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The Concept of the Ideal Human in Hamka's Thought: Towards the Reconstruction of Islamic Humanist Ethics

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the concept of the ideal human being (manusia utama) in HAMKA's thought as a formulation of Islamic humanistic ethics grounded in the integration of faith, reason, and moral virtue. The study is motivated by the contemporary humanitarian crisis characterized by moral degradation, materialism, individualism, and spiritual disorientation, which necessitates a reconstruction of Islamic thought capable of presenting an integral concept of the ideal human person. The research aims to analyze HAMKA's concept of the ideal human being, explain the ethical structure that shapes it, and explore its relevance in addressing contemporary human challenges. This study employs a qualitative library research method with a philosophical-analytical approach. Primary sources include HAMKA's major works, namely Falsafah Hidup, Tasawuf Modern, Lembaga Budi, and Tafsir al-Azhar, while secondary sources are drawn from relevant scholarly literature. The findings reveal that, in HAMKA's perspective, the ideal human being is not only spiritually pious but also possesses social and civilizational responsibility. Faith serves as the foundation of moral formation, while reason functions as an instrument of humanization that guides individuals toward wisdom. Furthermore, virtues such as iffah (self-restraint), 'adalah (justice), syaja'ah (courage), and hikmah (wisdom) constitute the ethical foundation that produces moral integrity. This study contributes to the development of Islamic philosophy and Islamic humanism by demonstrating that HAMKA's thought offers a religious-humanistic ethical paradigm that remains relevant in addressing the moral and spiritual crises of modern society.

Keyword

HAMKA; ideal human being; Islamic humanism; Islamic ethics; morality.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji konsep manusia utama dalam pemikiran HAMKA sebagai formulasi etika humanisme Islam yang berlandaskan integrasi iman, akal, dan kebajikan moral. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh krisis kemanusiaan modern yang ditandai oleh degradasi moral, materialisme, individualisme, dan disorientasi spiritual, sehingga diperlukan rekonstruksi pemikiran Islam yang mampu menghadirkan konsep manusia ideal secara integral. Penelitian bertujuan menganalisis konsep manusia utama menurut HAMKA, menjelaskan struktur etika yang membentuknya, serta menelaah relevansinya dalam menjawab problem kemanusiaan kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode

kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka dengan pendekatan filosofis-analitis. Sumber primer berasal dari karya-karya HAMKA, antara lain Falsafah Hidup, Tasawuf Modern, Lembaga Budi, dan Tafsir al-Azhar, sedangkan sumber sekunder diperoleh dari literatur ilmiah yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa manusia utama dalam perspektif HAMKA merupakan pribadi yang tidak hanya saleh secara spiritual, tetapi juga memiliki tanggung jawab sosial dan peradaban. Iman menjadi dasar pembentukan moral, sedangkan akal berfungsi sebagai instrumen pemanusiaan yang mengarahkan manusia pada kebijaksanaan. Selain itu, nilai-nilai kebajikan seperti iffah, 'adalah, syaja'ah, dan hikmah membentuk fondasi etika yang melahirkan integritas moral manusia. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam pengembangan kajian filsafat Islam dan humanisme Islam dengan menunjukkan bahwa pemikiran HAMKA menawarkan paradigma etika religius-humanistik yang relevan untuk menghadapi krisis moral dan spiritual masyarakat modern.

Kata Kunci

HAMKA; manusia utama; humanisme Islam; etika Islam; moralitas.

INTRODUCTION

Modern human beings face various existential challenges amid the rapid advancement of science, technology, and globalization. The progress of modern civilization is not always accompanied by corresponding moral and spiritual development. This reality is evidenced by numerous global reports indicating the emergence of increasingly visible humanitarian crises. The World Health Organization (WHO), for example, reports that one in six people worldwide experiences loneliness and social isolation, conditions that contribute to approximately 871,000 deaths annually (World Health Organization, n.d.). At the same time, the Edelman Trust Barometer 2025 reveals that 61% of the global population exhibits a high level of social dissatisfaction, while around 40% of respondents believe that aggressive actions such as spreading misinformation, verbal attacks, and even violence can be justified to achieve social change (Edelman, 2025). Furthermore, the World Happiness Report 2024 indicates a decline in the well-being of younger generations, associated with increasing loneliness, weak social support systems, and the loss of meaningful life orientation.

These findings suggest that modernity has not only generated material progress but has also given rise to various humanitarian problems, including individualism, social alienation, moral decline, and an increasing sense of meaninglessness. Indeed, modernity has fostered multiple crises such as individualism, materialism, hedonism, social alienation, and the loss of life's deeper meaning. Modern individuals often lose their sense of purpose because material success is frequently regarded as the primary measure of human achievement. As a consequence, people become estranged from spiritual values and lose the moral compass necessary for developing a holistic personality. This phenomenon demonstrates that contemporary society requires an ideal concept of humanity that emphasizes not only rationality but also a balanced integration of spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions (Assyaukanie, 2023). In this context, the concept of the *manusia utama* (the exemplary or ideal human being) becomes significant as an ethical and spiritual framework within Islam for addressing the humanitarian crises of modernity (Muhammaddin, 2017).

The discourse on human nature and the ideal human being has long been a central concern in philosophy, Sufism, and modern Islamic thought. The concept of the ideal human being extends beyond individual spiritual perfection to encompass moral integrity, social responsibility, and a civilizational orientation. In HAMKA's thought, the ideal human being is one who successfully integrates faith, reason, and moral character in daily life (Hamka, 1983). Hamka emphasizes that intellectual intelligence alone is insufficient; individuals must also possess noble character and a profound awareness of God in order to attain the highest degree of human perfection. Based on these concerns, this study formulates the following research questions: How is the concept of the ideal human being articulated in HAMKA's thought? What ethical structure underlies the formation of such an ideal human being? And how relevant is this concept in addressing the humanitarian challenges of the modern world?

Studies on humanity from the perspective of Islamic humanism have been conducted by a number of scholars. Luthfi Assyaukanie argues that Islamic humanism differs from Western humanism in that it continues to place God at the center of humanity's moral orientation (Assyaukanie, 2023). Islamic humanism does not absolutize human freedom; rather, it links freedom to ethical and spiritual responsibility. Similarly, Muhammaddin explains that Islamic humanism seeks to promote universal human values while remaining firmly rooted in divine revelation and religious morality (Muhammaddin, 2017). These studies demonstrate that the discourse on Islamic humanism has evolved as a response to the moral crises associated with modernity.

Within the context of modern Muslim thought, discussions of humanity and humanism have also been prominent in the works of Ali Shariati. Research by Asep Wildan shows that Shariati's Islamic humanism views human beings as free agents who possess both social and historical responsibilities (Wildan, 2020). Another study by Muhammad Adres Prawira Negara and Muhlas emphasizes that humanism in Shariati's perspective advocates human freedom while maintaining its grounding within a theocentric framework (Prawira Negara & Muhlas, 2023). These studies indicate that the concept of the ideal human being in Islam is consistently associated with the integration of spiritual values and social responsibility.

Research on HAMKA, meanwhile, has primarily focused on themes such as humanism, happiness, modern Sufism, nationalism, and social ethics. Mutiara Hardewita explains that HAMKA's humanism regards reason as an essential instrument for humanizing individuals and cultivating moral consciousness (Hardewita, 2025). Fuadi argues that happiness in HAMKA's thought is attained through the harmonious integration of Sufism and rationality (Fuadi, 2018). Likewise, Maria Ulfa and Erva Dewi Arqomi Puspita emphasize that HAMKA's conception of modern happiness is grounded in religion as the moral and spiritual foundation of human life (Ulfa & Puspita, 2020). Other studies have also shown that HAMKA viewed Sufism as a means of moral formation and spiritual purification in the context of modern life (Kaplan, 2024).

In addition, contemporary scholarship has increasingly explored ethics and *adab* (moral conduct) in HAMKA's thought. Asif Trisnani, Muhammad Thoriql Islam, and

Elit Ave Hidayatullah argue that the concept of *hikmah* (wisdom) in *Tafsir al-Azhar* represents HAMKA's response to the crisis of *adab* in modern Muslim society (Trisnani et al., 2025). Their study demonstrates that HAMKA places morality and wisdom at the core of human development. Other research on the integration of Islamic values and nationalism in HAMKA's thought further suggests that the ideal human being, according to HAMKA, is characterized not only by personal piety but also by national consciousness and social responsibility (Erwin et al., 2024).

Although numerous studies on HAMKA have been conducted, research that specifically examines the concept of *manusia utama* (the ideal or exemplary human being) as a construct of Islamic humanist ethics in HAMKA's thought remains relatively limited. Most previous studies have focused on particular aspects of his thought, such as Sufism, happiness, general humanism, nationalism, or moral education. Few studies have attempted to reconstruct HAMKA's concept of *manusia utama* as an integrated philosophy of humanity that harmoniously combines faith, reason, and moral virtue. Therefore, this study occupies an important position in addressing this academic gap while simultaneously contributing to the broader development of contemporary Indonesian Islamic philosophy.

This study aims to analyze the concept of *manusia utama* in HAMKA's thought, explain the ethical structure underlying its formation, and examine its relevance in responding to contemporary humanitarian crises. It also seeks to reconstruct HAMKA's intellectual framework as a form of Islamic humanism that avoids the pitfalls of secular anthropocentrism while remaining firmly grounded in divine values and Islamic morality. Through this investigation, the study aspires to formulate a paradigm of the ideal human being that is relevant to modern societies experiencing spiritual disorientation and moral crises.

The significance of this research lies in the need to reintroduce Islamic thought capable of addressing modern humanitarian problems in a substantive manner. The prevalence of moral decline, growing individualism, weakening social solidarity, and the dominance of materialistic values indicate the necessity of a human paradigm that balances spirituality and humanity. HAMKA's thought is particularly important because it offers the concept of *manusia utama*, which emphasizes not only individual piety but also social responsibility and civilizational development (HAMKA, 2017). In the context of contemporary society, this concept provides a relevant foundation for a humanistic and transformative Islamic ethic.

This study focuses on the concept of *manusia utama* as presented in HAMKA's major works, particularly *Falsafah Hidup (Philosophy of Life)*, *Tasawuf Modern (Modern Sufism)*, *Lembaga Budi (The Institution of Virtue)*, and *Tafsir al-Azhar*. The discussion encompasses HAMKA's views on human nature, the relationship between faith and reason, the concept of moral virtue, and the relevance of *manusia utama* in addressing the challenges of modernity. Rather than examining the entirety of HAMKA's intellectual legacy, this study is specifically limited to the ethical construction of *manusia utama* as a component of Islamic humanism.

Academically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic philosophical studies, particularly in the fields of Islamic humanism and HAMKA scholarship. It is also anticipated to enrich contemporary discussions on the concept of the ideal human being in Islam, a discourse that has often been dominated by modern Western perspectives. By reconstructing the concept of *manusia utama* in HAMKA's thought, this study seeks to demonstrate that the Indonesian Islamic intellectual tradition offers a significant contribution to the development of a paradigm of humanity that is religious, ethical, and relevant to modern life.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library research design aimed at examining and reconstructing the concept of *manusia utama* (the ideal or exemplary human being) in HAMKA's thought. Library research was selected because the object of investigation consists of ideas, concepts, and intellectual constructions contained in HAMKA's writings as well as relevant scholarly literature. The study adopts a philosophical approach using a critical-analytical method to explore the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations of the concept of *manusia utama* in HAMKA's thought. In addition, a contextual hermeneutical approach is employed to understand HAMKA's ideas within their socio-historical context while simultaneously relating them to contemporary humanitarian issues (Ashadi, 2024).

The sources of data consist of both primary and secondary materials. The primary sources include HAMKA's works that directly discuss issues of human nature, morality, spiritual development, and Islamic ethics, namely *Falsafah Hidup (Philosophy of Life)*, *Tasawuf Modern (Modern Sufism)*, *Lembaga Budi (The Institution of Virtue)*, *Pribadi Hebat (The Great Personality)*, *Lembaga Hidup (The Institution of Life)*, and *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Secondary sources were obtained from national and international journal articles, scholarly books, conference proceedings, theses, and dissertations addressing HAMKA's thought, philosophical anthropology, Islamic humanism, Islamic ethics, and moral education. Data were collected through documentation and literature review by identifying, cataloging, classifying, and evaluating sources relevant to the focus of the study (Arcanita et al., 2023).

Data analysis was conducted through a combination of content analysis and philosophical hermeneutics. The analytical process began with an intensive reading of HAMKA's major works, particularly *Tasawuf Modern*, *Pribadi Hebat*, *Lembaga Budi*, *Falsafah Hidup*, and *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Relevant sections discussing human nature, faith, reason, morality, and social life were then selected. The collected data were subsequently coded and organized into several major themes, namely human nature, the relationship between faith and reason, moral virtues, and social responsibility.

The data categorized into these major themes were then analyzed using a philosophical hermeneutical approach. At this stage, each quotation and idea presented by HAMKA was reexamined to identify the meanings of key concepts such as *manusia*

utama, virtue (*budi*), reason (*akal*), faith (*iman*), and social responsibility. The researcher then compared the use of these concepts across HAMKA's various works to identify consistencies, developments, and interconnections among his ideas. The meanings derived from this process were interpreted by considering HAMKA's intellectual background and the broader objectives of his thought. The interpretations generated from each thematic category were subsequently synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of HAMKA's concept of *manusia utama*, which revolves around three central pillars: faith, reason, and virtue. The combined use of content analysis and hermeneutics in library research enables a more comprehensive understanding of both the textual meanings and the intellectual context of the ideas under investigation (Hatimah et al., 2019).

RESULTS&DISCUSSION

HAMKA and the Characteristics of His Thought

Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (HAMKA) is one of Indonesia's most influential Muslim thinkers, whose contributions have significantly shaped the development of modern Islamic thought in the country. Born in Maninjau, West Sumatra, in 1908, HAMKA grew up in a family of Islamic reformers led by his father, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (Haji Rasul). His family background, the intellectual traditions of Minangkabau society, and his engagement with Islamic reform movements profoundly influenced the development of his intellectual outlook. These factors enabled him to embrace progress and modernity while remaining firmly grounded in Islamic values. As a scholar (*ulama*), literary figure, Qur'anic exegete, and public intellectual, HAMKA produced numerous influential works, including *Falsafah Hidup (Philosophy of Life)*, *Tasawuf Modern (Modern Sufism)*, *Lembaga Budi (The Institution of Virtue)*, *Pribadi Hebat (The Great Personality)*, and *Tafsir al-Azhar*, all of which continue to serve as important references in Islamic studies, ethics, and philosophical anthropology (HAMKA, 1947).

The distinctive character of HAMKA's thought is founded upon a synthesis of Islamic teachings, rationality, social experience, and the realities of Indonesian society. For HAMKA, Islam does not merely regulate the relationship between human beings and God; it also provides guidance for building social life and civilization. In *Falsafah Hidup*, he explains that the ultimate purpose of human life is the attainment of self-perfection through a balance among physical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions (HAMKA, 1983). Consequently, his thought does not become confined to religious formalism; rather, it presents Islam as a source of values capable of shaping both human character and the direction of life itself.

One of the central features of HAMKA's intellectual framework is his emphasis on the harmonious relationship between reason and faith. According to HAMKA, reason is a divine gift that enables human beings to understand truth, advance knowledge, and develop civilization. However, reason must remain guided by divine revelation, as its

separation from spiritual guidance may lead to arrogance and moral deviation. In *Tasawuf Modern*, HAMKA argues that intellectual progress must be accompanied by spiritual maturity if human beings are to attain genuine happiness (HAMKA, 2017). His thought therefore represents a significant effort to integrate modern rationality with Islamic spirituality.

In the field of ethics, HAMKA places moral cultivation at the center of human development. Through *Lembaga Budi*, he explains that human dignity is determined not by social status, wealth, or intellectual ability alone, but by the quality of one's moral character (*budi pekerti*) (HAMKA, 2016). The ideal human being is one who is capable of controlling desires, upholding honesty, demonstrating moral courage, acting justly, and assuming responsibility toward both oneself and society. This perspective exhibits a strong affinity with Aristotelian virtue ethics and the ethical thought of Ibn Miskawayh. Aristotle argued that the ultimate goal of human life (*eudaimonia*) is achieved through the cultivation of virtues such as courage, justice, and wisdom (Aristotle, 2009). Ibn Miskawayh subsequently developed this framework within an Islamic ethical context by viewing virtue as a means of perfecting the soul and drawing closer to God (Ibn Miskawayh, 1968). HAMKA continued this intellectual tradition by providing a stronger religious dimension and adapting it to the socio-cultural context of Indonesian Muslim society. While Aristotle regarded happiness as the ultimate end of human existence, HAMKA maintained that true happiness is not merely worldly in nature but is also deeply connected to the quality of one's relationship with God and with fellow human beings.

Furthermore, HAMKA's concept of *manusia utama* shares significant common ground with Ali Shariati's Islamic humanism, which emphasizes human beings as conscious, free, and responsible agents capable of transforming social reality (Shariati, 1979). Both thinkers reject fatalistic perspectives that reduce human beings to passive objects of history. However, while Shariati places greater emphasis on social liberation and resistance against structures of injustice, HAMKA focuses more strongly on individual moral transformation as the foundation of social change. This difference illustrates that Islamic humanism is not a monolithic concept; rather, it encompasses diverse orientations that complement one another through ethical, spiritual, and social dimensions.

Taken as a whole, HAMKA's thought reflects a distinctive form of Islamic humanism that regards human beings as dignified creatures endowed with both spiritual and social responsibilities. His humanism is not anthropocentric but rather theohumanistic, combining respect for human dignity with an awareness of humanity's relationship with God. From this perspective, the concept of *manusia utama* may be understood as a synthesis of classical Islamic virtue ethics, al-Ghazali's spirituality with its emphasis on purification of the soul and moral formation (Al-Ghazali, 2013), Ibn Miskawayh's character-building philosophy, and the humanistic orientation that has developed within modern Islamic thought. Through this synthesis, HAMKA offers a model of the ideal human being who is not only personally pious but also morally upright, intellectually productive, and socially responsible. This concept makes a significant

contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic humanism while providing an ethical framework relevant to addressing the challenges of moral decline, materialism, individualism, and spiritual disorientation faced by modern societies (HAMKA, 2014).

Faith as the Moral Foundation of Human Beings

Within the overall structure of HAMKA's thought, faith (*iman*) occupies a central position as the primary foundation for the formation of human personality and morality. For HAMKA, faith is not merely a verbal or theological confession; rather, it is an existential force that determines the direction of human life. In *Falsafah Hidup*, he asserts that "a life without reliance upon God is a life that has lost its purpose" (HAMKA, 1983). This statement demonstrates that faith functions as a source of moral orientation, providing meaning and direction to all human actions. Consequently, morality does not arise solely from rationality or social consensus but is rooted in a transcendent consciousness that connects human beings to God as the ultimate source of value. This perspective reveals that HAMKA develops a theistic ethical framework in which moral values derive their legitimacy from the relationship between human beings and the Divine (HAMKA, 2017).

For HAMKA, the foundation of morality is closely related to the concept of *fitrah* (human innate nature). In *Tasawuf Modern*, he states that "the human soul always longs for something higher than itself" (HAMKA, 2017). This longing signifies that human beings are naturally inclined to know God and seek meaning in life through religion. Consequently, faith is not something imposed from outside; rather, it constitutes an ontological necessity of human existence. When this need remains unfulfilled, individuals may experience existential anxiety, inner emptiness, and a loss of moral direction. HAMKA's view of faith as an ontological human need bears a close resemblance to al-Ghazali's understanding of *fitrah* and the soul's inherent inclination toward knowing God. According to al-Ghazali, the human heart naturally possesses the potential to receive divine truth, although this potential may become obscured by the dominance of desires and worldly attachments (Al-Ghazali, 2013). This similarity demonstrates that HAMKA does not regard faith merely as a religious doctrine but as an existential necessity that preserves the inner balance of human beings. However, unlike al-Ghazali, who places greater emphasis on the individual-spiritual dimension, HAMKA connects the fulfillment of spiritual needs with the formation of morality and social responsibility in modern life.

In this regard, HAMKA is aligned with the tradition of Islamic humanism, which maintains that human dignity cannot be separated from spiritual consciousness. Islamic humanism views human beings as dignified creatures whose nobility is derived from their relationship with God rather than from human autonomy alone (Saruhan, 2021). HAMKA's argument concerning the importance of faith becomes even more apparent in his critique of modern civilization, which he believes has generated a crisis of meaning and moral degradation.

HAMKA's critique is consistent with a number of contemporary studies on the crisis of meaning in modern society. Various scholars have shown that material progress, rationalization, and technological advancement do not necessarily lead to more meaningful lives. On the contrary, the weakening of traditional sources of meaning, the fragmentation of identity, and the dominance of instrumental rationality often produce feelings of emptiness, purposelessness, and existential alienation. John Vervaeke describes this phenomenon as the *meaning crisis*, a condition in which individuals lose their connection to the values that provide direction, purpose, and significance in life (Reyburn, 2025). In this context, HAMKA offers a compelling perspective by positioning faith as a source of meaning capable of guiding scientific development and material progress toward genuinely human ends. Thus, HAMKA's critique is not a rejection of modernity itself but rather a critique of a form of modernity that has lost its ethical and spiritual foundations (Hidayatulloh, 2025).

In *Lembaga Hidup*, HAMKA writes that "the progress of life does not lie merely in the accumulation of material wealth, but in the enhancement of human worth" (HAMKA, 2016). This statement demonstrates his rejection of a materialistic paradigm that treats economic success as the primary measure of human advancement. In his view, the loss of faith leads individuals into hedonism, individualism, and a way of life centered exclusively on self-interest. This analysis is highly relevant to contemporary scholarship, which suggests that secularization and materialism often contribute to the weakening of moral commitment and social solidarity (Ulfa & Puspita, 2020).

Therefore, HAMKA regards faith as an instrument capable of controlling human desires and maintaining a balance between material and spiritual needs. Furthermore, he understands faith as the source from which virtues emerge. In *Lembaga Budi*, HAMKA emphasizes that human nobility lies in the ability to cultivate good character through moral discipline and self-control (HAMKA, 2016). This perspective bears a strong resemblance to Aristotle's theory of virtue ethics, which holds that the purpose of ethics is not merely to determine the right course of action but to cultivate good character (*good character*) (HAMKA, 2016). However, unlike Aristotle, who places reason as the primary foundation of virtue, HAMKA regards faith as the fundamental source from which virtues such as honesty (*sidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), courage (*shajā'ah*), justice (*'adālah*), and wisdom (*hikmah*) arise.

Accordingly, virtue in HAMKA's perspective possesses not only an ethical dimension but also a spiritual one that connects human beings to God. This close relationship between faith and virtue is reflected in his understanding of *akhlāq* (moral character). According to HAMKA, the quality of a person's faith is manifested in his or her social conduct. Authentic faith gives rise to honesty, responsibility, humility, and concern for others. Conversely, faith that remains confined to ritual observance alone cannot produce genuine moral transformation. In this regard, HAMKA rejects the dichotomy between individual piety and social piety. Morality must become the concrete manifestation of faith in everyday life. This view demonstrates that HAMKA understands

religion not merely as a system of beliefs but also as a system of character formation oriented toward human well-being and the common good (Adeel, 2015).

In addition to serving as the moral foundation of the individual, faith also possesses a profound social dimension. In *Tafsir al-Azhar*, while interpreting Qur'anic verses concerning justice, brotherhood, and mutual assistance, HAMKA argues that faith must generate a commitment to social welfare and respect for human dignity (HAMKA, 1984b). A believer is expected to embody values of compassion, justice, and solidarity within society. It is here that the distinctive character of HAMKA's Islamic humanism becomes evident. The humanism he advocates is not centered on humanity as the ultimate authority, as is often the case in secular humanism, but rather on human beings as God's vicegerents (*khalifah*) who bear moral responsibility toward fellow human beings and the environment. This perspective is reinforced by Hardewita's research, which concludes that HAMKA's humanism is rooted in religious conviction that encourages individuals to develop their potential for the benefit of the wider community (Hardewita, 2025).

Thus, in HAMKA's thought, faith is not merely a theological concept but the primary foundation for the formation of the *manusia utama* (ideal human being). Faith functions as a source of values that provides meaning to life, shapes character, generates virtues, and inspires social responsibility. Through the integration of spirituality, morality, and humanity, HAMKA offers an ethical paradigm that may be described as virtue-based Islamic humanism an Islamic humanism grounded in the cultivation of moral virtues through faith. This concept is particularly relevant in addressing the moral and spiritual crises of modern society, as it affirms that human dignity does not reside solely in wealth, power, or intellectual achievement, but in the quality of faith that gives rise to noble character and meaningful contributions to collective human life.

Reason as the Determinant of Human Dignity

In HAMKA's thought, reason (*akal*) is a fundamental element that determines human dignity and superiority over other creatures. Reason is not merely a biological capacity for thinking; rather, it is a divine gift that enables human beings to understand their own nature, recognize God, and manage life responsibly. In *Falsafah Hidup*, HAMKA states that human beings attain their nobility through their ability to think and to discern between right and wrong actions (HAMKA, 1983). Therefore, reason functions not only as an instrument of knowledge but also as a means of discovering values and the meaning of life. Through reason, human beings are able to transcend the limitations of instinct and attain a higher level of humanity. This perspective demonstrates that, in HAMKA's view, human dignity is determined not by social status or material wealth but by the capacity of reason to guide life toward truth and virtue.

HAMKA's understanding of reason as the source of human nobility bears a close resemblance to the Islamic philosophical tradition developed by Ibn Rushd (Averroes). For Ibn Rushd, rational thinking is the defining characteristic that distinguishes human beings from other creatures and serves as a means of understanding the orderliness of God's creation (Nur Kholis, 2017). This similarity indicates that HAMKA regards reason

as an essential instrument in the pursuit of truth. However, unlike Ibn Rushd, who places greater emphasis on the epistemological function of reason, HAMKA gives greater attention to its moral function its capacity to guide human beings toward virtue and ethical responsibility. Consequently, the value of reason in HAMKA's thought is measured not only by its ability to generate knowledge but also by its capacity to shape the quality of human existence.

HAMKA maintains that the primary function of reason extends beyond intellectual activity and must ultimately lead to wisdom (*hikmah*). In *Tasawuf Modern*, he argues that intelligence that is not guided by spiritual purification can easily give rise to arrogance and the misuse of knowledge (HAMKA, 2017). Therefore, truly rational individuals are not merely those who possess extensive knowledge, but those who are capable of controlling their desires and employing their knowledge for the common good. This perspective reflects the influence of the classical Islamic ethical tradition represented by Ibn Miskawayh and al-Ghazali, both of whom regarded reason as the faculty that governs the soul in its pursuit of virtue, with particular emphasis on the attainment of wisdom.

HAMKA's emphasis on wisdom as the ultimate goal of reason demonstrates his affinity with al-Ghazali's thought. According to al-Ghazali, reason is the faculty that enables human beings to distinguish between right and wrong, yet its perfection can only be achieved through spiritual purification and the control of worldly desires (Afifah Nabil Hasna Aisy, Salsabila Nur Hasan, 2025). In this regard, HAMKA advances a similar argument by asserting that intelligence without moral integrity can become a source of destruction rather than benefit. This perspective offers a critique of the modern tendency to measure human progress solely in terms of intellectual and technological achievements without considering moral quality. Research conducted by Asif Trisnani and colleagues indicates that the concept of *hikmah* in HAMKA's thought represents a reconstruction of Islamic virtue ethics, positioning reason as a source of moral wisdom and as a foundation for the formation of the *manusia utama* (ideal human being) (Trisnani et al., 2025).

On the other hand, HAMKA criticizes the tendency of modernity to separate reason from its spiritual dimension. According to him, advances in science and technology do not necessarily correspond to moral progress. In *Lembaga Hidup*, HAMKA warns that reason detached from the values of faith can give rise to intellectual arrogance, exploitation, and humanitarian crises (HAMKA, *Lembaga Hidup*, Jakarta: Republika, 2015, pp. 78–89). Conversely, faith that is not accompanied by the use of reason may lead to blind imitation (*taqlid*), fanaticism, and resistance to change. For this reason, HAMKA proposes an integrative paradigm that unites reason and revelation as two complementary sources of truth. This perspective is supported by the research of M. Zainal Abidin, who argues that HAMKA's epistemology is built upon a harmonious relationship among reason, experience, and revelation in the pursuit of truth. Thus, reason and faith are not opposing forces but rather work synergistically in the formation of a complete human being.

In addition to its individual function, reason also plays a crucial role in the development of civilization. In *Tafsir al-Azhar*, HAMKA interprets various Qur'anic verses concerning the creation of the universe as encouragement for human beings to employ their reason in advancing knowledge and promoting social progress (HAMKA, 1984). According to him, the progress of a nation depends largely on the intellectual quality of its people and their ability to utilize knowledge for the public good. Nevertheless, HAMKA rejects the view that technological advancement should be regarded as the ultimate goal of civilization. Genuine progress is progress that preserves human dignity and strengthens moral values.

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be understood that reason, in HAMKA's perspective, constitutes a fundamental basis of human dignity and a key instrument in the formation of the *manusia utama*. Reason enables human beings to acquire knowledge, cultivate wisdom, build civilization, and fulfill their moral responsibilities as God's vicegerents (*khalifah*) on earth. However, HAMKA rejects the absolutization of reason characteristic of modern secular humanism. Reason must always remain under the guidance of faith so that it does not lose its moral and human orientation. Within the framework of Islamic humanism, the ideal human being is not merely one who is intellectually intelligent, but one who successfully integrates reason, faith, and moral character in life. Through this synthesis, HAMKA offers a paradigm of humanity that views rationality as a means of attaining wisdom, promoting the common good, and fulfilling one's devotion to God (Hanzalah & Harahap, 2025).

The Four Cardinal Virtues as Transformational Ethics

The concept of *manusia utama* (the ideal human being) in HAMKA's thought is founded upon four cardinal virtues: *iffah* (self-restraint), *'adalah* (justice), *syaja'ah* (courage), and *hikmah* (wisdom). These four virtues constitute the foundation of character formation that enables human beings to attain moral excellence and spiritual maturity. In *Lembaga Budi*, HAMKA explains that human nobility is determined not by social status, wealth, or intellectual ability alone, but by one's capacity for self-control and the cultivation of noble character (HAMKA, 2016). Thus, the *manusia utama* is not merely an individual who is personally pious, but also one who embodies virtuous values in social life.

The first virtue is *iffah*, which refers to the ability to control one's desires and keep personal inclinations within proper limits. HAMKA regards *iffah* as the foundation of moral integrity because individuals who lack self-control are easily dominated by greed, ambition, and destructive tendencies. In *Tasawuf Modern*, he argues that happiness is not attained through the unlimited gratification of desires but through self-mastery and the maintenance of inner balance. In the context of modern society, characterized by consumerism and hedonism, *iffah* serves as an ethical safeguard that prevents individuals from losing their moral orientation. This finding is consistent with studies on HAMKA's moral values, which demonstrate that self-restraint is a prerequisite for the formation of a complete Islamic character (HAMKA, 2017).

The second and third virtues are *'adalah* and *syaja'ah*. According to HAMKA, justice extends beyond legal considerations; it also involves the ability to place things in their proper proportion and to respect the rights of others. Likewise, *syaja'ah* is not merely physical bravery but moral courage the courage to uphold truth and resist injustice. In *Falsafah Hidup*, HAMKA emphasizes that a civilized society can only be realized when its members possess the courage to defend justice, even in the face of social pressure or personal interests (HAMKA, 1983). These two virtues demonstrate that HAMKA's ethical framework is not confined to individual development but is also directed toward social transformation through a commitment to justice and public responsibility.

The culmination of all these virtues is *hikmah* (wisdom). In HAMKA's view, wisdom is the capacity to apply knowledge, experience, and moral judgment appropriately in addressing the challenges of life. It is not derived solely from intellectual intelligence but emerges from the integration of reason, faith, life experience, and purity of heart. In *Tafsir al-Azhar*, HAMKA explains that wisdom is the ability to perceive truth profoundly, enabling individuals to make decisions that promote the common good (*maslahah*) (HAMKA, 1981). Recent studies indicate that HAMKA's concept of *hikmah* represents the core of Islamic virtue ethics, functioning to integrate spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions in the formation of a civilized human being (Islam et al., 2025). Research by Muhammad Thoriqul Islam and colleagues further reveals that *hikmah* serves as an integrative principle that connects reason, faith, *adab* (ethical conduct), and social action, thereby offering a solution to the moral crises of modern society (Islam et al., 2025). These findings suggest that wisdom is not merely one virtue among others; rather, it is the central orientation that directs *iffah*, *'adalah*, and *syaja'ah* toward the realization of the common good.

From a philosophical perspective, the four cardinal virtues articulated by HAMKA demonstrate continuity with the tradition of virtue ethics that originated with Aristotle and was later adapted by Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Miskawayh and al-Ghazali. Aristotle identified wisdom (*phronesis*), courage, justice, and temperance as the principal virtues that shape good character (Aristotle, 2009). A similar structure is found in Ibn Miskawayh's ethical thought, which identifies *hikmah*, *syaja'ah*, *iffah*, and *'adalah* as the foundations of the soul's perfection (Ibn Miskawayh, 1968). This similarity indicates that HAMKA stands within the long intellectual lineage of Islamic virtue ethics. However, HAMKA does not merely adopt these concepts; he reconstructs them within the context of modern Muslim society by providing them with a stronger religious foundation and a more explicit social orientation.

Whereas Aristotle viewed virtue as the path to happiness (*eudaimonia*), HAMKA understands virtue as the path to human perfection, encompassing worldly happiness, closeness to God, and social well-being. The uniqueness of HAMKA's thought lies in the way he connects these four virtues to a broader project of moral transformation within society. In many classical theories of virtue ethics, discussions of virtue are primarily centered on individual character formation. By contrast, HAMKA insists that virtue must have tangible social implications. *Iffah* not only fosters personal piety but also prevents

the emergence of consumerist and corrupt cultures; *'adalah* is not merely an individual moral quality but also the foundation of social justice; *syaja'ah* encourages the courage to confront injustice and the abuse of power; and *hikmah* guides all actions toward the realization of broader social benefit. From this perspective, the *manusia utama* is not simply a morally good individual but an agent of transformation capable of embodying and promoting moral values within society.

This concept demonstrates that HAMKA's ethics moves beyond personal character formation toward the cultivation of civilization itself. Consequently, the four cardinal virtues function not only as a framework of personal ethics but also as a form of transformational ethics that remains highly relevant for addressing the moral, social, and humanitarian crises of the contemporary world (Khosiah et al., 2025).

The Ideal Human Being as the Subject of Social Ethics and Civilization

In HAMKA's thought, the *manusia utama* (ideal human being) represents a comprehensive synthesis of faith, reason, and virtue. Faith functions as the moral foundation that provides direction and purpose in life; reason serves as the instrument for understanding truth and managing life rationally; while virtue shapes character and is manifested through concrete actions. Consequently, the *manusia utama* is not confined to personal piety but emerges as an individual capable of translating spiritual values into social responsibility. Human nobility does not lie in status, wealth, or power, but rather in the ability to contribute positively and foster a more dignified life for others. This perspective demonstrates that HAMKA's concept of the ideal human being constitutes a form of Islamic humanism that places character development at the core of human development.

This concept further reveals that HAMKA understands human beings as subjects of social ethics and civilization. Individuals who possess faith and reason are not expected merely to cultivate personal goodness; they must also play an active role in promoting justice, strengthening social solidarity, and preserving humanitarian values within society. Accordingly, the quality of a civilization is ultimately determined by the quality of the people who build it. Research on HAMKA's philosophy of character education indicates that the ultimate goal of human development is not simply the acquisition of knowledge but the formation of individuals who possess moral responsibility toward society and the nation (Kumalasari & Wibowo, 2021).

Thus, according to HAMKA, an advanced civilization is not one that excels merely in material achievements but one that is sustained by the moral integrity of its citizens. The relevance of this idea becomes increasingly evident in the face of contemporary moral crises such as corruption, violence, intolerance, and the growing prevalence of individualism. These problems demonstrate that technological and economic progress do not necessarily correspond to the advancement of human character. In this context, HAMKA's concept of the *manusia utama* offers an alternative paradigm that places moral cultivation (*akhlāq*) at the foundation of social transformation. Studies on HAMKA's philosophy of moral education affirm that social crises are fundamentally

rooted in moral crises within individuals; therefore, the necessary solution is not merely institutional reform but also the reconstruction of character based on faith, reason, and moral virtue (Qurun, 2022).

On this basis, the *manusia utama* in HAMKA's thought can be understood as an agent of civilization who integrates spirituality, intellectuality, and morality into a unified whole. Such a person is not one who withdraws from social reality but rather one who transforms religious values into a source of energy for building a just, peaceful, and civilized society. This is where the significance of HAMKA's thought lies: the *manusia utama* is not only the goal of education and self-cultivation but also a prerequisite for the emergence of a dignified civilization. Therefore, the concept of the ideal human being offers a framework of Islamic ethics that remains highly relevant in addressing the humanitarian challenges of the modern world (Dartim, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

This study finds that the concept of *manusia utama* (the ideal human being) in HAMKA's thought constitutes a paradigm of Islamic humanist ethics centered on the integration of faith, reason, and moral virtue. Faith serves as the moral foundation that provides orientation and purpose in life; reason functions as the determinant of human dignity, guiding individuals toward truth and wisdom; while the cardinal virtues of *iffah* (self-restraint), *'adalah* (justice), *syaja'ah* (courage), and *hikmah* (wisdom) serve as instruments of character formation through which moral values are actualized in everyday life. From the integration of these three elements emerges the concept of the *manusia utama* a person who not only attains individual piety but also fulfills social and civilizational responsibilities.

Accordingly, the *manusia utama* in HAMKA's perspective may be understood as an ethical subject who integrates spirituality, rationality, and morality in the pursuit of a just, dignified, and civilized life. This finding further demonstrates that HAMKA's thought offers a distinctive form of Islamic humanism that differs from secular humanism by situating human dignity within a harmonious relationship with God, fellow human beings, and social life.

This study contributes theoretically to three areas of scholarship. First, within the field of Islamic philosophy, it offers a conceptual reconstruction of the ideal human being based on HAMKA's thought, highlighting the integration of spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social dimensions as the foundation of Islamic ethics. Second, within the discourse of Islamic humanism, the study enriches the development of humanistic theory grounded in Islamic values by presenting the concept of *manusia utama* as a model of humanity oriented not only toward self-development but also toward social responsibility and the public good. Third, within HAMKA studies, this research provides a more systematic interpretation of HAMKA's ideas, which have often been examined separately in relation to Sufism, education, or morality, by integrating them into a coherent framework of Islamic humanist ethics.

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to reconstruct HAMKA's concept of *manusia utama* as a systematic framework of Islamic humanist ethics that remains relevant to contemporary contexts. Unlike previous studies, which generally examined HAMKA's views on humanity, morality, or education in isolation, this research demonstrates the conceptual interconnectedness of these ideas and formulates them as a model of Islamic humanist ethics capable of responding to various modern humanitarian challenges, including moral crises, individualism, materialism, and spiritual disorientation. Future research may focus on comparative studies between HAMKA's concept of *manusia utama* and modern virtue ethics theories, as well as classical Islamic ethical thought. In addition, empirical studies could investigate the implementation of this concept in education, leadership, character development, and contemporary social life. In this way, the theoretical and practical relevance of HAMKA's thought can continue to be developed in addressing the challenges of civilization in the modern and digital age.

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