Is Islamic Philosophy 'Islamic'? A Critical Exploration Through the Qur'anic Narratives

This paper critically examines the ongoing debate surrounding the Islamic nature of Islamic philosophy by engaging with key Qur'anic narratives and philosophical discourses. The central question addressed is whether Islamic philosophy can genuinely be classified as "Islamic", considering its amalgamation of Greco-Roman and Persian intellectual traditions. In common, Islamic philosophy addresses themes familiar to broader philosophy, but it does so from an Islamic perspective, using the language and context of Islamic civilization. By analyzing the works of prominent Muslim philosophers, including al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and al-Ghazali, the study explores how their interpretations and methodologies align—or diverge—from the foundational texts of Islam. Additionally, this paper highlights how Qur'anic narratives have been employed within Islamic philosophical thought to construct ethical, metaphysical, and theological frameworks. In conclusion, the "philosophical discussion of Islamic issues" is considered to be representative term for Islamic philosophy as it captures its essence and clarifies debates about its origins, actors, and focus discussions.

Keywords: Islamic philosophy, Qur'anic narratives, Islam

Author:
Muhammad Luthfi Dhulkifli[1]

Affiliation:
[1] UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding author:
muhammad.dhulkifli@ uin-suka.ac.id

Tulisan ini secara kritis menelaah perdebatan yang terus berlangsung tentang ke-Islami-an filsafat Islam dengan mengkaji narasi-narasi kunci dalam al-Qur'an dan beberapa diskursus filosofis. Pertanyaan utama yang dibahas adalah apakah filsafat Islam dapat benar-benar dikatakan sebagai "Islami," mengingat penggabungannya dengan tradisi intelektual Yunani-Romawi dan Persia. Secara umum, filsafat Islam membahas tema-tema yang akrab dalam filsafat umum, tetapi melakukannya dari perspektif Islam, dengan menggunakan bahasa dan konteks peradaban Islam. Dengan menganalisis karya-karya filsuf Muslim terkemuka, termasuk al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, dan al-Ghazali, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana interpretasi dan metodologi mereka selaras—atau justru menyimpang—dari teks-teks dasar Islam. Selain itu, tulisan ini menyoroti bagaimana narasi-narasi al-Qur'an digunakan dalam pemikiran filsafat Islam untuk membangun kerangka etika, metafisika, dan teologi. Secara keseluruhan, "Diskusi filosofis isu-isu Islam" dianggap sebagai istilah yang lebih representarif untuk filsafat Islam karena berkenaan dengan esensinya dan memperjelas perdebatan tentang asal-usul, para aktor dan fokus diskusi yang ada.

Kata Kunci: Filsafat Islam, narasi al-Qur'an, Islam.

Introduction

One of the most misinterpreted Islamic topics is Islamic philosophy. Islam and philosophy have a contentious relationship due to Islamic scholars' criticism of several significant philosophical statements. Philosophers consider reason to be the highest level of knowledge, but Islamic traditionalism regards the Qur'an as the ultimate source of Truth. For some Muslims, the adaption of Greek philosophy is not just divisive but also the label philosophy itself debatable. In addition, Philosophers and Islamic theologians maintained a reciprocal hostility that frequently resulted in both parties disregarding one another. Shahab Ahmed (2016) questioned this in his book *What is Islam*?, to be among some of his fundamental questions in trying to define Islam itself. A book that earned the Best Book in the History of Religions award American Academy of Religion claims that Islamic philosophy is a controversial concept. Ahmed quotes some figures like Marmura, Leaman, and Brague, who said that some philosophers are not Muslims but are driven to engage in Islamic idea discussion. In addition to this, some philosophers are more interested in numerous spheres of knowledge than in pure philosophy, hence they are not quite philosophers.[1]

Philosophy is often considered a secular field of study, mostly linked to the ancient Greek heritage rather than Islamic ideas. When considering historical perspectives, the emergence of Islamic philosophy can be seen as a connection between ancient Greek philosophy and modern Western philosophy. Philosophy is commonly defined as the endeavor to acquire wisdom, truth, and comprehension. This term originates from the Greek language and can be interpreted as a fondness for wisdom. [2] The Arabic term for philosophy is *falsafa*, which is derived from the Greek words *philo* and *sophia*. This was accepted as natural philosophy by the Western civilization, which encompasses non-religious disciplines such as logic, mathematics, physics, astronomy, psychology, ethics, and politics.[3]

Because of this, Marmura suggests to label Arabic philosophy as an intellectual language used in classical Islamic times rather than Islamic philosophy. Some academic books such as Fakhry (2004); Adamson and Taylor (2005); McGinnis and Reisman (2007) support this view since they consider Islamic philosophy to be the result of a sophisticated intellectual process in which Arab and Persian intellectuals significantly contributed to Islamic studies and philosophical enlightenment. However, in his other work, Adamson argues that Arabic philosophy does not include texts in other languages and that talking of Islamic philosophy excludes Christians and Jews, who may be rather important. On the other hand, since Islamic philosophy is excessively wide and covers various spheres of knowledge, Sharif (1963) names his work using the name Muslim philosophy.

Islamic philosophy is subject to multiple viewpoints. It is commonly believed that Islamic philosophy is only a replication of Greek philosophy.[4] It is alleged that there is no novelty in the work and that it is merely a rendition of Greek philosophy into the Arabic language. Maimonides, a Jewish philosopher, claims that Islamic philosophy originated from the intellectual process of ijtihad among Muslim scholars.[5] Conversely, an external stimulus unrelated to Islam was regarded as a response to the teachings of other religions throughout that

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[1] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), 10.

[2] George Barkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (London: Jacob Tonson, 2002), 1.

[3] Roy Jackson, *What is Islamic Philosophy?* (USA: Taylor & Francis Books, 2014), 4.

[4] Khudori Soleh, *Filsafat Islam: Dari Klasik Hingga Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2016), 23.

[5] Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), Translated by Shlomo Pines, vol 1, 177.

period. The revisionist position says that Islamic philosophy is the result of intellectual endeavors that have been present from the beginning of Islam. The emergence of the Khawārij, Shi'ī, and Mu'tazilī sects significantly contributed to the progress of Islamic intellectual discourse, particularly in the areas of God's omnipotence and justice, and their connection to human freedom and accountability. [6] Throughout the history of world philosophy, Islamic philosophy has played a significant role in bridging the gap between Western and Eastern thinkers. It does so by incorporating elements of the Greek paradigm, such as language, logic, physics, metaphysics, and ethics. [7] Consequently, the work of Islamic philosophers goes beyond mere replication of ancient Greek ideas in a passive manner. Islamic philosophers have examined, refined, evaluated, and expanded upon novel methodologies for addressing philosophical matters.

When engaging in philosophical discourse within the context of Islam, it is imperative to thoroughly examine and contemplate every aspect and perspective of the religion. Many orientalists mistakenly equate Islam with only sharia or kalam and then examine the connection between philosophy and that specific aspect of Islam.[8] In his book, Ahmed provides a definition of Islamic that takes into account the diverse experiences of Muslims. He emphasizes the consensus within Islam, which is characterized by its belief in monotheism. [9] According to Shihadeh, Islamic and philosophical traditions developed independently. Islamic studies emerged as a discipline rooted in the teachings of

scripture, whereas philosophy carried on the ancient intellectual heritage without any religious associations.[10]

Islamic philosophy is a unique and captivating intellectual tradition that revolves around Islamic concepts and has been influenced by the classical Greek era.[11] Subsequently, this Greek concept was mainly used in the context of classical philosophy to understand the Islamic issue and the interpretation of the Qur'an. This paper will analyze the Islamic nature of Islamic philosophy by examining different viewpoints on the notion of Islam, drawing on Ahmed's book and its connection to the narratives in the Qur'an. The Qur'an plays a pivotal role as the ultimate authority in Islam, and numerous Muslim philosophers have employed it as the fundamental basis for their reasoning. Therefore, it is useful to examine how these philosophers participate in intellectual dialogue and critique one other's ideas within the Qur'an while debating on significant philosophical queries.

The Concept of God in Qur'anic Context: Avicenna's Necessary Existent and Ghazali's Critique of Philosophical Theology

Avicenna represents the influence of both Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic philosophies Ahmed.[12] Avicenna posits that God is the only Necessary Existent *(wājib al-wujūd)* upon which all other existents must depend. The Necessary existence cannot be identical to another necessary existence because, if the essence of the One is regarded as separate from the other, it must be either necessary or not necessary in itself. [13] God is the ultimate origin of pure

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[6] Syamsuddin Arif, "Filsafat Islam antara Tradisi dan Kontroversi," *Jurnal Tsaqafah* 10, no. 1 (2014): 12.

[7] Hans Daiber, *Bibliography of Islamic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), vol 2, vii.

[8] Sayyed Hossein Nasr (ed), *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 31.

[9] Islam, as defined, is a doctrinal system that involves the belief in Allah as the sole deity, the Qur'an as the holy text, and the concept of a unified global society. See Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 149.

[10] Ayman Shihadeh, "Religious Readings of Philosophy', in Richard C. Taylor and Luis Xavier Lopez-Farjeat, (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2016), 412-422.

[11] Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[12] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 11.

[13] Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (Brigham Young University Press, 2000), Translated by Michael E. Provo Marmura, 32.

knowledge and virtue, and He exists as *wājib al-wujūd*, signifying that God's existence is necessary.

Avicenna presents a number of important arguments, to which other intellectuals and Muslims make responses. He reaches the conclusion of a "higher truth" through logical deduction that the world is eternal, that God does not have knowledge of particular actions and words, and that there will be no physical resurrection in the afterlife. According to Avicenna, only a small number of superior human intellects have the capacity to reach the level of Divine Truth.[14] In addition to this, the Qur'anic text was received by Prophets, including Muhammad, who was able to convey a simplified version of Truth. Muhammad receives the Qur'an through a translation that is accessible to all of humanity, rather than through a direct and literal statement from God. This reasoning may hold significance for individuals with a philosophical comprehension, but it is not applicable to those who are not experts in the field. Individuals with a restricted comprehension are more likely to disregard this philosophical discourse as an exaggerated approach to contemplating religion.

On the other hand, Ghazali is a vocal Islamic scholar who openly attacks Avicenna and categorizes ultimate unbelief (*kufr*). Ghazali categorically classified philosophers like Avicenna and Farabi as unbelievers due to their denial of the all-knowing and all-powerful Creator-Ruler, rejection of the concepts of afterlife, Resurrection, and Reckoning, and propagation of incorrect views derived from Greek philosophers.[15] Avicenna calmly responds to the accusation of being an unbeliever, asserting that if he is indeed an unbeliever, it would imply that there is not a single Muslim anywhere in the world. Ghazali's perspective, which takes into account theological considerations, is frequently embraced by traditional Muslims who place their trust in the Qur'anic narrative.

Avicenna, however, used the Qur'an as the primary authoritative Islamic source to support his position. For instance, in Q. 16:102, the individual is described as seeking God's permission, command, and inspiration. In Q. 16: 19, it is mentioned that God has knowledge of both hidden and apparent matters. Additionally, Q. 7:54 emphasizes that obedience should only be carried out according to God's instructions and in the appropriate manner.[16] It is important to emphasize that both Avicenna and Ghazali hold a strong belief in and deep reverence for the Qur'an. Nevertheless, those figures are not consistently mentioned the Qur'an in their argument. Avicenna employed his personal rationality to advocate for the eternal existence of the world and the physical revival of the body. Human existence is imperative as long as the world is eternal. According to Reisman and Rahim, if corporeal resurrection happens just within a physical body, it can be seen as a replica of the original person. In this case, the individual exists within their soul, which is where their identity is found.[17] Ghazali presents a comparison between an illogical argument and a logical argument, asserting that it is impossible for something to have eternal existence if it is related to the temporal creation of anything through reason or theoretical contemplation.[18] Regarding physical resurrection, he asserted that the soul persists within a human body following death, enabling the experience of both pleasure and suffering.[19]

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[14] Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1958), 31.

[15] Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, *Deliverance From Error* (London: American University of Beirut, 1980), Translated by Richard J. Boston McCarthy, 365.

[16] Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 32.

[17] David C. Reisman and Ahmed H al-Rahim, *Before and After Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 171.

[18] Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 17.

[19] Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 208.

Ghazali is a significant person for Muslims due to his profound contributions to sophistical philosophical reasoning. Ghazali's argument, while often viewed as apologetic, is actually based on the logical principles of philosophical discipline. His work, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, is widely studied and serves as a primary source for his followers who criticize philosophers. Ghazali attacks Farabi and Avicenna, who are prominent scholars of Aristotelian philosophy in the Islamic world, in his *Tahāfut*.[20] Contrarily, Averroes presents a compelling counter-argument in his work *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (the incoherence of incoherence), which is a compilation of his rebuttal to Ghazali's *Tahāfut* published seventy-three years afterward. Averroes employs his Aristotelian viewpoint to refute Ghazali's Neo-Platonist contention. According to him, it is argued that philosophy should not be prohibited as it is one of the most effective means of discovering religious Truth.[21]

Both Ghazali and Averroes claim to belong to the Islamic faith, but they engage in debates over Islamic matters while simultaneously expressing disapproval towards one another. Ghazali's assertion that all philosophers are unbelievers in his classification is an extreme viewpoint. Although the act of accusing fellow Muslims of apostasy or disbelief is controversial, Ghazali is still concerned about it. In his other work, *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah*, he created clear and specific criteria to determine if an individual belonged to the Muslim or *kufr* category. Griffel states that Ghazali created this definitive criterion as a response to charges of being an unbeliever due to his deviation from many early Ash'arite principles in his revival.[22] However, this contradicts the teachings of the Qur'an regarding the

significance of love, as it promotes hostility against others. Ghazali's invocation of *takfīr* has extremist consequences, as those who follow him perceive philosophers as disbelievers, resulting in individuals refusing to engage in the study of philosophy.

Creation, God is All-Knowing, and corporeal resurrection: Averroes, Ghazali, and the Qur'anic Foundations

Ghazali offers a critical analysis of philosophy based on three primary issues that may result in disbelief: the eternal nature of the world, God's comprehensive knowledge, and the physical resurrection.[23] Averroes thoroughly examines these concerns in his work, *Tahāfut*. Averroes expresses criticism towards specific predecessors and contends that Ghazali's assertions lack both certainty and evidence. Averroes, like Farabi, adheres to Aristotle's principle of causal law. Averroes argues that the world is eternal as it is missing an indication of origin. Averroes, along with other thinkers, asserted that the world is eternal. The perpetual sovereignty of God over the world can be compared to the relationship between cause and effect in terms of substance and degree, rather than in relation to time or period.[24] Nevertheless, Ghazali asserts that philosophers lack the ability to express the eternal nature of the world and that it is impossible to find a solution that aligns with Muslim beliefs on this matter.[25]

The assertion that the world is eternal due to its lack of a beginning is considered not correct by Islamic scholars. The reason for this is rooted in Islamic theology, which holds the idea that God possesses the ability to create anything out of nothing, a concept known as *creatio ex nihilo*.[26]

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[20] Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, xix.

[21] Averroes, *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London: American University of Beirut, 1961), Translated by George Hourani, 2.

[22] Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, (2009), 105.

[23] Sari Nusseibeh, *The Story of Reason in Islam* (California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 138.

[24] Averroes, *The Incoherence of the Incoherence.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Translated by Simon Van Den Bergh, 320.

[25] Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 55.

[26] Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers,* 219.

If the world lacks a beginning, it implies that it was never brought into existence, thereby negating the notion of God as a creator. This is why Ghazali categorizes them as disbelievers due to their denial of God as the ultimate creator of all things. Contrarily, Averroes argued that *creatio ex nihilo* was impossible due to the improbability of transitioning from non-being or emptiness to existence.

While Averroes did not explicitly discuss the specific Qur'anic passage, his reasoning is grounded in the Qur'anic principle that God created something from preexisting matter, rather than from nothing, as stated in Q. 14:47-48, *"So do not think (Prophet) that God will break His promise to His messengers: He is mighty and capable of retribution. One Day–when the earth is turned into another earth, the heavens into another heaven, and people all appear before God, the One, the Overpowering"*.[27] It signifies the presence of a particular shape and a preceding period before the creation of the universe. A representation of divine power and a period preceding the formation of the celestial realm and the earth. For Averroes, this naturally derived material must be eternal.

In contrast, Ghazali adheres to the doctrine of Muslim theologians, asserting that God brought the universe into existence from nothing.[28] The existence of a creator is evidenced by the ability to make something from nothing. Meanwhile, Averroes challenges Ghazali's assertion that God resides in solitude while the world is nonexistent. Averroes acknowledges this argument by revisiting the subject of time. The world is everlasting, and it is plausible that God is its creator. Due to His omnipotence, God does not require any waiting period to bring the world into existence.[29] This disagreement has been ongoing as Ghazali regards Averroes and other philosophers who share his views as nonbelievers. However, Averroes is equally uncertain about whether his perspective will result in disbelief or has already done so. Although philosophers primarily rely on logical reasoning, certain philosophers do make reference to Qur'anic scriptures, which is considered traditionalism. Text and rationality are inherently interconnected, thereby no pure logical thought or just traditional belief.

The assertion that God possesses omniscience, however, cannot be justified. Ghazali posits that God, in His omnipotence, is the creator of all existence and the orchestrator of all events in this universe, all of which occur in accordance with His divine will.[30] Therefore, God possesses complete knowledge of all these matters, as it is inherent for a being with a will to be aware of its own intentions. This exemplifies the omniscience of God, as He possesses comprehensive knowledge of every intricate aspect. Averroes contradicts Ghazali's concept that God lacks omniscience. In order to determine whether God's comprehension of reality is universal or individual, it is necessary to take into account all factors. Ghazali's interpretation had mistakes because none of the philosophers had the same beliefs as him. However, they did agree that comprehending the intricacies of the world is different from human understanding of those things. The main concern for Averroes is the conflict between Ghazali and the philosophers over the connection between God's knowledge and human understanding[31] Humans acquire information about specifics through their five senses, and each sense undergoes continuous transformation and improvement. Conversely, understanding specific information is acquired by reason, and its essence is not connected to the specifics of the material. Here, it can be seen that the primary focus of these two thinkers is to

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[27] M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 161.

[28] Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 60.

[29] Peter S Groff, *Islamic Philosophy A-Z* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2007), 28.

[30] Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 138.

[31] Averroes, *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, 280.

examine the theological perspective on differentiating between knowledge of God and knowledge of humanity. From a theological perspective, the Qur'an contains thirty passages that affirm Allah's omniscience, indicating that Islam holds the belief that God possesses complete knowledge of everything, including all aspects of the world.

Ghazali's third challenge was a corporeal resurrection. This concept was regarded as impossible by numerous philosophers because the corporeal components of the body would be processed by nature. It is possible that the initial element could evolve into an additional component of the human body as a consequence of the extended natural process. There is a possibility that humans will be resurrected in imperfect physical forms if they are resurrected in their original physical form. Ghazali strongly disagrees to the conventional interpretation of Q. 3:16, which posits that individuals who have been killed are still alive and in the presence of their God. Ghazali maintained that the acceptance of philosophers' argumentation is incompatible with all Muslim values.[32] This is because of God's infinite power to resurrect the organism, irrespective of its form.

In other issues, philosophers believe that the soul is the only component that possesses infinite qualities, whereas the body or material is limited. Ghazali, on the other hand, argues that the human soul endures beyond death or separation from the body due to its autonomous nature as a separate being. Averroes uses a sleep analogy to illustrate spiritual awakening as a means of countering Ghazali's claim. During human sleep, their souls persist, and likewise, when humans die and their bodies are destroyed, their souls persist and have the potential for resurrection.[33] The parallel between death and sleep provides

compelling evidence for the persistence of the soul, as the end of bodily functions is caused by the soul's acts, yet the soul itself continues to exist. This state is comparable to death, and it is understandable to the general public or non-expert. God's words in the Qur'an 39: 42-43 make it clear that souls are taken by God at the moment of death to be returned to Him.[34] This includes the souls of those who did not die while asleep.

Bridging Philosophical Inconsistencies: Ibn Khaldun's Reflections and the Divergence between Ḥikmah and Wisdom

Ibn Khaldun, an influential figure in the history of Islamic thought, provides valuable perspectives on philosophical discourse. Unlike his predecessors al-Kindi, Farabi, and Avicenna, Ibn Khaldun did not directly involve himself in the formal writing of philosophical works. Nevertheless, his contemplations regarding the essence of knowledge, society, and human civilization indirectly reconcile many philosophical contradictions found in past Islamic thinking. This section also examines the conceptual difference between *ḥikmah*, an Islamic term originating from the Qur'an that represents the journey towards Truth through wisdom, and the Greek intellectual tradition's understanding of wisdom.

Khaldun did not author a philosophical work, but his ideas are elaborated in *the Muqaddimah* (prolegomena), an introspective analysis of history and society. Khaldun acknowledges the significance of Greek philosophy in this work, claiming that Aristotle was the initial teacher of logic. However, he argues that philosophy has a theological issue since it has led to disciplines that are difficult to differentiate from one another.[35]

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[32] Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers,* 219.

[33] Averroes, *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, 343.

[34] (42) God takes the souls of the dead and the souls of the living while they sleep–He keeps hold of those whose death He has ordained and sends the others back until their appointed time–there truly are signs in this for those who

reflect. (43) Yet they take intercessors besides God! Say, 'Even though these have no power or understanding?' See M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, 288.

[35] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah* (no year) Translated by Rosenthal Franz, Available at https://asadullahali.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/ibn_khaldun-al_muqaddimah.pdf, 472.

When it comes to the intersection between Islam and philosophy, Khaldun prefers to mention Muslim philosophy. [36] Khaldun's primary critique of Muslim philosophers is their belief that logical arguments and proofs were limited to what could be perceived through the senses. Brainpower, encompassing imagination, reasoning, and remembering, is responsible for the production of all these phenomena. Therefore, brainpower itself is the underlying issue. [37] Conversely, Khaldun believes that mastering philosophy is crucial as it can enhance one's intellectual sensitivity. Khaldun advised pupils to use prudential behavior when studying philosophy due to its requirement of prior understanding. He expresses concern that the study of philosophy may cause Muslims to deviate from their religious beliefs.

Another essential aspect of philosophy and Islam is the historical meaning of the term itself. Muslims consider the pathway to the Truth as *ḥikmah*, which is drawn from the Arabic text of the Qur'an, while philosophers perceive the path to the Truth as wisdom, which is derived from the Greek tradition. [38] According to orthodox Muslim theologians, philosophy is considered a secular idea that is distinct from *ḥikmah* as mentioned in the Qur'an. In Arabic culture, the term *falsafa* is employed to denote Greek philosophy. The phrase has been present in Arabic since the seventh and eighth centuries, as seen in Greek intellectual works. Before it was adopted, the term *al- ḥikmah* was already familiar in Arabic. Most Arabic writers used *ḥikmah* to understand philosophy, and *ḥakīm* to refer to a philosopher or *faylasūf*. [39] *Ḥikmah* is considered to have greater significance compared to the more prevalent philosophical concept. Nasr states that the debate on the usage of the terms *al-falsafa* or *al-ḥikmah* has been ongoing since these terms

were introduced into Islamic scholarly discourse. Nasr states that Muslims from various theological perspectives tried to elucidate the significance of *ḥikmah*, as well as to develop a philosophical framework rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and hadiths, which mention the term *ḥikmah*. This issue remains a subject of disagreement among many intellectual groups, such as Ṣūfīs, Mutakallimūn, and philosophers. [40] The Mutakallimūn, Ṣūfīs, and philosophers all contend that their respective interpretations are more deserving of *ḥikmah*.

The term *"ḥikmah"* has multiple interpretations in the Qur'an, and it was first introduced in Islamic culture. The statement is reiterated twenty times in the Qur'an across twelve separate surahs, with ten of them being associated with the term *"al-kitāb"*. *Ḥikmah* is a term that encompasses qualities such as wisdom, sagaciousness, philosophy, maxim, rationable, and underlying reason, as stated by Wehr. [41] *Ḥikmah*, in addition to its literal meaning, also encompasses a set of principles and virtues that can inspire individuals to act with fairness, justice, and equality. The usage of the word *"ḥikmah"* to refer to philosophy in the Islamic world is connected to the concept of wisdom, as indicated by the various definitions of this term. In order to emphasize the importance of *ḥikmah* and philosophy, it is crucial to differentiate between *ḥikmah* as a manifestation of Islamic philosophy and the Western understanding of philosophy.

Nasr argues that modern Western philosophy did not originate within Islam until the era of Avicenna, during which Islamic philosophy flourished. [42] *Ḥikmah* respects both rationality and the nature of life, while also requiring a high level of intellectual ability. The statement that *ḥikmah* involves more than

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[36] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 849.

[37] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 699.

[38] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 15.

[39] Hossein Ziai, "Islamic Philosophy (*Falsafa*)" in Tim Winter (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 57.

[40] Sayyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds), *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1996), 21.

[41] Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (New York: Spoken Language Service Inc, 1976), 196.

[42] Sayyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds). *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 23.

philosophy refers to the fact that *ḥikmah* encompasses a broader range of knowledge and understanding than just philosophy. *Ḥikmah*, in the Islamic context, refers to a profound understanding that not only stimulates intellectual growth but also nurtures spiritual development. *Ḥikmah* is closely associated with the highest degrees of spiritual purity and holiness.[43] Within the Islamic world, the concept of philosophy, known as *ḥikmah*, encompasses not just intellectual pursuits and human reasoning abilities, but also includes the aspects related to God. It is important to acknowledge that the Muslim philosophers' primary inspi-ration for the *hikmah* discussed above stems from the teachings of Islam, supported by the influence of Greek philosophy to enhance and expand their understanding. The primary foundations of philosophy originate from religion or shari'a principles, whereas explana-tions are derived through the faculties of reason and the human intellect.

Reframing Islamic Philosophy Under the Concepts of Islamic, Islamicate, and Islamdom

In addition to the aforementioned in-depth analysis of Islamic philosophy, Ahmed criticizes the philosophers based on Hodgson's classifi-cations of Islamic, Islamicate, and Islamdom. Ahmed employed Hodgson's Islamic classifi-cation to refer to Muslim societies that adhere to Islam in a religious sense. According to this interpretation, there is a strong statement about Maimonides or Musa bin Maymun as a Jewish intellectual and his contemplations on Islamic philosophy.[44] According to Ahmed, a more significant problem arises when categorizing the term "Islamic" only based on the views and behaviors of Muslims, without including individuals like Maimonides who are not Muslim. According to Hodgson's definition, the philosophy that permits the inclusion of figures like Maimonides, where non-Muslims partici-

pate in a tradition dominated by Muslims, is referred to as Islamicate philosophy, rather than Islamic philosophy. According to Ahmed, the criticism of secularism in Islamic philosophy arises from a narrow understanding of Islam that focuses only on doctrinal interpretations and fails to consider the broader universal context of Islam.

Ahmed's definition of Islam encompasses Islamic philosophy. Islam embraces all signifi-cant interpretive efforts in which humans engage with the complete revelation of Muhammad. In accordance with Ahmed's thesis, revelation is comprised of three components: "Pre-Text", "Text", and "Con-Text". According to Ahmed, the Text is considered the ultimate manifestation of Truth, serving as evidence for the presence of an unseen reality. Pre-Text refers to a secret layer of reality that is not readily apparent. The Islamic tradition has consistently debated the epistemo-logical question of whether humans may possess knowledge of the unseen. Con-Text refers to the collective meaning that is extracted from the analysis of texts over the history.[45] Islam is evaluated based on criteria outside scriptures, legal requirements, and orthodoxy by consi-dering it as a means of seeking significance through the interplay between human inter-pretation and divine revelation. Despite its inconsistent and unorthodox nature in many Muslim traditions, what may seem contradictory and heterodox is nevertheless an integral element of core Islam and nothing else. Ahmed asserts that exploring the notion of Pre-Text reality illuminates a certain aspect of Islam within Islamic philosophy. The practice of using reason to uncover Pre-Textual Truths here is referred to as a hermeneutical engagement.[46] The main focus of Islamic philosophical epistemo-logy is to understand concepts that are not easily understood by the general public. Some discourses, such as the presence of God, the world's eternal nature, and the story of the soul

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[43] Imam Iqbal, "Filsafat Sebagai Hikmah: Konteks Berfilsafat di Dunia Islam," *Jurnal Refleksi* 17, 1 (2017): 36.

[44] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 174.

[45] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 347-360.

[46] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 519.

and body, are too complex and comprehensive to be reduced to a text's textual elements alone.

Conclusion

Answering the question of whether Islamic thought is truly Islamic presents a considerable challenge. Identifying philosophers who believe in a single God and Muhammad as His Messenger is a complex task that requires more than a basic approach. Not every philosopher is affected by Greek philosophy. Although Ghazali is commonly considered a theologian who is not influenced by Greek philosophy, it can be observed that certain of his arguments show similarity to Plato's ideas, albeit indirectly. There are a few non-Muslim philosophers who contribute to Islamic philosophy and they add the range of discussion rather than restrict it. Despite certain philosophers labeling others as non-believers, it does not change the fact that their belief is Islam.

Regarding philosophy as a secular field, it is important to consider the connection to the Qur'anic text in order to engage in thoughtful and analytical reflection of something happening in the world. Similarly, the concept of *hikmah* is the most suitable term to describe the philosophical aspect of Islamic teachings, as it aims to determine the most effective approach to achieve a deeper understanding of higher truth. Nevertheless, the pursuit of knowledge and understanding that lies at the core of philosophy is not exclusive to the Greeks or any particular society. Each civilization possesses its unique philosophy, which encompasses both its mode of thought and style of life. While it is true that Greece, Syria, and Persia influenced the philosophy that developed in the Islamic world, it is important to note that Islam also had its own distinct historical context that shaped its unique philosophical traits.

I agree with Ahmed's understanding of Islam or Islamic as a subjective interpretation of historical revelation within the realm of human experience. Islam is the subjective interpretation and understanding of individuals, encompassing their feelings, experiences, and perceptions of what constitutes Islam, irrespective of its legal or orthodox definition. In this context, Islamic philosophy is characterized by its focus on Islamic issues, irrespective of whether it draws inspiration from Greek philosophy or includes non-Muslim intellectuals.

The ambiguity displayed by philosophers such as Ghazali and Averroes in attributing criticism to each other can be interpreted as a longstanding practice of intellectual contemplation and pursuit of truth, rather than a religious disagreement. The themes addressed in Islamic philosophy are not wholly novel, but they are approached from an Islamic point of view, expressed in the language of Islam, and situated within the cultural context of Islamic civilization. However, I would rather refer to Islamic philosophy as a philosophical discussion of Islamic issues. This term is suitable for resolving the argument over its origin, the individuals involved in the debate, and the subject matter being discussed.

Data Availability

As no new data were generated or analyzed, data sharing is not applicable for this study.

Disclaimer

The opinions and conclusions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of any affiliated institutions.

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