

Self-made individual

Ibrahim's transcendence, as perceived by the narrator, is linked to the concept of being "self-made," which appears in two instances. In the first instance, the narrator notes that Ibrahim's self-made nature has granted him a form of sovereignty over himself and a sense of purpose. "He even became a professional builder; he learned the trade from his friend, and they became partners, employing a worker to assist them, taking on medium-sized building contracts. It became clear that Ibrahim's self-made nature was making a man out of him."

Linguistically, the concept of being self-made refers to someone who has "achieved eminence by the virtue of their own character, not by the virtue of their ancestors". The term has been commonly used to describe anyone "toiling, striving to develop them-

selves through their own efforts". Thus, to be self-made can be considered philosophically as an existential practice where an individual finds the meaning of their existence and life by adhering to firm principles such as personal responsibility, autonomy, and intellectual freedom. These principles will elevate and develop the individual in pursuit of self-sovereignty and the shaping of their desired destiny.

In the second instance, the self-made individual is associated with the true leader; thus, being self-made is the foundation for a political leader capable of confronting the circumstances of occupation. "Every day, Ibrahim grew more transcendent and respected in my eyes; he was the one who grew up an orphan after his father was martyred when he was four years old, then was abandoned by his mother while

still young, raised among us, and became a self-made man, and a true leader despite his young age and the difficult circumstances under occupation."

When Ibrahim's self-made nature merges with its political dimension, it makes him a leader; someone capable of developing not only himself but also his community and his people, elevating their collective condition. He carries them beyond, to overcome the difficult political circumstances towards freedom. For the narrator, Ibrahim embodies this model of the transcendent human being, who ascends and elevates themselves by finding the meaning of their existence in their commitment to the political role of uplifting their people. In other words, they ascend through a political practice philosophically founded on self-made principles.



Yahya Sinwar (sitting-C) takes a group photo with his prison pals including Samir Kuntar (standing-R), a member of the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) and Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement, in an Israeli prison.

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Übermensch, self-made individual

In existential philosophy, Nietzsche introduces the idea of the "Übermensch," an individual who has transcended and ascended to achieve true freedom embodied in the ability to shape their own destiny. According to Nietzsche, the transcendent individual is one who chooses their goals and selects their values, and principles without succumbing to any societal pressures beyond their control. This concept invites individuals to embrace what he calls the "Will to

Power," an inner drive for liberation and self-sovereignty. Thus, the Übermensch forms an intellectual model of a person who overcomes societal values and standards that hinder them and creates their own values.

In contrast, Sinwar's transcendent individual is the politically self-made individual; one who chooses their goals in a way that contributes to their political liberation. Therefore, they engage in shaping their identity and defining their values within the social and political fabric that shelters them. This process is not merely a personal quest

for freedom but a political act that involves challenging and contributing to the formation of collective identity in a way that serves the freedom of the entire community.

The politically transcendent individual, through the self-made philosophy, is a model of the practical person who deals with inherited societal values—social, moral, and religious—as resources to enhance their community's drive for liberation and to achieve political ascendance. They understand that their struggle against occupation is an existential

battle and a war on the Palestinian "will to power"; that is, a war on their drive to politically self-govern. In this context, self-made philosophy transcends individual self-determination and becomes a tool to influence and shape political discourse. The hard-working individual committed to achieving their liberatory goal will harness all the efforts of others for that purpose as much as they can. As for the Islamic Resistance Movement, it seeks through Islamic values to produce this transcendent individual, or this state of being in the Pal-

estinian individual; so how do these values contribute to that?

"The house became filled with men and women, boys and girls from the same family, and memories flooded back of us as children gathered in a small room that was too big for us. Our modest family had grown into a small army over the years... I mentioned this jokingly; my mother quickly shouted, 'Send blessings upon the Prophet,' a gentle reminder to mind my words. Immediately, everyone chorused, 'O Allah, bless our master Muhammad.'"



Hamas leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar poses defiantly for a photo in his office premises, which was bombed by Israel Defense Forces (IDF), amidst IDF's massive hunt for him in 2023.

TASNIM

Islam, self-made individual

The novel begins in the winter of 1967, just before the Naksa, when Gaza was under the administration of Egypt. Ahmad, then five years old, recounts one of his earliest memories — his interactions with Egyptian soldiers whom he frequently visits. They would play with him and give him and his friends pistachio sweets. Then, the war breaks out, and the soldiers shout at them to go back, and they no longer get any sweets.

"The occupation forces had faced fierce resistance in one area and withdrew. Shortly after, a group of tanks and military jeeps appeared, flying Egyptian flags. The resistance fighters rejoiced, thinking help had arrived, and they emerged from their positions and trenches, firing into the air in celebration. They gathered to welcome the reinforcements, but when the convoy approached, heavy fire was opened on the fighters, killing them. Then, the Zionist flag was raised on those tanks and vehicles, instead of the Egyptian flags."

This scene signals an ideological turning point in the Palestinian struggle: the realization of the failure of Arab nationalism, or its inadequacy as a political current in inducing the necessary seriousness in individuals towards the Palestinian national cause, especially in the face of the ever-increasing voracity of the occupation.

While the philosophy of the self-made

individual encompasses a condition for elevation, which is seriousness and commitment to the pursuit, "self-made individuals look at their goals with respect and belief, and they take the matter of achieving them with utmost seriousness, without compromise. They are simply committed to what they must do to achieve that." Here, the "extraordinary connection between religion and nationalism" achieves this seriousness through the obligation of jihad, or holy war, imbuing the national cause with sanctity and thus planting in the individual the strict seriousness necessary to achieve it, as the narrator states: "So that the battle takes its true dimension and meets the required standard."

When the politically self-made individual looks around, they find the Islamic system among the last social systems that have remained steadfast among Palestinians in the face of societal annihilation, or sociocide, committed by the occupation. They find, in the intertwining of political practice and faith, in transferring the reference of the Palestinian's existence and purpose to Allah, a principle that the enemy cannot disintegrate. The self-made individual finds in historical Islamic sites, stable political edifices against occupation's attempts to erode awareness and distort direction. Therefore, we find Ibrahim, who calls the battle "a battle of civilization,



Yahya Sinwar rides a bus on his way to Gaza after his release from prison in the Shalit deal in 2011.

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history, and existence," organizing a trip for the youth to learn about their concealed lands and their sacred and historical Islamic sites, the foremost being al-Aqsa Mosque. These sites are where the flourishing of Palestinian culture, self-sovereignty, and the shaping of their land destiny are embodied. Here, the architecture of al-Aqsa Mosque and the majestic Dome of the Rock stand in stark contrast to the architecture of the refugee camp, which embodies the state of confinement for Palestinians. Hence, Hamas places special emphasis on al-Aqsa for encapsulating the sacred historical meanings that immortalize the Palestinian cause, like al-Isra' wa al-Mi'raj, or the Night Journey of

Prophet Muhammad, forming a point of connection between the land of Palestine and the heavens. Perhaps this is why the battle addressing the freedom of the Palestinian prisoners is named "al-Aqsa Flood," in an attempt to magnify the cause of the prisoners, emphasizing that the freedom of Palestinians is the meaning for which their Lord created them. Although Islam links the political struggle to Allah and the meaning of human existence, this connection goes beyond merely granting the struggle lofty meanings such as the afterlife and reward from Allah. So, how do these meanings practically manifest in individuals who practice a life centered around politics?

Asceticism

The novel pays special attention to the phase of "education and preparation" in the history of Hamas's inception. One day, a Sheikh, also named Ahmad, passes by the young men and teenagers of the camp who are loitering in the streets and spending their time playing around. He warns them against useless amusement and urges them to engage in prayer, worship, and contemplation instead, "linking all of this to the future of Islam, whose banner must be raised

in the land of Palestine." The Sheikh then spends decades with them, instilling Islamic values that promote asceticism and renunciation of worldly desires in favor of the hereafter, creating a generation "capable of sacrifice and self-sacrifice".

Perhaps the novel's thesis on love, which represents the most intense connection to the self and the "mundane life" in Islamic terms, showcases how this asceticism enhances the meaning of existence in political practice. The

narrator says, "It overwhelmed me with a feeling of comfort... Is this love? (...) I was later sufficed with watching her leave for university from afar; not aspiring for more than that, not even a glance. It was enough for me to love, and it was enough that she understood that well." Thus, Ahmad is satisfied with knowing love in his world, postponing its attainment until the appropriate time when he can propose to her as he was "raised since his childhood". He does not feel the need for love just

because it is the "Love" that he has always heard about.

Ibrahim then clarifies to Ahmad that he, too, knew love, and because he considers himself part of the national struggle, he decided not to pursue it, stating that "it turns into a whip with which the occupation lashes the backs of those in love with one another. Ahmad, when this noble sacred relationship is used by collaborators as a pressure card on lovers, forcing them to abandon their first love, Al-Quds, is there still room for love and

passion in our lives?" Ibrahim explains how systematic asceticism in Islamic philosophy reflects on political life; it is an upbringing that allows an individual to renounce desires at any time if they conflict with or endanger their national endeavor. It molds the individual such that the national endeavor becomes the central meaning of his life, his foremost desire, and the foundation upon which he constructs other aspects of his life.

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