hilal, 1995).

²⁸ Muhammad Syafi'i, "Etika Dalam Pandangan Al-Farabi," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 16, no. 2 (2018): 139.

²⁹ Bima Guntara and Ayni Suwarni Herry, "Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Konseling 'Hak Kebebasan Berpendapat Di Media Sosial Dalam Perspektif Hak Asasi Manusia,'" *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Konseling* 3, no. 1 (2022): 4.

to support the common good and avoid actions that could undermine the social order.³⁰ In this case, Al-Farabi's thoughts on responsibility become very relevant to shaping a more ethical and harmonious digital culture. The meaning of life for Al-Farabi depends not only on freedom of choice, but also on the ability of the individual to achieve a higher purpose in his life. According to him, humans are creatures that have intellectual potential that needs to be developed. A meaningful life is a life that is used to seek knowledge and improve oneself, draw closer to God, and direct all one's freedoms toward the attainment of spiritual happiness.³¹ In the digital context, this means that humans not only use freedom for mere entertainment or personal expression, but also to learn, expand knowledge, and achieve a deeper understanding of life's purpose.

Al-Farabi's view of human existence involves a balance between freedom and responsibility. He rejects egoistic or individualistic freedom, which is concerned only with self-interest. Rather, it emphasizes freedom directed to the common good and supports the attainment of spiritual perfection.³² In the modern world, this can be interpreted as a call to be responsible in the use of technology and social media. Unbridled freedom of expression can have a negative impact, create conflict or worsen the morality of society. Al-Farabi provides an ethical framework within which freedom must be aligned with values that support the common good and spiritual balance.³³ Through his thoughts, Al-Farabi provides an alternative view that is more directed in using freedom in the digital era. Freedom accompanied by moral responsibility creates a stable order, allowing human beings to achieve their life goals while maintaining social harmony. He sees existence not only as an

³⁰ Al-Farabi, *Risalah Fi Al-'Aql*.

³¹ M Wiyono, "Pemikiran Filsafat Al-Farabi," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 18, no. 1 (2016): 71.

³² Al-Farabi, *Arā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fadhīlah, Tahqiq, Al-Biir Nasri Nadir* (Beirut: Daar Al- Masyriq, n.d.).

³³ Ibnu Alwi Jarkasih Harahap, Asnil Aidah Ritonga, and Mohammad Al Farabi, "Pendidikan Sosial Dalam Al-Quran: Studi Literatur," *VISA: Journal of Vision and Ideas* 4, no. 1 (January 16, 2024).

individual effort to find meaning, but also as a collective effort to create a better society. In this increasingly global and digital world, freedom without responsibility can lead to moral and social disorientation.³⁴ Therefore, freedom in Al-Farabi's view becomes a guideline for individuals to consider the implications of each of their actions in the public sphere.³⁵

Al-Farabi also underlined the importance of education as the main means to achieve the highest happiness. Education in philosophy is not only the transfer of knowledge, but also character formation and moral development.³⁶ Education in the digital era is often limited to instant information and data.³⁷ However, if interpreted within the framework of Al-Farabi, digital education should serve to support deeper intellectual and spiritual growth, not just superficial information consumption. In the digital age, Al-Farabi's philosophy can lead humans to take advantage of technology and information freedom to achieve more true happiness.

Al-Farabi's existentialism shows that human beings need to manage their freedom wisely in order to achieve a meaningful life.³⁸ Thus, the concept of existence in Al-Farabi's view becomes broader, involving intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects that guide individuals to happiness. In the midst of the very fast flow of information in the digital era, humans can return to Al-Farabi's thinking to find a more meaningful direction of life. Freedom is not merely about choice, but also about the use of freedom for a higher purpose, namely the attainment of balanced worldly and spiritual happiness. The application of Al-

³⁴ Al-Farabi, *Arā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fadhīlah, Tahqiq, Al-Biir Nasri Nadir*.

³⁵ Lina Maulia, "Emokrasi Dalam Pemikiran John Locke Dan Al-Farabi" (UIN Mataram, n.d.).

³⁶ Humaedah Humaedah and Mujahidin Almubarak, "Pemikiran Al-Farabi Tentang Pendidikan Dan Relevansinya Dengan Dunia Kontemporer," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Raushan Fikr* 10, no. 1 (July 30, 2021): 104–113.

³⁷ Remelia Dalensang and Melky Molle, "Peran Gereja Dalam Pengembangan Pendidikan Kristen Bagi Anak Muda Pada Era Teknologi Digital," *Jurnal Abdiel: Khazanah Pemikiran Teologi, Pendidikan Agama Kristen dan Musik Gereja* 5, no. 2 (October 29, 2021): 255–271.

³⁸ Jamalul Muttaqin, "AL-FARABI : POLITIK SEBAGAI JALAN KEBAHAGIAAN," *An-Nur : Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 2 (2022): 129–144.

Farabi's philosophy in the context of contemporary existentialism allows for the reinterpretation of individual freedom in the digital age.³⁹ It provides an ethical foundation that leads man to evaluate the impact of the freedom he has on himself and others. By applying these principles, the digital society can evolve into a more caring, ethical, and spiritually purpose-oriented community.

Al-Farabi and its Existentialism

Al-Farabi, known as the "Second Teacher" after Aristotle in the Islamic philosophical tradition, was a great philosopher who was born around 870 in the Faryab region, which is now on the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. His full name is Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn Awzalagh al-Farabi. He was known not only as a philosopher, but also as a scientist, mathematician, musician, and politician.⁴⁰ Al-Farabi studied in Baghdad, the intellectual center of the Islamic world at the time, and mastered Arabic and several other languages. During his lifetime, he produced many works in the fields of philosophy, logic, and politics, which show the strong influence of ancient Greek thought, especially Aristotle and Plotinus. Proof that al-Farabi delved into Aristotle's philosophy is when Ibn Sina could not understand the contents of *Aristotle's Maqālah fī Aghrād al-Hakīm fī Kulli Maqālah al-Marsūm bi al-Hurūf*, even though he had read it repeatedly up to 40 times. Finally Ibn Sina found al-Farabi's work entitled *Tahqīq Gharad Aristātālīs fī Kitāb mā Ba'da al-Thabī'ah* and managed to understand Aristotle's thought which was previously difficult to understand.⁴¹ In addition, Al-Farabi's thought was heavily influenced by the Islamic context, where he tried to synthesize philosophical thought with

³⁹ Sukri and Sabriah, *Filsafat Islam Dan Tantangan Modernitas* (Padang Sidempuan: PT. Inovasi Pratama Internasional, 2024).

⁴⁰ Indo Santalia and Nurhaerat, "Pemikiran Al-Farabi Dan Ibnu Sina," *Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin* 2, no. 3 (2024): 480–486.

⁴¹ Al-Farabi, *Arā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fadhīlah, Tahqiq, Al-Biir Nasri Nadir*.

Islamic teachings.⁴² Other important works include *Risālah al-Itsbat al-Mufāraqāt*, *At-Ta'liqāt*, *al-Jam'u Baina Ra'yu al-Hākimain*, *Kitab al-Siyāsāt al-Madīnah al-Fadhīlah*, *al-Mūsīqā al-Kabīr*, *Risālah Tahsīl al-Sā'adah*, *'Uyūn al-Masāil*, *al-Madīnah al-Fadhīlah*, and *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fadhīlah*. As for *al-Ihshā al-Ulūm*, it is believed to be his last work before his death.

Al-Farabi strongly emphasized the importance of reason in achieving the truth. For Al-Farabi, human beings are beings endowed with intellectual abilities that make it possible to understand the world and achieve true happiness.⁴³ This thought is reflected in his ideas of philosophy, which he believes is the means to attain the highest self-perfection and happiness.

Al-Farabi views philosophy as a path that not only helps man understand reality, but also as a moral guide that can guide man in daily life.⁴⁴ In Al-Farabi's thought, philosophy is also a bridge between empirical knowledge and transcendent knowledge, which connects man with

his Creator.⁴⁵ Al-Farabi also went so far as to argue that a leader must be a philosopher, in the sense that even though he is not a philosopher who is given the title of "philosopher", but with wisdom that with such wisdom the leader can think and act like a philosopher.⁴⁶ One of Al-Farabi's main contributions to philosophy was the concept of the philosophy of form or ontology. According to Al-Farabi, form or existence is the basis of everything that exists. It

⁴² Yulita Putri and Abid Nurhuda, *FILSAFAT PEMIKIRAN PENDIDIKAN ISLAM LINTAS ZAMAN*, ed. Sepriano and Efitria (Jambi: Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2023).

⁴³ Muhammad Fajar Pramono and Riza Maulidia, "Konsep Negara Utama Dan Hubungannya Dengan Kebahagiaan Menurut Al-Farabi," *Risalah: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam* 8, no. 4 (2022): 1276–1292.

⁴⁴ HIDAYAH NUR, "EKSISTENSI KENABIAN DALAM PERSPEKTIF FILSAFAT AL-FARABI DAN RELEVANSINYA DALAM ERA KONTEMPORER" (UIN Radin Intan Lampung, 2023).

⁴⁵ Wiyono, "Pemikiran Filsafat Al-Farabi."

⁴⁶ Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, *Mabadi Ara Ahl Al-Madina Al Fadila*, trans. R. Walzer (Oxford: Claendon Press, 1985).

distinguishes between obligatory (*wajib al-wujud*) and possible form (*mumkin al-wujud*).⁴⁷ Compulsory form refers to something whose existence is inevitable, namely God, which exists by itself without the need for any other cause. Meanwhile, existence may be anything other than God, whose existence depends on other causes and is contingent.⁴⁸ In Al-Farabi's view, God is the source of all existence, and all other beings depend on God for their existence. This view shows Al-Farabi's deep understanding of the structure of reality, in which God as an absolute being becomes the ontological foundation for everything that exists.⁴⁹

In addition to the concept of form, Al-Farabi also developed the idea of emanation or emanation, in which everything in the universe comes from God through a process of multi-stage emanation. According to him, God as the source of all existence emits a lower intellect or intellectual entity, which ultimately produces the physical world.⁵⁰ This process of emanation explains how the universe was created and how the relationship between God as an absolute being and a contingent being. Through the concept of emanation, Al-Farabi seeks to explain the existence of the material world without eliminating the connection with God as the Creator. In his view, each level of emanation showed a different degree of perfection, with God being at the highest level of perfection.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Dzulfikar Akbar Romadlon, *Buku Ajar Membenarkan Allah Dalam Iman: Membaca Aqidah Dengan Nalar Kritis*, *Buku Ajar Membenarkan Allah Dalam Iman: Membaca Aqidah Dengan Nalar Kritis*, 2020.

⁴⁸ Jamaludin Al Arifillah, "Wujud Tuhan Menurut Imâm Fakhr Al-Dîn Al-Râzi Dalam Al-Matâlib Al-`Âliyah" (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2024).

⁴⁹ Amirudin, "Memahami Otentisitas Konsep Tuhan: Kajian Konsep Eliminasi, Ontologi, Dan Kosmologi Filosof Muslim," *Jurnal Kaca* (2014): 65–86.

⁵⁰ Abdul Karim, "No TEORI EMANASI (Studi Komparatif al-Farabi Dan Ibnu Sina)" (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2020).

⁵¹ Maisaroh, "KESEMPURNAAN JIWA MANUSIA PERSPEKTIF AL-FARABI DALAM KITAB AL-SIYASAH AL-MADANIYAH."

In Al-Farabi's perspective existentialism can be found in certain aspects of his thought, particularly those related to individual freedom and moral responsibility.⁵² Although he does not directly address existentialism in the modern sense, Al-Farabi emphasizes the importance of freedom of reason and moral choice in achieving life's goals. According to him, human beings have the freedom to choose their own way of life, but this freedom must always be in line with moral laws and ethical principles derived from reason and religion. This is in contrast to the view of modern existentialism which tends to emphasize unlimited freedom, in which human beings are free to determine their own meaning without being bound by absolute moral rules. Al-Farabi's existentialism centers on the attainment of the highest happiness or *al-sa'ādah* through intellectual and spiritual perfection.⁵³ Freedom for Al-Farabi is not just the ability to choose, but the ability to choose the right one according to reason and Divine guidance. In this case, he combines freedom with moral responsibility, in which the individual must consider the consequences of his actions on himself and society. In Al-Farabi's thought, individual freedom that is not accompanied by moral responsibility will actually hinder the achievement of true happiness. This indicates that Al-Farabi sees freedom as a means to achieve self-perfection, not as the ultimate goal itself.⁵⁴

When compared to modern existentialist thinkers, there is a fundamental difference in Al-Farabi's view of freedom. Sartre, for example, saw freedom as a curse, in which man must determine the value and meaning of his own life without the help of God or absolute moral guidance. In Sartre's view, man must create his own value and meaning in a world that is absurd and has no definite purpose.⁵⁵ This is in contrast to Al-Farabi who sees freedom as a

⁵² Agustina Agustina and Mutiullah Mutiullah, "Filsafat Sosio-Politik Al-Farabi Dan Implementasinya Terhadap Demokrasi," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2024): 20–39.

⁵³ Risa Anisa Nurlaeli, "Al-Farabi's Perspective on Happiness Perspektif Al-Farabi Mengenai Kebahagiaan" 2, no. 2 (2023): 231–250.

⁵⁴ Syafi'i, "Etika Dalam Pandangan Al-Farabi."

⁵⁵ Beta Firmansyah et al., "Manusia Dan Kebebasan Dalam Pandangan Taqi Misbah Yazdi: Studi Kritis Terhadap Jean Paul Sartre," *Aqlania* 14, no. 1 (June 28, 2023): 85–112.

gift that must be guided by reason and ethical values that come from God. In Al-Farabi's view, man is not left in a moral vacuum; He has guidelines and life goals that can guide him to true happiness.⁵⁶

Another difference is seen in Heidegger's thought, which views human existence as something that is always in the process of "becoming." Heidegger emphasized the importance of the individual's involvement in the surrounding world, where he must find authenticity through a relationship with his environment and history.⁵⁷ Although Al-Farabi also sees the importance of individual involvement in social life, emphasizing that such involvement should be guided by a higher goal, namely intellectual and spiritual happiness. Heidegger does not associate the process of "becoming" with spiritual or religious goals, while Al-Farabi believes that human existence is always linked to the achievement of divine goals.⁵⁸

Simone de Beauvoir, who focuses on gender issues in existentialism, also offers a different perspective from Al-Farabi. De Beauvoir saw that individual freedom was often hampered by social constructs and patriarchal norms that limited women's roles. She advocated for greater freedom for women to overcome these restrictions and achieve self-authenticity.⁵⁹ Al-Farabi, meanwhile, does not explicitly highlight gender issues, but he sees freedom as something that all individuals must apply within the same ethical and moral boundaries. In his view, freedom is not about going against norms, but about finding harmony between individual freedom and the broader social good.

⁵⁶ Syafi'i, "Etika Dalam Pandangan Al-Farabi."

⁵⁷ Lalu Abdurrahman Wahid, "Filsafat Eksistensialisme Martin Heidegger Dan Pendidikan Perspektif Eksistensialisme," *PANDAWA : Jurnal Pendidikan dan Dakwah* 4, Nomor 1 (2022): 1–13.

⁵⁸ Hambali and Asiah, "Eksistensi Manusia Dalam Filsafat Pendidikan: Studi Komparatif Filsafat Barat Dan Filsafat Islam."

⁵⁹ Nafila Azzahra, "Eksistensi Perempuan Dalam Novel *Jumhuriyyatu Ka'anna Karya Alaa al-Aswany: Kajian Feminisme Eksistensialis Simone De Beauvoir*," *Middle Eastern Culture & Religion Issues* 1, no. 2 (2022): 116–132.

From this comparison, it can be seen that existentialism in Al-Farabi's perspective has a stronger focus on the balance between freedom and responsibility. For him, human existence has a clear meaning and a definite goal, which is to achieve happiness through knowledge and moral goodness. This is in contrast to Western existentialist thinking which tends to place more emphasis on the uncertainty and absurdity of life. Al-Farabi offers an optimistic view, in which human beings have the potential to achieve perfection by following moral and intellectual principles.

Discussions

Al-Farabi's existentialism in the digital age highlights various challenges related to existence, freedom, and responsibility in the midst of technological advances that are increasingly changing the way humans interact with the world. Existential challenges in the digital era are mainly related to the crisis of identity and meaning of life that often arises in the midst of the hustle and bustle of social media, uncontrolled information flows, and dependence on technology. In this condition, individuals often lose depth in understanding themselves, replaced by superficial or even artificial self-representations in the virtual world. One of Al-Farabi's works, *Al-Madina al-Fadila*, teaches that true happiness and the meaning of life cannot be achieved without a deep understanding of the self and the purpose of life.⁶⁰ In this digital era, it is a big challenge because the meaning of life is often dictated by trends, popularity, or external validation from cyberspace, not by true wisdom and self-awareness.

The identity crisis that has hit the digital society can be overcome by applying Al-Farabi's thinking on the concept of freedom and responsibility in achieving *al-sa'ādah* (happiness). In his view, human beings are beings who are given '*aql*' (intellect) as the ability to understand and achieve their life goals.⁶¹ In the digital age, this thinking teaches that humans must use technology as a means that supports ethical and moral goals, not the other way around. In *Tahsil al-Sa'ādah*, Al-Farabi argues that the highest happiness can only be

⁶⁰ Izzuddin, "Studi Kitab Ara' Ahl al-Madinah al-Fadilah Karya al-Farabi Dan Relevansinya Dengan Pancasila" (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2020).

⁶¹ Nurlaeli, "Al-Farabi's Perspective on Happiness Perspektif Al-Farabi Mengenai Kebahagiaan."

achieved through knowledge and goodness, not through material attainment or superficial recognition.⁶² In the digital world, this principle reminds humans not to rely too much on popularity or the number of *likes* on social media as a measure of happiness or self-worth, but rather on the achievement of wisdom and inner awareness.

In the digital era, humans tend to be trapped in artificial conditions of existence, where self-identity is often determined by the image built on social media. This has the potential to give rise to a digital identity crisis, where individuals no longer know their true selves because they are used to presenting an “ideal” version that is polarized by public opinion. Al-Farabi through *Risālah fi al-'Aql*, emphasizes the importance of self-authenticity which can only be achieved through a deep awareness of one’s reality and purpose in life. For Al-Farabi, one’s true identity can only be formed through the development of reason and morals that are in line with ethical principles.⁶³ In the digital age, this thinking provides a foundation for distinguishing between an artificial digital identity and a true identity that is based on a clear understanding of the meaning and purpose of life.

The application of Al-Farabi’s thinking in the face of the challenges of digital identity can help individuals develop more authentic and meaningful personalities. According to Al-Farabi, the ideal individual is someone who is able to control his passions and follow reason in every action, which is called a human *being who is 'aql* (reason).⁶⁴ In the digital context, this principle teaches that one should not succumb to the temptation of popularity or external validation, but rather should consider every action in the virtual world with moral principles that prioritize truth and goodness. This can be applied in the use of social media that is not excessive, avoiding the spread of incorrect information, and not following trends that are not in accordance with personal or moral values.

⁶² Al-Farabi, *TERAPI BAHAGIA: Cara Mencapai Kebahagiaan Lewat Eksistensi Keilmuan Dan Sains Ala al-Farabi*, trans. Muhammad Ardiyansyah (Sleman: Anak Hebat Indonesia, 2023).

⁶³ Al-Farabi, *Risalah Fi Al-'Aql*.

⁶⁴ Al-Farabi, *Risalah Fi Al-'Aql*.

Before associating freedom with the digital context, it is important to understand the concept of freedom according to Al-Farabi. In his mind, freedom does not mean absolute freedom to do anything, but freedom that is controlled by reason (*'aql*) and directed towards moral and spiritual goals. In *Kitāb al-Siyasa al-Madaniyya*, Al-Farabi emphasizes that true freedom is the ability to choose actions that are in accordance with the universal good and support a just social order. This is different from digital freedom, which is often interpreted

as unlimited autonomy, such as freedom of expression without ethical considerations.⁶⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to criticize that not all forms of freedom in the digital world are in line with the ethics of freedom according to Al-Farabi. Having understood these differences, Al-Farabi's reinterpretation of the concept of freedom can be used to assess digital dynamics more wisely. Freedom in the digital age should not mean freedom as freely as possible, but freedom accompanied by moral and social responsibility, as mandated in Al-Farabi's ethics.

Furthermore, the reinterpretation of Al-Farabi's freedom in the digital era can also be applied to the phenomenon of data privacy and security. Individual freedom in cyberspace is often compromised by personal data collected without the owner's knowledge or consent. In Al-Farabi's thought, individual freedom is not freedom that is solely controlled by others, but freedom that is in line with the values of ethics and justice.⁶⁶ Thus, in the digital context, the protection of personal data and privacy is part of the moral responsibility to protect individual freedom. This means that tech companies and users must respect the right to privacy and not abuse the freedom afforded in utilizing technology.

In addition, the concept of *al-'aql al-fa'āl* (active intellect) in Al-Farabi's philosophy is an important element in the intellectual structure of man. In Al-Farabi's view, *al-'aql al-fa'āl* is the highest form of reason, which acts as a link between the material world and the intellectual world. It is a constant and perfect source of universal knowledge, and serves as a driver for man to actualize his intellectual potential. It is this active intellect that allows

⁶⁵ Al-Farabi, *Kitab Al-Siyasa al-Madaniyya al-Mulqab Bi-Mabadi' al-Mawiyudat Al-Farabi's the Political Regime*, ed. Fawzt M. Nayyar (al-Matba'a al Katulikiyya, n.d.).

⁶⁶ Al-Farabi, *Kitab Al-Siyasa al-Madaniyya al-Mulqab Bi-Mabadi' al-Mawiyudat Al-Farabi's the Political Regime*.

humans to go out of potential knowledge to actual and true knowledge.⁶⁷ In the context of the digital era, this concept can be applied as a principle to guide individuals in using technology wisely and responsibly. *Al-'aql al-fa'āl* encourages people not to get caught up in the superficial and impulsive use of technology, but to use it as a means to enrich knowledge, increase self-awareness, and strengthen moral values. This principle also emphasizes the importance of self-control and discipline in the face of digital temptations that can disrupt life balance and mental health.

In the digital era, the application of Al-Farabi's existentialism can also be found in an effort to develop a more ethical and common welfare-oriented digital society. In *Kitāb al-Millāh*, Al-Farabi emphasizes the importance of morality and wisdom in social life. In cyberspace, this principle means that every individual has a responsibility to maintain ethics in digital interactions and support the formation of positive communities. The ideal digital society is one that supports each other to achieve intellectual and spiritual happiness, not one that knocks each other down or damages each other.⁶⁸ In this context, Al-Farabi's existentialism is the basis of ethics that can guide humans in interacting in the digital world.

Thus, Al-Farabi's thinking offers a relevant view to addressing existential challenges in the digital age. Al-Farabi's existentialism teaches that true identity and happiness can only be achieved through knowledge and wisdom, not through material attainment or digital popularity. Responsible freedom and active development of the mind are the key principles for achieving true happiness in this increasingly digitally connected world. By practicing these principles, humans can achieve a more meaningful and authentic life, even in the midst of a fast-paced and often superficial digital world.

Conclusion

Existential challenges in the digital era, especially identity crises and the search for meaning in life, require a philosophical approach that is able to balance freedom and

⁶⁷ Al-Farabi, *Risalah Fi Al-'Aql*.

⁶⁸ Al-Farabi, *Kitāb Al-Millāh Wa Naṣuṣ Ukhra*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1968).

responsibility. Al-Farabi with the concept of true happiness (*al-sa'ādah*) achieved through reason and morality, offers a valuable guide to dealing with this crisis. Artificially inclined digital identities often form a self-image that is far removed from personal essence, and Al-Farabi emphasizes that true happiness comes from spiritual and intellectual achievement, not from popularity or validation in cyberspace. Through this view, Al-Farabi emphasizes the importance of reason and responsibility as the basis for exercising freedom, directing individuals to develop themselves authentically and wisely. As a digital ethics education solution that prioritizes social responsibility, efforts can be made to encourage the wise use of technology, in line with the values carried by Al-Farabi. By understanding freedom as a right with responsibility, individuals are expected to be able to manage their digital identities more consciously and not depend on external validation. In addition, with awareness of the consequences of actions in cyberspace, every individual can practice freedom of speech accompanied by moral principles and maintaining social harmony. This creates a solid foundation for avoiding identity crises and helping individuals live more authentic and meaningful digital lives.

For further research, an empirical study of the influence of digital identity on mental health and psychological well-being can strengthen this research, especially by exploring how Al-Farabi's thinking can be applied in this context. Comparisons with the thought of Western existentialist philosophers, such as Sartre and Heidegger, will also provide a rich perspective, deepening an understanding of how Al-Farabi's values can be applied to modern challenges. In addition, developing an educational model based on Islamic philosophy to raise awareness of digital ethics could be a strategic step, allowing the principles of responsible freedom and the achievement of true happiness to be integrated into the curriculum. This research can also be improved by adding several aspects, such as including a psychological perspective on the impact of digital identity on self-well-being. Further research could deepen the contextual analysis of Al-Farabi's thought in modern society, seeing how his philosophy resonates with contemporary values in various cultures. Extending the research by linking Al-Farabi's views to contemporary philosophy can clarify the relevance of this thought in responding to social changes due to technological advances.

These aspects will make research more comprehensive, so that it can provide real solutions to existential crises in the digital age.

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