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Groundwork in Islamic Philosophy

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Background Information

Greek philosophy was the major formative influence on the later philosophical traditions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. In all three, the theories of the Greeks, particularly Plato and Aristotle, were employed to clarify and develop the basic beliefs of the religious traditions.

In the Islamic tradition the starting point was the work of Plato and Aristotle. The 9th-century Neoplatonist al- Kindi was followed by al-Farabi, who drew on both Plato and Aristotle to create a universal Islamic philosophy.

The most important of the medieval Muslim philosophers, however, was Avicenna (ibn Sina). Starting from the distinction between essence and existence, Avicenna developed a metaphysics in which God, the necessary being, is the source of created nature through emanation. Both his metaphysics and his intuitionist theory of knowledge were influential in the later Middle Ages as well as in the later history of Islamic thought.

The philosophical tradition did not go unchallenged, however. The 11th-century theologian and mystic al-Ghazali mounted a critique of philosophy, specifically Avicenna's, that is rich in argument and insight. Al-Ghazali's Incoherence of the Philosophers provoked a response by Averroes ibn Rushd entitled the Incoherence of the Incoherence, in which al-Ghazali's arguments are countered point for point. Averroes was best known, however, as an interpreter of Aristotle and excited great influence on all subsequent thinkers in the Aristotelian tradition.

In the later Middle Ages the historian and philosopher Ibn Khaldun produced a trenchant critique of culture, and the elaboration of metaphysics and epistemology was carried on in the theosophical schools of Islamic mysticism.

Introduction

Relative to Western philosophy, the field of Islamic philosophy has remained largely dormant for the past few hundred years. The rigor of intellectual thought in Islam has been lost and contemporary Muslim thinkers are faced with the enormous challenge of reinterpreting and integrating the tremendous intellectual achievements of the West with that of earlier Islamic thinkers and the Quran (the Muslim holy book).

This endeavor is of crucial importance to any new Islamic intellectual renaissance. With the rise of Western science and philosophy, serious new challenges have been posed to the very fundamental principles of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics, espoused by the classical thinkers of Islam. These issues need to be addressed, as Muhammad Iqbal, perhaps the first modern Muslim philosopher to deal with these problems in any comprehensive manner, writes:

With the reawakening of Islam, therefore, it is necessary to examine, in an independent spirit, what Europe has thought and how far the conclusions reached by her can help us in the revision and if necessary, reconstruction, of theological thought in Islam. [Iqbal, p. 6]

The current undertaking will by no means meet the challenge put forth by Iqbal. It will, however, attempt to at least lay out some of the issues in Islamic epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy of religion. The difficulty of studies in this field, is compounded by the fact that there is very little academic material available on Islamic philosophy, and much of it remains to be translated from their original languages.

Even if translated, many of the issues in modern philosophy have changed over time and it is not clear how to relate the medieval debates with the modern ones. In short, there is a significant period of intellectual lapse on the Islamic side, between the middle ages and today.

Despite these problems, there is a need to present intellectual thought in Islam in an easy to understand yet rigorous manner, that maybe contribute towards enhancing further studies between western and Islamic philosophy. Both traditions have much to gain from each other.

It is important to understand the basic framework and essentials tools used by Islamic philosophers in order to critique and build upon their works. Modern western philosophy has already dismissed many of the claims of medieval thinkers. It is now worth evaluating if the earlier claims are worth of a reexamination.

It is peculiar that many of the modern western arguments have close analogues in the earlier Islamic thinkers. Some have suggested that perhaps, this shows the influence of Islamic thought on European thought.

Many of the classic works of Islamic philosophy were translated into Latin from Arabic at the beginning of the European renaissance. These along with translated Greek manuscripts greatly impacted the development of western thought. This influence is best seen in the works of the likes of, Descartes and Aquinas. In any case, I think, the material is best viewed as a progression of thought from the Greeks onto the Muslims and then to Europe, and not as two different and opposed points of view.

There are three major, purely rational, arguments for the existence of God that have had a significant influence on the history of philosophy of religion. These are namely, the Cosmological, Teleological and Ontological arguments. Other arguments put forth for the existence of God are the arguments from morality and probability.

This paper will examine the three major arguments as they are presented in modern philosophy and compare them with arguments for the existence of God presented by ancient and modern Islamic philosophers. It will also attempt to clarify the role of philosophy in Islamic thought, and how Muslim philosophers have attempted to reconcile faith and reason.

The main argument against the existence of God, has been the problem of evil. This has posed many problems to the theist, and Islamic philosophy is only beginning to tackle the problem in western terms. Another stream of arguments for God's existence, recently proposed in contemporary western philosophy are the proofs from religious experience. This is a theme also present in Islamic philosophy and the second part of this project will examine this issue.

Philosophy and Islam

Philosophy is concerned with the fundamental questions about nature and reality. Al-Kindi called philosophy the most exalted science, since it dealt with issues which are universal. Al-Kindi (Alkindus, 800 &endash; 873 CE) is recognized as the first Arab or Muslim philosopher. He defines philosophy as the love of wisdom, from the Greek words philo (friend) and sophia (wisdom) [Kindi, pp.18-19].

Ibn Rushd (Averroes) goes a step further and states that the Quran makes the study of philosophy obligatory upon all believers. Ibn Rushd (Averroes, 1128 &endash; 1198 CE) is considered a major Aristotelian Muslim and Spanish philosopher. He states that philosophy is nothing more than the study of beings and reflection upon them.

The Quran encourages mankind to "Reflect, you have vision." At another place it states, "have they not studied the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and whatever things God has created?" Here God is urging the readers to study the world and how and why objects and beings exist. Ibn Rushd concludes that God requires man to try to obtain demonstrative knowledge of His existence. But prior to having demonstrative knowledge, Man must be able to have dialectical, theoretical and logical knowledge. That is for man to learn he must know the basis of reasoning. Hence, philosophy is not only necessary but also commanded by the divine [Ibn Rusd, pp. 44-46].

Al-Ghazzali finds serious problems with the philosophers of his era. He writes, "they have abandoned all the religious duties of Islam imposes on its followers." He thinks that the kind of reasoning used by philosophers would never result in the proof of the existence of God. Al-Ghazzali (Algazel, 1058 &endash; 1111 CE) was an extremely influential orthodox Muslim thinker who rebuffed many of the claims of the 'philosophers' who claimed they could proof God by reason alone.

Ibn Rushd admits that philosophy may have its harms as a discipline, but these harms are no greater than those resulting from the study of medicine or law. Since, the study of philosophy is commanded by God Himself, it is obligatory, although it is possible to misuse the science for other purposes [Ibn Rushd. pp. 47].

As Al-Kindi and most Muslim philosophers agree philosophy cannot reach as far as revelation can. Hence, the basis of our actions should be based upon Islam, whereas philosophy ought to be considered as an independent discipline. It should also be noted that the thrust of Ghazzali's argument is not against philosophy, but rather its use.

His main concern is that the philosophers are drawing conclusions from their 'arguments' that are not valid. Muhammad Iqbal sees no contradiction between faith and reason. Iqbal (1877-1938 CE) in this century is considered the poet-philosopher of Islam, his works have been extremely influential in the revival of Islamic thought. He was born in (what is now) Pakistan but studied in Britain and Germany, thus providing insight into both philosophical traditions. He thinks that both thought and intuition arise from the same source and don't oppose each other, but rather are complimentary.

Reason aims at understanding the physical world and existence, whereas religious experience aims at transcending this world and achieving the knowledge of the ultimate. Iqbal then thinks that it is necessary for Muslims to engage themselves in the study and science of philosophy in order to redefine Islamic culture, which is now confronted with a more advanced western civilization. If Muslim thinkers fail in this challenge, then Muslim thought may be absorbed by Western philosophy, as the two cultures begin to integrate further.

This debate is not uniquely Islamic, similar debates have persisted in Christian thought as well. While religious tensions in Europe were hindering analytical thought, it was flourishing in Muslim lands. As the Churches influenced decreased a more dynamic movement emerged in Europe brining with it a whole new worldview moving towards reason and away from dogma.

Today many Christian theologians also use philosophy to justify their positions, as is similar among certain Muslim groups. The irritating problem, however, is to uphold the conclusion of these theists on purely philosophical grounds, in the face of a challenge from radical skepticism.

Analytical Arguments

Cosmological Arguments

The cosmological argument was first introduced by Aristotle and later refined in western Europe by the celebrated Christian theologian, Thomas Aquinas (d.1274 CE). In the Islamic tradition, it was adopted by Al-Kindi, and Ibn Rushd (Averroes). The argument has several forms, the basic first-cause argument runs as follows. Every event must have a cause, and each cause must in turn have its own cause, and so forth. Hence, there must either be an infinite regress of causes or there must be a starting point or first cause. Aquinas and Al-Kindi reject the notion of an infinite regress and insist that there must be a first cause, and the first cause must be God, the only uncaused being.

Another form of this argument is based on the concept of a prime-mover. This is the Aristotelian form of the argument also propounded by Averroes. The premise being that, every motion must be caused by another motion, and the earlier motion must in turn be a result of another motion and so on. The conclusion thus follows that there must be an initial prime-mover, a mover that could cause motion without any other mover.

Two kinds of Islamic perspectives may be considered with regard to the cosmological argument. A positive Aristotelian response strongly supporting the argument and a negative response which is quite critical of it. Among the Aristotelian thinkers are Al-Kindi, and Averroes. Al-Ghazzali and Iqbal maybe seen as being in opposition to this sort of an argument.

Al-Kindi is one of the many major and first Islamic philosophers who attempt to introduce an argument for the existence of God based upon purely empirical premises. In fact, his chief contribution is the cosmological argument (dalil al-huduth) for the existence of God, in his On First Philosophy [Nasr, p. 168]. He presents four different versions of this argument, all are variation of the cosmological argument which require a cause.

One of the arguments revolves around the principle of determination (tarjjih), that is prior to the existence of the universe it was equally likely for it to exist or not to exist. The fact that it exists, implies that it required a determining principle which would cause its existence to prevail over nonexistence. This principle of determination is God [Kindi, p. 58].

This is similar to Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason [Russell, p. 568; Cassirer, p. 73]. Leibniz argues that everything in the world is contingent: that it may or may not have existed. Something will not exist unless there is a reason for its existence. This rests on his premise that the actual world is the best possible world, as such we can account for everything in it as being there for a specific reason. But the universe as a whole, requires a further reason for existence, and that reason for Liebniz is God.

It should be noted that Liebniz' theory of the best possible world is flawed. We can conceive of a better world than any possible 'best' world that can be created. An additional unit of pleasure or goodness can be added to it to make it better. Therefore, it seems implausible to think that a 'best possible world' could ever exist.

There are difficulties with this kind of an account of the universe. It seems to lead to the conclusion that all truths are necessary. That is, if everything exists because the reasons for its existence supersede the reasons for it nonexistence, then it will necessarily exist. Everything and anything with a sufficient reason to exist will exist. Therefore, the universe and everything in it, must necessarily exist. Since, the superiority of its potential existence over its nonexistence provides the required determining principle (of Kindi) or sufficient reason (of Liebniz), for it to exist.

It appears now that the bringing into being of the universe is not contingent upon the will of God, rather it is something that is as necessary as the existence of God Himself. This seems implausible. In response Liebniz argues that its existence is only theoretically necessary and God may or may not implement it. However, if God is all good, He would clearly be obliged to bring into being the best possible world [Sosa, p. 515].

A second argument of his draws its inspiration from Islamic and Aristotelian sciences. He argues that only God is indivisible, and everything other than God is in some way composite or multiple. Kindi describes his concept of God: He has no matter, no form, no quantity, no quality, no relation; nor is He qualified by any of the remaining categories (al-maqulat). He has no genus, no differentia, no species, no proprium, no accident. He is immutable He is, therefore, absolute oneness, nothing but oneness (wahdah). Everything else must be multiple [Sharif, p. 429].

This for Kindi was a crucial distinction upon which he rested some of his main arguments for God's existence. In Kindi's theory only God's oneness is necessary whereas that of all others is contingent upon God. Hence all other beings single or multiple must emanate from the ultimate essential being. In addition this first being must be uncaused, since it is the cause of everything else [Fakhry, p. 78].

The material world cannot exist ad infinitum because of the impossibility of an actual infinite (a concept borrowed from Aristotle). The material world can also not be eo ipso eternal, because of the impossibility of an infinite duration of time, since the existence of time is contingent upon the existence of bodies and motion, which have been shown to be finite. As such the world requires a creator, or rather a generator (mudhith) in Kindi's scheme, who could generate the world ex nihilo [Fakhry, pp. 74-79].

The other arguments he presents are similar versions of the first cause argument, and hence are subject to the same criticisms that apply to any cosmological argument. These criticisms come not only from western scholars but also Islamic ones. Ghazzali is unconvinced by the first-cause arguments of Kindi.

In response to them he writes, According to the hypothesis under consideration, it has been established that all the beings in the world have a cause. Now, let the cause itself have a cause, and the cause of the cause have yet another cause, and so on ad infinitum. It does not behoove you to say that an infinite regress of causes is impossible. [Tahafut, pp. 90-91]

Ghazzali thought that it is at least theoretically possible for there to be an infinite regress, and that there is nothing that necessitates a first-cause

simply by pure deductive reason. He thus undermines one of the essential premises of the first-cause argument.

Muhammad Iqbal also rejects the argument stating, "Logically speaking, then, the movement from the finite to the infinite as embodied in the cosmological argument is quite illegitimate; and the argument fails in toto." For Iqbal the concept of the first uncaused cause is absurd; he continues:

It is, however, obvious that a finite effect can give only a finite cause, or at most an infinite series of such causes. To finish the series at a certain point, and to elevate one member of the series to the dignity of an uncaused first cause, is to set at naught the very law of causation on which the whole argument proceeds.

It is for these reasons that modern philosophers almost unanimously reject the cosmological argument as a legitimate proof for the existence of God. Kant for example also rejects any cosmological proof on the grounds that it is nothing more than an ontological proof in disguise. He argued that any necessary object's essence must involve existence, hence reason alone can define such a being, and the argument becomes quite similar to the ontological one in form, devoid of any empirical premises.

Al-Kindi's argument has been taken up by some contemporary western philosophers and dubbed the Kalam Cosmological Argument. Kalam being the Islamic science of dialectical reasoning. Among its chief proponents today is Dr. William Craig [Ramey]. It proposes to show, contrary to what Ghazzali thought, that the universe must have necessarily had a beginning. A contrast is drawn between two concepts, the "potential infinite" and an "actual infinite."

A potential infinite is a concept of an infinite series, to which more things can be added. For example, there maybe and infinite number of integers, however in any one set there will be a finite number of them. An "actual infinite" would be a set which would contain all possible integers.

This would be impossible, since there are an infinite number of integers. Once a set is defined, another integer can always be found to add to it. They can never actually exist. Ramey quotes a famous mathematician, David Hilbert:

the actual infinite is nowhere to be found in reality. It neither exists in nature nor provides a legitimate basis for rational thought -- a remarkable harmony between being and thought.

This forms an essential part of the argument, it demonstrates that an infinite regress could not exist, and that the universe can not possibly be actually infinite, in and of itself. The argument goes on to show that if the universe could not be actually infinite or eternal, given the principle of causality, it must have a first-cause or creator, which is God.

Now, it maybe argued, that if an actual infinite cannot exist, then how can God exist? Since the concept of God, is one of an uncaused and infinite being. Al-Kindi's answer is quite interesting. He states that it is not fair to ask this question of God, since God is not an "actual infinite." God is not a set or collection of things, He is one. God is an absolute unity, and hence on Al-Kindi's scheme God should not be thought of as an 'infinite' [Fakhry, p. 77].

It is not clear, however, if the Kalam argument successfully shows the impossibility of an infinite, a common response (which is also offered by Avicenna) has been to point out that there is no problem imagining an infinite that begins at the present and continues into the future, so it follows that it is entirely conceivable for the same infinity to continue in the past as well [Sharif, p. 503].

Contemporary supporters of this argument have reformulated the first-cause argument to take away the difficulty of explaining why an infinite regress would be impossible. Hick explains, "they interpret the endless series that it excludes, not as a regress of events back in time, but as an endless and therefore eternally inconclusive regress of explanations." Thus a move is made from an infinite regress of events to an infinite regress of explanations.

That is, if events can be explained with reference to other events there must be an ultimate reality of self-explanatory events behind this complex that would make the collective set comprehendible. Hence, no longer is a creator being sought, rather given the creation an ultimate reality is being sought which would explain, or make sense of, the complex and plethora of phenomena in the world. Even here, the non-theistic skeptic will ask what reason do we have to think that the universe is not simply an "unintelligible brute fact"? [Hick, p. 21].

Teleological Arguments

The version of the argument from design is best known in contemporary philosophy as presented by William Paley (1805) in his Natural Theology. He presents us with an analogy of a watch. Suppose that while walking in a deserted remote location one comes across a watch. Upon examining this device one may ask themselves how did this object come into existence.

Surely it could not be by pure chance, it is composed of intricate and complex internal design. We are likely to think that it was a product of an intelligent designer, i.e. there must be a watchmaker.

In the same way Paley argues that the universe is much more complex and manifestly designed. The extraordinary design is evident from planets and galaxies at the cosmic level to human cells and atoms at the quantum level. Therefore this world must have an intelligent creator.

This form of the argument can be seen as an inference to the best explanation. That is given the remarkable phenomena of the universe, the best possible explanation for this, must be the existence of God. Elliot Sober explains this in terms of the Likelihood Principle, which he defines as: "O" strongly favors "H1" over "H2" if and only if "H1" assigns to "O" a probability that is much bigger than the probability that "H2" assigns to "O" [Sober, pp. 31-33].

Here "O" is an observation, and "H" is a hypothesis. The likelihood may be mathematically written as [P (O/H)]: the probability of the observation given the hypothesis. The principle in probability theory form would state that "O" strongly favors "H1" over "H2" if and only if "P(O/H1) >> P(O/H2)." This Sober makes clear is not to be confused with the Probability Principle which states can be written as "[P (H/O)]."

These are two important distinct principles. Sober gives an example of the observation (O) that while sitting in a cabin one hears rumblings in the attic. On the basis of this one forms the hypothesis (H) that there are gremlins in the attic and they are bowling. Now it is clear that the P (O/H) is very high, that is, if there were gremlin's bowling (H) the likelihood of the rumbling noise (O) would be quite high.

But P (H/O) in this case is very low. Since given the rumbling noise (O), the probability of the explanation being bowling gremlins (H) is small. "The gremlin hypothesis has a high likelihood but a low probability given the noises we hear" [Sober, p. 32].

The Likelihood Principle a much better way to understand the inference to the best explanation, since in the case of God a hypothesis is being formed on the basis of observations, in the teleological sense.

Paley, according to Sober, is attempting to apply the Likelihood Principle to the watch example. That is, given that the watch is intricate and well-designed for timekeeping (O), the inference that it was designed by an intelligent creator (H1) is higher than the conclusion that it came into being via random natural processes. Symbolically written it would be stated: $P(O/H1) \gg P(O/H2)$.

Paley next argues that if one accepts the above reasoning one is then obliged to accept the reasoning he gives for the universe as a whole, which is as follows:

O - The world is intricate and well-designed for the purpose of supporting life. H1 - The world is the product of an intelligent designer. H2 - The world is the product of random physical processes.

Given the above, again Paley's claim would be that $P(O/H1) \gg P(O/H2)$. Both of the above are inferences to the best explanation on the basis of the Likelihood Principle outlined earlier [Sober, p. 33]. Sober later rejects the notion presented by Paley, and argues that the likelihood of an evolutionary hypothesis supersedes the likelihood of a creationist hypothesis.

Al-Kindi also attempts to make reference to the teleological proof (dalil al-'indyah) for the existence of God. He argues that "the orderly and wonderful phenomena of nature could not be purposeless and accidental" [Kindi, p. 61]. This is consistent with the Quranic verse "Not for (idle) sport did We create the heavens and the earth and all that is between!" [Yusuf Ali, Quran 21:16].

The teleological argument analyses the material world and infers from it an Artificer or a creator, a self-conscious being of unlimited intelligence and power, who created this extremely complex world for a purpose and that creator is God. Muhammad Iqbal once again criticizes this argument in the following terms:

At best, it [teleological proof] gives us a skillful external contriver working on a pre-existing dead and intractable material the elements of which are, by their own nature, incapable of orderly structures and combinations. The argument gives us a contriver only and not a creator; and even if we suppose him to be also the creator of his material, it does no credit to his wisdom to create his own difficulties by first creating

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intractable material, and then overcoming its resistance by the application of methods alien to its original nature. The designer regarded as external to his material must always remain limited by his material and hence a finite designer ... . [Iqbal, p. 24]

Iqbal is pointing out that any argument from design rests on the extraordinary complexity and almost perfect arrangement of the universe, so as to compel the observer to infer that there must be an intelligent designer. This is consistent with the watchmaker example presented by Paley. The two cases, the watch and the universe, are however, different.

Unlike the case of the watch, where its builder put the complex machine together given pre-existing material, the universe and its material itself created by God also. That is, there is no point in finding it extraordinary that God would be able to organize pre-existing "intractable" material in such an elegant fashion.

The only reason we would have of thinking so, would be if it was a difficult task to design the universe. But then why would God, first create a difficult task for Himself and then go on resolve the difficulty by arranging into a sophisticated pattern? In addition, God would be limited in what He could create by this pre-existing material.

This, to Iqbal, does not seem consistent with the Islamic concept of an omnipotent God. Iqbal writes, perhaps in response to Paley, "There is really no analogy between the work of the human artificer and the phenomena of Nature" [Iqbal, p. 24].

Bertrand Russell joins in this criticism, commenting on the teleological explanation, he professes, but if a man is so obstinately teleological as to continue to ask what purpose is served by the creator, it becomes obvious that his question is impious. It is, moreover, unmeaning, since, to make it significant, we should have to suppose the Creator created by some super-Creator whose purposes He served. [Russell, p. 85]

Both Iqbal and Russell point out that it is inappropriate for a person who believes in God to put forth an argument for His existence on teleological grounds.

The British philosopher David Hume also rejected the teleological argument, for different reasons. For him the argument from the best explanation is an inductive argument, and Hume had argued that inductive knowledge and causation is not possible. Hume rejected all theological works and claimed that they fail certain philosophical tests. He contended that metaphysical knowledge was not possible by either abstract or experimental reasoning. The problem of induction argues that it is impossible to make a justified inference from the observed to the unobserved. This is applicable to all such inferences.

An example of such an inference is the following: we observe that "the sun rises everyday and has risen everyday for over several thousand years" on the basis of this observation we make an inference that: "Hence that the sun will rise tomorrow". Hume claims that we are not at all justified in such an assumption.

He asks what makes such an inference justifiable? Hume recognizes that we spontaneously make such an inference and that perhaps we have no

control over it. But he is asking what is our justification for this supposed causal relationship? He asserts where is the causal glue that links the rising of the sun yesterday to the rising of the sun tomorrow?

The only argument that can be made in support of it is that "Nature is uniform," i.e. Nature has been uniform and will remain uniform thus we are justified in making inferences to unobserved events on the basis of what we have been observing. However, it must be noted that this argument in itself is an inductive one and begs the question.

This is similar to the argument for the existence of God from induction, since the argument is being made that we can use empirical/inductive proofs, i.e. we can make inferences based upon what we observe (empirical) to the unobserved (God, Metaphysical). Hume denies that any such inference is at all logically justifiable.

Bertrand Russell in response to this attitude states, it is therefore important to discover whether there is any answer to Hume within the framework of a philosophy that is wholly or mainly empirical. If not, there is no intellectual difference between sanity and insanity ... . This is a desperate point of view, and it must be hoped that there is some way of escaping from it. [Russell, p. 646]

Most Muslim philosophers have attempted to get around this vexatious problem by simply recognizing the Quranic emphasis on the uniformity of nature, accepting it as such and thus avoiding this problem. The above problem of induction gave rise to modern skepticism and remains a fascinating unsolved puzzle.

Kant's Critique of Empirical Evidence

Kant raises a powerful objection to any theory that claims to grasp knowledge of God. He claims that in terms of knowledge there can be no jump from the physical to the metaphysical. Kant distinguishes between noumanal and phenomenal objects. The noumena are objects that lie beyond all possible experience, and the phenomena are the ones we directly experience.

Hence, for him the metaphysical is the noumenal realm. He argues that there can be no possible relation between two realms that have no connection between them. How can we prove that a certain noumanal object exists from phenomenal premises?, he asks.

Ernst Cassirer, in his book Kant's Life and Thought, comments:

It is especially discordant for Kant on the one hand to consign reason in its determination of actuality completely to the data of experience, and on the other to entrust to it the power of bringing us to unconditional certainty regarding an infinite being lying beyond all possibility of experience. [Cassirer, p. 76]

Although he does not deny that there are metaphysical objects (in fact he argues for their existence from practical reason), he rejects this particular avenue for arriving at what he calls synthetic and a priori objects.

Iqbal responds to Kant's criticism of metaphysical existence from empirical experience as follows: "Kant's verdict can be accepted only if we start with the assumption that all experience other than the normal level of experience is impossible. The only question, therefore, is whether the

normal level is the only level of knowledge-yielding experience." He will argue, as we will see later, that there are other levels of experience that can bear knowledge as well.

Ontological Arguments

The modern form of the ontological argument in modern western philosophy was made famous by Anselm and Descartes. The argument rests on the premise that existence is a predicate that a being could have or lack. A summary of Anselm's argument is as follows:

P1) God is a being than which nothing greater can be conceived. P2) A being than which nothing greater can be conceived to exist in our thought. P3) Either a being than which nothing greater can be conceived exists in thought alone and not in reality or a being than which nothing greater can be conceived exists both in thought and in reality. P4)

If the greatest conceivable being existed in thought alone we could think of another being existing in both thought and reality. P5) Existing in thought and reality is greater than existing in thought alone. C) Therefore: A being than which nothing greater can be conceived (God) exists in thought and in reality.

Simply by pure reason, without any reference to the world, Anselm argues for God. A key feature of these kind of arguments is that they try to show not only that God exists, but that he necessarily exists. That is, He cannot, not exist.

The existence of God is an essential feature of its being just like the angles of a triangle always add up to 180 degrees. It would be impossible to think of God without it existing. Descartes writes, from the fact that I cannot think of a mountain without a valley, it does not follow that a mountain and a valley exist anywhere, but simply that a mountain and a valley, whether they exist or not are mutually inseparable. But from the fact that I cannot think of God except as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from God.

Hence, the very essence of God, to even make the concept of God intelligible it must exist. This argument has been widely criticized.

Kant criticized the argument from two perspectives. First he points out that, although, the concept that all three sides of the triangle add up to 180 is an analytical concept, there is still nothing that shows that it must exist. Similarly the idea that existence analytically belongs to the concept of God is an illegitimate inference.

He writes, To posit a triangle, and yet to reject its three angles, is self-contradictory; but there is no self-contradiction in rejecting the triangle together with its three angles. The same holds true of the concept of an absolutely necessary being. [Kant 3:4]

Secondly, he rejects Descartes argument on the grounds that existence is not a predicate that can be added or taken away from a concept. That is, existence is not like any of the other properties that are associated with 'things.' To say that something exists, is simply to say that the concept is instantiated in the world. He claims this on the basis of his distinction between analytic and synthetic statements.

An analytic statement is one of the kind, "all bachelors are unmarried males," or "the sum of the angles of a triangle is 180." In these statements the predicates, "unmarried males" or "sum of angles is 180" does not add any new information to the concept of "bachelors" or "triangle." Analytic statements are true by virtue of their meaning alone.

A synthetic statement is something that adds more information about the object in question. For example, "all ravens are black," is synthetic. The predicate "are black" tells us more information about the subject "ravens." Kant's claim is that statements of the sort, "X exists" are analytic. It does not add anything additional to the concept. Hence the inference that existing in reality is greater than existence in thought alone is false. The reductio ad absurdum from pure thought to God, of Anselm and Descartes thus fails according to Kant.

The closest form of parallel thought to this can be found in the thought of Avicenna (981 &endash; 1037 CE). He also shared Descartes methodological doubt and proposed a somewhat similar ontological argument for the existence of God [Shiekh, p. 77]. Avicenna also propounded that God is a necessary being, however, his argument unlike Descartes is not a purely rational one.

Avicenna believed that we possess a direct intuitive apprehension of the reality and existence of this necessary being. He believed that it would be impossible to think concretely without the existence of such a being. Averroes, however, insists that there can be no rational proof for God's existence and it can only be grasped via the medium of intuition.

The God that Avicenna argues for is a Necessary Being. A being that necessarily exists, and everything else besides it is contingent and depends upon it for its existence. God has no other essence besides his existence. His essence (mahiyah: quidditas), just is His existence. Since, God is the only being in which the essence and existence are to be found together, the essence of all other beings precedes their existence. Thus He is absolutely simple, and no has no further attributes [Sharif, p. 501].

In his book al-Shifa Avicenna explains that since the Necessary Being has no genus or differentia it is both indefinable and indemonstrable. As such "neither its being or its actions can be an object of discursive thought, since it is without cause, quality, position or time" [Fakhry, pp. 153-154].

All other entities do not exist necessarily or essentially, rather they are merely contingent beings (per accidens). The characteristics of God offered by Avicenna drew major criticisms from the contemporary Muslim orthodoxy, who found his definition incompatible with Islamic doctrine. "not a particle remains hidden from God in the heavens or on the earth" [Quran]. How can God be omniscient if He has no attributes.

He does try to explain, however, how his description would be compatible with God having knowledge of the world. In knowing Himself, God is capable of knowing everything that emanated from Him. Since God does not have sense-perceptual knowledge He cannot know the particulars, but rather only the essences or universal principles.

But according to Avicenna this does not exclude him knowing the specifics of any given event. Knowing all the antecedents and consequences

in the causal chain, allows God to place the event temporally and differentiate it from all other events.

Hence, his theory does not preclude God's knowledge of the specifics. Al-Ghazzali was not satisfied with this account and criticized Avicenna stating that the theory being presented would not allow for change in divine knowledge with the introduction of the time factor [Sharif. p. 502].

Another important characteristic of Avicenna's ontology was the fact that he believed that the universe is eternal. This was another belief, which was not acceptable to the Islamic orthodoxy. He thought the creative ability of God was linked to His intellectual nature and thus flowed eternally of rational necessity from Him.

Although the universe exists as an independent body, its existence is still contingent upon God. God and the world are different, but the existence of the world depends upon God. This can be seen as refinement, or rather 'islamization' of the Aristotelian view that God and the universe were two distinct beings which did not interact with each other.

Arguments against the Existence of God

The Problem of Evil

One of the major arguments proposed against the existence of God in contemporary western philosophy is the problem of evil. It is based upon the inability to reconcile the magnitude of evil in the world with the all-loving nature of God. John Hick describes the problem from the perspective of its proponent: "If God is perfectly loving, God must wish to abolish all evil; and if God is all-powerful, God must be able to abolish all evil.

But evil exists; therefore God cannot be both omnipotent and perfectly loving." This thus causes difficulty for the Judeo-Christian-Islamic God who possess both qualities of being all-loving and omnipotent. David Hume is a proponent of this view and argues that the sheer amount of evil, which may outweigh the good, in the world makes dubious that a deity exists [Pojman , p.167].

The main response to this kind of an argument is known as the free-will defense. It is based on the premise that for God to create self-directly and independent agents like humans, he had to grant a certain amount of freedom to them, and this freedom would inevitably result in human-to-human evil. It has been proposed that there need not be a contradiction between God creating morally free agents and making it the case that all their actions turn out to be good.

But it can be argued that in that case, are the beings really as free as humans? If all our actions were predestined in this way, there would be a sense in which we would not be free and only an allusion be created thereof. Although God could have created beings of this sort, they would have amounted to mere puppets and not vibrant beings as envisioned by God [Hick, pp. 39-41].

The Free Will Defense

The primary difficulty with the problem of evil is resolving the apparent conflict between the reality of evil in the world and the claim that God is:

Omniscient -- All knowing Omnipotent &endash; All powerful and Wholly Good

One version of the free will defense is to compare the current state of the world with a world in which all actions were good and no evil was possible. It is important here to point out that the good that is being referred to is 'moral good.' That is, it is good that is a result of the conscious actions of people.

This is distinct from 'natural good' or 'natural evil' which maybe result from non-human causes. The free will defense (FWD) theorist points out that in order for man to be in a position to do 'moral good' he must be 'significantly free.

' That is, he must be in a position to make a choice between making a morally good or evil action. Given that in the current world (World-1) human agents are given this freedom, a certain level of moral evil is unavoidable. This world would still be more preferable to a possible World-2 in which there were no free actions (thus no freedom) but all actions performed were entirely good.

A critic of this defense will point out that if God is all-powerful (omnipotent) then it ought to be in His capacity to create a World-3 in which humans had freedom, yet all their actions turned out to be good. Thus their actions would be predetermined to be good, yet they would still have the free option of choosing between morally good or bad actions.

The agent would have the freedom to chose any action they like, it would just be that whatever choice they made it would turn out to be good. This would entirely be within God's power since He is omnipotent and is only limited by logical impossibilities.

The challenge for the FWD theorist is to show that Freedom and Causal Determinism are both mutually inconsistent. It can't both be the case that humans are free agents, and that their actions are causally predetermined [Pojman, p. 203]. The crucial question is, can God can create any world?

Alvin Plantinga attempts to answer this question. First, he points out that Leibniz was mistaken in thinking that God would have to, and thus did, create the best possible world. Plantinga argues that there can be no such thing as the best possible world, since to any world one more unit of pleasure or goodness can be added to make it even better.

Thus it seems implausible to think of the best possible world as existing. This then is one instance when God cannot create any world. Secondly, he argues that God cannot create a world in which Man is both significantly free, yet his actions are already determined. His proof on this premise has to do with a thought experiment.

We can imagine a case in the present world in which we know given certain conditions person A would hypothetically engage in a morally evil action. It would no be impossible for God to create a world that were almost identical the present world, except that the person would then not engage in the evil. Since, to do so would deny him the freedom of individuality and his personality. That is, for God to ensure that he not engage in the evil would deny his freedom.

The only other solution is for God to not create the world at all. He argues that for any world God could create, which included freedom, there is at least one action on which Man would go wrong, or else he could not create any world at all. This phenomenon he calls transworld depravity. Therefore, for God to create a world in which humans had moral freedom, the existence of both Good and Evil is necessary [Platinga, p. 211].

Islamic Reaction to the Problem of Evil

Islamic philosophers of the middle ages did not address this problem in any direct fashion. This maybe because in the context of Muslim thought, the existence of God was a prerequisite. In fact, the aim of the philosophers was to prove the existence of God using Aristotelian logic. So we do not find Muslim philosophers arguing against the existence of God, on the contrary they are attempting to justify the qualities of God from a philosophical perspective.

The Muslim philosophers did, however, tackle a different but somewhat similar issue concerning the unity of God. The central problem facing them was how to reconcile the absolute unity and perfection of God with the fact that there exists in the world such great amounts of imperfections. If God is

all perfect and the world is a result of divine will, we are then faced with the problem of duality between God and His will. Yet it is this very difference (i.e. the imperfection of the world) that sets it apart from God (who is perfect).

How is this consistent with the absolute unity (tawhid) of God which is so central to Islamic doctrine? This issue had been one of the major issues of Muslim thought, and was a subject of great debate between Al-Ghazzali, and other neo-platonic Muslim thinkers [Landau, p. 17].

It is, however, difficult to find any direct analogue to the problem of evil in medieval Islamic philosophy. However, some positions held by early Muslim thinkers maybe relevant to the free will defense. Early Muslim Aristotelian thinkers like Ibn Sina held that God is a necessary being, who had no other attributes besides His existence, and that all other beings emanated from the divine by necessity. Despite holding this position, they attempted to reconcile it with Islamic doctrines.

Ghazzali points out that this is not possible. That is, to say that whatever proceeds from God does so by necessity denies God agency, i.e. it denies Him Free Will. If God has no will, since he has no attributes, then God has no free choice to decide which world to create. It seems that Ghazzali's criticism can be equally applied to advocate of the problem of evil who states that God by necessity must always in a way that will ensure that its consequences are wholly good.

This would then break down the dilemma posed by trying to reconcile the divine attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, wholly goodness versus the reality of evil in the world. Since, now God would not be obliged to abide by the condition of wholly goodness [Ghazzali, p. 63].

Another stream of thought in Islam, advocated by Ghazzali, Ibn Arabi, Al-Attas and Islamic mystical traditions, is to argue that the only true way to grasp the ultimate reality, and thus resolve this problem is through a "direct awareness of Reality," unencumbered by intellectual interference (Laudau 20). This aspect will be discussed at length in the Arguments from Religious Experience section.

The lack of intense debate on the problem of evil maybe because the problem was not formulated at the time, or that Muslim thinkers were preoccupied by other issues. In modern times, the 20th century Islamic philosopher Muhammad Iqbal does attempt to address this problem.

He suggests that Goodness would not be possible without the resistance of evil. The evil in the world is meant to be overcome. Whoever asks why must there be evil when God can remove it is missing the point. Iqbal insists that without evil there could be no moral or spiritual development. He sites a simile used by Kant in which he refers to birds who resent the resistance of air, yet it is the very air that allows them to fly high, they would be unable to do so in a vacuum.

Likewise, a certain amount of evil is necessary for the inner growth of humans, so that they may be able to overcome it [Sharif, p. 1628]. As the Quran states, "And for trial will We test you with evil and with Good" [21:35].

Iqbal could here be subject to criticism, since he has ignored the victims of evil. What about those people who suffered so the rest of mankind could build itself? Iqbal's answer here would be consistent with his philosophy of self. Like Nietzche, Iqbal believed that ultimately the self, the individual is the only thing of utmost importance. That is we have no concrete knowledge of the external world and factors therein.

What we can be sure of is only ourselves, hence, we must view happenings to beings other than ourselves only in the capacity in which they help to build ourselves. The fact that the suffering of an innocent victim serves to bolster our personality is sufficient. The independent suffering of the external individual cannot be verified.

Nietzche has criticized Christian theology for placing mankind in a state of guilt for the original sin, Iqbal had pointed out that this concept of original sin is absent in Islam, and that the Quran encouraged a positive self image of the self or man. Many modern Christian theologians also adopt this view.

Arguments from Religious Experience

There have been arguments presented for the existence of God which are non-analytical, and do not rely an purely logical or empirical premises. There is a strong strand within classical Islamic philosophy, beginning with Al-Ghazzali, to strongly put forth this view, and at the same time deny the legitimacy of the purely theoretical arguments for God's existence. Muhammad Iqbal will also defend this view, however, he attempts to provide reconciliatory possibilities of reason with religious experience in concert with his organic world-view.

The principles for an Islamic epistemology are laid out in the Quran as it defines three avenues for knowledge [Wan Daud, p. 65]. These are namely, 1. Certainty by Sense-Perception (ain al-yaqin) or empirically derived knowledge; 2. Cognitive Certainty (ilm al-yaqin) or knowledge by pure reason; 3. Absolute Experienced Certainty (haqq al-yaqin) or knowledge by intuition.

These are sometimes called modes of knowledge. A Muslim Sufi (mystic) philosopher explains: The sensory mode is experienced through we eat and smell, the cognitive is through knowledge, whether self-evident or acquired, while the intuitive is similarly divided: It can either be self-evident or acquired.

However, he who has access to intuitive, which is to say divine knowledge, knows instinctively what other must acquire through the exercise of their cognitive faculties. [Awliya, pp. 160-161]

It is this last form of knowledge, the intuitive, that the arguments from religious experience aim at. There is some disagreement on the significance of intuitive knowledge and even if it is necessary, is it sufficient for an Islamic epistemology of metaphysics? Ghazzali argues in the affirmative, however modern philosophers Iqbal and Al-Attas assert that intuitive knowledge must work in concert with other 'modes' of knowledge as well.

al-Ghazzali

The first major critic of philosophy in the Islamic tradition was Abu Hamid ibn Muhammad al-Ghazzali (1058-1111 CE). Ghazzali felt that no formulation of an epistemology based on human reason could possibly account reasonably for the metaphysical existence of God.

He was an influential Islamic scholar and became interested in philosophy after studying various quarreling Muslim intellectual movements. He then decided to embark on a project to determine, what is certain knowledge? And is it possible by humans? [Fakhry, p. 218, Sheikh, p. 85, Sharif, p. 583].

To accomplish his goal Ghazzali, much like Descartes, engages in a methodological doubt. Unlike Descartes, however, Ghazzali reaches a much more radical conclusion about our ability to have "certain knowledge." He begins by defining what he means by "certain knowledge." He writes:

The search after truth being the aim which I propose to myself, I ought in the first place to ascertain what are the bases of certitude. In the second place I ought to recognize that certitude is the clear and complete knowledge

of things, such knowledge as leave no room for doubt, nor any possibility of error. [Sharif, p. 588]

Thus, the kind of knowledge Ghazzali is seeking is such that the object of knowledge is known in a manner which precludes all possibilities of doubt [Fakhry, p. 218].

There are only two sources of knowledge that are available to us, and those, according to Ghazzali, are sense-perception and pure reason. He writes: We cannot hope to find truth except in matters which carry their evidence in themselves, i.e. in sense-perception and necessary principles of thought; we must, therefore first of all establish these two on a firm basis. [Sharif, p. 589]

As a first step he concludes that the only knowledge that could qualify as "certain" would be of the kind that would fit the above description, i.e. knowledge of sense-perception or self-evident or necessary truths [Ghazzali, Freedom and Fulfillment]. Next Ghazzali examines the extent of knowledge allowed via these avenues.

He quickly realizes that sense-perception cannot be a source of certain knowledge since it is often not trustworthy. For example, he observes shadows appear to be stationary, whereas they move, and planets appear to be coin-sized whereas astronomical evidence points to the contrary.

Having discarded knowledge of the senses, Ghazzali now moves towards knowledge of necessary truths. He thinks that this is not a credible source of knowledge either. If he could not trust one kind of knowledge, why should he trust the other? He thought he had no reason to prefer one over the other [Fakhry, p. 219].

One of the issues that made him doubt the utility of necessary principles were questions such as, is 10 more than 3? Can something be and not be at the same time? Can something be both necessary and impossible? He thought reason alone, could not provide a satisfactory answer to these questions [Sharif, p. 589]. Hence, making an analogy between the two, Ghazzali denies knowledge of necessary proposition as well [Fakhry, p. 219]. His argument here is quite controversial, and Iqbal strongly criticizes Ghazzali on this count.

Ghazzali is now in a position where he has convinced himself, that the only two avenues of knowledge open to him are not reliable. He is confused and considers the possibility that life could be a dream. He was in a state of continuos doubt and unable to ground anything in truth and existence, he suffered from this like a real sickness.

Until he realized a "light which God infused into his heart, which is the key to most species of knowledge" [Fakhry, p. 219]. This he considers similar to how the Prophet Muhammad (saw) describes it, "the dilation of the heart, whereby it becomes prone to the reception of Islam." He, therefore was able to transcend everyday experience and realize the ultimate reality via a spiritual experience.

What Ghazzali is suggesting is a "possibility of a form of apprehension higher than rational apprehension, that is, apprehension as the mystic's inspiration or the prophet's revelation" [Sharif, p. 590]. This new form of knowledge is what he calls intuition. It is distinct from knowledge by the

senses or the intellect, in that in intuitive knowledge is only possible via divine facilitation.

Ghazzali and Descartes both agree that knowledge by sense-perception is unreliable, but Ghazzali makes the further claim that knowledge by pure theoretical reason alone is also unreliable. Descartes, on the other hand, had built his entire epistemology on the basis of the viability of knowledge by pure reason.

Iqbal's Critique of Ghazzali

Muhammad Iqbal is also critical of Ghazzali's characterization of knowledge. He thought that Ghazzali was mistaken in giving up reason and thought and embracing mystic experience as the only exclusive way the totally infinite could be revealed to an individual. Iqbal writes:

He failed to see that thought and intuition are organically related and that thought must necessarily simulate finitude and inconclusiveness because of its alliance with serial time. The idea that thought is essentially finite, and for this reason unable to capture the Infinite, is based on a mistaken notion of the movement of thought in knowledge. [Iqbal, p. 5]

For Iqbal, there is no inherent difficulty in a finite being grasping the reality of an infinite one. Thought is dynamic and is revealed via a temporal vision over time. He further explains how the infinite can come into the comprehension of a finite being. Using a Quranic metaphor, the infinite according to Iqbal is "'a kind of 'Preserved Tablet', which holds up the entire undermined possibilities of knowledge as a present reality, revealing itself in serial time as a succession of finite concepts appearing to reach a unity which is already present in them. It is in fact the presence of the total Infinite in the movement of knowledge that makes finite thinking possible."

Thus, the continuos revealing of the infinite over a temporal period allows the finite to grasp the essence of the infinite God. It is not that at any point the finite intellect will be able to fully comprehend the limitless and infinite, but rather that it is the potential of thought to be itself without limit, that allows it to have an understanding of the limitless, at least in principle. Dr. Naquib Al-Attas, a contemporary Muslim philosopher and disciple of Al-Ghazzali's school, explains the concept of intuition as understood by him:

We maintain that all knowledge of reality and of truth, and the projection of a true vision of the ultimate nature of things is originally derived through the medium of intuition. The intuition that we mean cannot simply be reduced to that which operates solely at the physical level of discursive reason based upon sense-experience,

for since we affirm in man the possession of physical as well as intelligential or spiritual powers and faculties which refer back to the spiritual entity, sometimes called intellect, or heart, or soul, or self, it follows that man's rational, imaginable and empirical existence must involve both the physical and spiritual levels.

Here he reaffirms both physical (material) and spiritual (metaphysical) levels as necessary for intuition. However, special emphasis is placed upon the spiritual. This concept of intuition is a major theme both within higher Islamic philosophy and mysticism. It holds that the ultimate reality can be

directly and spontaneously experienced and truth can become self-evident with complete clarity.

Iqbal is trying to point out that, intellectual reason and intuition are inseparable, and that in the act of comprehending something by intuition, the intellect plays an indispensable role, which cannot be discounted. He thus thinks that Ghazzali was mistaken in his claim that reason and intuition could not interact and were incompatible. Iqbal saw both of these avenues as complimentary, towards ultimate knowledge.

Muhammad Iqbal

Iqbal gives his account of the possibility of religion in the last lecture in the reconstruction entitled "Is Religion Possible?"

For Iqbal, religion is not something that is isolated from philosophy. He advocates an integration of the two, sometimes suggesting that the science of psychology has not reached an advanced enough level to be able to incorporate spiritual experience as part of a scientific theory of knowledge. Iqbal thinks, given adequate methods, the ultimate reality is within human grasp. He writes,

The truth is that the religious and the scientific processes, though involving different methods, are identical in their final aim. Both aim at reaching the most real. In fact, religion is far more anxious to reach the ultimately real than science." [Iqbal, p. 155]

One of the major objections to proofs from religious experience has been that, religious experience is incommunicable and as such has no value as 'evidence' since it is not transferable from one person to the other. That is, person A may see the truth of a proposition whereas person B may not, and there is no way for person A to demonstrate to person B, how he came to believe a certain thing.

Iqbal does not think that this is a problem. Rather precisely this "problem" is the foundation of his worldview. He had an organic view about the universe as a whole and people as we encounter them. In our everyday life we see other individuals as mere functions, and only deal with them in so far as their conceptual relation to us is concerned.

We do not pursue them any further for any ultimate reality. Thus when seeking the divine we cannot and do not rely upon "others." The clue to the ultimate reality must be contained within the ego (person). The individual self must then be the only way to certain knowledge.

It maybe that what we call the external world is only an intellectual construction, and that there are other levels of human experience capable of being systematized by other orders of space and time -- levels in which concept and analysis do not play the same role as they do in the case of our normal experience. [Iqbal, p. 144]

The incommunicability of religious experience is an essential part of what makes it different from 'normal experience.' Strictly speaking, the experience which leads to this discovery is not a conceptually manageable intellectual fact; it is a vital fact, an attitude consequent on an inner biological transformation which cannot be captured in the net of logical categories [Iqbal, p. 145].

Intuition then is a valid form of knowledge yielding experience. This does not, however, mean that it is divorced from reason. Iqbal explains, although real, we do not have the tools at our disposal to evaluate this process of "inner biological transformation." The scientific method we have today is not sufficient to apply to these kinds of experiences, since scientific "concept and analysis" may not be applicable to this sort of experience as they are to physics. Dr. Al-Attas advocating a similar view states,

Belief has cognitive content; and one of the main points of divergence between true religion and secular philosophy and science is the way in which the sources and methods of knowledge are understood. [Anees]

At this level of experience, "the act of knowledge is a constitutive element in the objective reality" [Baharuddin]. He thought God could not be removed from his creation. Not in the pantheistic sense, but in that the ultimate reality cannot stand as an 'other' to the universe or person (as Avicenna thought).

Rather, they are interlinked, and in looking within ourselves for this higher level of experience, the ultimate reality would be revealed unto the individual. As Iqbal explains, this higher level of experience is not at the sensational or representational level, rather it is better described as a feeling rather than concepts. He writes,

It is rather a mode of dealing with Reality in which sensation, in the physiological sense of the word, does not play any part. [Maruf] This for Iqbal is the mystic experience that leads to ultimate certain knowledge. This knowledge is irresistible and like bright sunshine forces itself immediately to be perceived as soon as the mind turns its attention to it and leaves no room for hesitation, doubt or examination, but the mind is perfectly filled with the clear light of it [Hasan].

It should be mentioned that, although Iqbal offers the above explanation of the way in which an individual may access the ultimate, he draws his inspiration from Einstein and Nietzsche. Einstein's theory of relativity gave him hope, that his theory about the way the finite and the infinite are related is possible.

Relativity shattered traditional notions of space, time and thus matter. The line between the physical and metaphysical had been blurred or rather interconnected. Hence, there is great philosophical debate at the frontiers of modern physics over what happens in extreme situations on the cosmological scale.

Nietzsche's emphasis on individuality deeply impressed Iqbal, who thought that Neitzsche was on the right track, if only he had not been distracted by naturalistic theories of Schopenhaur, Darwin and Lange mistakenly explaining away the existence of God. Hence, Nietzsche was a failure. But he had realized an essential truth. That is, ultimately what matters is the ego, self, and nothing else. Thus it is not significant if reality is not transferable from one to another.

What matters is the "me" and not the "other."

It is also significant that Iqbal thought, that if a sufficient understanding of the 'mental' was achieved it would indeed be (at least theoretically) possible within the science of psychology to gain a better sense of the kind

of deeper experience Iqbal is referring too. This maybe relevant to the concept in philosophy of Mind known as Anamolousness of the Mental.

It states that there are no causal laws that relate to mental events. This explains the difficulty of science and psychology in grasping these concepts. Iqbal, however, thinks that it is at least theoretically possible to be able to achieve a working understanding of mental events.

The theories of knowledge advocated by the proofs from religious experience may be considered externalist accounts.

Externalism is the view that some of the justifying factors of belief need not be cognitively accessible and maybe external to the mind of the individual. That is, a person can be justified in holding a belief even if they are not aware that they are in possession of all the reasons that make the position justified. Iqbal is advocating a similar view, in that the reasons, although they may objectively exist, are difficult to determine by the individual.

Externalism often rests on the premise of reliablism. That is, one way to know that something is true, without knowing all the reasons, is if the knowledge is received from a reliable source. For example, we may consider our vision and senses to be a reliable source to affirm the existence of the external world.

In the same way Iqbal and Ghazzali describe the experience of the divine in terms of the sense. If this experience is reliable and originating from God, then we could affirm the knowledge without knowing all the reasons that justify God's existence. It appears, however, that what Iqbal wants to say is that the reasons for the justification of God are in theory accessible to humans, but in practice are much more difficult to determine compared to the direct mystic experience of the divine entity.

This is consistent with the views of Al-Ghazzali and Ibn Arabi on this issue. Iqbal also advocates another proof for the existence of God based upon the Quranic emphasis upon history. This can also be considered a reliablist account, however it has not been considered in this paper.

Conclusion

There is a strong tradition of rigorous Islamic thought on philosophical issues. Issues in Islamic metaphysics and epistemology are varied and complex. There are strong and useful similarities of thought within Muslim and Western thought. Western philosophers have expanded upon many of the debates originating within the Islamic world, as the Muslims had done earlier with the Greek scholars.

It would be a mistake, however, to consider Islamic thought a relic of the past. Islamic philosophy is showing signs of significant recovery and with the emergence of an integrated worldview, it will be a viable discipline.

The consensus among modern Muslim philosophers seems to be moving away from the purely empirical arguments for God's existence. The recent consensus of Islamic thinkers like Ghazzali, Al-Attas and Iqbal seem to prefer arguments from religious experience over the rational arguments.

Apart from the basic question of how faith and reason interact in epistemology, there are significant other issues in philosophy that need study. For instance, is there an Islamic response to the mind-body problem? Are we to reject the concept of the soul as Kant did since it is an obscure concept? Or can it be reinterpreted to be read as the mind? If so, what constitutes the mind? Does Islam provide its own ethical framework?

If so, what are its principles and does it resolve the problems with Western ethical theories (of Aristotle, Kant, Mill or Nietzche)? How does Islam tackle the radical existentialism of Sartre or Heidegger? These are just some of the other problems, besides those in epistemology and metaphysics that will face future Muslim philosophers.

Resolving these problems will have profound implications on the Islamic worldview and values. It is also a prerequisite to any tangible and independent Islamic academic philosophy.

In the modern context it is important, for Islamic thought at least, to reassert itself clearly and define its parameters upon which a modern Islamic epistemology can be built. The work of European and American philosophers cannot be ignored, and their criticism should be used to recreate the vigor of Islamic philosophy which has been lost over the past few centuries.

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