

Intro: Dr Muhammad Kamal was born in 1955 in the city of Kirkuk. After finishing high school in the city of Sulaymaniyah, he completed tertiary education in teaching in Hewler/Erbil city, in 1977. Later, in 1979 he left Kurdistan for educational purposes, and arrives in the city of Karachi in Pakistan. Following the completion of his education, and gaining PhD from University of Karachi, he worked at the university as a lecturer and associate professor until 1994.

Dr Kamal arrived in Australia in 1994, and he has worked as a lecturer in a number of universities in the state of Victoria to-date. Currently, he is the head of Asia Institute at The University of Melbourne, and until now Dr Muhammad Kamal has published many books on Hegelian [Hegel's] and Existential Philosophy, in both Kurdish and English.

And now let's hear from Dr Kamal himself about all of his work.

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A: As you know, in my academic capacity, my specialisation is on Hegel, particularly Hegel's logic system, known as "Dialectic Logic". Then in my private life, or in my private thoughts, I work on existentialism, or expressing my own perspective on this philosophy and the core of this philosophy, I've written several books, such as "Basic Ontology", "Human Existence", "Existence and Innovation", [and] "Existential Philosophy". These are based on my thoughts and viewpoint regarding philosophy. However, the other books that I've written are regarding philosophy of Hegel, Heidegger, Nietzsche or Sartre, those are on philosophy in general, but these are books I've written and are not translations.

Q: What are the books that you have translated?

A: I have translated several books. Actually, I would like to talk a little bit about the challenges of translation... [host: yes...] Because, you know, the Kurdish library is poor, from philosophical and scientific research perspective [host: undoubtedly...]. So, I felt like it is my duty to try and fill that gap. Secondly, when I first started writing about philosophy... for example, I wrote, and published a book about Heidegger's philosophy, I felt like the Kurdish reader doesn't have access to the original text by Heidegger, in order for them to understand my explanation of Heidegger's philosophy. Hence, I began to translate several philosophical books, which I believe were important for the Kurdish library and market.

Those books... I initially began with Aristotle's book, particularly Aristotle's Metaphysics. Later, I translated a number of Aristotle's books to Kurdish. I translated "Plato's Republic" to Kurdish which is written by Plato, also Martin Heidegger's book "Being and Time", "Being and Nothingness" by Sartre, finally, a book which has now gone back to Serdem [or Sardam] Publishers, a book by Hegel called "Phenomenology of Mind."

Q: As you mentioned, Kurdish language may not be sufficient enough to explain all the terminologies of a sophisticated language such as philosophy's...How have you been able to fill-in those limitations?

A: When I first started writing in regarding philosophy in Kurdish, I did sense my own shortcomings, of course, my shortcomings were related to Kurdish language. [Host: sure, yes...]. As you know, I also write in English, when I write in English all the terminologies and dialects, let's say...the pre-prepared philosophical language is ready for me to use to express my desired point of view. However, in Kurdish language, because we are still in the beginning of philosophical and scientific research, that philosophical language has not been created. This doesn't mean that Kurds cannot write in a philosophical or scientific language, we need to have a starting point to begin from, the beginning of philosophical writing and scientific research.

I, for instance... felt a sense of responsibility, that I should try in my capacity to create a Kurdish philosophical language, or the philosophical dialect that is used in philosophical language. I could [say] that my efforts have so far been successful to a certain degree, because the readers who have read my books or the respectable people who review and criticise them, or forward their opinions, they approve of my work to a certain degree. They're not so bad, that a reader could not understand them, or for them not to understand what I am talking about. Therefore, I feel like this is a needed start for all of us, or the Kurdish intellectuals in general need to start, so we can create a Kurdish language for philosophy and science.

Q: Yes... I'm not sure when was the last time you visited Kurdistan, or even from afar, are you aware if your field, whether philosophy or in general, how has it developed academically, and how far does it need to go in order to reach an international standard?

A: Yes, recently as you know, two philosophy faculties were opened in University of Salahaddin and Raperin University in Rania, they have good teachers and good students who are interested in philosophical studies, but as I said; this is only the beginning, more needs to be done, especially when it comes to political authorities, as the Kurdish political authorities have not given enough consideration to philosophical studies. However, whenever I return to Kurdistan, I become quite pleased regarding what I witness. The youth who seek philosophy books or like to engage in philosophical discussions in cafes and coffee-houses, they're constantly reading. Also, another pleasant fact, I mean it is really heart-warming, the philosophy books that are published, they disappear, they sell out really quickly in the shops, the youth purchase them. This indicates that the Kurdish reader is truly thirsty for reading... in other words, thirsty for reading serious philosophy and scientific research.

Q: Yes, as you mentioned in the beginning, you have studied Hegel's philosophy, and that is your area of expertise, but you're also interested in Existentialism... If you could, for those people and for those listeners who don't know much about philosophy, explain a little about Existentialism, for example (in a simplified way)?

A: I'd like to further explain this topic and go back to the past... in the beginning when I was really young, I was in high school in Sulaymaniyah, it was then when I was introduced to philosophy, especially Sartre's philosophy, who was a French philosopher, he was an existentialist, or an advocate for existence/being. Sartre had a major impact on me. As a young person, I become an advocate for existence right from the start. Even when I left Kurdistan to pursue study in philosophy and I reached PhD level, I wanted my PhD to be on

Hegel's philosophy, not Existentialism philosophy. I still remember the professor whom I reached out to, to study my PhD under his supervision, he asked me: 'give me one reason so that I am satisfied to supervise your PhD on Hegel's philosophy. Why do you wish to do your thesis on Hegel's philosophy?' and I said: 'the only reason I have is that I haven't understood Hegel's philosophy, I want to understand it.'

Because, as you know when you study the thoughts of a philosopher for three-four years, you'll develop a deep understanding of philosophy. At the time Hegel was really important to me, because Hegel is truly a philosopher that there aren't many philosophical schools of thought that aren't influenced by him. You'd know, especially the philosophy of Marxism, which became the philosophy of half the world, it was developed under the influence of Hegel.

This is in my academic field, I mean this was my ambition, I wanted to understand philosophy better. However, since my youth... I was thinking and acting as an existentialist person. What attracted me the most to existentialism philosophy, was issues of true freedom, my own true being. I've always considered myself as different from others in the society, I couldn't think the same as everyone else around me, I couldn't accept the values and morals of my society and make them my own. I viewed myself as different, or I felt as though there was a sort of originality in my being, which separated me from others. I found this kind of thinking in the existential philosophy.

When I became familiar with Existentialist philosophy, I tried harder to be an original being, and think as I am, live as I am, and not as others wished, or I believed in my own independence, I believed in my own decision making and planning my own path. Thus, any human being who believes in his/her own desires and independence, believes that they are capable of planning their own path in life, and makes their own decisions on their projects, and not allow others to make those decisions for them, that person will become an Existentialist... this is in short... the thinking of existentialism in someone's daily life.

Q: You're now busy with lecturing, or you're a professor at the University of Melbourne, apart from your daily work, do you have any projects that you're currently working on?

A: Yes, my daily academic life is as the following: of course, I am at university every day, aside from lecturing and supervising PhD students, I've divided my week into two parts; I've allocated three days for reading and writing in English. Of course, this is essential if I want to continue my work... I need to continuously write and publish my work in English.

Secondly, I dedicate the second part of my week for reading and writing in Kurdish. So, the second part is really more important to me, because this is something that I feel I serve my people with, the more I write, the more I try to add another philosophy book to the Kurdish library for the Kurdish reader, the future will be brighter for the Kurdish people, if they can benefit from the knowledge that I provide in my books.

So, I'll speak more about the second part of my week, in this part... I'm constantly busy writing in Kurdish, I also read. Of course, I always have projects, last year I had a project of translating Hegel's book, titled "Phenomenology of Mind", which is currently at 'Serdem' Publications, and will be released soon. After this, I began writing a book on Hegel's logic, because I believed that since the Kurdish reader can read a book by Hegel called "Phenomenology of Mind", which is a masterpiece of Hegel's philosophy, they should also be aware of his logic system. Currently, I am writing a book on Hegel's logic, not a

translation, but I am writing the book myself in Kurdish. After this project, of course this project will be completed next year and I will send it to Kurdistan for publication, I have other projects which I'm working on completing in the near future.

Outro: Dr Muhammad Kamal, thank you very much for being with SBS Kurdish radio. Wishing you all the success, we thank you very much for your time and all the insight.

Dr Kamal: I also thank you.