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The Metaphysical Distinction between Existence and Essence: A Foundation for the Non-Greek Philosophical System

Sohrab Haghghat¹

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Abstract

With a rational reflection on possible beings, Farabi presents an analysis of the relationship between existence and essence, which requires a new philosophical system distinct from Greek philosophy. In his view, all possible beings are composed of two metaphysical aspects, i.e. existence and essence. By distinguishing constituents (*muqawwamāt*) from accidental things (*‘araḍiyyāt*) and using terms such as *‘ārīḍ* and *lāzim*, Farabi explores the structure of possible beings. In possible beings, existence is not the same or a part of essence; rather, it is an accident of essence, and since any accidental thing is subject to causality (*mu‘allal*), thus the possible things require something out of themselves for their existence. The main point is that the container of this distinction is not merely the world of the mind or the objective world; rather, it is the product of rational analysis. In other words, the distinction of existence and essence is neither a mental distinction nor a physical one; rather, it is a rational distinction which is called, in today’s metaphysics, metaphysical distinction. In metaphysical distinction, the existence and essence of the possible beings are two ontological principles and two metaphysical

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modes of the being that compose its identity. The metaphysical distinction designs the foundation of the non-Greek philosophical system based on which one can explain, from the theological viewpoint, proving the existence of the Necessary Being, the evolution of the ultimate causality, natural agency with the agentive causality and divine agency; from the cosmological viewpoint, proving the essential contingency of the universe and the philosophical explanation of the creation; from the ontological viewpoint, dividing beings into necessary and possible, and explaining the structure of possible beings; and from the epistemological viewpoint, evolution in dividing knowledge. This article is an applied study that attempts, by relying on the descriptive-analytical method with an exploration of the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence, to deal with applying that distinction in Farabi's philosophical system and its products and results.

Keywords

existence, essence, metaphysical distinction, kinds of distinction, Farabi.

Introduction

With a glimpse of the contemporary metaphysical discussions, one can conclude that the issue of existence and essence and their relationship are among issues of great concern and much disputed among philosophers. Whether existence and essence are equal or different and, in the latter case, whether this distinction is mental, physical or metaphysical have preoccupied philosopher and theologians in the history of philosophy and even theology, both in the Islamic world and the Christian world as well as – to some extent – the Jewish world. In Izutsu's words, since the early periods of Islamic thought, the dichotomy of essence and existence has played such a prominent and evident role that it even had a deep effect on the historical formation of the west's scholastic philosophy in the Middle Ages (Izutsu, 1379, p. 12). Besides, the distinction, in the metaphysical sense, between existence and essence is an issue that, for the first time, was posed in the tradition of Islamic philosophy, and the Jewish and Christian philosophies in the Middle Ages got familiar with it through the Islamic philosophy. The way the existence is distinguished from essence, and the type of accidentality of the existence were proposed by the Muslim peripatetic philosophers and criticized by Suhrawardi and Ibn Rushd. Accordingly, the mode of the relationship between existence and essence in the possible beings is one of the disputed issues in the history of philosophy. Considering the fact that the Muslim philosophers would philosophize in the religious context, they faced issues such as God's existence and the creation of the universe; thus, to present arguments for proving God's existence, they considered a dichotomy of structure for the possible beings along with other arguments and the philosophical explanation of the theological issue of creation, a structure with no precedent – at least – in the Greek

philosophy, and explained by Muslims with the proposition “any possible being is a composite duality with essence and existence”. In effect, this proposition consists of three parts: “any possible being is composed of existence and essence”, “there is a distinction between the existence and the essence of possible beings”, and finally, “the existence of any possible being is accidental to its essence”. This proposition, with its subsidiaries, institutes the new philosophical system. By the philosophical system of an Islamic philosopher, we mean his collection of theology, cosmology, ontology and epistemology that, together, form a philosophical system.

Statement of the Problem

Upon reflection on Farabi’s philosophical system, we may conclude that he, based on the new analytical foundation of the relationship between existence and essence, has been able to establish a new philosophical system distinct from the Greek philosophical tradition. For the first time, Farabi proposed the dichotomy of possible beings in the form of ‘essence’ and ‘existence’ vividly and definitely in the Islamic philosophy. On the importance of his view, we may say that the dichotomy between the essence and existence is – undoubtedly – one of the most fundamental philosophical views in the Islamic thought and prepares a foundation upon which all the construction of the Islamic philosophy is founded. Rightly, we must say that Farabi, in the Islamic world, is the first one who initiatively rethinks on the mode of relationship between existence and essence and attempts to present a non-Greek philosophical system harmonious with the Islamic religious tradition. Besides, his linguistic and etymological reflections on terminologies such as existence and essence in his treatise entitled *al-Ḥurūf* adds to that importance. On the importance of Farabi’s innovative analysis regarding the

relationship between existence and essence, its position in generation of the non-Greek philosophical system, and its effect on the later philosophies including Islamic, Christian and Jewish philosophies, one may refer to the views of those who study Farabi, including Shehadi, Richard Netton and Hammond. According to Shehadi, Farabi's distinction between existence and essence plays an important role in the history of philosophy of the Middle Ages, whether in the Islamic sphere, Christian sphere and Jewish sphere. One cannot understand that theory without considering the views of Farabi and Avicenna. Farabi founded that theory, but Avicenna used it in his own philosophical system in a more fundamental and broader way (Shehadi, 1982, p. 52). According to Netton, the two concepts of existence and essence are highly important not only for Farabi's own philosophical system, but also – in general – for the success of the Islamic theology and metaphysics. Similarly, it has had a considerable importance in the evolution of the Christian theology of the Middle Ages, for those two concepts are among the key issues in the scholastic discussions, especially those proposed in Thomas's philosophy (Netton, 1994, p. 109). In his view, the evolution of those concepts by Thomas Aquinas and his followers is perhaps one of the sources for the great revolution in the rational thought, especially the theology of the Middle Ages in Europe in 13th century (Netton, 1994, p. 109). Hammond, who compares Farabi's philosophical system with that of Thomas Aquinas, especially in the spheres of theology and studying the soul, believes that Farabi, about 300 years before Thomas, has spoken in detail about the distinction between existence and essence in possible beings and their sameness in the Necessary Being. Thus, philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas, who speaks of existence and essence, has certainly taken the theory of distinction between existence and essence from Farabi (Hammond, 1974,

p. 55). Madam Goichon, the famous scholar who studies Avicenna, has referred us to Farabi in his book on Avicenna's distinction between existence and essence; and, relying on *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, she says that the distinction between existence and essence is Farabi's theory (Goichon, 1937, p. 131). Thus, in this article, I am not seeking to deal with philosophical, linguistic and historical importance of Farabi's theory about the distinction between existence and essence; rather, I try to deal with a neglected point, i.e. the kind of distinction between existence and essence. This has been, unfortunately, somehow ignored in the tradition of Islamic philosophy and, thus, has led to some sophistries. Thus, I deal – though briefly – with the Greek and Greek-like background of the distinction between existence and essence; then, I deal with the kinds of distinction between existence and essence; and finally, I deal with Farabi's distinction and its results.

1. The Greek and Greek-like Background

Although efforts have been made to show that the metaphysical distinction has been proposed in the Greek tradition, especially that of Aristotle and Plotinus, or even in the Christian tradition like the work of Boethius and Muslims theologians to present – in this way – a Greek, Christian and theological background for that theory, upon reflection on Farabi's rational analysis regarding the relationship between existence and essence, we will find out that Farabi's distinction between existence and essence existed before Farabi in the philosophical and theological tradition. However, what is important is the certain distinction called the metaphysical distinction innovated by Farabi in the tradition of Islamic philosophy. And it is this kind of distinction that can alter the whole philosophical system (for more information, see Akbarian and Haghghat, 1387 SH,

pp. 40-61). In his philosophical works, Aristotle has implicitly spoken of the distinction between existence and essence, but explicitly proposes it in his second analytical logical treatise. For Aristotle, the one who knows what the man, or anything else, is must necessarily know it exists, because no one knows anything about the nature of what does not exist. Definitely one must know what the meaning of a word like antelope or deer is, but nobody can know what it really is. If someone wants to show what something is and show that it exists, how can he do that with a single reason? Definition shows something and argument shows something else. What the man is and that the man exists are two quite different things (Aristotle, 1993, 92b4-12). Elsewhere, he says after we know that there are things, we try to find out what they are (Aristotle, 1993, 89b34). In a similar statement, he says if something does not exist in a fact, or if we do not know whether it exists or not, we cannot say what it is (Aristotle, 1993, 93a21-33). A reflection on Aristotle's statements, mentioned in the logical section of his works, suggests that he proposes the mental distinction between existence and essence, but the metaphysical distinction has not been discussed and, basically, Aristotle cannot propose such a distinction because the universe Aristotle deals with is a universe that exists in actuality. Aristotle's universe is a universe without events and, in effect, is a universe without history. It is not the universe that cannot exist. In such a metaphysical system, there is – from the very onset – no room for the difference and distinction or the relationship between the “essences” that do not exist, and this is proposed due to the fact that one cannot get to something's existence just through essence and definition of the substance. Of course, Farabi has used Aristotle's analyses in achieving the metaphysical distinction.

Similarly, among Neo-Platonic scholars, the distinction between

existence and essence is proposed in the mental level, but the metaphysical distinction has not been discussed and explored. We may refer to Plotinus who has been effective in formation and completion of the Islamic philosophy. In the seventh and eighth chapters of the sixth treatise of *Enneads*, Plotinus has descriptions about the One and His attributes that, somehow, show the distinction between the existence and the essence. He says: “The One is the intellect with no dimension and greater and stronger than anything appeared; nothing is greater or stronger than Him. Thus, He gets neither His existence from others nor He acquires His Howness” (Plotinus, 1992, VI, 8, 17, 24-25; Lutfi, 1366, p. 1068). Elsewhere, he says that the One is not referred to anything else in the fact that He exists and He is the substance (Plotinus, 1992, VI, 8, 12, 16). These statements by Plotinus can be the mental distinction, not the metaphysical distinction, between the existence and essence, because the metaphysical distinction creates a system, which is realized by Farabi. Of course, the scholars who study Plotinus, like Corrigan, believe that Plotinus would use “*to einai*” for anything and “*to on*” for real beings and intelligibles, as well as speaking about the One and His features, has prepared the ground for metaphysical distinction (Corrigan, 1996, p. 106). This is because for Plotinus, this distinction is not running in the One who is the Self-subsistent being and the cause for any other things; rather, it is running in the reason and the soul as composed of existence and substance, and in the material beings as composed of quantities, qualities and the like (Corrigan, 1996, p. 107). Despite these opinions, we must say that what is proposed as the metaphysical distinction and contains numerous results from theology to other components of the philosophical system is the product of Farabi’s reflections, which we will discuss in the next sections.

It is worth noting that some works have been composed about Farabi's opinion regarding existence and essence, including Kamali-zada's article in *Hikmat Sānavī* journal (1387 SH), Pur-Hassan's article in *Tārīkh Falsafa* (1393 SH), and Hedayat-afza and Leva'i's article (1395 SH). Although these three articles have explored the relationship between existence and essence in Farabi's works in proportion to their discussion, basically dealing with the three mental, physical and metaphysical distinctions, adjusting them with philosophers before Farabi in brief and Farabi in detail as well as the results of the metaphysical distinction in Farabi's whole philosophical system are among the innovations in my article, not dealt with in the abovementioned articles.

2. Kinds of Distinction between Essence and Existence

With a glimpse of the contemporary metaphysical discussions, one can conclude that the issue of existence and essence as well as their relationship is one of the issues much discussed and disputed among philosophers. Whether existence and essence are the same or different and, if different, whether this distinction is mental, physical or metaphysical has preoccupied the minds of philosophers and theologians, in the history of philosophy and even theology, in the Islamic world, the Christian world and somehow in the Jewish world. Reflection on the kinds of distinction, while preventing sophistries, can be a great help in understanding the difference between the reason and the mind as well as the sophistries arising from mixing them. another importance of this discussion is the status of the relationship between existence and essence in the contemporary metaphysical discussions. For instance, one can name the Neo-Thomists who have been able, using the thoughts of Thomas Aquinas, to present a new reading of Thomas's thought in various

fields. Among the much disputed issues in the circles of Neo-Thomists is the kinds of existence and essence. Entries such as “essence and existence” and “kinds of distinction” in encyclopedias such as Neo-Catholics, especially the fourth and fifth volumes (Glanville, 1967, pp. 908-911; Taylore, 1967, pp. 548-552) as well as the series of Cambridge publications including the history of philosophy and other works show the importance of this issue (Corrigan, 1996, pp. 105-129; Wippel, 1982, pp. 131-164; Wippel, 2000, pp. 385-410). In metaphysical studies, kinds of distinction between existence and essence is discussed, but the best-known and mostly disputed one is the tripartite distinction, i.e. the mental, the physical and the metaphysical distinctions, which we will define and analyze respectively.

2-1. The Mental Distinction

The mental distinction, which is also called conceptual and logical distinction, means that the reason, by analyzing an external thing into two components – i.e. existence and essence – in the mental order, attributes existence to the essence or describes essence with the existence. In this kind of distinction, the external thing is a monolithic and simple entity, and speaking of distinction or composition of the existence and essence in that thing in the world outside the mind is quite nonsense. The main characteristic of this kind of distinction is that it is quite dependent on the mind, in a way that without mind and rational analysis, one cannot speak of this kind of distinction. That is, as long as there is a subject, we may speak of this kind of distinction in the external thing, but without a subject and the analysis of the rational faculty, this kind of distinction is also non-existent (Copleston, 1963, pp. 97-98). This kind of distinction can be observed in Aristotle’s philosophy (Aristotle, 1993, 92b, p. 10-11) and the opinions of Muslim theologians and philosophers

such as Suhrawardi (Suhrawardi, 1380 SH, pp. 64-66). For this group, the external beings are simple realities that can be analyzed into two concepts of existence and essence just in the mental world. The peripatetic philosophers, even though they believe in mental distinction too, maintain that this kind of distinction is not restricted to the mind; rather, it follows the metaphysical distinction, which will be dealt with in the next sections.

2-2. The Physical Distinction

The physical distinction is proposed in contrast to the mental distinction. In the physical distinction, one may distinguish and even separate the existence from the essence of the external thing in the outside world; that is, one can separate the existence of something from its essence in the outside world. In this view, existence and essence are two things (*rei*), and this kind of distinction is not dependent on the subject's mind (Taylor, 1967, Vol. 5, p. 549; Glanville, 1967, pp. 908-910). Using the language of 'thing' in explaining the relationship between existence and essence in the philosophy of the Middle Ages is attributed to the Roman Gilles (Taylor, 1967, Vol. 5, p. 549; Glanville, 1967, pp. 908-910). In the Islamic world, the peripatetic philosophers consider this kind of distinction as an inconsistent idea whose mere conception leads us to inconsistency. Philosophers like Suhrawardi, however, attribute such an opinion to peripatetic philosophers. He maintained that, according to peripatetic philosophers, if we consider existence as superfluous over the essence, we must necessarily consider those two as two independent things. Thus, he maintained that the adherents of peripatetic philosophy, by accepting the superfluity of existence over essence in the outside world, consider – in effect – those two as two separate things, which have led them to some sophistries (Suhrawardi, 1380 SH, pp. 64-66). It must

be said, however, that Suhrawardi has misunderstood the case in criticizing the peripatetic philosophy and he has not had, basically, a right image of the existence as the subject of the peripatetic philosophy and as the foundation of other philosophical issues (See: Haghghat, 1401 SH, pp. 343-370). Using the term 'thing' and the language of 'thingness' about the two philosophical conceptions of existence and essence, and even other conceptions and secondary philosophical intelligibles, is the very physicalization of metaphysical issues, which is the heritage of Suhrawardi's philosophy.

2-3. The Metaphysical Distinction

The third distinction, which has been neglected, is the metaphysical or rational distinction, also called real distinction. This kind of distinction is neither mental nor objective; rather, it is proposed both in the mental order and objective order. In other words, in this kind of distinction, the existence and essence of the external possible being are neither identical as we see in the mental distinction, nor quite separate and like things as in physical distinction; rather, the existence and essence are two ontological principles and two metaphysical modes of the being that form the identity of the possible beings. This kind of distinction is not merely dependent on the subject's mind and is completely independent of mind. The subject, whether existing or not, is the external being of these two modes and two ontological and metaphysical principles (Copleston, 1963, p. 98; Taylor, 1967, Vol. 5, p. 549; Glanville, 1967, pp. 908-910). Indeed, this kind of distinction, as the title shows, is not the product of the mind's creation; rather, it is the result of the reason's discovery of the objective and external beings. The innovation of the Muslim peripatetic philosophers in ontology is precisely pertaining to this mode of distinction. As mentioned before, there is mental distinction

in Aristotle's works, but the metaphysical distinction has not been mentioned there and cannot exist, for the universe with which Aristotle deals is the universe that exists in actuality; that is, the universe of the things that exist. It is not the universe that one thinks it can be non-existent. The creation of the universe as mentioned in the Torah, the Bible or the Quran cannot exist for Aristotle, for the universe he imagines is the one without the possibility of non-existence, the universe that is impossible not to exist in the preexistent past. In such a metaphysical system, there is no room for the issue of the difference and distinction as well as the relationship among essences that do not exist; and Aristotle proposed this issue because one cannot achieve the existence through essence and the definition of substance. But the Islamic philosophers, including Farabi, and afterwards Avicenna, believed in the metaphysical distinction between the essence and the existence in addition to the mental distinction between them, considering that distinction as the metaphysical foundation for their philosophical thought. Farabi and – following him – Avicenna went beyond Aristotle's logical and epistemological distinction to the metaphysical and ontological distinction between the essence and the existence to be able to present a new interpretation and explanation of theology, cosmology and ontology. As a result of this evolution, the new philosophical system distinct from the Greek philosophy emerged. Now, the question is how Farabi acquired the metaphysical distinction and, through it, established the new philosophical system. We continue with analysis of Farabi's theory regarding existence and its relationship with essence as well as his innovations there.

3. Farabi's Theory about 'Existence'

Farabi's theory about the distinction between existence and essence

is based on his theory about 'existence' and 'essence from the viewpoint of its nature'. Farabi believes that existence is among the meanings and concepts that are, firstly, evident and axiomatic in the mind; secondly, it is imagined without intermediation and help from another concept; and thirdly, it is inscribed in the mind through unanimity (Farabi, 1349 AH, p. 2; Farabi, 1890, p. 56). That is, unless the existence is imagined, no other conception can be imagined; and finally, it cannot be known. Thus, existence is the imaginal origin of all imaginations. In other words, conceptions such as existence, necessity and possibility are not, for him, an empirical and *a posteriori* conception; rather, they are rational, primary and *a priori*, which are inscribed in the mind through initial imprinting. These conceptions are not products of acquisition; rather, we obtain those conceptions through awakening and admonition. In other words, the early conceptions that the man has from the childhood are not the product of applying the senses; rather, they are acquired by the child without intention and without any conscience. They are acquired by the child's talent (Farabi, 1371 SH, p. 129). In Avicenna's words, only through reason one can achieve conceptions such as being, thing, cause and the like, and even typical realities such as human being, which is out of sensible things, not through illusion and imagination which are preceded by sensory perception and limited to sensible things (Avicenna, 1405 AH, p. 65). But the question is whether the concept of existence forms the foundation of Farabi's philosophy. The answer is undoubtedly negative. The concept of existence as an evident concept is not the subject of philosophy, for the philosophical issues are formed around the objective truths, and the mental subject cannot be the axis of the objective issues. Thus, we must say that beyond the mental concept, the existence enjoys a rational truth and, from this angle, is the subject of philosophy and the uniting epicenter of the philosophical issues. Thus, it must be said that

existence as the metaphysical truth – which is a meta-conceptual and metaphysical entity – is the subject of Farabi’s philosophical system. Indeed, Farabi designs his philosophical system based on the rational intuition of the existence, and thereby, he affects the whole Islamic philosophy after himself. In Farabi’s philosophy, existence is neither a mental and psychological idea nor an objective sensible one; rather, it is a non-sensible entity. In other words, it is a metaphysical truth which is discovered by using reason. Existence as the subject of the peripatetic philosophy is not a mental concept or a physical and external entity; rather, it is a metaphysical and rational truth which is the result of confrontation between human’s reason and his belongings, an entity that reason discovers through its activity. The sphere of appearance of metaphysics is the analysis of reason. In other words, the way Farabi achieves the metaphysical truth of existence is the rational and philosophical intuition of existence. Transition through the mere concept to rational truth is Farabi’s metaphysical art, which achieves its perfection through Avicenna’s efforts. For Avicenna, existence is neither a thing nor a certain type of essence like accident, substance and the like, nor a mental or physical entity; rather, it is a metaphysical truth. As a result, we must say that existence in Farabi’s philosophical system is something that cannot be explained through the innate nature of essence alone; rather, as we will say, it is something more than essence and superfluous to it. “Essence” is the other side of the distinction between existence and essence. When Farabi speaks of the accidents of existence to the essence, he does not mean the essence of a being or non-being, because in that case, we are involved in vicious circle, acquiring the acquired, and inconsistency. Rather, the ‘essence’ in that discussion means the essence from the viewpoint of what it is, which is the product of the reason’s validity. ‘The essence from the viewpoint of what it is’ is neither a mental entity nor an external one. It is placed

neither in the container of mind nor in the order of objectivity; rather, it is a rational entity. Understanding this fact is rooted in understanding the difference between the mind and the reason in metaphysical issues. Reflection on the difference between mental distinction and metaphysical distinction clarifies the difference between the mind and the reason. Of course, this is true about all philosophical conceptions and confusion of these two will lead to a confusion between conventional laws of the essence, leading to some sophistries. Rational truths are not, in principle, the fabrications of the mind; rather, they are the result of the reason's discovery as the objective and external truths. Thus, the philosophers consider the superfluity of existence over essence as the product of rational analysis, and it is not discussed as a mental or objective matter.

4. Farabi and the Metaphysical Distinction of Existence and Essence

Now, after understanding existence and essence in Farabi's philosophy, we can delineate the relationship and, more precisely, the distinction between them. It seems that with a reflection on Farabi's works, we can find two logical and epistemological statements as well as philosophical and ontological statements in distinction between existence and essence. Indeed, the distinction between existence and essence is not, for Farabi, an intuitive matter; rather, it is an argumentative one. We will pose and reconstruct Farabi's opinion in the form of an argumentation.

4-1. The Logical and Epistemological Statement

Farabi's mechanism in logical and epistemological statement of the distinction between existence and essence is using the three interrogative words: *mā*, *hal*, *lim*. In answering the question on *mā* (what) and the essence of something, we are trying to imagine it.

That is, to recognize the truth of something, we need to imagine it. What comes to imagination is its essence and quiddity, not its existence or anything other than its essence, including the time, the place and amount of that thing. If the existence of that thing was imagined, we would find out its existence by recognizing its essence, and any imagination would necessitate affirmation. But this is not the case. On many occasions, we are aware of the essence of something, but we do not know whether it exists or not. Thus, the essence of something is other than its existence (Farabi, 1404 AH, pp. 48-49).

We may reconstruct Farabi's statement in the form of an argument as follows:

1. For recognizing the whatness of something, its essence is imagined.
2. Imagining the essence of something is its being known.
3. Not any imagination needs affirmation (auxiliary assumption).
4. Imagining the essence of something does not necessitate its existence.
5. The essence is known and the existence is unknown.
6. The known is different from the unknown.

Thus, the essence is different from the existence.

This statement and argument proposes the epistemological distinction, or the very conceptual distinction, of existence and essence in the container of the mind. Such an argument, in addition to being somehow present in the works of predecessors of Farabi like Aristotle and other Greek-like philosophers, cannot design a foundation for the new philosophical system; rather, it reveals – at most – non-companionship of the essence and the existence in the

level of mind as well as the semantic and conceptual conflict between them. Besides, it can be – from the viewpoint of the priority of logics over philosophy – an introduction to Farabi’s philosophical statement about the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence.

4-2. The Philosophical and Ontological Statement

In his philosophical works, Farabi proposes the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence in possible beings and asserts that this distinction is specified to possible beings, and is not running in essentially Necessary Being. Of course, he has used – in this statement – the logical statement as the introduction and, then, through it, he deals with the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence. The right understanding of this argument is definitely important for perceiving and promoting the metaphysical thoughts in Islamic tradition. In his treatises entitled *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, *Zeynūn Kabīr*, and *Ta’līqāt*, in describing the relationship between existence and essence, he uses the words ‘*āriḍ* (i.e. what is accident and originated from outside) and *lāzim* (i.e. an essential or inseparable attribute) or *mulāzim* (Farabi, 1371 SH, p. 42). In the first chapter of *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* as well as in *Zeynūn Kabīr* treatise, Farabi considers all possible beings as composite, dealing with proving the Necessary Being through discussing the existence, the essence and the relationship between them in possible beings and discussing that existence is neither the same as essence, nor a part of possible beings; rather, their existence is accidental and requires a cause. Farabi, like Aristotle, starts from the objective and concrete existing things, which are – for him – primary and prior reality. By analyzing an existing objective and concrete thing, he deals with essence and existence, and this is where he transits from logics to metaphysics.

The necessary point for logical statement was that existence is not among the constituents of essence; thus, it must be a part of accidents of essence. Accidents also include both posterior and consequent. Existence is not accident for posterior, for it necessitates previous existence of essence, and that leads to vicious circle and inconsistency. Thus, existence is the consequent accident of essence; and since any accident is a caused entity, the possible beings are the effects of a cause. That cause is either the essence or something outside the essence. In the former case, due to the existential priority of cause to effect, the essence must be prior to existence, and the previously mentioned restrictions will necessarily be repeated. And the latter case, due to invalidity of vicious circle, must lead to an external entity not inconsistent with existence; and that external entity is the very essentially Necessary Being (Farabi, 1381 SH, pp. 81-82; Farabi, 1387 SH, pp. 107-108). Thus, “any possible being is a composite entity with essence and existence” and “the Necessary Being’s essence is His nature”.

Reconstruction of Farabi’s statement in the form of an argument is as follows:

1. We have some beings.
2. These beings have common points and differences.
3. Existence is their common point and essence is their difference.
4. These beings are composed of existence and essence.
5. Existence is not inherent for essence.
6. Existence is accident for essence.
7. Any accident is a caused attribute.
8. Existence is a caused attribute.

9. Vicious circle is invalid.
10. Existence is the effect of an entity out of essence.
11. That external entity is not composed of existence and essence.
12. The external entity is impossible, that is necessary.

Thus, the possible beings are composed of existence and essence and the Necessary Being is free from this composition.

In this rational analysis, with a focus on external beings, Farabi considers existence as accidental to essence, and this accidentality occurs in the outside world. In *al-Ḥurūf*, he deals – in detail – with the semantic and conceptual meaning of ‘*araḍ*’ both from literal and philosophical viewpoints, as well as its difference from ‘*araḍī*’ and ‘*āriḍ*’ (Farabi, 1970, p. 95). In philosophy, however, ‘*araḍ*’ is an attribute with which a noun is described, and that attribute is not inside the essence of the noun; rather, it is outside its essence and nature. Now, that ‘*araḍ*’ is either essential or non-essential. In the essential ‘*araḍ*’, its subject is its essence or part of its essence, but in the non-essential ‘*araḍ*’, its subject is not the essence or part of the essence of that ‘*araḍ*’. And this type of ‘*araḍ*’ is what is meant in philosophy (Farabi, 1970, pp. 95-96). Therefore, the existence of ‘*araḍ*’ is not from the categories; rather, he means the ‘*araḍ*’ from the *isagoge*, which is contrary to essence.

With a reflection on philosophical statement of the relationship between existence and essence, it is clarified that Farabi’s metaphysical system is the rational analysis of the direct reality. He does not start from ‘essences’ as the ideas that are initially and directly known to us. He does not consider the essence and existence, from the onset, as the elements mutually separate to attempt to compose them as one single thing. On the contrary, he

starts with objective and concrete thing; then, makes it subject to a conceptual analysis and finds in it two substantiating and composing elements: essence and existence. As a result, the proposition “any possible being is a composed pair with existence and essence” is the metaphysical foundation for Farabi’s philosophy. In that theory, our mind can analyze the external things into two ontological principles and use that analysis for constructing its philosophical system.

5. The Results of the Metaphysical Distinction between Existence and Essence

As mentioned before, the philosophical system is a series of theology, cosmology, ontology and epistemology. By proposing the metaphysical distinction, Farabi has created an evolution in the whole philosophical system and established a new philosophical system. These results are mentioned in a list as follows:

A) Evolution in Theology: by transiting from Aristotle’s logical and epistemological distinction into the metaphysical and ontological distinction between essence and existence, Farabi could present a new argument for proving the existence of the Necessary Being, known as the “argument of necessity and possibility”. Farabi could establish an argument, in proportion to his philosophical system and the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence, for proving the Necessary Being, based on the analysis of existence as the reasonable truth and the center of all philosophical issues, an argument known as the existential argument in the philosophical tradition of the West with numerous readings. The alteration in the meaning of the Necessary Being’s causality for the possible beings means a transition from the ultimate causality and

natural agent as the motion-giving to the agentive causality and divine agent as the existence-giving, changing the non-moving mover into the pure Necessary Being and its implications, including turning the pure action and pure thought into the pure existence, are all the results of theology of the metaphysical distinction.

B) Evolution in Cosmology: explaining the essential origination of the universe and the philosophical statement of the theological issue of creation are among the cosmological evolutions arising from metaphysical distinction; and this is what is not found in Aristotle's philosophical system. This is because in the process of predicating existence over essence, indeed, the Primal Cause emanates the existence to the possible beings, and accordingly, the being is realized. The container of this predication, which explains the doctrine of creation, is not the mind, but the object. The essential createdness of the possible beings, meaning that the possible being is preceded by its nothingness both in the levels of essence and nature, is based on the rational analysis of the possible beings into two metaphysical modes of existence and essence as well as the explanation of the relationship between the two. The continuous relationship between the possible beings and the essentially Necessary Being is another fruit of the metaphysical distinction. Indeed, although the metaphysical distinction between essence and existence leads to the distinction between possible beings and the Necessary Being, the possible beings are continuously related to the Necessary Being through effusion of existence.

C) Evolution in Ontology: from the ontological viewpoint, dividing existence into necessary and possible, analyzing the structure of possible beings, and relating possible being to the Necessary Being are among the results of metaphysical distinction. Accordingly, we are moved from the tripartite structure of existence for the Greeks (i.e. inconsistent existence, potential existence, and actual existence) to the tripartite structure of impossible existence, possible existence and Necessary Existence. Besides, in terms of the relationship between 'existence' and 'essence', the essentially Necessary Existence is imagined as His essence is the same as His existence, while the possible beings are known as beings whose essences is the same as existence, and they are not capable of being the cause of their own existence. Their existence must be emanated from another source, that is the creator of the existence. This distinction divides the beings of the universe into the necessary and possible beings. The Necessary Being is infinite, uncreated, pure action and pure existence; and the possible being is finite, created, composed of potential and action (materials) and composed of existence and essence. We can say that in Aristotle's view, in primary division, the being is divided into substance and accidents, while Farabi divides the being, in primary division, into necessary and possible and, then, in the secondary division, he divides the essence into substance and accidents. Similarly, the metaphysical distinction between essence and existence prepared the ground for dividing the Aristotelian 'four reasons' into the reasons of subsistence (essence) and

reasons of existence in Farabi and the philosophers after him.

D) Evolution in Epistemology: Although philosophers such as Aristotle have spoken of intuitive knowledge, founding system on the basis of the intuitive knowledge is the product of efforts made by Muslim philosophers, especially Farabi. Thus, we must say that dividing knowledge into intuitive and acquired is rooted in the metaphysical distinction, because the intuitive knowledge is concerned with essence and the acquired knowledge is concerned with existence. We can find this evolution clearly in the transcendental theosophy in particular. For Mulla Sadra, the truth of existence is not of the type of essences; thus, it cannot be known through intuitive knowledge. However, it is not unknown; rather, it is known through acquired knowledge (for example, Mulla Sadra, 1410 AH, vol. 1, pp. 53, 61, 392). The necessary condition for this reflection made by Mulla Sadra and considering the fact that the knowledge of truths of existence is a source for other forms of knowledge, dividing knowledge into intuitive and acquired is considered as an initial division, and the intuitive knowledge is referred to the acquired knowledge (Allameh Tabataba'i, 1362 SH, p. 138). Thus, this kind of distinction also changes the philosopher's epistemology. That is, there is a difference between two types of conceptualization. The first type is based on essences such as being human, being a horse, etc. The second type is based on the entities of the actual beings in the world. Conceptualization of the first type is a quite mental affair, without a need of the entity existing outside the mind. But

the conceptualization of the second type is dependent on the entity existing independent of our mind. Such an entity has no precedent in the philosophy before Farabi. Besides, the metaphysical distinction overshadows the discussion of generalities. The natural general is the very essence; thus, the way existence is related to essence affects the discussion of generalities. Finally, we can say that the ground is prepared for discussion on principality of existence and conventionality of essence and vice versa. Thus, we can say that by proposing the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence, an independent philosophical system emerges.

Conclusion

We can say that by proposing the project of metaphysical distinction between existence and essence, Farabi departs from Greek philosophy, and this kind of distinction is one of the distinctive aspects of Islamic philosophy as compared to Greek philosophy. It is, indeed, the sublime instance of defending the identity of the Islamic philosophy as the non-Greek philosophy. This, of course, has no inconsistency with the fact that the Greek philosophy has a great role in formation of Islamic philosophy. I think that Farabi, by reflecting on the relationship between existence and essence, established a new philosophical system in the Islamic world that was developed by later philosophers such as Avicenna. This new philosophical system can be found in the evolutions arising from the metaphysical distinction in philosophers' theology, cosmology, ontology and epistemology. Presenting new argument in proving the Necessary Being, evolution in the meaning of causality, and transiting from ultimate causality and natural agent to agentive

causality and divine agent as well as changing the non-moving mover into essentially necessary being are among the theological evolutions. Explanation of the essential createdness of the universe and the philosophical explanation of the theological issue of creation are among the cosmological evolutions arising from metaphysical distinction; and such an analysis is not found in Aristotelian philosophical system. Besides, the universe's continuous need of the Necessary Being, due to the emanation of existence by the grantor of existence, is also among the cosmological evolutions. Dividing beings into necessary and possible, analyzing the structure of possible beings, and relating possible beings to necessary being are among the results of metaphysical distinction in ontology. In the epistemological sphere, dividing knowledge into intuitive and acquired, and being acquainted with two epistemic conceptualization system are among the fruits of metaphysical distinction. That is, the intuitive knowledge is concerned with the essence, but the acquired knowledge is concerned with the existence. Thus, we must say that the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence is a new foundation for proposing the new philosophy.

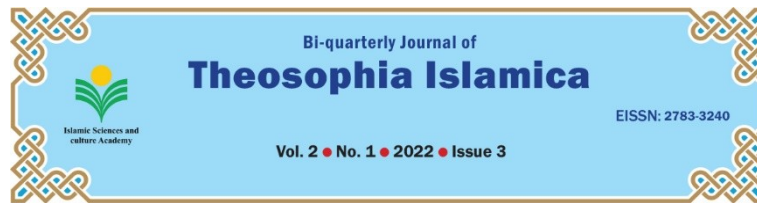
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Avicenna's View on the Greek Philosophical Thought

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Abstract

Continuing the path of Neo-Platonic philosophers and Farabi, while accepting the framework of the Greek thought in reaching the truth of the beings in the universe through the rational knowledge in the framework of Aristotelian logics, Avicenna has attempted to present a certain interpretation of some fundamental concepts of the Greek thought and offer a metaphysics with quite rational and argumentative results as well as a rational interpretation for some of the principal concepts of the Quranic thought in the Islamic world, a metaphysics that can be called the essential Greek-Islamic rational system. The present article attempts to use an analytical-explanatory method to prove that, firstly, Avicenna accepts the Greek rational thinking method in reaching the truth of the beings, calling it the certitude wisdom and knowledge. And – in line with Aristotle – he introduces the man's sensory faculty as the starting point for the path of acquiring certitude knowledge, through which he reaches the rational knowledge of the beings. Secondly, it states the most important axes of Avicenna's philosophy in his legal reasoning reading of principles of Aristotelian thought.

Keywords

Avicenna, Greek thought, philosophical thought, certitude, reason, existence, essence, distinction.

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Introduction

Regarding Avicenna's metaphysical effect, Etienne Gilson says, "In all philosophical languages, including Greek and Latin, the word 'essence' has hardly been cut off from its root, i.e. 'being'. When a Greek philosopher said something is *ousia*, he meant that it is real. When a Latin philosopher said something is *stantia*, he would also refer to its reality. This is, however, not the case. When we speak of a reality, the first denotation of the word that comes to our mind is that what it denotes may exist, just as it may not exist" (Gilson, 1952, p. 82). These statements show Avicenna's historical effect on metaphysics, an effect that could present a new understanding of 'essence' and 'existence' as the most important Greek metaphysical concepts to the world. The fundamental effects of Avicenna's rational thought are not restricted to the Western philosophy (especially the Christian philosophy); rather, it has more deeply affected the Islamic philosophy and wisdom, theology and other subsidiary sciences like principles of jurisprudence. Explanation of the nature of his view compared to the Greek thought not only reveals his innovations and principles more, but also plays an important role in understanding the identity of philosophy in Islamic world and understanding the performance of Avicenna's successors in the Islamic and Christian worlds.

Regarding the relationship between Avicenna's metaphysics and the Greek and Plato's philosophy, some authors such as Ibn Rushd, in many of his works, especially in *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, and Etienne Gilson and others have written; but there are not many works in Persian and in the sphere of Avicenna's general look at the Greek philosophical thought. Here, the writer tries to explore and revise one of the most fundamental philosophical evolutions in the

Islamic period (i.e. the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence) developed by Avicenna and turned into the foundation for the Islamic philosophical thought, and even the Islamic theology.

1. Philosophy and ‘Inquiry of Truth’

Philosophy as acquisition of the certain and essential knowledge in Avicenna’s language is wisdom. He considers it inquiry of truth in proportion to human’s ability (Avicenna, 1404 AHb, p. 5). He believes that the man has the ability to reach the truth of the beings in the universe, and the way to achieve that truth is through philosophical thought (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 1, p. 12). Achieving the rational knowledge of the beings in the universe is the highest virtue for the man, and acquiring the knowledge of philosophy is the perfection of human’s soul and the way to achieve felicity (Avicenna, 1980, p. 30). In the entry of logics in *Shifā*, Avicenna asserts that whatever I bring from the principles in this book have been proved for me, and I consider them as truths. In explaining his own researches, he adds that principles on which we peripatetic philosophers have researched are principles and rules that have been in philosophical sciences, the principles and rules that have been based on the thought organized on the basis of logical order and whose results have been signed by the logics. He emphasizes that the thought signed by logics is right and true, and its principles have been realized (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 1, p. 10).

Avicenna maintains that the realized philosophical principles are inferred from the ancient philosophers’ principles produced and fixed by the intellectual consensus and much work and efforts. He regards himself as sharing the Greek scholars’ intellectual consensus. In his view, the role of all Greek and Alexanderian philosophers are not equal in fixing the realized philosophical principles, and

considers Aristotle as the teacher, the rule (*dastūr*) and the great figure of the Greek philosophy (Avicenna, 1383 SH, p. 111). In his view, Aristotle is the researcher of the fundamental principles of philosophy, and the philosophers before him, like Plato, have little to say in philosophy (Sheikh of Illumination, 1375 SH, vol. 2, p. 30)¹ and play mostly the role of preparing the ground for researching on the principles of philosophy by Aristotle.

Avicenna maintains that philosophy is the greatest science and that the scientific certitude is restricted to the philosophical certitude signed by the logics. In stating the reason for that claim, he emphasizes that just the philosophy needs no imitation in affirmation of its subject and its issues, and the man can achieve knowledge of its subject and issues just through assistance from his intellect (Avicenna, 1404 AHb, p. 5). If the man has certitude on a subject or the judgment on a subject while his own intellect has not reached that certitude and he has acquired that certitude through imitation, persuasion and the like, it is not – for Avicenna – a scientific certitude, and it can be readily substituted by doubt and uncertainty.

Thus, Avicenna considers philosophy as truth and philosophizing as the inquiry of philosophy; and this is alone enough for us to consider him as an Aristotelian-Greek rational thinker. Of course, he is a genuine and independent thinker who does not remain in the position of expositor, and forms his own special philosophical thought.

1. The statement 'but the Plato is a divine person, and if his property from philosophy is what we have received from his writings and his sayings, his property from knowledge is little' has been quoted by Suhrawardi from Avicenna. It is related to the section on meanings of deduction in the book 'logics' in *Shifā*; but we did not find the abovementioned statements in *Shifā* (Sheikh of Illumination, vol. 2, p. 30).

1-1. Avicenna's Analysis of Philosophical Certitude

When we speak of the Greek rational thought, it is clear that any thinker who claims to follow Aristotle must firstly accept and apply his method of scientific certitude. Avicenna accepts rational certitude as the Greek-Aristotelian intellectual basis and believes that the certitude is gained through intellectual acquisition (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 51). Just like the Aristotle, he believes that human's reason, in the first place and in time of his birth, is merely a (material) potentiality, and he introduces the process whose first step is 'sense' as the only way to achieve its actuality (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 51; Avicenna, 1363 SH, p. 97; Avicenna, 1379 SH, p. 333). Thus, it is clear that non-intellectual acquisition and even the non-acquisitive rational knowledge are not consistent with Avicenna's foundations and negate the system of the potentiality and actuality of the universe. When a thinker maintains that human's reason in time of his birth is only a potentiality and its actuality begins with sensory perception, he will necessarily consider the non-acquired rational perception as meaningless. This is because until the ground is prepared for abstraction through senses, no actuality will be possible for the reason. Thus, he believes that the actuality of human's reason begins just through his epistemic faculties. Of course, this does not mean that the human's reason actualizes itself. Rather, he believes that the man, by taking sensory meanings from the beings in the universe and with the assistance from axioms that he innately considers as true (Avicenna, 1379 SH, p. 132), takes rational knowledge of beings from the Being who is the complete intellect, forming creatures and perfecting them (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 331). Up to this point, Avicenna accompanies Aristotle, but he follows Neo-Platonic philosophers and Farabi in interpreting the active intellect. In next sections, we will clarify the background of such an interpretation.

In analyzing the acquisitive nature of rational knowledge, he introduces human's soul as enjoying various faculties and maintains that the soul's rational faculty is divided – in an initial division – into theoretical and practical. The former one perceives that generalities and the theoretical truth and falsehood (the beings not at man's disposal), and the latter is related to finding the good and evil actions, and have the authority of the man's actions (the beings at the man's disposal) (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 1, p. 12). Accepting the various orders claimed by Aristotle for human's reason, he maintains that the first order is merely the potentiality of assuming different forms (material reason), and considers the actuality of material reason to be just through assuming sensory role or rational forms acquired by the human' soul through acquisition (Avicenna, 1363 SH, pp. 96-97). What is resulted from sense as the first stage of actuality of the reason is nothing except the repetition of perception of natural phenomena; that is, we human beings are continuously observing the repetition of sensory perception of the universe. Thus, if the sense is to be the starting point for general rational perception, the man has no asset, save the integration of his sensible perceptions. Accordingly, Avicenna believes that material reason achieves actuality through two ways: essential induction and argumentation (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, pp. 85-95' Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 220).¹ Since the general premises of the inductive arguments are also acquired through induction and studying the repetition of sensory perceptions, he says anyone who

1. The essential induction is a kind of partial induction that leads to knowledge of the cause due to integration of hidden deduction, and leads – for Avicenna – to certainty. The hidden deduction is based on the well-known rule of 'incidental' in Aristotle's logics. That rule has been stated in Avicenna's language as 'the incidental is neither maximal nor perpetual' (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, pp. 85-95); and for Aristotle: (981a28) (982a14) (983a7-26) (1031b7-8).

lacks a sense lacks the knowledge related to that sense. Of course, as Avicenna himself has pointed out, the sense and imagination are just the starting point of rational abstraction, and they have the preparatory role for the man's rational faculty; and since the true knowledge is rational knowledge, the sensory perception itself cannot be considered alone as the knowledge of things. Thus, for Avicenna, it is true that if there is no sense, the man will lack the knowledge related to that sense, but we must not think that the sensory perception is itself knowledge of beings; rather, the sensory perception is the starting point of the man's rational faculty. Indeed, it is through the sensory perception and assistance from axioms that the human's reason changes the unknown to the known (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 224). This Avicenna's statement is quite in line with Aristotelian thought about the status of human's self-relying rational certitude as well as the special position of sensory perceptions for obtaining rational knowledge for the man.

To achieve the rational knowledge, Avicenna – just like Aristotle – analyzes the man's sensory perception, distinguishes the substantial and accidental meanings, and specifies the essentials of something that lead to the complete (total limit) or incomplete (partial limit) of it (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 52). By separating the questions on existence of something and its nature, he believes that what comes in answering the question on the nature of something is its quiddity, and what comes in answering the question on the existence of something is its being. Of course, in line with Aristotle and Farabi, he believes that the total limit of something, which comes in answering to 'what is it?' follows the 'simple limit' of that thing (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, pp. 261-262). In the section on logics in his *Dānishnāmayi 'Alā'ī*, he writes: "And the question of 'whether' is of two types: asking whether something exists, and asking whether it is

like this. And the question on 'what is it?' is of two types: one is asking what you mean. For example, someone says 'triangle' and you ask 'what is the meaning of triangle?' The other is when you say, 'what is a triangle?' And the matters on 'what' are more than 'whether' because you must first know what he says to deal with whether it exists or not. The matters on 'what' are more than 'whether' because until you know it exists, you will not ask 'what is it?' And the answer to the question on 'what' is the interpretation of a name or the limit of essence." (Avicenna, 1383 SH, pp. 154-155). This means if someone does not have knowledge of the external existence of something, his image of the essential meanings distinguishing that thing from other things is no longer a 'total limit'; rather, they are the descriptions of that name (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 262). In other words, Avicenna considers any kind of true perception of the universe in the first place as subordinate to the knowledge of its external existence; and affirming the external existence of things is prior to any kind of rational abstraction about those things. In this regard, he says, 'no reasonable idea comes only from our soul and essence; rather, they all come from outside' (Avicenna, 1404 AHa, p. 102); that is, if there was no outside, there would be no reasonable thing for the man.

Therefore, making the rational knowledge of beings dependent on their sensory reception and, accordingly, making reception of any rational knowledge of beings subordinate to outside of the man's mind, is completely Aristotle's method in acquiring rational knowledge.

1-2. The Position of Primary Knowledge in Acquiring Rational Certitude

As mentioned before, Avicenna considers the human's faculty of

sense as only a preparatory factor for acquiring rational knowledge and believes that the man, from the early stages of perceiving sensible things, has perceptions with no sensory origin. He believes that when the man comes across other beings with his sensory faculty, he acquires an image of the meaning of beings. The existence of these sensory meanings leads to the origination of other knowledge for the reason that are certain for the man (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 224). These items of primary knowledge have some features: first, they are propositions; that is, they are of the type of affirmation, not mere imagination. They are affirmations acquired by the man's soul and are described as true and false, and naturally belong to something. He believes that those primary items of knowledge are true, and their truth is their agreement with the external world and is axiomatic; that is, the man innately considers them as true (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 57; Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, pp. 330-332). Thus, along with giving importance to sensory perception, Avicenna considers it as preparation for those perceptions that are not of the type of sensory imagination, are judgments, and are issued by reason.

His view on determination of the origin of those primary items of knowledge is somewhat different in his writings. In the section of 'argument' in *Shifā*, he maintains that the human's reason relies on its own form, of which one is its own sensory form; and with acquisition of two sensory forms, he can find out their otherness and directly find out that the other form is not this form. Consequently, he can assess other propositions using that axiomatic proposition (the identity and impossibility of union of two contradictory propositions). In an important position, he believes that the human's soul finds that axiomatic known item in conformation to its own identical item. That is, he believes that the

axiomatic proposition is true because it is axiomatic. Of course, since he has no doubt in that judgment (axiomatic is true because it is axiomatic), he brings no argument for it, and the mere fact that an axiomatic proposition has a correspondent as well as its verity, for Avicenna, is considered axiomatic. If he is asked how the soul judges that a sensory form conforms to its correspondent, Avicenna answers that the man directly finds its correspondent; otherwise, how is it possible for the soul to judge it as correspondent (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 262; Avicenna, 1379 SH, p. 122). Thus, the appearance of his statements in section 'argument' in *Shifā* is that the soul by itself reaches the primary knowledge. By accepting the foundation that the initial tool of the human's reason in the material stage in confrontation to beings is just sensory perception, the question arises as follows: "How does the reason grant the known primary rational form to itself by merely acquiring the sensory form?" Perhaps, it is because Avicenna says something in the 'argument' section in *Shifā* showing the fact that even this axiomatic primary rational form is granted by the Active Intellect. He says, "So when one of us used the senses and the imagination in the simple ways as mentioned and not in the works, this is the reason for our recognition of its essence if it is connected with the divine grace which is inseparable from him" (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 3, p. 331).¹ It means whenever the man acquires the sensory form, he is connected inseparably to the divine grace and automatically affirms it. Thus, considering the basis of priority of outside over acquisition of reasonable, it is essential even for the primary rational knowledge to be emanated from outside.

۱. فلما استفاد الواحد منا من الحس و التخیل بساطتها على النحو المذكور و لاح له تألیفها، كان ذلك سبب تصدیقنا بها لذاتها إذا كان متصلا بالفيض الإلهی الذي لا ینفصل عنه المستعد.

1-3. Illumination of the Active Intellect

As mentioned before, Avicenna – in explaining the way the rational knowledge is acquired – gets help from a being called active intellect that has a very important role in analyzing the rational knowledge. The assumption of the existence of a being called the active intellect (*wāhib al-ṣuwar* or ‘grantor of forms’) is not – for Avicenna – a polemic and theological assumption. Rather, in his view, Aristotle’s view necessitates firstly in assuming a motion and secondly in its explanation in the form of potentiality and actuality in regard with beings and thirdly in regard with human’s intellect, the acceptance of a being called the active intellect. Aristotle says, ‘whatever is created by the nature or the art is created from something which is potentially so and so, and by something which is actually so and so. And whatever is created is what is created from something and by something, which is typically the same as what is created’ (Avicenna, 1404 AHc, vol. 2, p. 208; Aristotle, 1991, 1049b27-29; Aristotle, 1991, 734b21-22). This is like the spike of wheat, which must emerge from the grain of wheat by the nature of wheat (actual wheat). Since Avicenna introduces the ‘intellect’ as one of human’s sensual faculties, which is initially void of any kind of knowledge and acquires rational knowledge through acquisition, he necessarily considers the intellect as a being continuously in the state of alteration and perfection. Thus, according to Aristotle’s view on any kind of change and ‘perfectional’ motion, the intellect also seeks perfection, and is liable to the ‘theory of potentiality and actuality’, and its stage of actuality must be formed by the intellect that is itself actual; and since it leads the human’s reason to actuality, it is called the active intellect. According to Avicenna, this ‘active intellect’ is full of reasonable forms and forms of things, and by granting forms to the matter of things, it leads them from potentiality to actuality, and

leads the human's faculty of intellect from potentiality to actuality through illumination. Avicenna maintains that the relationship of the active intellect to human's intellect is like the relationship of the Sun to eyesight, saying that just as our eyes do not see without the Sun and its light, our intellects also do not perceive any of the intelligible beings without the active intellect. Avicenna calls the relationship between the active intellect and human's intellect '*ishrāq*' (i.e. 'illumination'); and this is a very important point that he considers the rational form of the beings in the universe as the illumination of the active intellect to the human's intellect, not the result of the activity of the human's intellect itself.

Of course, Avicenna's analysis of the Aristotelian active intellect is not consistent with the interpretations of persons like Ibn Rushd regarding Aristotle's foundations (Ihterami, 1401 AH). Avicenna, however, is a philosopher and actively interprets Aristotle's foundations, which is – for Avicenna – an essential condition for accepting Aristotle's theory of 'potentiality' and 'actuality' regarding human's intellect.

Therefore, the important feature of rational thinking in Aristotle's view, compared to Plato's, is his attempt for protecting the visible sensory universe and presenting the rational epistemic system based on sensible outside world. By accepting the way Aristotle thinks, Avicenna introduces philosophy as the true science and by analyzing the way epistemic certitude is acquired by the man, he shows his participation in cooperation for inquiry on the philosophical principles of peripatetic philosophers (especially Aristotle). Avicenna, however, as a philosopher, resorts to Aristotle's theory of 'potentiality' and 'actuality' in justifying motion and change in the universe to say that the human's intellect – due to its seeking perfection – also needs a potential being of the type of

intellect to lead it to the stage of actuality. It is a being – in Avicenna’s words – independent from human’s soul and purely actual, leading to acquisition of rational knowledge for human’s soul by illumination of intelligible beings (including both axiomatic and theoretical ones). Avicenna, while introducing Aristotelian Greek origin as an inquiry on truth, clearly distances himself – in justifying the way it is acquired – from Aristotelian thought about the origin of intelligible things. Unlike Aristotle, he does not consider the potential and actual intellects as well as the form and matter as everlasting, introducing the active intellect as a being who, in addition to granting the external existence of physical forms, emanates their rational existence to the soul, which is called the ‘rational knowledge of truth’. Of course, it must be noted that Avicenna has prepared the scientific foundations of illumination of the active intellect in his metaphysics, and his departure from Aristotle’s track is not polemic, but argumentative. We will deal with the metaphysical context of that departure in the next sections.

2. Avicenna and the Origin of Greek-Islamic Philosophical View (the Ontological Distinction of Existence from Essence)

If we want to call the most important Peripatetic-Islamic philosophical principle that, due to the plurality of its special accessories and results, establishes the renewal of the Aristotelian-Greek rational system and presents a special reading of it in the context of the Islamic thought, that principle is – undoubtedly – the ontological distinction between existence and essence. The fundamental discussions of Islamic philosophy such as ‘the three matters’, ‘decrees of essence due to nature’, ‘proving the essentially Necessary Being and His attributes’, ‘agentive causality of the Necessary Being for the universe’ and many other primary and secondary discussions

have all been created and developed in the milieu of the discussion of the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence.

In general, we may say that the discussion (of the distinction between existence and essence) mainly shows Avicenna's active interaction in the framework of the Aristotelian-Greek thought. This – after him – turned into one of the main factors of the closeness of the Islamic theology to philosophy and the point of manifestation of reconciliation between the Greek rational thought and the Quranic transmitted thought in his descendants.

For a better understanding of Avicenna's performance regarding the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence and the theory that says the existence is an accident of the essence, we have to refer to some points in short.

A) In his logic, Aristotle distinguishes between 'what' and 'whether' questions. That is, he believes that the truth of something that comes in response to a question about its nature is different from the question about whether it exists or not. For instance, regarding the human being, a man's truth is different from the question on whether he exists or not. (Aristotle, 1991, 97b8-11). Thus, in Aristotle's view, something's truth is – at least in the container of the mind – distinct from its existence. Of course, Aristotle metaphysically does not believe in such a distinction, and maintains that knowledge of the existence of a subject is prior to its definition, and until something is not existent externally, knowledge of its nature and essence is nonsense (Aristotle, 1991, 89b, 39; 90a5). Clearly, according to that foundation, the essence and quiddity of something is unified with its existence in the outside world. However, how Aristotle's claimed distinction in the mind from the united external being is acquired

has not been stated. In other words, this question has not been investigated in Aristotle's metaphysics: "How knowledge of something's essence is acquired without knowledge of its external existence if its essence is externally realized?" In the next step, the question arises on that thing's existence. How can we understand Aristotle's saying that 'one can doubt the existence of something while one is certain about its essence in the mind'? Is knowledge of something's essence not subordinate to knowledge of its existence? How can be the essence – which is subordinate – certain while its external existence doubted?

This Aristotle's foundation has reached its descendants in the Islamic world in an ambiguous form. Farabi as the founder of the Islamic philosophy, while preserving Aristotle's foundation in external unity of existence and nature of something, turned Aristotle's mental distinction regarding the existence and essence of something into an independent being with an essence outside the mind and an independent being with an essence inside the mind. Like Aristotle, he maintained that the essence leading to the mental independence of something from other things – in case that thing lacks the external existence – is the 'description of the name' (*sharḥ al-ism*) and is not a true essence (Farabi, 1986, p. 116). Of course, Farabi has not, firstly, explained how that description is attained if the thing has no external existence; and secondly, he has not put the independent thing with an essence in the mind in opposition to the external being and has enumerated effects for the independent thing with a mental essence. One of them is justifying motion in the universe proposed in an answer to his predecessors among Greek philosophers and naturalists, while that is one of the metaphysical effects of distinguishing essence in the mind, not in the external world (Ihterami and Pazouki, 1400 SH).

B) Plato considered *ousia* or 'whatever exists' as beings essentially acquired that were the only beings, and the beings sensed by human's senses have no existence. In posing objections on his master's foundation, Aristotle would say that *ousia* exists in the sensible world. Of course, this is an existence both sensible and intelligible. Thus, he believed that for instance:

1. "This human" is truly existent.
2. "This human" has an essence and some actions that are a substance and its accidents.
3. The substance of "this human" is a form common among all human beings and the truth of all human individuals is that typical form.
4. The form that is the truth of the human is an intelligible essence, not sensible.
5. The form, since it is the origin of the effects of 'this human', is the 'nature'.
6. The intelligible natural forms are considered the genuine truth of the sensible reality of things.

Considering the above foundations, the question arises as follows: How are Aristotle's *ousia* (the rational forms) metaphysically analyzable if they are not – like that of Plato – essentially acquired and independent of individuals, and if they are united with external individuals in having existence? In other words, what is the relationship between typical nature and the individuals from the ontological point of view, and how are they plural and at the same time single? Considering Aristotle's foundations, we can say that those forms are the nature and are the origin of the thing; and on

the other hand, they have a rational existence. Thus, they are the essence of the thing; that is, if one asks, 'what is the human's truth?' Aristotle would reply, 'it is the very sensible form that is the nature and essence of the human species and exists because of the individuals' existence in the outside world.'

C. Considering Aristotle and Farabi's thoughts in distinguishing existence and essence in the mind as well as the way Aristotle and Farabi explain the nature and essence of things in the outside world, Avicenna has accessed a foundation that is, though metaphysically different from Aristotle-Farabi's foundations, the fruit of the distinction between the nature and the existence of the thing or, in other words, the result of the separation between the being and the existence.

3. Avicenna's Innovation

Avicenna has taken the mental distinction between the existence and the essence of the thing claimed by Aristotle, and adjusted it to Aristotle's statement on the typical substance and form of a thing (which is the essence of a thing, is sensible and comes in answer to 'what is'). He says, 'if that form and essence is considered independently and no mental and external mode is considered for that form and essence, it is the essence with its special features and can independently be the object of metaphysical reflection.' With some contemplation on the accessories of those considered independent essences, Avicenna developed the philosophy with a new reading in the Islamic era.

With a fundamental innovation regarding Aristotle's view on rational natural forms, Avicenna states that the human's faculty of understanding has a power to consider those essences and natures of

things independently, to relinquish the features of particularity and individuality of those essences in the outside world, as well as their generality in the mind, to consider those essences just as they are (the aspect that has no longer the features of the external and mental containers; it is neither particular, nor is it general); and to discern the truth of their essence. He chooses 'animal' as the genus to explain that idea and believes that 'animal' is by itself, regardless of the fact that it exists in the outside world or in the mind, is neither general nor particular. This is because if it was general, the 'individual animal' would be meaningless; and if it was particular, the 'general animal' would be meaningless (Avicenna, 1404 AHd, vol. 1, pp. 65-66). That is, the human's faculty of understanding can specify, by relying on his own understanding, the way something gets an attribute by its essence, and can judge whether that attribute is essential or accidental, and through that understanding, he can distinguish the constituting element of something from the non-constituting element, considering the constituting element (the essence) independently. Thus, he believes that anything with an essence has a quiddity on whom the constitution of that thing resides; and the truth and quiddity of that thing is the very limits (close genus and close differentia) of that thing. He states various examples for what he says. For instance, regarding the essence of 'being a horse', he says, 'being a horse' is just 'being a horse' and there is nothing else in it. It has neither the feature of generality nor the feature of particularity; it is neither the imaginal concept, nor the external individual realized being; there is neither existence in it nor non-existence (Avicenna, 1404 AHb, p. 196). Avicenna proposes the non-conditioned nature, which the human reason – in Khaja Nasir's words – can consider it, and can have philosophical reflection on it (Tusi, 1375 SH, vol. 3, p. 34).

3-1. The Occurrence of Existence over Essence and Proving the Necessary Being

Considering the discussion of “distinction of existence and essence”, Avicenna believes that the essence of something is different from its existence; and if the essence wants to put on the clothes of the objective or mental existence, the external or mental existence must occur for it. As he himself says, ‘Know that everything has an essence. And verily, it is a being realized either objectively or in the mind, for its particles are present with it, and when there is a truth for it other than its existence existent with one of the existences, not constituent on it, then the existence is a meaning added to its truth, whether essential or not. And the causes for its existence are also other than causes for its essence such as humanity...’¹ (Avicenna, 1375 SH, p. 5). Thus, according to Avicenna’s foundation, existence – from the ontological viewpoint – is distinct from something’s essence; and if an essence wants to be existent, the existence must occur to it. Of course, it is clear that ‘occurrence’ here means that existence is not inside the essence and is distinct from it; and this sense must not be mixed with the term ‘accident’ common in discussion on categories.

Another important point about the ‘nature and essence’ proposed by Avicenna is that the relationship between essence and existence/ non-existence is non-conditioned; that is, it always has ‘possibility’ with it as its main feature. The nature and quiddity of something, while they are possible in view of essence, must take the necessity for being existent from something other than itself to

١. «اعلم أن كل شيء له ماهية، فإنه إنما يتحقق موجودا في الأعيان أو متصورا في الأذهان، بأن يكون أجزاءه حاضرة معه و إذا كانت له حقيقة غير كونه موجودا بأحد الوجودين، غير مقوم به فالوجود معنى مضاف إلى حقيقتها لازم أو غير لازم و أسباب وجوده أيضا غير أسباب ماهيته مثل الإنسانية، فإنها في نفسها حقيقة ما و ماهيته ليس أن لها موجودة في الأعيان أو موجودة في الأذهان مقوما لها بل مضافا إليها».

become existent in the outside world. That is, if it wants to be existent in the outside world, its relationship to existence must change from possibility to necessity; and the essential need of 'essence' to occurrence of existence is the feature of any essence. In other words, due to essential nature of that feature, any essence – for being existent – is essentially in need of occurrence of existence. Avicenna says, 'Thus, anything with an essence is the effect and all things other than the necessary being have essences; and those essences are in themselves possible beings. And verily, the existence occurs to them from outside' (Avicenna, 1404 AHb, pp. 347-354).¹

It is clear that the essence itself – due to being essence – is impossible to fulfil its existential need and become existent. Thus, for essences to become existent, we need a being that is other than essence from the existential viewpoint. That is, a being like the essence does not have the possibility essentially, and be essentially necessary, a being that is outside the circle of nature and essences of things and, according to Avicenna and as the result of the discussions on essence, has several features specified to it, with no copartner. Thus: (1) it has no essence, because if it had an essence, it would be among the essences and natures and would be a possible being, not being able to grant existence to anything other than itself (Avicenna, 1404 AHb, pp. 346-350). (2) It grants existence, for Avicenna accepts the existent universe outside and, according to his own view, the existent outside essences have no existence essentially, and the existence has certainly accidentally occurred to them. Thus, it has granted existence to them essentially (Avicenna, 1404 AHb, p. 347). (3) It is

١. «فكل ذي ماهية معلول و سائر الأشياء غير الواجب الوجود فلها ماهيات و تلك الماهيات هي التي بأنفسها ممكنة الوجود و إنما يعرض لها وجود من خارج».

existence, not being; that is, since it has no essence to which the existence has occurred, it is not existent (the essence for which existence is proved); rather, its being existent is the same as existence. (4) It is necessity; that is, since it has no essence and quiddity with the attribute of possibility, we cannot say it is an essence with the attribute of necessity; rather, it is the necessity itself (essentially necessary being), the necessity also called eternal necessity. (5) It is the same as unity, because if it has no essence, no need for plurality – neither in essence, nor in names or attributes – can be imagined for it. Thus, in Avicenna's metaphysics, existence, unity and necessity are the same. Therefore, in Avicenna's metaphysics, the one necessary being is essentially rich and self-contained, and the possible essence is essentially in need of existence. The necessary being – due to its essential existence, is the same as existence; and if the possible essence becomes existent, the existence will be borrowed for it due to its essential possibility. Reflection on these sentences alone shows that if the subject of Avicenna's metaphysics is the 'being' because it is a being, then how will the necessary being as the only being that is the same as existence (necessarily existent) be the axis of the discussions of that metaphysics.

Avicenna maintains that the existence of such a necessary being must be proved and is not axiomatic; however, the proof he offers (as we saw in no. 2 above) is in effect making the reader aware of existence and essence. That is, only one external being with essence is sufficient for proving the essentially necessary being; and even in that one single case, the existence is proved through existence itself, not through the essence. In other words, accepting the existence is the same as accepting its being necessary, being one

and being individual. It is necessary because it is essentially not possible. It is single because any kind of duality negates the necessity of its existence. It is individual because it is not essence, and is the same as external. Indeed, it is just the external individual being (Avicenna, 1404 AHb, pp. 354-365; Avicenna, 1379 SH, pp. 354-357).

Thus, Avicenna says, 'If there is a series of beings, only the first one is necessary, and only the first one is truly existent, because truth is the state of existence and just the first one truly exists. Thus, everything is annihilating unless God (the first being) turns to it' (Avicenna, 1404 AHb, p. 356).¹

Therefore, in Avicenna's view, the human's faculty of understanding in the Greek-Aristotelian system is able to discern and specify – in addition to acquiring rational knowledge through its own faculties – the essential and accidental features of something. It is even able to separate that essence and nature (quiddity) from its existence and – in an independent look at it – extract its judgments from metaphysical point of view. In Avicenna's view, 'existence' is not something that can be present inside the essence and nature of things. Neither is it the genus of those essences that exist, nor their distinctive feature or differentia. 'Existence' must be added to the nature of something (like 'humanity') so that a human being comes to the scene of existence, just like generality that must be added – in the container of mind – to the 'humanity' so that it is described as general. Avicenna believes that if we have an external being with essence, it is enough to adjust the rational system based on

1. His statements are as follows:

«سائر الأشياء فإن ماهياتها كما علمت لا تستحق الوجود، بل هي في أنفسها و قطع إضافتها إلى واجب الوجود تستحق العدم، فلذلك كلها في أنفسها باطلة و به حقة و بالقياس إلى الوجه الذي يليه حاصلة، فلذلك كل شيء هالك إلا وجهه، فهو أحق بأن يكون حقاً» (ابن سينا، ١٤٠٤ق «ب»، ص ٣٥٦).

necessary being/ possible being to it and prove that no being with essence can be eternal. And all of them need a being that is essentially the same as existence and needlessness, a being that is the cause granting existence to all essences. This foundation is ontologically necessary for distinction between existence and essence, and the separation between existence and essence.

Avicenna's special interpretation of Aristotle's view could make his philosophical-logical system an interpretative context for religious concepts (God, creation, etc.). If someone has not accepted Avicenna's foundation, he cannot pose – merely because of its difference from Aristotle's foundation – objections to the theory that says existence is accidental to essence, and introduce it as a polemical and theological theory, considering Avicenna as a philosopher influenced by theologians. However, if there is a considerable objection, it must necessarily be about Avicenna's main foundation in the way he considers the validity of essence (as it is essence), and nothing else.

2-3. A Reflection on Avicenna's Innovation

In the first place, it seems that Avicenna's interpretation of the essence of something, introduced by Aristotle as different from its existence in the mind, is a clear and understandable interpretation. However, the whole problem reveals itself when we want to specify the metaphysical status of Avicenna's foundation; that is, the man's recognition faculties as the perceiver of the world of beings are at a later order than their external existence. According to him, any kind of perceiving the essence and nature of something is considered a truth when before it the external existence of that thing has been affirmed. Therefore, firstly, how is it possible that the man casts doubts on the external existence of

something and – at the same time – is aware of its truth? Is it not the case that any perception of the essential and accidental meanings of things follows its external existence? How is Avicenna certain about the essence of something while he is in doubt about its existence, and while he himself takes the images related to that thing (including both essential and accidental ones) from its external existence? Secondly, according to Avicenna's foundation, the total limit of the thing, which comes in the answer to 'what is it?' question, follows – in its being total limit – the external existence of the thing (the simple 'whether' question). And, according to him, if the thing related to those essential meanings has no external existence, those features will not be total limit; rather, they will be 'descriptions of the name' (*sharḥ al-ism*). How is it possible that the man considers his images of something as its truth, while its being true follows the knowledge of its external existence? Thus, how have 'description of the name' without an existent [external] thing been acquired for the man, while there is no image of them to be descriptions of the name?

The next point is that as said before, according to the distinction between essence and existence of the things as well as the way one acquires knowledge, the man's epistemic faculties, influenced by the external existence of things, achieves recognition (including both sensory and rational) of the universe. Thus, things have an external existence and a mental one for the man, which is the man's very image of the external existence of things. Therefore, the container of the truths of things will not be metaphysically outside those two, and any abstraction and rational recognition formed for the man is ontologically formed in a dialectic relationship between the outside world and the mind. When Avicenna says that the man is able to understand the truth and

essence of things independently and is able to metaphysically investigate their judgments (such as essential possibility, being non-conditioned to external and mental existence, unity and plurality, and the like), and if as Khaja Nasir points out, this separation between essence and existence is formed in the container of the reason and shows one's power of understanding, how does this very 'perception' and 'consideration' related to the essence and nature of things, formed in the container of reason, make a container for the quiddities and natures of things called 'essences', and that world is – in Avicenna's words – metaphysically neither external nor mental?

Someone may say that Avicenna has spoken only of the self-validity of those natures and has not spoken of the world of natures and essences. However, we must note that if Avicenna believes in an independent rational perception for the man's faculty of understanding in regard with those natures and quiddities, he certainly believes – according to traditional epistemological foundations – in a fact-itself and corresponding item for those perceptions outside the reason, considering the reason as the perceiver and those things as the perceived ones. The question then arises as follows: "Where is the fact-itself of what is metaphysically perceived of the nature of things by the man's reason?" If it has external existence, then it is initially external and – afterwards – is separated in human's mind from its external existence. However, he does not regard those quiddities, independently considered, neither external nor mental. Avicenna regards metaphysical effects and other great results for the perceived things whose manifestation in human's reason is later than their manifestation in the outside world. In other words, how are the natures and quiddities of the things introduced as possible beings and needy beings; and due to this feature, how are they influenced by causality law, and how is an

essential necessary being proved in the outside world while before their being perceived in the human's reason, they were existent through the external existence. And no previous stage is imaginable for them existentially, because the essence of the things, in Avicenna's view, is of the close genus and close differentia, and both of them are – in his view – the same as non-conditioned matter and form, which is abstracted from the external matter and form 'negatively conditioned'. In other words, the essences of the things (from the viewpoint of being so) are themselves the product of human's rational perception. So, how is their essential possibility – which is the product of the type of human's rational independence – used as a metaphysical resort for proving the external existence of the agentive cause of the whole world of substantive beings? Do they have true existence in the universe before being considered by human's reason or even before the existence of human's reason, so that they take their existence from the necessary being? One may say the fact that the man perceives them independently shows that they are rational fixed ideas and that the human's reason is united with them to perceive them; and this shows that the world of quiddities is a rational world that neither has existential realization (external as opposed to mental) nor mental realization. The answer is that one can say that Avicenna, in the most basic disagreement of the Greek master and his pupil in considering or not considering the nature of things as essentially acquired, supports the master and interprets the thesis offered by the pupil (i.e. Aristotle) in a way that reveals the master's statement (Plato's world of Ideas).¹

1. However, this defense of Avicenna is firstly opposing his views in following any true perception of the universe from perceiving its external sensible existence. Secondly, it opposes his view on the way the typical essences are related with

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The type of Avicenna's look at the human's perception system and its relationship with Aristotelian world of sensible and intelligible beings starts – at least – in Aristotelian form, though it does not end in an Aristotelian way. Perhaps these very problems have caused some scholars to use expressions such as psychological justification instead of metaphysical analysis regarding Avicenna's innovations (occurrence of existence to essence) (Golson, 1952, p. 75).

Conclusion

In the first step, Avicenna accompanies the Greek thought, especially that of Aristotle, in asking question about the existence and essence as well as finding answers for them by relying on the findings of human's epistemic faculties. He maintains that it is possible to present a natural and philosophical explanation for the universe, and considers philosophy as the way of recognizing truths in proportion to human's ability. That is, he believes that the man can use his epistemic faculties to perceive the truth of things outside the mind in a certain way. Not only does he believe in such a capacity for the man, but also he participates actively – by studying the works of Greek philosophers and their successors – in fixing the basic principles of the man's comprehensive knowledge of the universe through his own perceiving faculties (i.e. philosophy). This participation is not restricted to exposition and elaboration of his predecessors' views and uses a critical look at those principles that could lead to the Eastern philosophy.

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the external individuals – stated in an answer to Hamadani scholars, interpreting it as the way fathers and sons are related and maintaining that its external existence is dependent on the external existence of individuals. In principle, the Aristotelian spirit of the nature of things, running in Avicenna's metaphysics, is difficult to be a place for their Platonic interpretation.

Just like Aristotle, Avicenna starts the process of the man's acquisition of certainty from the sensory perceptions, and believes that when the man confronts the outside world with his senses, he faces another action – along with the initial sensory receptions – which is not of the type of sensory perception; rather, it is of the type of judgment. This is a judgment on which the sensory forms are imposed and its carrier on the subject perceived by the sensory perception is a faculty other than the faculty of sense and imagination, and is called rational or intellectual faculty. For Avicenna, the intellectual faculty is initially potential and material, and is actualized gradually. He considers the perceptions of the intellectual faculty either 'axiomatic' – that the man is innately aware of their verity – or 'theoretical' that turns into the certain knowledge for the man on the basis of logic through the same axiomatic items.

Considering the foundations he has taken from Aristotle on the interpretation of the change in the universe through 'potentiality and actuality', Avicenna maintains that any actualization for the intellectual faculty is related to the being called actual intellect; and since it actualizes the humans' intellects, it is called active intellect.

He believes that one can consider the essence of the beings independent of their external and mental existence and investigate its metaphysical implications the most important among which are the essential possibility of essences and occurrence of existence to essence.

As the result of the theory of occurrence of existence to essence, the world of natures – in Avicenna's view – is in need of a being outside of the circle of entities with essence becoming external, individual and particular. That being – if existent – will be

the same as existence, necessity, unity and all perfection in an eternal way. For Avicenna, the initial origin for the universe of the beings is the agentive cause who grants existence to the whole universe of substantive beings.

Avicenna accepts Aristotle and Farabi's view that knowledge of the effect belongs to the knowledge of the cause, and considering the fact that the agentive cause of the beings is the essentially necessary being. Thus, knowing the existence and attributes of that agentive cause of the universe is among the issues of metaphysics and – indeed – its sublime section, which is known in Islamic tradition – as the 'theology in its most specific sense' (*ilāhiyāt bi ma'na al-akhaṣṣ*). Considering his own foundations in the discussion of 'occurrence of existence to essence', Avicenna says, 'philosophy is the knowledge of the Necessary Being, and since no being – save God – knows His essence', the true philosopher is the Prime Being.

Based on the aforementioned explanations, we may say, regarding Avicenna's view on the Greek-Aristotelian thought, that Avicenna is one of the most important followers of the Greek philosophical thought, especially that of Aristotle, in the Islamic world. Thus, in the first place, he accepts the foundation of Aristotelian thought about the self-founded ability of human's reason in rational and natural recognition of the universe, and tries to develop his own specific philosophical system based on it. That rationality emerges in an epistemic process specified to human beings and develops. It is a rationality that is acquired and the man must rely, in the first place, on his own cognitive faculties for acquiring it. In that rationality, the world of sensible beings is not void and illusive; rather, the man perceives their rational existence and achieves true recognition of them through the perception of that world of sensible beings. The certainty resulted from that

rationality is a certainty that can be used in dialectical argument and change the unknown to the known. Of course, Avicenna – while following Aristotle's intellectual path in following the philosophical rationality based on the criterion of logics – does not remain as an expositor of the views of the First Teacher and, according to what he himself says, in the way of achieving the truth, he attempts to modify the principles, foundations and method of Greek philosophy rightly. He tries to establish the principles and a reading in the foundations of Aristotle's philosophy with very important results in metaphysics to the extent that it has showed itself as the Avicenna's metaphysics along with Aristotelian metaphysics, influencing many thinkers (both in the Islamic and the Christian world).

Avicenna's metaphysics, even though it may be influenced by Islamic teachings, attempts to offer those teachings not in the polemic or theological form, but in a form that attracts its addresses without religious axioms and only through imagining and affirming its ontological and epistemological foundations. Avicenna's metaphysics is a Greek one, but its principles are easternized through Avicenna's modifications. And the axis of discussion in it is shifted from universe to God by Avicenna's innovative interpretations. These innovations include the metaphysical distinction between existence and essence, the relationship between possible beings and the Necessary Being, investigating the existence and attributes of the essentially Necessary Being as the agentive cause granting existence to the world of beings, special project of the relationship among the rational beings in actualizing the world of beings and actualizing the human's reason through emanation of rational existence of the beings over the human's reason, etc.

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A Schema for the Islamic Epistemological System

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Abstract

Today, 'system-generation' in the sphere of religious sciences and teachings as well as other basic affairs is among the important and critical issues now seriously considered by the elite. In regard with religious sciences and knowledge, one can achieve perfection, comprehensiveness, and good epistemic logical structure (moving from generalities and foundations to specifics and results) when the findings of those spheres are formulated in the form of an 'intellectual system' or 'behavioral system' like a general system with specified goals, enjoying coherent constituents and interactive and related components. One of the philosophical and religious sciences of great importance with a basic role in other religious sciences and an accumulated background in the works and texts of earlier, later and contemporary Muslim philosophers is '(Islamic) epistemology'. The present study claims that it can offer a systemic image of Islamic epistemology. Thus, it has tried to offer a

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schema for ‘the System of Islamic epistemology’ and explain its nature, components and features in short, based on the process of Islamic system-generation. According to the present study, the theoretical framework and the main axes of the discussions on formulating an Islamic epistemological system can be suggested to be as follows: concepts and definitions, features and characteristics, status and importance, goals and ends, foundations and presuppositions, components and constituents, method and sources, usage and efficiency. In addition, for instance, the authors of the present article consider the usage of the System of Islamic epistemology in the ‘Islamic methodology’. The research method in this study is substantially a rational one, and it has used library sources in data collection.

Keywords

system, system-generation, epistemology, epistemology system, Islamic methodology.

Introduction

In general, 'system-generation' in the sphere of religious sciences and teachings as well as other basic affairs is among the important and critical issues now seriously considered by the elites. And in specific terms, among the scientific essential tasks in the contemporary Iran is offering the discussions and findings of the religious sciences and teachings in the form of an 'intellectual system'.

Regarding religious sciences and teachings, one can achieve perfection, comprehensiveness, and good epistemic logical structure (moving from generalities and foundations to specifics and results) when the findings of those spheres are formulated in the form of an 'intellectual system' or 'behavioral system'. The intellectual system is a general system with specified goals, enjoying coherent constituents and interactive components. Thus, if that group of sciences and teachings are presented in the form of intellectual systems, one can explain the pillars and constituent parts of each – in their mutual relationships – with a certain methodology and with more precision and cohesiveness.

In our country, the scientific institutes and some authorities have taken some steps to design some of the religious systems including the political system of Islam, the legal system of Islam, the economic system of Islam, the ethical system of Islam, the educational system of Islam, and the managerial system of Islam. However, it seems that foundational works are to be done and we must continue our efforts. Most of instances of system-generation are of the type of inferring and formulating 'social' and 'behavioral' systems, while it is also important to formulate 'theoretical' systems of Islam as well.

One of the philosophical and religious sciences of great importance with a basic role in religious sciences and an accumulated background in the works and texts of earlier, later and contemporary Muslim philosophers is 'epistemology' that must be presented systematically. The Islamic epistemology system can be inferred from two important main sources: Islamic philosophy and religious texts.

Islamic philosophy includes the following philosophical schools: peripatetic, illumination, Yemeni,¹ transcendental, and Neo-Sadra'id schools. However, it must be noted that the main concern of Islamic philosophers has been ontology and metaphysical discussions, not epistemology. Nevertheless, the texts of Islamic philosophy are full of epistemological discussions (in its general sense, not particular).² Besides, religious texts (the Quran and hadiths) contain deep and precise epistemological doctrines.

The present study claims that we can have a systematic formulation of epistemology. Thus, this article seeks to offer a

1. Among the specific features of Mirdamad's Yemeni philosophy – which is both its distinctive feature from earlier philosophies and influencing the transcendental philosophy – is that Mirdamad has considered the whole universe of possible beings as one single individual unit and a macro system. That is, all worlds with all diversity and plurality of beings form one coherent single system.
2. Epistemology in its general sense is a science used by both Islamic and western philosophers, and it is better to use the term 'philosophy of knowledge' for it. This discipline covers some broader discussions including epistemology in its specific sense, ontology of knowledge, epistemic discussions of psychology and the like. But epistemology in its most specific sense is a knowledge developed by Kant and the contemporary western epistemologists. Epistemology in this sense merely deals with limits of knowledge, definition of knowledge and its components such as 'belief', 'verity', and 'justification' as well as linguistic and semantic discussions.

schema of the System of Islamic epistemology along with an investigation of elements such as key definitions of discussion as well as the essence, components, features and functions of that system.

In the present article, based on the ‘process of generating Islamic system’ – designed and offered in the ‘circle of system-generation’ of the Research Center of Islamic Culture and Thought, and a summary of it has been formerly published in the form of an article¹ whose detailed copy is being prepared to be published in the form of a detailed series. By using some studies, conducted in the related subjects including Islamic humanities, social systems of Islam, and Islamic epistemology, we attempt to present firstly a definition of system of Islamic epistemology, then to explain the theoretical framework and the main axes of the discussions related to formulation of that system and, finally, to explain its application in Islamic methodology.

This article deserves to be considered by the scientific community as a schema and a suggestion as the first step in formulating the Islamic epistemology and, consequently, lead to a more detailed and more precise scientific effort in this regard.

As far as the authors have sought, no considerable scientific work has been done – inside the country and abroad – regarding the formulation of the system of Islamic epistemology; and thus, the present article can be considered innovative and without any precedent.

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1. Concepts and Definitions

1-1. System

Some consider 'system' (in its absolute sense) as a coherent series with certain foundations and goals (Sadr, 1375 SH, p. 210). Indeed, 'system' is the title for a purposeful series with components, relations and harmony among the components (See: Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 77; Churchman, 1968, p. 26; Mar'ashi et al., 1385 SH, pp. 34-66). Therefore, any system has components related to one another with a certain goal. 'Goals' are the ends for which the components of the system have been designed. Thus, among the features of the system are having components, elements and its constituents. It is not possible to imagine a system without its constituents, because the whole without the components and the components without the whole are nonsense (See: Durand, 2010, p. 40; Reza'iyani, 1387 SH, pp. 22-24).

Accordingly, the system is a certain whole consisted of the components with mutual relations (coherent); that is, a change in any component affects other components and the whole as well, and none of the components does affect or is affected independently and as separated from the whole collection (Vaseti, 1388 SH, p. 89).

Similarly, in the definition of the system, one can say, "system is composed of various components that are consistent, yet different. Besides, it has demarcations with other systems and has a certain end and goal that must be realized" (Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 11). The system of Islamic epistemology naturally enjoys such components of the system (in the absolute sense).

1-2. Religious system

If we accept that the religion (here, Islam) is completely capable to fulfill all basic needs of human beings in various spheres

of life including beliefs and knowledge, obligations and laws, ethics, education, rights, economics, politics and so on, we may claim that religion is systematic in all and each of those sphere. That is, it starts from certain specific origins and achieves certain results through various methods; and this system is a consistent whole consisting of interactive purposeful propositional and doctrinal components of insight, knowledge, character, action and attitude; and we mean this very idea when we speak of religious system.

In discussing the religious system, we must distinguish two aspects: the aspect of theory and the aspect of practice. We may call the former 'system study' or 'system generation' and the latter 'systemizing' or 'applying system'. The former is the subject of the study, and here, we must infer and extract the religious system in various spheres of life through research. In the latter, however, we must apply the system inferred in practice in the individual and social life. Naturally, it is possible for system study and system generation to have some subcategories (for more information, see: Reza'i-manesh and Baba'i Mojarrad, 1394 SH, pp. 164-166).

It is worth noting that the system of religious (Islamic) epistemology is posed mainly in the sphere of theory, discussion and inquiry, i.e. in theoretical level (though one can consider other usages for it in relation to other sciences). In the system of Islamic epistemology, thus, we are mainly seeking to study and generate system, not to apply systems.

1-3. The Intellectual-Philosophical System

When we speak of the intellectual-philosophical system, the 'philosophical' factor plays a considerable role, and we do not mean any kind of thinking. Rather, we consider the thinking that enjoys a

philosophical character. Three of the intellectual-philosophical systems are as follows: epistemological system, ontological system, and value system.

Any kind of intellectual-philosophical system, apart from the components of system in its absolute sense, enjoys at least these kingpin elements: subject matter, issues, domain, method, ends, and functions (Abbas-zadeh, 1398 SH, p. 18). Naturally, the system of Islamic epistemology enjoys those elements as well.

1-4. The Knowledge

'Knowledge' consists of any kind of cognition, perception and consciousness in the absolute and general sense (Mesbah Yazdi, 1386 SH, vol. 1, pp. 151-152), whether it is science, an intellectual discipline, a belief, or an affirmation and judgment (or even a simple assumption or concept);¹ whether it is general or particular, whether it is theoretical, presumptive, or certain. All these are instances of knowledge. Knowledge is, thus, the divisional category of all of them.

Earlier Islamic philosophers have mainly called knowledge '*ilm*'; and here, they do not mean knowledge in its specific sense or – as Westerners say – science. Rather, they consider the very cognition,

1. The contemporary western epistemology considers knowledge as merely a 'propositional knowledge', which works in the sphere of affirmations. It does not regard assumptions as knowledge. But the Islamic philosophers consider assumptions as a part of knowledge as well (for example, see: Farabi, 1890, p. 56; Suhrawardi, 1388 SH, p. 4; Mulla Sadra, 1388 SH, pp. 54-55). Similarly, in the contemporary western epistemology, knowledge is just of the acquired type, while in the Islamic philosophy, intuitive knowledge (including human's knowledge of his own essence, his own internal states, his own notions and thoughts, the prophets' revelations, the mystics' inspiration, etc.) is also a type of knowledge (Abbas-zadeh, 1401, p. 62).

perception and consciousness in its general and absolute sense, which also includes – as mentioned before – the particular sense of the word.

The above definition is not the real and true definition of the word *'ilm* or knowledge. Rather, it is a mere description of the title (*sharḥ al-ism*). Indeed, knowledge is among the axiomatic conceptions and needs no definitions. In principle, we cannot offer a definition for it, for there is no more evident notion of it by which one can define knowledge. Thus, the statements mentioned in the philosophical and logical books as the definitions of knowledge are not true definitions. Rather, they are specifications of the instances of knowledge (such as defining knowledge as 'acquisition of the image of something in the mind', which states the instance of acquired knowledge). Or they are explanations of the way knowledge is originated or comes to existence (such as defining it as 'presence of an abstract being before another abstract being' or 'presence of something before an abstract being' which states the abstract existence of knowledge and knowledgeable) (Mesbah Yazdi, 1386 SH, vol. 1, p. 152). Similarly, the contemporary Western epistemologists' definition of knowledge as 'justified true belief' (see: Audi, 2003, p. 90 & Chisholm, 1982, p. 90) and some Islamic thinkers' definition of it as 'asserted statement conformed to constant idea' (see: Tusi, 1370 SH, p. 226; Helli, 1412 AH, p. 394; and Jurjani, 1325 SH, p. 67) refer to 'affirmative acquired knowledge'. And this is just one of the instances of knowledge.

1-5. Epistemology

Epistemology¹ is one of the branches of philosophy dealing

1. The term 'epistemology' is derived from the Greek root and is composed of 'episteme' meaning 'knowledge' and 'logos' meaning 'cognition and consciousness'. Together, it means a cognition about knowledge or theory of knowledge (A'vani, 1399 SH, p. 352).

with study on the essence and nature, the domain, and various aspects of knowledge, possibility of cognition, value of cognition, sources of cognition, method of cognition, human's capacity and ability in regard with cognition and the like (Fa'ali, 1377 SH, p. 29). Altogether, one can define epistemology as a discussion on the nature and essential accidents of 'knowledge' and the related issues (Abbas-zadeh, 1398 SH, p. 18).

Thus, the subject of epistemology is knowledge in its general sense (the absolute notion of cognition and consciousness) and the method of science of epistemology, in the Islamic philosophy, is rational method (see: Avicenna, 1403 AH, vol. 1, p. 308; Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 3, pp. 277-360, vol. 8, p. 200; Fakhri Razi, 1966, vol. 1, p. 367). However, Muslim philosophers have also adduced religious texts in their discussions and the later philosophers have conducted more or less rich studies in this regard by adducing religious sources.

Epistemology and logics are two introductory disciplines for entering philosophy. There is also a mutual relationship between epistemology and logics: logics deals with the form of the thought and epistemology discusses the material of thought and the possibility to achieve the reality. Thus, epistemology is, from this perspective, prior to logics. Therefore, the principles and pillars of logical discussions require epistemological investigation, just as epistemology is also based on logical principles and rules. Similarly, epistemology – on the basis of its scope and domain – is of two types: absolute epistemology and restricted (constrained) epistemology. The former means that group of common and general rules and principles of epistemology that is not specified to a certain sphere of epistemology of sciences and affairs and covers all domains of knowledge. And the latter means that group of epistemological

principles and rules that is specified to a certain domain and does not cover all human knowledge and sciences (Hussein-zada, 1382 SH, p. 16).

1-6. The Islamic Epistemology

The Islamic epistemology is the epistemological school based on Islamic philosophy, which enjoys five features: realism, correspondence, foundationalism, certainism, and altogether rationalism (Abbas-zada, 1401 SH, pp. 52-53).

The phrase 'altogether rationalism' has been inserted in the above definition because all Islamic philosophers stress on the unique and non-removable role of reason. Among them, the Illuminative philosophers, Sadra'id and non-Sadra'id, have more considerably stressed on the role of intuition while confirming the reason.

As we said, the subject of Islamic epistemology is knowledge in its general sense (the absolute cognition and consciousness), but the issues of the Islamic epistemology are as follows (Abbas-zadeh, 1398 SH, pp. 19-20):

1. Kingpin issues: knowledge, knower, the known, and their homogeneity.
2. Principal issues: the nature of knowledge, possibility of knowledge, resolving the problem of skepticism and relativism, criterion of knowledge, tools and sources of knowledge, types and orders of knowledge, the relationship of the mind and object (and resolving the problem of mental existence), limits and borders of knowledge, possibility of spontaneity and its criterion, certitude and its ultimate limit, the process of genesis of knowledge and the like.

3. The secondary, related or new issues: verity and justification, the effect of non-epistemic issues on knowledge, definition and its conditions, *a priori* knowledge, the possibility of human's knowledge of others' minds, the possibility of human's knowledge of God, epistemic usage of words and language, (and recently) cognitive sciences and knowledge, the cyberspace and knowledge, artificial intelligence, etc.

Among the Islamic philosophers, the role of the Iranian philosophers, especially early ones such as Farabi, Avicenna, Mulla Sadra, and the later ones (called Neo-Sadra'ids) including Allameh Muhammad Hussein Tabataba'i, Master Murteza Mutahhari, Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, and Ayatollah Abdullah Javadi Amuli, as well as younger philosophers, in emergence of some new issues of Islamic epistemology and diffusion of the discussions and findings of that science – compared to the ancient Greek philosophers and other philosophers before them – is a very important and central role. These philosophers, quantitatively, added new issues, critiques and evidence to the series of earlier discussions; and qualitatively, they made a considerable contribution in scrutiny and deepening that discipline (for more information, see: Abbaszade, 1400 SH, pp. 277-281).

1-7. The System of Islamic Epistemology

According to the series of previously stated points, in our perception, the system of Islamic epistemology consists of:

“The philosophical system originated from the Islamic wisdom and religious texts composed of pillars (foundations, components and various coherent and interactive constituents of the epistemology) distinct from other systems, and fulfilling certain goals”.

2. The Features and Characters of the System of Islamic Epistemology

2-1. The General and Common Features

The general and common features are those features that any epistemic system must enjoy. Considering the definition offered for the Islamic epistemology, some general features of such a system are as follows (see: Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 11):

1. The system of Islamic epistemology is a composite entity (with components and constituents)
2. Those constituents are diverse and none of them is a repetition of others, and each has its own function.
3. Those constituents have their own proportionality and consistency.
4. Those constituents are interacting with one another.
5. This system is distinct from other systems (whether they are macro-system, mid-system or micro-system or even sub-system), and they have specified demarcations and boundaries (both longitudinal and traverse).
6. That system is seeking to realize some certain ends and goals.
7. That system enjoys authentic religious criteria.

2-2. Special Features (Criteria for a System to be “Religious”)

By special features, we mean those features that are specified to the system of Islamic epistemology, specifying the demarcations between religious (Islamic) epistemology and non-religious secular epistemologies.

Indeed, any system is conditioned by provisions to be described

as being religious (Islamic) (see: Rashad, 1387 SH, pp. 6-11). And the system of Islamic epistemology has all those provisions; thus, it is described as religious.

Accordingly, some of the special features of the system of Islamic epistemology are as follows:

1. Being founded on religious foundations: the system of Islamic epistemology is founded on religious foundations. That is, the assumption of the existence of One God who is the grantor of all things including 'human's knowledge' goes on with the image that religion offers of the universe and creation of the human being as well as his abilities and weaknesses, and the ways to reinforce those abilities and remove those weaknesses. Indeed, the human's knowledge is a divine grace and the true owner of knowledge is God and the true knowledge comes down from the divine territory to the world of angels¹ and then to the human level (Rashad, 1400 SH, p. 7).
2. Religious nature of the constituents: the propositions of the system of Islamic epistemology (unlike the doctrinal propositions) are not in principle subject to faith, for they are enumerated among the propositions of knowledge. However, since the major propositions of this system are found in their exact or similar form in the religious texts, and they are not contradictory to religion, they are considered as religious.

1. The Islamic philosophers maintain that the Active Intellect – whose duty is leading the human's intellect from potentiality to actuality and who grants knowledge to the human being – is the same as the angel of revelation (Gabriel) in religious texts.

3. Being obtained from authentic religious sources: the system of Islamic epistemology is obtained from authentic religious sources. That is by referring to the text of the Quran and authentic hadiths, one can explore the epistemological findings of the Islamic philosophers there and adduce them as evidence. Similarly, the common sense (*'aql salīm*, i.e. 'sound reason')¹, whose authority is confirmed by religion and is considered among the authentic religious sources, is one of the sources of inference in that system as well. In general, intellect, revelation and inspiration, innate nature, sense and the like are all confirmed by religion as sources of knowledge provided that they have the conditions of validity. In that case, they are also sources of epistemology.
4. Inclusion of religious usage (ends and benefits): the system of Islamic epistemology is seeking to realize ends and

1. There are two readings of reason or intellect: the purely philosophical intellect and the human's general intellect, along with various readings of the purely philosophical intellect, the most common one is the 'argumentative intellect' used by the classic rationalist philosophers and Islamic philosophers. That intellect is of two types: theoretical intellect, which is used in theoretical unpractical reflections, and practical intellect, which is used in practical actual issues. The human's general intellect, however, which is called common sense, is the intellect that 'has some theoretical natural essential principles as well as practical ethical non-acquirable rules for all' ('Abedi Shahrudi, 1366 SH, p. 20). According to the former meaning, any given religious proposition is 'rational' when it can be proved through argumentation and reasoning. But according to the latter meaning, any given religious proposition is 'rational' when it is in harmony with the human's common sense and human's nature. Nevertheless, these two readings of intellect are not precisely distinct; rather, they sometimes accompany one another.

benefits that are confirmed by religion. For instance, in the discipline of epistemology, accessing verity (truth) and achieving certain cognition is an important and central end also confirmed by religion. Similarly, accessing the ability to distinguish right from wrong in human's beliefs is among the benefits of this system, which is also supported by religion.

5. Being shaped by the factors of genesis of religion: the system of Islamic epistemology has been shaped by the religious factors. Human, social, natural and other elements are among the factors for genesis of sciences. The founders and compilers, civilizational and historical containers, cultural and social conditions, etc. are also among the factors for genesis of sciences. Since the authors of the Islamic epistemology are the Islamic and Muslim philosophers who have created that science in the civilizational container of Islam, we may consider it Islamic.

It is worth noting that the religious (i.e. Islamic) nature of any science is a multi-dimensional and gradable affair (Rashad, 1387 SH, p. 11). Accordingly, the more the 'Islamic system of epistemology' is consistent with the epistemological teachings of Islam (texted in the Quran and authentic hadiths), the more it will be religious. Naturally, the contradiction of some of the components of epistemological system to the text of the Quran and authentic hadiths will lead those components out of the religious scope, and this may overshadow the whole system and the knowledge originated from it.

Besides, any science is composed of kingpin components and five genesis-making elements including the following ones:

theoretical origins, subject matter, issues, end, and logic. The consistency and harmony of these five elements is the factor for genesis of knowledge, which is called 'the theory of harmony of elements' (Rashad, 1401 SH, p. 68). Any science will be religious when: (1) its five pillars are prepared with the authentic religious perception, and (2) the existing propositions in it are verified (Rashad, 1401 SH, p. 68). Accordingly, a science is religious when its theoretical origins and bases are religiously valid, its subject matter has a religious identity, the perception of its issues conform to the religious perception, its end has a religious value, the method and logic used in it is religiously valid, and the propositions therein are true and real (Rashad, 1401 SH, pp. 90-99). Accordingly, one can study and prove the religious nature of the 'Islamic science of epistemology' with precision and in detail.

3. The Status/ Position and Importance of the System of Islamic Epistemology

In discussing the classification of the system, there are, in general, four distinct types discernable: macro-system, mid-system, micro-system and sub-system. The Islamic macro-systems are of five groups: doctrinal-credo system, scientific-epistemic system, spiritual system, practical-obligational system, and ethical-value system (Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 20).

From the perspective of the status, it seems that the system of Islamic epistemology is a mid-system under the scientific epistemic system. The relationship of the system of Islamic epistemology with other macro-systems, mid-systems, micro-systems, and sub-systems are infra-structurally important and deserve to be seriously studied, which itself needs a detailed study.

Regarding the 'status' of the system of Islamic epistemology, we may say that the Islamic epistemology is itself the most fundamental basis and is, thus, one of the most important bases. This is because ontology, axiology, methodology, studying religion, theology, anthropology, sociology, scientology and the like – any of which are considered the basis for many systems and sciences – are all based on the epistemological foundations. And if these systems and sciences are to be pursued with an Islamic approach, they will be fundamentally in need of the Islamic epistemology (for more information, see: Abbas-zadeh, 1401 SH, pp. 51-58). And it also seems that if the Islamic epistemology is in itself based on those foundations, there will be a vicious circle.

It is worth noting that priority of epistemology over ontology is a logical priority, and logically, ontology is impossible without epistemology. According to some of the contemporary scholars, the ideology of any school is based on its worldview, and its worldview is based on its theory about knowledge (i.e. epistemology) (Mutahhari, 1392 SH, p. 228). Thus, epistemology is prior to worldview (which is of the type of ontology).

Similarly, we can say that from the viewpoint of order of knowledge, epistemology is prior to ontology; but from the viewpoint of the subject of science, ontology is prior to epistemology, for the subject of ontology is 'existence' and the subject of epistemology is 'knowledge'; and until existence is realized, speaking of knowledge will be nonsense. The importance and vitality of the system of Islamic epistemology is discernable through the above discussions.

4. The Goals and Ends of the System of Islamic Epistemology

Among the discussions regarding the system of Islamic epistemology is its goals and ends. By goal, we mean the result of a volitional task

that a free agent considers from the onset and does that task to achieve it. The result of the work is the 'end' because it is the endpoint, and it is the 'goal' because it has been the agent's purpose from the onset. It also is the 'ultimate cause', for its desirability causes the agent to be mentally related to it. The word 'end' usually means the 'endpoint' of a motion, and the relationship between its instances and the instances of the goal is 'partial inclusion' (*'m ūm wa khuṣūṣ min wajh*). This is because on the one hand, no goal can be considered for the agent of a natural motion, but the concept of 'end' applies to their 'endpoint'; and on the other hand, in creative task wherein there is no motion, the ultimate cause applies but here the end does not mean the endpoint. However, the 'end' is used here for the 'ultimate cause' (Mesbah Yazdi, 1386 SH, vol. 2, pp. 106-111).

The above point applies also to the system of Islamic epistemology. The goal of the epistemology system means the purpose and motive of those who infer that system, and it seems that the goal of that system is to establish the science of Islamic epistemology, and the end of that science is explaining the value of what the man knows and specifying its scope and domain.

5. The Foundations and Presumptions of the System of Islamic Epistemology

Foundation means the origin and root of something: "foundation is what on which something is founded". The term 'foundations' has different meanings. First, it means the causes of realization of something. Second, it means the affirmative causes of something. And third, it means assumptions or axioms and axiomatic principles. That is, the ideas that no discipline deals with to prove and are considered self-evident, because they are either obvious and need no proof, which are called 'conventional principles' (*uṣūl muta' ārifā*) or

the place for proving them is in another discipline, which are called 'deducted principles' (*uṣūl mowḍūʿa*) (Saliba, 1366 SH, vol. 1, p. 192).

Mainly, by the term 'foundations' we mean the second and third meanings. Thus, foundations are principles and assumptions on which the sciences, theories and scientific issues are founded, and judgments or taking positions in a science are based on them (see: Avicenna, 1404 AH, p. 157; Tusi, 1375 SH, vol. 1, p.301).

Sometimes, foundations are called origins (*mabādī*). The term 'origin' (*mabdaʾ*) means the source and starting point of something and is used in two senses: first, it is equivalent to bases (infrastructures) and second, it is equivalent for the starting point of a departure or the introductory items dealt with before the main item. For instance, the compilers of an educational source for a discipline, before entering its subject matter, would insert some elementary data of it in the introduction to their book (see: Ibn Fares, 1404 AH, vol. 1, pp. 121-213; Farahidi, 1410 AH, vol. 8, p. 83).

The origins are divided into three types according to the distance or no distance between the origins of the science and its issues: *baʿīda* (far or 'meta-presupposition'), *wasīta* (midway or 'presupposition') and *qarība* (close, contiguous with issues or 'supposition'). And the close or even the mid-way origins may be called just origins (*mabādī*). Some close origins are of the type contiguous with the issues of the science and some others are non-contiguous with those issues. The former type are among the internal components of that science and are discussed in that science, but the latter type must be discussed in another science. Thus, by 'foundations' we mean just the non-contiguous origins, because the contiguous origins are inside the science and are considered as the internal components of it (Rashad, 1389 SH, pp. 29-30).

The foundations have various features and functions, such as having a degree of generality and comprehensiveness. Though general, the foundations are limited (limitedness of series of foundations), because according to foundationalism, any foundation leads at last to one or several special foundations, not to infinite continuous series of foundations. Among the functions of foundations are specifying the borders and epistemic distinctions in schools, sciences and attitudes. Some of the foundations are effective in understanding conceptions and influence our perception of the next conceptions. The type of a person's look at the existence, universe and human has a direct effect on his understanding. Among other features of foundations is that they are directing, making goal and specifying favorite causes and ends (Shakerin, 1399 SH, vol. 1, p. 38).

In short, the foundations of any system are fixed and established bases that have been proved or are provable, guiding us to that system, and a change in them leads to a change in the content of that system. Various types of system are – from the longitudinal aspect – far, midway, close and direct. Types of foundations of system are – from the traverse aspect – epistemology, theology, anthropology, sociology, scientology, and the like (see: Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 14).

A movement from the foundations to the religious system requires both using religious foundations and taking rational approach, although in the recent case, there must be no inconsistency with the religious laws and values.

By the 'system of the Islamic epistemology', we mean the theoretical fundamental substructures on which that system is founded. As we mentioned before, the foundations of epistemology are in themselves the most basic foundations of various sciences and

spheres of knowledge. All accidental foundations of sciences and spheres of knowledge are themselves products or subordinate to epistemological foundations. Thus, the system of Islamic epistemology is founded just on some theoretical substructures, which are restricted to the foundations of religious 'system generation' in general and perhaps inserted in some of the meta-epistemological discussions.¹ Besides, some of the presuppositions of the system of Islamic epistemology are as follows (Rashad, 1399 SH, pp. 14-15):

1. The system of Islamic epistemology are there in the text of the religion (in fact-itself and state of affirmation). The religion's attention to the human's knowledge is the necessary condition for comprehensiveness of religion, and the most comprehensive look at the human's knowledge is a systematic look at it. Thus, religion has a certain system of epistemology.
2. The system of Islamic epistemology can be extracted and inferred from the context of religion (in the state of proving).
3. The system of Islamic epistemology has fixed, inclusive and far-reaching essences, including in the inner side and context of religious law (epistemological propositions in the text of the Quran and authentic hadiths).

1. While epistemology is – in a general definition – a philosophical theory on knowledge and its nature and domain, meta-epistemology tries to go one step back from the internal and minute discussions of epistemology to pose questions on assumptions and essential ideas taken by epistemologists. The major questions in meta-epistemology are as follows: (1) Are there any objective epistemic realities or not? And how are those realities – if existent – described? (2) What is the subject matter in epistemology? And (3) What is the methodology of epistemology? (for more information, see: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaepistemology/>)

4. The system of Islamic epistemology has varying accidents that can be extracted with the help from the common sense and the researching experience of the wise people (especially the epistemological findings of the Islamic philosophers).

The Islamic philosophers including Farabi, Avicenna, Suhrawardi and Neo-Sadra'id philosophers (from Allameh Tabataba'i on), despite their intellectual disagreements, have attempted to establish the Islamic school of epistemology and deepen it; and of course, their works are always able to be completed and developed.

6. Components and Constituents of the System of Islamic Epistemology

By the components of any system, we mean its internal and external constituents. Any religious system have two sets of components and constituents: essential or fixed, and accidental or volatile. The essential fixed components are elements whose deletion inflict impairments to the religious nature of the system. But the accidental volatile components are those whose lack inflict no impairment to the religious nature of the system, and they can – in proportion to the conditions of time and place – be replaced by other components (for more information, see: Rashad, 1399 SH, pp. 16-17).

Accordingly, the components and constituents of the system of Islamic epistemology are as follows:

1. Laws: the laws of the system of Islamic epistemology are naturally epistemic laws that – sometimes – have some practical benefits as well.
2. Foundations: we have previously mentioned some points regarding the foundations of the system of Islamic epistemology.

3. Ends: we have also mentioned some points regarding the ends of system of Islamic epistemology.
4. Knowledge: the knowledge originated from the system of Islamic epistemology is the knowledge of Islamic epistemology with its tenets and various constituents.

7. The Methods and Sources for Epistemological System Generation

There are three methods for system generation in its general sense: the method of system generation or discovering system; the method of producing the models originated from the system (model is later than the system); and the method of assessment and evaluation of the two methods of discovering model and producing model.

Of course, the third method may not be an independent affair, and with assessing the first two methods, we may well be needless of the third method (Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 17). Regarding the system of Islamic epistemology, the method of generating it or discovering it are naturally 'rational' methods; and of course, we may also make use of 'traditional' method for referring to religious texts. Similarly, in designing any kind of religious system, we must consider six sources of inspiration as well: (1) the Book (i.e. the Quran); (2) Sunnah; (3) common sense; (4) pure innate nature; (5) *Maqāsid al-Sharī'a* (in its general sense, the macro goals of Islam in enacting religious laws); and (6) the human's vital needs based on the religious view, and the demands of the conditions for inquiry and understanding, as well as commitment and enforcement (Rashad, 1399 SH, pp. 17-18).

Regarding the system of Islamic epistemology, the Book, Sunnah, common sense and pure innate nature are considered among the sources. However, as we mentioned before, the science of

epistemology is a pure theoretical science and it fulfills the human's vital needs just in the theoretical and intellectual spheres, not the practical needs. Its conformation and enforcement is possible just in epistemic issues, not in the sphere of practice and action, though the knowledge – which is of the type of theoretical wisdom – has a determining effect on practical wisdom.

Nevertheless, the effect of conditions and demands of time on the system of Islamic epistemology is important. The science of epistemology is from one angle divided into two types: *a priori* and *a posteriori*. The former type is the pure theoretical epistemology which enjoys – like logics and mathematics – general and fixed principles, and it is not influenced by the conditions and demands of the time. But the latter type is the realized epistemology, which is naturally possible to be affected by various non-epistemic factors.

Non-epistemic conditions and factors effective in epistemology are divided into two groups: *mu'addāt* (preparatory factors) and *mawānī'* (hindering factors) (for instance, see: Rashad, 1400 SH, pp. 12-14).

8. Applicability and Efficiency of the System of Islamic Epistemology

Applicability and efficiency is the criterion for acceptability of a system. In other words, a system that is applicable and efficient and resolves the problems of individuals and societies will naturally have more acceptability among people and the community of elites.

As we mentioned before, the system of Islamic epistemology is a purely theoretical science, but we may consider some usages for it as well. The usages of the system of Islamic epistemology are of two types: the primary (direct) usages and secondary (indirect) ones. The essential and primary usages are directly related to the sphere

of knowledge and epistemic issues as well as the science originated from it, i.e. the science of Islamic epistemology. The accidental and indirect usages can be shown in other human sciences such as founding the philosophy of knowledge with Islamic approach, founding the humanities with Islamic approach, answering some of the doctrinal-religious doubts and the like, which needs in itself a separate study.

But the unique usage of the Islamic epistemology is that the theological authority of any religious system is subordinate to its epistemological authority. That is, any religious system must enjoy sufficient certitude for comprehending the context of reality to be considered right (Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 18).

9. Application of the System of Islamic Epistemology in the Islamic Methodology

The methodology of knowledge has a direct relationship with epistemology (see: Fritz, 1978, pp. 5-6). That is, method is the way tools and sources of knowledge are used or the rules of matter and form are applied for extracting knowledge. And methodology is the investigation of method. The task of epistemology is stating the rules of matter and content of argument as well as how to access knowledge. Thus, since methodology is the way rules of epistemology are applied for acquiring knowledge, it is based on the principles and rules of epistemology and is later than it (Khosro-panah, 1394 SH, p. 36). The general methodology is subordinate to general epistemology; and the methodology of sciences – in addition to general epistemology – is based on epistemology of science.

From the perspective of historical background, epistemology is prior to methodology. Epistemology has grown along with history

of philosophy and philosophy itself; but methodology in its today's form is a new discipline. Any criterion and framework a researcher accepts, he will organize his methodology accordingly.

Methodology is founded on the basis of epistemology, and it will change in proportion to the evolution in geometry of epistemology. Thus, anywhere and anytime when a certain system of epistemology is born and developed, the necessary condition and setting for emergence of methodology specified and in proportion to it will also grow. Consequently, when the system of knowledge and epistemology becomes subject to crisis and disintegration, the system of methodology becomes subject to doubt and wavering (Firahi, 1387 SH, p. 15).

The epistemological origins are one of the influential and decisive factors in taking methodology; and epistemology has a sub-structural and foundational role for methodology. In other words, just as methodology accepts some presuppositions from logics, it will accept assumptions from epistemology as well. Indeed, methodology is – from various perspectives – based on epistemology and feeds on it:

One of the issues discussed in epistemology is the relationship of the observational propositions or scientific premises with reality (verity of premises). By accepting the claims proposed in epistemology, methodology makes them the foundation of its own activity and research; and accordingly, it deals with judgements on the method used there. Methodology takes its foundations from epistemological theories. For instance, the theories of foundationalism, correlation, idealism, and the like can be various foundations for the science of methodology (Haqiqat, 1385 SH, p. 53).

Similarly, regarding the sources, it is epistemology that specifies which sources must be used, and the methodology is

subordinate to the sources of knowledge. For instance, the foundations of sensationalism and empiricism (positivist) have influenced methodology and realized a certain school for which other sources of knowledge are either invalid or are considered ideological and – consequently – unscientific (Sharifi, 1393 SH, p. 375; Sharifi, 1395 SH, p. 36; Chalmers, 1939, p. 7; Iman and Kalata Sadati, 1392 SH, p. 465).

For instance, the intellect is considered as one of the sources for knowledge, and any type of judgment we have about intellect in epistemology is effective in adopting the methodology. Suppose we accept another intellect instead of empirical and critical intellect. Naturally, we will see its effects in methodology. Clearly, if we recognize the existence of metaphysical intellect, theoretical intellect, celestial intellect and the like, and consider divine revelation as one of the authentic sources of knowledge as well, our methodology will be completely changed (Parsania, 1392 SH, pp. 49-50).

Any of the scientific approaches, including the positivist, interpretive, critical approaches as well as unity of the scientific method, compound methods, identification of the method of natural sciences with humanities and the like are based on epistemological foundations (Sharifi, 1393 SH, p. 375). And “considering with which ontological and epistemological features the reality and the social world of knowledge are defined, the scientific knowledge will find an identity relied on those features from the logical, theoretical, conceptual and methodic viewpoints, or – generally – from methodological viewpoint.” (Iman and Kalata Sadati, 1392 SH, p. 467).

In view of the above points and considerations, the system of Islamic epistemology, with features and components we enumerated before, completely affect the methodology of knowledge and sciences that are to be furthered through Islamic approach.

Conclusion

The whole collection of aforementioned discussions can show us that offering a systematic image of the Islamic epistemology is possible. In such an image, the essence, the features and the components of the system of Islamic epistemology can be suggested as follows:

1. The system of Islamic epistemology is: “the philosophical apparatus, originated from the Islamic wisdom, and the religious texts, composed of pillars (various consistent and interactive epistemological foundations, components and constituents) distinct from other systems and providing certain goals”.
2. Special features of the system of Islamic epistemology are as follows: being founded on religious foundations, religious nature of the constituents, being acquired from authentic religious sources, inclusion of religious application (ends and benefits), and being formed from factors of religious genesis. The religious nature of the system of Islamic epistemology is a multifaceted and multistage affair. Similarly, the religious nature of science of Islamic epistemology can be investigated and proved through the religious nature of its five pillars (theoretical origins, subject matter, issues, ends, and logics) as well as verity of the existing propositions therein.
3. As far as the ‘position’ is concerned, the system of Islamic epistemology is a mid-way system under the scientific epistemic macro-system. From the perspective of ‘status’, the Islamic epistemology is in itself one of the most fundamental foundations. This is because ontology, axiology, methodology, studying religion, theology,

anthropology, sociology, scientology and the like – each of which is considered the basis of many systems and sciences – are themselves based on epistemological foundations. The importance of the system of Islamic epistemology is also discernable from this perspective.

4. The goal of the system of Islamic epistemology is the establishment of the science of Islamic epistemology, and the end of that science is explaining the value of human's knowledge and specifying its domain and scope.
5. The system of Islamic epistemology is just founded on some theoretical substructures, which are restricted to the foundations of intellectual system generation in general and perhaps inserted in some meta-epistemological discussions. Besides, some of the presuppositions of the system of Islamic epistemology are as follow: the system of Islamic epistemology exists in the context of religion (in the state of affirmation); and we can discover and infer it from the text of religion (in the state of proving). It enjoys fixed, inclusive and far-reaching essences in the inner side and context of the religion (*Shari'a*). It also has volatile accidents that can be inferred with the help from the common sense and the researching experience of the wise people (specially the Islamic philosophers).
6. The components and constituents of the system of the Islamic epistemology are: laws, foundations, ends and science.
7. The method for creating or discovering the system of Islamic epistemology is 'rational'. However, the 'traditional' method must be also used to provide its religious aspect. Similarly, Book and Sunnah, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a* (literally,

‘ends of religion laws’), common sense and pure innate nature are also among the true sources of the system of Islamic epistemology. The effect of conditions and demands of time on the system of Islamic epistemology is also important.

8. The applications of the system of Islamic epistemology are of two groups: primary (direct) applications and secondary (indirect) applications. But the unique application of the system of Islamic epistemology is that the theological authority of any religious system is itself subordinate to its epistemological authority.
9. The epistemological origins are among the influential and decisive factors in adopting methodology; and epistemology has a sub-structural and foundational role for methodology. Methodology is, from various angles, based on science of epistemology and feeds on it. These include the discussion on truth of propositions, the sources of knowledge, specifically reason and revelation, the scientific approach and so on. Thus, the system of Islamic epistemology will completely influence the methodology of sciences and disciplines to be furthered with Islamic approach.

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Father and Mother: Two Topos of Family Ethics in Christianity and Shia Islam

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Abstract

Christianity and Shiite Islam share the religious nature of marriage as compliance with a divine precept and of the family as a sharing and continuation of the divine will preordained for the creation and multiplication of human beings on the face of the earth. I will not dwell on the institution of marriage itself and I will omit to expound its principles, canons and ethics proper to it. I therefore proceed to immediately lay out the essential outlines that characterize the existential philosophy and the role to which parents are called within the family cell. Of this cell they are not the only protagonists, and it must also be said that the cell itself is not an end in itself: the parents are one with the children and the family is one with the society, civil and religious, in which and with which it evolves, lives its religiosity and ethics, and realizes divine wills. The subject of people who make up the family nucleus in the strict sense and the people who gravitate with different duties and in different capacities around it, such as fathers, mothers,

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sons, daughters, relatives and servants, is vast and complex in its articulations. This is true both as regards their interpersonal relations and their relations with the community environment in the midst of which they stand as elements of edification and support. Indeed, an exhaustive treatment of the personal roles of individuals constituting the family would in itself require extremely detailed and laborious research. Perhaps in no other field has legalism indulged so much as in the treatment and determination of the rights and duties inherent to the members of the family unit. Not only because of their natural belonging to a tribe, clan and family, but also because of their religious identity as subjects of a revealed law, over whom the dominion of faith prevails, or ends up prevailing, over every other instance of ethical, associative and community order. We therefore propose to outline, below, just a few of the complex religious and human implications of the interpersonal relations that regulate and govern the family institution as it articulates itself and becomes the core of the so-called Islamic community.

Keywords

family ethics, God's cause, Christianity, Shia Islam.

The Father and the Mother

The father is the lord of the house. As a man, symbol of strength and vigor, maturity and experience, resourcefulness and sense of responsibility at every level: physical, mental and character, he stands above the woman by divine design and will. For we find it written in Surah II: 228:

Divorced women must wait three monthly cycles 'before they can re-marry. It is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they 'truly' believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands reserve the right to take them back within that period if they desire reconciliation. Women have rights similar to those of men equitably, although men have a degree 'of responsibility' above them. And Allah is Almighty, All-Wise.

The Qur'anic verse II: 228 is corroborated by a hadith that reads:

If I were to order a human to prostrate himself before another human, I would order the bride to prostrate herself before her husband, however great the right he has over her

The expression "men have a degree 'of responsibility' above them", which contributes to forming the idea of a superiority of man over woman, seems to reflect only a primacy of a juridical and social order, not so much, therefore, an ontological superiority of person and nature, although some orientalist and scholars of Islamic law maintain that, in line with Semitic and Oriental mentality, "the Qur'an decisively affirms the ancient concept of the natural superiority of man over woman", or, as others say: "In reality, there exists among Muslims an adjustment to a state of affairs, to what exists and, therefore, a respect for natural forces".

In treatises dealing with conjugal matters, it is stated that this constitutes a reality that no person with common sense can

dispute or deny. To further emphasize this difference, Surah IV: 34 says:

Men are the caretakers of women, as men have been provisioned by Allah over women and tasked with supporting them financially (...).

Here too the terminology is precise and leaves no room for supposition or interpretation beyond the concrete meaning of the terms. Indeed, we find *rijāl* for 'men' and *nisā'* for 'women'. But always in a sphere that deals directly with the institution of marriage.

Again in the Qur'an, we come across explanations or reasons for this superiority of men over women in marriage. The fact that *'men have a degree 'of responsibility' above them*, while constituting in itself a higher cause of honor, also implies a greater responsibility on their part by virtue of the fact that this derives to them by God's 'choice' or 'preference', as is eloquently asserted in the aforementioned Surah IV: 34. Here again, the tradition relies on a hadith in which the Prophet told:

The degree /of superiority/ accorded to the man is an indication that he is more exhorted to have a good behavior with his wife, to be liberal and gentle in character with her.

This concept of responsibility is closely related to the fact that God created woman by giving her a specific purpose and end: "to be a convenient helper to man" (Gn. 2:18).

Besides, nothing else would justify the carnal frequentation of a woman if not the path of faith that induces one to enter into marriage, the only institution within which intercourse is permitted by the Qur'an, as it says:

Blessed are the believers (...) who keep chastity (except with their

wives and with what their right hands possess, who are not to be blamed.

This sort of subjugation and inferiority of woman to man becomes a pretext to prove, *a fortiori*, the absolute uniqueness and asexuality of God. For this reason, it is ruled out that He could never have wives, sons, let alone daughters. That is abundantly stated and specified in the Qur'an . But on the other hand, this does not take away, as already mentioned, that both man and woman are equal persons (Cf. Surah IX: 73; XLVIII: 5; LVII: 12) before God and before the Law in the assumption of rights and duties sanctioned by the precepts, *aḥkām*, present in the Qur'an.

This perfect equality is emphasized by the apostle Paul with considerations of high spiritual value. For he says:

Therefore, the man will leave his father and mother and unite to his woman, and the two shall form one flesh. This mystery is great; I say this in reference to Christ and the Church! So you also, each one on his part, love his wife as yourself, and the woman be respectful to her husband (Ef 5:15-33).

Adam needed a woman, a woman to stand before him, but not a creature inferior to him, treated and created from other matter, different from his, because they were both created from the same substance, and the woman was created as a helper who was similar to him, worthy of him, of his own dignity, therefore, and not inferior to him or submissive by nature. This is an absolute equality of being, very well sensed and defined by the apostle Paul when he says, "There is neither male nor female; for you all are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3, 28).

Woman's fundamental rights are, for example, the right to assert her freedom in the choice of a spouse; the right to a dowry to be kept and considered as her exclusive property; the right to respect and protection of her person, without becoming the object of mistreatment; the right to education and, in particular, to a healthy and complete education in the principles of her religion and her dignity as a mother of future believers; the right to have servants or women of service if the level of social life in which she is inserted demands it; the right to bring up and educate her children even if her husband enters into a second marriage as a result of divorce; the right to equal treatment if her husband enters into a second or third or fourth marriage in accordance with the polygamist regime; the right to a temporary or prolonged nursing allowance if her husband divorces her in the meantime; the right to be provided with food and clothing in a dignified manner; the right to a marital roof and to the personal and autonomous management of her property.

Naturally, there is a whole series of rights that the husband can claim over the woman, among which is the right, fundamental to the Semitic and Arab mentality and late to die in some of its deviations and demands, to demand full submission from his wife in those areas that do not compromise the Qur'anic dictate and the subsequent regulations formulated on the life and sayings of the Prophet; the right that his wife does not squander his wealth with thoughtless life choices; the right for his wife to cherish the honor and respect due to him by maintaining a conduct commensurate with her status as the legitimate wife of her man; the right for his wife not to make religious and social choices without his prior permission; the right for his wife not to refuse him in the provision of sexual exercise; the right for his wife not to leave the house

except with his permission; the right for her to take care of her body to make herself attractive exclusively to him; the right for his wife to be vigilant of the home and the upbringing of the offspring; the right that she should not gossip about what happens in the secrecy of the home. In this regard, an illuminating *hadith* in which the Prophet says:

One of the worst situations in which one will find oneself on the Day of Judgment before God will be that of the man who, after uniting intimately with his woman and after she has united intimately with her man, divulges her secret.

These individual rights are accompanied by common or reciprocal rights, such as the right to share in the moments of sorrow and happiness involving the family; the right to show mutual understanding and forgiveness for faults and mistakes committed; to recommend to each other attention and sensitivity to the divine prescriptions and the Prophet's dispositions entrusted to the tradition; in keeping what is consumed within the household a secret; in competing for good and avoiding evil, as the Qur'an states that in demanding the observance of conjugal rights and duties:

The believers, both men and women, are guardians of one another. They encourage good and forbid evil, establish prayer and pay alms-tax, and obey Allah and His Messenger. It is they who will be shown Allah's mercy. Surely Allah is Almighty, All-Wise (Surah IX, 71).

It goes without saying, therefore, that the much-proclaimed superiority of men over women in Islam is not and can never be an incentive for oppression and injustice. The subjugation of women is functional to the smooth running of family harmony in the mutual

respect of rights and duties, an area in which insubordination and disobedience are not allowed to the extent that what is imposed is in harmony and in conformity with God's precepts. Woe also to those who would come between two spouses from the outside, sowing the seeds of discord and mistrust between them, as the Prophet is quoted as saying in one of his hadiths:

Surely he is not of us who corrupts the heart of a woman against her husband.

Preserving even in this context that peculiar disposition of the spirit that declares itself ready to submit fully and consciously to the divine will, marks the watershed between justice and abuse. In this sense, the woman's submission is to be seen as adherence to the divine will in the specificity of the role assigned to her in the household.

In the fear of Christ, be subject to one another: wives be to their husbands, as to the Lord; for the husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church, he who is savior of the body. And as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything (Ef 5, 21-24).

Because he who loves his wife, loves himself.

A man's authority is not an absolute authority but must be constantly subordinate to the observance of the Law and, therefore, never be the inspiration for works and actions contrary to the divine will. The abuse of this authority or superiority unjustly invoked does not require the woman to conform to her husband's will, but allows her to dissent, disobey and rebel.

The bridegroom must therefore be a man of mercy, indulgent

towards his woman, ready to help her, to support her, to correct her, and to guide her along the straight path indicated by Law and custom. On this, the mystic Yaḥyā Ibn Mu'āḍ al-Wā'iz al-Rāzī says:

Man is not kind until he regards women with benevolence and compassion, not with desire. He is not permitted to humiliate, malign and despise the woman with whom he has committed himself to the marriage experience for the procreation and continuity of the human species.

How many touching examples of mystics who were tender with their brides and companions on their journey in faith the Muslim tradition has preserved for us! The mystic Muḥammad Ibn Wāsi' said one day:

I know men who have been sleeping with their wives on the same pillow for twenty years and bathed him in their tears, and she never noticed.

In the communion of prayer, the wife of Rabāh Ibn 'Amr al-Qaysī would also have wished to consume her nights, but to no avail because she always found him immersed in sleep, so that one day she blurted out:

The whole night has passed and you have slept! Oh, if you knew who made me marry you deceitfully!

Exquisitely tender is also the family picture in which Abū Ṭalḥah al-Anṣārī and his wife Umm Sulaym Bint Miḥān compete in hospitality and generosity with a guest whom the man brings home, asking his wife taken by surprise:

Is there anything to eat? She replied, "There is nothing but my children's dinner". "Distract them somehow", he retorted, "and

when they tell you they want to eat, put them to bed and put them to sleep. In the meantime, give our guest something to eat, and when he begins to eat, pretend to mend the lamp and put out the light, so that he will think we have shared supper with him and will not bother to satisfy his hunger". The next morning, on bumping into Abū Ṭalḥah in the prophet at the gates of the mosque, he heard the latter say. "God was surprised at the manner in which you and your bride treated the guest this night" (SHAMMĀKH, 2011, p. 117).

Precisely because he is the strongest member of family, the man must provide for the expenses, take care of his bride, not impose on her burdensome tasks, and protect her in dangers. In the pre-Islamic period, women had their own role, even if legal custom did not seem to give them rights. She was a warrior, a poetess, a soothsayer, sometimes even a tribal chieftain. She assisted warriors in war by healing them and bringing water, she was lent to better-bred people, she was a dancer, she was behind the herd, she could be raped in battle, and if she was taken prisoner, she could be forced into prostitution to enrich her masters.

Muslim authors are unanimous in recognizing that the Qur'an has, in effect, revalued woman as a person, as a child, as a young woman, as a wife and as a mother. According to a happy expression of Muḥammad Aḥmad Jād al-Mawlā Bek, she was "reintegrated in her heart, in her authority and in her humanity".

Muḥammad was not insensitive to the spiritual dignity of women:

Be benevolent to women created from your rib. If you try to straighten a rib, you break it. Use them therefore with their curvature.... There is more merit in spending on one's wife than

on the poor or on holy war.... When two spouses hold hands, their sins fall through their joined fingers.... Heaven is at the feet of mothers... A child's kiss to its mother equals that which we shall imprint on the threshold of paradise¹

Muḥammad recognized the woman's right to religious education, which has so far been preserved by custom with particular sermons on specific days, even though, despite everything, she continues to be officially excluded from the solemn Friday communal prayer.

The consideration of parents is paramount and is given special attention in Islamic tradition. A hadith states:

Among the gravest of sins is that of a son who curses his parents.

Perhaps in no specification is it better outlined and asserted than in that of al-Ša'rānī, where he says:

After the rights of God and the Prophet, there is no greater right than that of parents, both natural and spiritual. Few have been saved from disobedience to one or both parents, and God revealed to al-'Azīz that disobedience is punished by Him for four generations and obedience blessed for four generations. The right of the mother is double that of the father.

It seems to me that in the spirit of the Law and tradition, where it does not give rise to open scandal and provocation of common feeling, one can even push this intense feeling of honor and veneration towards the mother to a degree of excellent fidelity to the spirit and no longer to the letter of the Law itself, keeping it intact in its soul-transforming purpose. It does not, therefore, seem

1. Series of hadiths collected here and there in the official collections.

to me blasphemous or unnatural in the order of the priority of religion and the call to its observance beyond all consideration and limitation, even if apparently at odds with the extremism of the evangelical call to set aside father and mother should they conflict with God or his religion, what Muḥammad said about the mystic Uways al-Qaranī:

There are two reasons that prevent him from visiting me in person: the first is that he cannot make up his mind to leave the service of the Most High for a single moment; the second is that, as a faithful observer of the law, he does not want to leave his mother alone, blind and deprived of the use of hands and feet, to visit me... and all that he earns from his work as a camel-driver he devotes to his and his mother's expenses.

The Prophet also took care to give the mystic Abū Ḥāzim al-Makkī a message for one of his guests in the following recommendation:

Tell him to have the greatest regard for his mother; this will earn him a greater reward than (he would receive) for a visit to the Ka'bah.

In order to better understand the significance of this last consideration, it is appropriate to reread the following tradition. Abū Hurayrah asked God's messenger one day:

"O Prophet of God, who among those who are closest to me has the greatest claim on me?" "Your mother," the Prophet answered him. And the other asked him: "And who, after her?" "Your mother!", the Prophet replied. "And who, then?", the other pressed, and the Prophet repeated, "Your mother!". And for the fourth time Abu Hurayrah asked him, "And then, who?" and

again the Prophet repeated, “Your mother!” But Abū Hurayrah persisted and asked him again, “And who, then?”. “Your father!”, the Prophet then said.¹

In the same order of ideas should perhaps also be understood the spirit of a hadith in which the Prophet was asked:

“Which individual has the greatest right to a person?”, he replied: “The right of the father is the greatest”. مَنْ أَكْبَرُ النَّاسِ حَقًّا عَلَى الرَّجُلِ قَالَ وَالِدُهُ (Shaykh Hurr, vol. 14, p. 112).

In another hadith, it is reported that the Prophet said:

You and your possessions are your father's property (Saduq, vol. 1, p. 257).

Even if one of the aforementioned hadith reports that the greatest right is of the father, what can be deduced from other hadith is that the right of the mother is superior. For example, when the Messenger of God was asked what the right of the father was, he replied:

It is his right that you obey him', so when asked what the right of the mother was, he replied, 'Alas, if you could be in your mother's service for as many days as the number of grains of desert sand and raindrops, it would not be equal to a day that you were in her womb' (Nuri, 1987, vol. 15, p. 204).²

1. We read it also in Allamah Majlesi, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, ed. Muassasat al-Wafā', Beirut, 1404 AH, vol. 71, in the chapter regarding the rights of father and mother: *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 159.

۲. 'قِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا حَقُّ الْوَالِدِ قَالَ أَنْ تُطِيعَهُ مَا عَاشَ فِقِيلٌ مَا حَقُّ الْوَالِدَةِ فَقَالَ هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لَوْ أَنَّهُ عَدَدَ رَمَلٍ عَالِجٍ وَفَطْرِ الْمَطَرِ أَيَّامَ الدُّنْيَا قَامَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا مَا عَدَلَ ذَلِكَ يَوْمَ حَمَلْتَهُ فِي بَطْنِهَا'.

Family Piety and God's Cause.

Addressing the Prophet, and through him every other believer, God enjoins him to "command his family to pray". And that the family should serve as a witness to faith and hope in the best of goods is abundantly deduced from the Qur'an:

O ye who believe! Preserve yourselves and your families from the Fire that will have for nourishment men and stones, guarded by fierce and terrible angels who do not disobey God in what He commands them and what they are commanded to obey (Surah LXVI,6).

Spiritual emulation in faith and works is inculcated. Does it allude, by any chance, to a certain ability to merit others as well? Or is it limited to mere exhortation and encouragement? To this general warning, souls respond in various ways. There are those who adhere to it and grow in merit:

And those who believe, and their seed shall follow them in the faith, we will gather them together to their seed, and we will not defraud them of any of their deeds; and every man shall be a pledge of what he has earned.

From this guarantee from God emerges the important concept of the dignity of the human person engaged in the meritorious constructiveness of faith and witness. The family is taken here as an exemplary image of what it is to be in heaven. The concept of mutual sanctification within the family is therefore reaffirmed and its purpose recalled: to be reunited with God, justified by the efficacy of the same faith. This is the ideal of the true family united also by blood. It is countered by another:

Say: 'God I adore, worshipping Him sincerely, and you worship what you will apart from Him' Say: 'The true losers will be those

who lose themselves and their families on the day of the Resurrection. Is not this the Clear Loss?¹

The parallelism between God and parents as the creators of life implies honorable gratitude and thankfulness of children towards their parents. But to what extent does family piety have the upper hand and precedence over possible friction that might arise for various reasons between parents and children?

In fact, another important aspect of family piety is its particular position vis-à-vis the nascent Islamic movement, which did not take long to identify itself with the central concept of the “cause of God” or the overarching and preferential interest of the Prophet’s religion and mission.

Could there have been a conflict between religion and the expansionist-missionary movement of Islam?

Imam Ali knew well that for the cause of Islam and supreme justice it would be necessary to sacrifice even his own parents. He knew that he could wish himself and his faithful supporters:

May my father and my mother be sacrificed for those few whose names are well-known in the sky and not known on the earth (Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 186).

He also hoped:

May my father and mother pour out their lives for you. O Messenger of Allah!... May my father and my mother die for you;

1. Surah XXXIX, 14-15; XLII, 45: “And you will see them exposed to the Fire, fully humbled out of disgrace, stealing glances ‘at it’. And the believers will say, “The ‘true’ losers are those who have lost themselves and their families on Judgment Day.” The wrongdoers will certainly be in everlasting torment”.

do remember us with Allah and take care of us (Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 233).

The Qur'an states in no uncertain terms that everything that belongs to believers must be for the sake of Islam: their possessions, above all, and their persons. But also their values. Hence, even the family is subordinated to the cause of Islam:

But if your father and mother strive to make you associate with Me what you do not know, do not obey them, keep them sweet company in this earthly world, but follow the Way of those who have turned to Me. then all of you shall return to Me, and I will inform you then of what you did on earth (Surah XXXI,15).

Imam Reza said:

It is obligatory to do good to one's parents, even if they are disbelievers, but if they order one to commit a sin, one should not obey them (Cf. Allamah Majlesi, vol. 71, p. 72).

In accordance with the doctrine of Islam, which strongly recommends obedience to one's parents, the apostle Paul illustrates the relationship between spouses and then other family duties, such as those of the children towards their parents but also of parents towards their children, saying:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for his is right. Honor your father and mother: this is the first commandment associated with a promise: that you be happy and enjoy a long life above the earth. And you, fathers, do not sour your children, but bring them up in the upbringing and discipline of the Lord (Ef 6, 1-4).

As can be well noted, it uses an explicit reference to the commandment of the Decalogue: "Honor thy father and thy mother,

that thou mayest prolong thy days in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Es 20:12).

Islam must inform every attitude of the believer. Generally speaking, “family piety” is always postponed to the cause of God and the service of the Prophet.

This stems from the very nature of the family and then from the communitarian function that it plays with regard to community unity and ultimate salvation. Thus before the requests and demands of the All-Wise, Abraham, the father of faith and friendship with God, sides with his Lord who calls him, and opposes the bonds of blood and obedience that should bind him to his father and people. Abraham, whose message is rejected with scorn and derision, declares himself irresponsible for his father’s unbelief and his resistance to grace:

Remember, O Prophet¹ when Abraham declared to his father and his people, “I am totally free of whatever ‘gods’ you worship, except the One Who originated me, and He will surely guide me!” (Surah XLIII, 26-27).

In surah LX, 4, the same teaching is reiterated, and Abraham, along with those who followed him on the right path, is given as an example to be followed when between faith and blood there are precise commands and directives from God. Thus it is in fact said in the Qur’anic passage just indicated:

You already have an excellent example in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, “We totally dissociate ourselves from you and ‘shun’ whatever ‘idols’ you worship besides Allah. We reject you. The enmity and hatred that has

arisen between us and you will last until you believe in Allah alone.” The only exception is when Abraham said to his father, “I will seek forgiveness for you,” adding, “but I cannot protect you from Allah at all.” ‘The believers prayed,’ “Our Lord! In You we trust. And to You we ‘always’ turn. And to You is the final return!

And like Abraham, other prophets of God also took the same line. This is how Šu‘ayb expresses it:

He said, “O my people! Do you have more regard for my clan than for Allah, turning your back on Him entirely? Surely my Lord is Fully Aware of what you do! (Surah XI, 92).

Here by family, in addition to the direct members of blood and flesh, is meant the entire blood group: the tribe. This particular attitude towards the cause of God even alters the nature of the commandment: “You shall do kindness to your parents...”, which requires man to respect and follow the fate of his parents. We have already seen this in Abraham. But it also becomes a precept of general scope in Surah XXIX, 8, where it is said that although God has commanded kindness towards parents, this no longer has any reason to exist if parents oppose God’s plan and hinder the believer's mission. For we read again:

We have commanded people to honor their parents. But if they urge you to associate with Me what you have no knowledge of, then do not obey them. To Me you will ‘all’ return, and then I will inform you of what you used to do! (Surah XXIX, 8).

A commandment that goes back to the origins of Christianity whose roots are firmly grounded in the Old Testament. We read in fact:

You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery, do not

kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother (Lc 18, 20).

It is a commandment that is spoken in the first person by God and later repeated by his prophets at different times. As we read:

For Moses said, Honor your father and your mother, and: Whoever curses his father or mother shall be put to death. You, on the other hand, say, "If one declares to his father or mother, 'What I should help you with is qorbán, that is, an offering to God,' you do not allow him to do anything more for his father or mother. So you nullify God's word with the tradition you have handed down. And of such things you do many (Mc 7, 10-13).

And we read further:

God said Honor your father and mother, and further, Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death (Mt 15, 4).

I repeat that honoring father and mother is a commandment; it is what honors God and finds God's satisfaction. Christianity and Shiism are in perfect harmony regarding this concept and value.

You know the commandments: Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not defraud, honor thy father and thy mother (Mc 10, 19).

In Christianity, it becomes universal love, breaking through the levees of tribe, clan and family and overlooking the soul of the universe, looking at each and every one of its creatures, making it full of love and sacrifice:

Honor your father and mother and you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Mt 19, 19).

The concept of the new kinship in the faith slowly makes its way, which is, moreover, also taken up to outline the conduct that parents themselves must take towards their children who persist in unbelief.

The separation between the various members of the same family, which God will bring about on the great day of the Last Judgement, must already take place on earth if necessary and required by the pre-eminence of the cause of God and the Qur'an.

Muslim believers have in their Book a copious list of examples with families and peoples who were divided and destroyed precisely because of their individual and collective attitude to the messages that the various prophets transmitted by God's will. Such was the story of Abraham, Noah, Šu'ayb, Moses, 'Īsà... etc., as we read in Surahs XLIII: 26; LX: 4; XI: 92; XXIX: 8.

But some scold their parents, "Enough with you! Are you warning me that I will be brought forth 'from the grave', while many generations had already perished before me 'for good'?" The parents cry to Allah for help, 'and warn their child,' "Pity you. Have faith! Surely Allah's promise is true." But the deniers insist, "This is nothing but ancient fables." (Surah XLVI, 17-18).

In the verse quoted, it is evident that kinship is willed by God, and is also presented as a supreme value in the natural order; it must, however, give way and take second place before God. Faith elevates kinship and sublimates it.

Parents are channels of faith. There is a climate of spiritual propaedeutics in every family, corroborated by harmony of purpose and ideals in a concomitant religious search for the meaning of existence and retribution.

Family harmony in the faith must not be a subjugated removal, endured with passive and inner aversion, but a broad and serene availability of spirit and piety, because God reads hearts, knows what appears and what is jealously guarded and hidden.

This is the true nature of family faith and family piety.

And if parents are not faithful to this structural vocation of their existence, a divine obligation is imposed on the faithful, when necessary, to testify even against their parents, as is stated in Surah IV: 135:

O believers! Stand firm for justice as witnesses for Allah even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or close relatives. Be they rich or poor, Allah is best to ensure their interests. So do not let your desires cause you to deviate 'from justice'. If you distort the testimony or refuse to give it, then 'know that' Allah is certainly All-Aware of what you do. For Islam too, God is at the apex of all concern in man endowed with faith and dedicated to a wise, just and dignified witness to God's truth.

We will see later that if parents do not witness true faith and true submission to God and His Prophet, it runs obligatory to oppose them so that they cannot harm the cause of religion. As indeed Ali saw himself compelled to do, to whom these words are referred:

In the company of the Prophet of Allah (PBUH), we used to fight our parents, sons, brothers and uncles, and this continued us in our faith, in submission, in our following the right path, in endurance over the pangs of pain and in our fight against the enemy (Nahj al-Balaghah, *Sermon 55*).

Every Muslim knows that his life is a function of this testimony;

he repeats it many times in his daily prayers, and many times again he rereads it in the cherished pages of his Qur'an.

Daily piety is a function of the gradual assimilation of all excessive care for transient values and duties towards oneself, towards the people of one's blood, and towards the needy. Social charity is not nullified, but charity is made to emerge from faith with distinct divine and supernatural overtones. Such an inner orientation or readiness imposes itself, *a fortiori*, when the link with the named categories and persons becomes a pretext and cause for not faithfully striving for the life of God. The testimony of one's faith imposes a decisive check on the passion and common interests of the clan: it must not allow itself to be intimidated and repressed by the affection and voice of blood.

And would it have happened that if you had turned away from God, you would have brought corruption to the earth and shattered your bonds of consanguinity? (Surah XLVII, 22).

It seems that the Prophet was addressing those who feared breaking their ties with the group if they decided to remain loyal to him and follow him in his warlike actions for the triumph of the cause of Islam.

The consciousness of having to be part of a family at all costs was ingrained in the sensibilities of the Semites. It was considered a guilt to be without family: guilt and danger was to be without people, without race and without blood. It was a guilt to be a blood without a name. And this implied the absence of any official religion, because blood and religion were one. Hence the Qur'an's insistence on the continuity of its message with the roots of the religion of the fathers. From this deep-rooted sense of the tribal 'religious' derive

the attitudes that Muslims still maintain today towards those who convert to other religions: in their rejection of the new social and tribal connotation of the convert, they repudiate his blood and his right to life.

The translation I have given of the just quoted verse was motivated by its analogical juxtaposition with the eleventh verse of Surah XLVIII, where the Prophet's pressing invitation to leave all family affairs and join him in the holy war is particularly emphasized:

The nomadic Arabs, who stayed behind, will say to you 'O Prophet', "We were preoccupied with our wealth and families, so ask for forgiveness for us". They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say, "Who then can stand between you and Allah in any way, if He intends harm or benefit for you? In fact, Allah is All-Aware of what you do.

The sinful character of the conduct of such warriors, who preferred their family obligations to the cause of the nascent Islam, must have been very much accentuated in Muḥammad's preaching. At the end of the war, in all likelihood, these warriors present themselves to Muḥammad and ask his forgiveness: it does not matter that they do so hypocritically, it is a fact that they feel obliged to acknowledge, in some way, that they have acted unjustly.

The prevailing morality of the new kinship in faith at the expense of the pure and simple bond of blood gave birth to the concept and reality of the Muslim *ummah*. And with its emergence, one understands even better why Muḥammad did not delay in overthrowing his adversaries and making the cause of Islam triumphant: his message did not allow for half-measures between commitment and word, between faith and deed.

Say, 'O Prophet,' "If your parents and children and siblings and spouses and extended family and the wealth you have acquired and the trade you fear will decline and the homes you cherish—'if all these' are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His Will. Allah does not guide the rebellious people" (Surah IX, 24).

No other choice was given: either with Muḥammad, on the way of God; or against him, on the way of perdition.

The family is preserved 'one' in the cooperation and common striving towards individual and collective salvation. The Qur'an could not do without this value. In a certain sense, the self-defense of the tribe had to result in this spiritual angle: united for earthly life and eternal life. The sense of the perpetual presence of the fathers was alive. And Muḥammad did not pass over it. He rectified this mentality and gave it a new dimension. That which is not built on earth will remain stunted even in the Hereafter, and that which remains divided will be left divided.

God will stand between fathers and sons, if they are not in communion of faith and labour, no intercession will be of any avail, for the proper time for merit will have already passed: "Neither will your relatives nor your children profit you on the Day of Resurrection, which will stand between you divided. And God will observe what you do.

So, too, will the family be divided in the sight of God if it has not achieved a perfect union of bodies and intentions on earth: the reprobate will desire in vain to avail himself of his children, his wife, or his brothers on the dreadful day of the Most High.

'Although' they will be made to see each other, the wicked will

wish to ransom themselves from the punishment of that Day by their children, their spouses, their siblings, their clan that sheltered them, and everyone on earth altogether, just to save themselves (Surah LXX, 11-14).

The bond of blood is definitively broken. It is replaced by the new “proximity” defined by justification and holiness.

Then, when the Deafening Blast comes to pass - on that Day every person will flee from their own siblings, and ‘even’ their mother and father, and ‘even’ their spouse and children (Surah LXXX, 33-36).

The family divided in faith thus loses all binding obligations between the various members. This aspect has been dealt with extensively in the Qur’an and has maintained its intransigent lines of application and legal effect virtually unchanged over the centuries. Killing due to conversion or abandonment of Islam was undoubtedly a reminder to effective effect against the decision of those few Muslims who wished to switch to other religions. The deep roots are to be found in the very principles that the Qur’an outlines regarding the value of blood with regard to the Islamic religion.

Parents cooperate, through procreation, in the divine plan of creation. This central idea constitutes the reason for the reprobation of the practice of suppressing and killing children. The Qur’an spares no hint of this regrettable misdeed; indeed, as usual, it gives it a firm moral assessment and defines it in the context of a theological certainty and the peremptory denial of the efficacious and constructive action of idols.

Likewise, the pagans’ evil associates have made it appealing to them to kill their own children—only leading to their destruction as well as confusion in their faith. Had it been Allah’s Will, they

would not have done such a thing. So leave them and their falsehood (Surah VI, 137).¹

One must bear in mind that it is a theme of fundamental importance throughout the Qur'an's doctrinal development that the opposition between "human opinion" and the "wise judgement of God" is of paramount importance. And if science belongs to God, it is better for man to be guided by His judgements. One must, therefore, accept with joy and gratitude what God ennobles in his sight.

And also the mystic Ishāq Ibn Muḥammad al-Nahrajūrī said:

Father and mother are the authors of our transitory life, while the educators generate our eternal life.

Also in tune with this sphere of the believer's spiritual advancement is the assertion of the mystic Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī al-Qurašī, who states:

The child of the heart is preferable to the child of the body: the latter inherits an earthly heritage, the former an invisible heritage

Moreover, the same mystic goes on to say:

The spiritual father is superior to the carnal parent, because he receives the disciple as raw iron and works him into pure gold.

The transposition of earthly life into the spiritual sphere preserves the evolutionary dynamics and ascribes them, as can be easily inferred, to a sphere of formation that transcends temporal

1. Reaffirmed also in verse 140 of the same surah, where it says: «Lost indeed are those who have murdered their own children foolishly out of ignorance and have forbidden what Allah has provided for them—falsely attributing lies to Allah. They have certainly strayed and are not 'rightly' guided».

education. The sphere of mystical exaltation here recovers the foundations of generation in the spirit structurally linked to the monastic experience in the close relationship between master and disciple, between father and son.

Sons and Daughters

I will limit myself to sketching some traits of the spirituality of family piety. It too, like other values of marriage and family, is founded on the Qur'an, where we find it written as follows:

We have commanded people to honour their parents. Their mothers bore them in hardship and delivered them in hardship. Their 'period of' bearing and weaning is thirty months. In time, when the child reaches their prime at the age of forty, they pray, "My Lord! Inspire me to 'always' be thankful for Your favours which You blessed me and my parents with, and to do good deeds that please You. And instill righteousness in my offspring. I truly repent to You, and I truly submit 'to Your Will' (Surah 46, 15).

This giving oneself to God means nothing other than making an act of submission and trust in God Himself, to be a pious Muslim, therefore, and not a *kāfir* (unbeliever) or ungodly one like one who detests his parents. Indeed, a hadith recites:

Do not detest your parents, for he who detests his own father is to be counted among the wicked.

Another hadith emphasizes that three invocations will always be answered by God: the invocation of the oppressed against the oppressor, the invocation of the wayfarer who turns to Him on his journey, and the invocation of a son who invokes God's goodness upon his parents.

In a hadith, it is reported that Imam Ṣādiq, when asked which was the best action, said:

Saying prayers at the beginning of their appointed time, doing good to parents and jihād.

Mentioning doing good to parents after the saying prayers at the beginning of their time and before jihad emphasizes how much this was held in high regard by the Imams.

In another hadith of the Imam Ṣādiq, it is reported that doing good to parents, whether they are alive or not, is one of the actions for which no one can justify himself if he has not performed it (Shaykh Tusi, 1986, vol. 6, p. 350).¹

Needless to say, this is a wonderful prayer of filial piety and domestic peace, which is echoed in a hadith in which it is said:

Sound faith leads to filial piety and filial piety leads to Paradise (...)

Although in tune with Old Testament biblical theology, the prayer emphasizes the human aspect of piety and love for parents. The figure of the mother who seems to come out of the thirsty desert of Arabia, clutching her child to her breast, stands here as a type of mercy and a devout symbol of life perpetuated in the pain of childbirth and in the trepidation of breastfeeding and in the sorrow with which she, the mother of all names and all children, anxiously follows the fate of that body brought into the world. Much is gained, consequently, in the social and religious consideration of the woman

1. The same is stated in a hadith of the Imam Bāqir. Cf. Allamah Majlesi, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 71, p. 56.

to whom it is given to complete, by divine providence, the primordial act of creation. By conferring on the above verse the sacredness of a “commandment”, God associates parents with Himself in the transmission of life and therefore wants the believer to nourish a deep and sincere love of gratitude and thankfulness for them as for Him. Recites a hadith:

As much God is pleased as the parents are pleased, and as much is His wrath as the parents.

To the believer who investigates the hidden “signs” and “messages” of his Word, God suggests outpourings of piety and intercession: “My Lord! Forgive me and my parents”. The foundation of piety lies in the “covenant”. It is actually written:

And ‘remember’ when We took a covenant from the children of Israel ‘stating’, “Worship none but Allah; be kind to parents, relatives, orphans and the needy; speak kindly to people; establish prayer; and pay alms-tax.” But you ‘Israelites’ turned away—except for a few of you—and were indifferent” (Surah II,83).

Piety is therefore a clause in the covenant that man makes with God and that God accepts to the extent of the commitments made.

The Qur’an does not abrogate the previous revelation to the people of Moses, as explicitly stated in Surah IV, 36

Worship Allah ‘alone’ and associate none with Him. And be kind to parents, relatives, orphans, the poor, near and distant neighbours, close friends, ‘needy’ travelers, and those ‘bondspeople’ in your possession. Surely Allah does not like whoever is arrogant, boastful.

Rather, it points out that a new revelation has intervened precisely to put a curb and a root-and-branch remedy to what the Jews continue to transgress.

It is precisely because of this character that the analogy between what the Qur'an proposes and what is already contained in the Old Testament deposit of revelation appears rather faithful and literal.

In order to confirm the nature of a total adherence of the soul to a more authentic and sincere form of piety or goodness, the Qur'an develops this simple statement of the precept with the words:

Piety is not in turning your faces towards the east or the west. Rather, the righteous are those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Books, and the prophets; who give charity out of their cherished wealth to relatives, orphans, the poor, 'needy' travelers, beggars, and for freeing captives; who establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and keep the pledges they make; and who are patient in times of suffering, adversity, and in 'the heat of' battle. It is they who are true 'in faith', and it is they who are mindful 'of Allah'¹

Allameh Ṭabāṭāba'ī says:

After the belief in the oneness of God, the most important

1. Surah II, 177. God's love remains in all things the healthy foundation of love that unites human beings together; in a special way it is the torch that fuels the solar serenity of a marriage that is founded on it. I like to quote here some remarks made about love by a Muslim author who, describing love in general and marital love in particular, says: "Love is the source of justice, tolerance, courage and other virtues still. It is in fact the very source of all virtues". Cf. BOUSSEROUEL HÈBRI, *Le divorce*, Grafo, Spagna 2009, p. 128.

obligatory action is benevolence towards one's parents; and in this regard, there is no difference between believing and disbelieving parents, for the Qur'an absolutely commands (without any conditions) to treat one's parents well. It is an absolute, universal principle, valid in both Christianity and Shiism (Tabatabai, vol. 13, vers. 17: 23).

Piety is not just a feeling, but an activity. One worships God with every human act that is governed by faith and right intention. It is the norm of faith, therefore, to provide parents with what they constantly need, in every difficulty and period of their existence. Piety, inculcated here, expresses the polarity of religious feeling. Every religious act of the believer becomes a "sign" of the piety and gift with which man worships his God. It therefore eliminates the conflict zone between selfishness and constant openness, helps one to always remain "clothed in the garment of piety", and places the believer in a healthy option of intentional openness. It not only instils a complex of inner spiritual attitudes and thinking, but extends its life-giving spirit to social conduct, endowing it with a warm and human sensitivity.

And towards parents, in particular, pity grieves the heart:

For your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And honour your parents. If one or both of them reach old age in your care, never say to them 'even' 'ugh,' nor yell at them. Rather, address them respectfully (Surah XVII, 23; See also surah XLVI,17-18).

In a hadith, the Imam Ṣādiq said:

If there were a shorter expression than 'uff', God would have forbidden it (Kulaynī, vol. 2, p. 349).

Attention must be paid to the fact that the obligatory nature of obeying parents and the prohibition of annoying them is a matter of debate among Islamic jurists. Some argue that it is not obligatory to obey them, but it is forbidden to annoy them: 'The child must avoid actions, which are not obligatory for him, and annoy his parents, or he must keep those actions from them or try to find their consent; but obeying them, as parents, is not obligatory (it is forbidden to annoy them)!'.

To better intensify the vital care of presence and love, the Qur'an continues:

Tilt before them meekly the wing of submission and say: 'Lord, have mercy on them, as they did on me, bringing me up when I was a child! (Surah XVII, 24).

It adumbrates the loving behavior of a father who wants to raise his son in the shadow of loving-kindness and full dedication, as Imam Ali himself expresses in a letter to his son, stating:

I have taken care to cover and guard every aspect of your life as it is the duty of a kind, considerate and loving father (*Nahj-ul Balagha*).

In addition to these, reference was also made to particular situations, for example in a hadith, Imam Mūsà ibn Ja'far recounts that when they asked the Prophet what the rights of a parent were, he replied:

The child must not call his parents by name, walk in front of them or sit before them, and must not behave in such a way that others offend them'. In one verse, priority is given to giving alms to parents and then to others: "They will ask you, "What shall we give as alms?" Say: 'Let the goods you give be destined for parents (Kulaynī, 1986, vol. 2, p. 158).

The expression “to lower one’s wing on someone” has a strong biblical background: it indicates a performance and a giving that must be totally defended and protected. In the Bible, it is God himself who lowers his wing on the people; even Jesus would have wanted to lower it on Jerusalem. In the one on whom one must lower one's wing, a state of destitution is mostly highlighted, but often also a real need for protection.

To understand the dense spirituality that the Qur’an intends to inculcate with such teaching, one must call to mind another verse in which it is said that “old age is a state of human, physical abjection”. It would seem that Muḥammad therefore wishes to persuade his followers to adopt an attitude that favors a correct reading of this painful “sign” of the body on its way to passing away, an attitude of understanding, therefore, aimed at the hope of heaven and respect for the values placed by God in the order of nature. This strengthening of the soul’s spiritual resources should help the faithful to overcome the natural repugnance that the condition of old age tends to provoke because of the puerility that makes old people curious, petulant and dissatisfied, touchy and insatiable. That this all-encompassing “piety” has a supreme value in the sight of God is deduced from Surah XLII, 23, where the concept of “fullness of grace” from God to his servants is put on the same level as the value in God’s eyes of “gratitude to one’s parents”. For we read there:

That 'reward' is the good news which Allah gives to His servants who believe and do good. Say, 'O Prophet' "I do not ask you for a reward for this 'message'—only honor for 'our' kinship." Whoever earns a good deed, We will increase it in goodness for them. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Appreciative.

It is God who speaks and expresses His will through the mouth of His Prophet.

To understand the importance and dynamics of family love, one must insist on the value that the Qur'anic "message" itself has among Muslims. Nothing but God is more sublime and divine than the Qur'an . In return for this 'message', which is a gift of God's munificence and a manifestation of His self-gift to the Arabs and, through them, to all mankind, God demands, among other things, that one loves his parents and relatives.

Manifestation of Filial piety

Care and concern for one's parents must be uppermost in the thoughts of the believer who sees himself close to death:

When death comes to any of you, it is enjoined upon you, if you leave property, to make a will to your parents and relatives with equity; this is a duty for God-fearing men.

This recommendation is reinforced by other Qur'anic pronouncements, such as the one in Surah XXIV, 22 which says:

Do not let the people of virtue and affluence among you swear to suspend donations to their relatives, the needy, and the emigrants in the cause of Allah. Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love to be forgiven by Allah? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

The statute of limitations is clearly in favor of the parents. Among the Arabs, the will was of paramount importance; the Qur'an itself testifies to this with its meticulous listing of the procedures it requires to be followed in dividing up and allocating a deceased person's property. The will ensures the parents a continuity in the

love and gratitude their son had for them. As long as they lived under the wing of his protection, they had nothing to fear. Now that their son is dead, they too are, in a sense, weaker, helpless creatures, abandoned to the relentless law of the desert that wants seekers and adventurers, strong and resilient bodies to whom alone can ensure survival amidst hardship and incessant struggle.

The Qur'an did not miss this dramatic side of desert life. The assets of the will come to mitigate the rigors of existence and give the elderly parents a way to still provide for themselves"

Do not let the people of virtue and affluence among you swear to suspend donations to their relatives, the needy, and the emigrants in the cause of Allah. Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love to be forgiven by Allah? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful (Surah XXIV, 22).

Up to this point, I have attempted to set family piety in an authentically spiritual framework, and have found it to be grounded in the truth of revelation and in the ethical obligation it automatically imposes due to the necessary symbiosis between faith and works. The Qur'an misses no opportunity to reiterate this concept. Piety cannot move outside or against revelation. This will have to be taken into account below, when discussing the conflict that may arise between "family piety" and "the cause of God or Islam".

Family piety must constantly insist, by its very nature, on the foundation of the "fear of God" and the holiness of his name.

O humanity! Be mindful of your Lord Who created you from a single soul, and from it He created its mate, and through both He spread countless men and women. And be mindful of Allah—in

Whose Name you appeal to one another—and 'honour' family ties. Surely Allah is ever Watchful over you (Surah IV, 1).

The Family and God or His Cause

The parallelism between God and parents implies, as already mentioned, honorable gratitude and reconciliation of the offspring towards those who have given them life. But can filial piety conflict with the supreme principles of the sovereignty of God to whom every family is called to honor and worship before any other reality?

Indeed, a not insignificant aspect of familial piety is its particular involvement in the initial Islamic expansion, which did not take long to identify itself with the also overriding concept of the "cause of God" or preferential interest of the Prophet's religion and mission. Was a tearing conflict between religion and the expansionist-missionary movement of Islam conceivable? The Qur'an asserts in no uncertain terms that everything belonging to believers must be in function of Islam, which is the religion of God and not of men or society. All their possessions, persons and values belong in the first instance to Islam. Therefore, the family is also subordinated to the cause of Islam. Islam must inform of itself the totality of the believer and all that in one way or another orbits in and around him. Family piety is consequently always to be postponed to the cause of God and the service of the Prophet and must never be placed in the service of Satan. Thus recites a hadith uttered by the Prophet when they pointed out to him that a corpulent and exceedingly dynamic man had just left home, passing in front of them:

If he left home to provide for the needs of his young sons, it is for

the cause of God! If he then went out to provide for the needs of his aged parents, it is for the cause of God! If he then went out to provide for his own sustenance, thus safeguarding his dignity without exposing himself to begging, it is for the cause of God! But if he has gone out to procure adulation and vainglory, it is for the cause of Satan!

The supremacy of the bond of Muslim faith and brotherhood transcends all ties of blood and kinship. Already Šu‘ayb manifested this in perfect faith and full submission to God with the following words:

O my people! Is my family dearer to you than God? Have you taken it, God, as a negligible thing, to be thrown away? But my Lord embraces what you do! (Hūd: 92).

Just as Abraham had already disowned his father and his people for not being responsible “for that which they continued to worship”, so the believers are no longer bound to “use kindness towards their parents”, if they oppose the cause of God and hinder the freedom to manifest faith in God and His messenger. The reality of the new kinship in faith slowly began to creep in, which is moreover corroborated to outline the conduct that parents themselves are called upon to take towards their children who persist in unbelief or return to it after professing the unity and oneness of God and their faith in the Prophet as God’s messenger. It must then necessarily follow that the *ummah* or Islamic community itself must be put at the center and at the top of the care and attention of believers.

Faith elevates kinship and sublimates it, therefore. If parents or children lose their function as witnesses of faith, blood has nothing to claim. If one is not faithful to the cause of Islam, there is

no light to illuminate the household. One does not nullify family or community charity, but one makes sure that charity emerges in its imperiousness from faith with divine and supernatural overtones. Already the Gospel in several passages recommends that love for God should not be debased by ardent love for relatives and the goods of this world. Even the Qur'an has something similar, where it says:

The nomadic Arabs, who stayed behind, will say to you 'O Prophet', "We were preoccupied with our wealth and families, so ask for forgiveness for us." They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say, "Who then can stand between you and Allah in any way if He intends harm or benefit for you? In fact, Allah is All-Aware of what you do (Surah XLVIII, 11).

But far more eloquent is what the same Qur'an says in surah IX, 24:

Say, 'O Prophet,' "If your parents and children and siblings and spouses and extended family and the wealth you have acquired and the trade you fear will decline and the homes you cherish—"if all these' are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His Will. Allah does not guide the rebellious people.

These are considerations that animate the Christian tradition of the earliest times, when Christ's message was the daily food of his believers.

The brother will cause the brother to die and the father the son, and the sons will rise up to accuse their parents and kill them. (22) You will be hated by all because of my name. But whoever

has persevered to the end will be saved. (23) When you are persecuted in one city, flee to another; verily I say to you, you shall not have finished going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes (Mt 10, 21-23).

But even in Christianity, God's cause comes first. Indeed, we read:

Peter then took to saying to him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus answered him, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, who does not already receive a hundred times as much in houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, together with persecution, and eternal life in the time to come. Many of the first shall be last, and the last shall be first (Mc 10, 28-31).

But we still read:

Peter then said, "We have left our possessions and followed you." (29) And he answered, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the kingdom of God, (30) who does not receive much more in the present time and eternal life in the time to come (Lc 18, 28-30).

And we read further:

Whoever shall have left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or fields for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life (Mt 19, 29).

This needs to see beyond the suffocating limit of matter animates not a few of the hadith that have been handed down to us

concerning the upbringing and faith of children. One of them reads:

After the death of parents, children may perform good deeds towards them, but the most meritorious of these is undoubtedly that of remaining in the right path.¹

And in another we also read:

Nothing better than a good education can parents leave to their children.

Honour your children and be considerate of their education.

This proposes another of the many hadiths handed down in this regard.

Other Peculiarities of Children in the Sight of God.

Substances and children are the ephemeral ornament of earthly life (...) (Surah XVIII, 46).

Now, it is of the nature of ornament to act as the frame and precious casket of other more essential and important qualities. And indeed the verse goes on to say:

(...) but eternal things, good works, deserve better reward in the eyes of the Lord, and better hope.

The sons, therefore, must help man to draw closer and closer to the only reality worthy of glorification and celebration. When this end is distorted by contingencies, which are exhausted by human vainglory, children end up becoming a “temptation” for man, as it is said in the Qur’an:

'O you who believe! Verily in your wives and children there is an enemy for you. Beware of it. But if ye forgive and are forgiving and condone, then God is forgiving merciful! For your riches and

your children are but a temptation, while with God you have immense merit!" (Surah LXIV, 14-15).¹

Not infrequently, this accentuation of the danger inherent in the offspring and the bride is part of a context that escapes the usual reading of events and projects an order of values that only the Most High knows as the greatest good for chosen souls. This brings to mind what the mystic al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī may have meant when he said:

When God desires the good of one of his servants in this world, he does not beguile him with wife and children, but rather causes the people of his family to die, in order to reserve him exclusively for devotion.

It will be said that such assertions go beyond the realm of common feeling, it is true, but the fact that other mystics are in line with the spirit of the above indicates that chastity was pursued by more than a few, albeit in eccentric and seemingly irrational ways, as was also the case with Rabah Ibn ‘Amr al-Qaysī, who left us with the following statement:

Man will not reach the level of the true believers until he abandons his wife as a widow and his children as orphans, and moves on to dwell in the dwellings of dogs.

Thus even in affection for children, an inner discipline of values and preferences is required: the exclusive love of offspring is reprobated when it distracts man from seeking the glory of God. It

1. See also surah VIII, 28: "And know that your wealth and your children are only a test and that with Allah is a great reward"; surah XXVI, 132-133: "Fear the One Who has provided you with 'the good' things you know: He provided you with cattle, and children". See also surah LXXI, 12 e LXXIV,13.

has already been said that children are a function of disciplined worship of God. They must in no way come between the will of God and the personal affections of the individual. Moreover, this recommendation also deals with situations in which parents might compromise their children's faith by attempting to divert them from the fundamental principles of religious piety, as when the Qur'an says:

And We have commanded people to 'honour' their parents. Their mothers bore them through hardship upon hardship, and their weaning takes two years. So be grateful to Me and your parents. To Me is the final return (Surah XXXI, 14) ... We have commanded people to honour their parents. Their mothers bore them in hardship and delivered them in hardship. Their 'period of' bearing and weaning is thirty months. In time, when the child reaches their prime at the age of forty, they pray, "My Lord! Inspire me to 'always' be thankful for Your favours which You blessed me and my parents with, and to do good deeds that please You. And instill righteousness in my offspring. I truly repent to You, and I truly submit 'to Your Will' (XLVI,15).

But if your father and mother strive that you should associate with Me that which you know not, do not obey them, keep them sweet company in this earthly world, but follow the Way of those who have turned to Me. Then all of you shall return to Me, and I shall inform you then of what you did on earth (Surah XXXI, 15).

But the same Qur'an in the Surah of Luqmān refers to the fact that disobeying parents who wish him to associate others with God, does not entitle the son to behave badly towards them: "... *be courteous to them in this life ...*".

In a hadith, Imam Ṣādiq said:

The son has three duties towards his father and mother: to thank them always, to obey their orders and prohibitions in what does not constitute sin, and to wish them well in both manifest and concealed ways (Allamah Majlesi, vol. 75, p. 236).

Let not the faces and desires of man be diverted from seeking and mentioning God.

O ye who believe! Let not your riches and your children distract you from the mention of God's name. Those who do such a thing will surely lose! (Monāfiqūn: 9)

Father and mother are above the same religious or ritual duties if one wishes to find God's satisfaction.

Instead you say, "Whoever declares to his father or mother, 'What I should help you with is an offering to God,' is no longer bound to honor his father." Thus you have nullified God's word by your tradition (Mt 15, 5-6).

In conclusion, from what has been said, it could be inferred that to respect parents, it is necessary to obey them absolutely in everything, whereas according to the Qur'an this is not correct. In fact, in the verses of the Qur'an, respect and obedience to parents are only required in cases where they do not involve transgression of divine orders and injustice. For example, in one verse, people are ordered to respect justice and bear witness to the truth, even if it is not in their own interest and that of their parents or relatives.

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“The Possibility of an Afterlife”: An Interpretation and Defense of D.H. Lund’s View of the Self as an Immaterial Center of Subjective States

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Abstract

The question of the probability of life after death has been of the highest importance throughout the ages for great numbers of people. The denial of its possibility is frequently based on a conception of a person as a completely material (or physical) being by appealing to both empirical evidence and philosophical argument. In this study, based on Lund’s view, we will present and defend a mind-body dualism in which the immaterial self does not consist in, and might not depend for its existence upon, the existence of the body and so might continue to exist after bodily death. The close association of these two distinct entities is due to a causal connection – a connection that fails to establish that the physical brings the mental into existence and is compatible with theories that the source of consciousness is not in the brain (e.g., the transceiver theory). In view of this, the continued existence of the self beyond the death of its body would be not only metaphysically possible but might be in accord with the laws of nature (i.e., naturally possible) as well.

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Arguments will be advanced in support of this form of dualism. They may be classified as follows: 1. the nature of the self (as known through acquaintance or phenomenology) and what it is to be a person, 2. Interactionist dualism and “transceiver” theory, 3. The self as an ontologically basic particular that experiences the world.

Keywords

Possibility of Afterlife, David Lund, Self, Phenomenology, Interactionist Dualism, Transceiver Theory.

Introduction

In the 21st century, everything is moving extraordinarily fast, and human attitude towards the world is changing. There has been an extensive trend between scientists to consider everything completely in terms of matter and physical measurement. Concerning this attitude, is there any excuse to speak of the self and soul? It seems not. No longer does science take seriously claims about an immaterial world, and that's because they assume that they can explain everything without referring to anything non-physical. Since the start of A.I., the phenomenal success of technology and computer science—especially transferring digital replication of consciousness— has raised new questions which are intensely focused on the nature of a person as a center of subjective experience. The result of ignoring or denying the reality of such a nature has put into question the possibility of life after death and has directly affected the necessary condition of this possibility. This is espoused by many contemporary scientists as well as philosophers. So, this issue is of historical and contemporary interest, and different scientists and philosophers in various branches are struggling to settle these problems or perhaps deny them right at the outset. Is it still possible to present and defend a kind of dualism as a conceivable theory based on inference to the best explanation which is in accordance with the contemporary achievements?

To put things into perspective more fully, it should be mentioned that even though some groups deny the reality, and even the possibility, of life beyond death, others acknowledge at least the possibility of an afterlife. Those who deny this possibility often base their view on a conception of a person as a completely material (or

physical) being and defend this view by appealing to both empirical evidence and philosophical arguments. In this regard, the empirically-grounded indicators seem to show that the likelihood of survival is not very high. The theory-based arguments would show that survival of death is absolutely (or metaphysically) impossible, at least without miraculous divine intervention. The upshot of their conclusion is that death results in the total destruction of the person. Those who reject this conclusion have a different view of persons, in most cases a dualist view, according to which a person's essence does not consist in, and might not depend upon, the continuing existence of the body and so might continue to exist after bodily death.

Those who believe that death leads to the extinction of the person note that mental states of all kinds always occur in close association with brain states and draw the conclusion that if the mind is not in some sense identical to the brain, it is such that its existence depends upon the existence of the brain and body. Dualists acknowledge the close association of mental with physical states but deny that the mental is reducible to the physical. They would argue that this association is due to a causal connection, not to a relation of identity. Some go further, challenging the assumption that the mental depends for its existence on the physical, arguing that the association in question does not establish that the physical produces the mental but is compatible with other relations that might obtain between them. Some are consistent with the possibility that the essence of a person with the capacity to have mental states continues to exist beyond biological death.

This study is an interpretation and defense of D.H. Lund's view of the self as an immaterial center of subjective states. So, this

study regarding Lund's views –which are eruditely organized in both analytic and phenomenological approaches and includes a comprehensive set of arguments against materialist and reductionist theories– proposes and defends a strong dualism (or dualism of particulars) in which a self is an essentially conscious being who is intrinsically and logically distinct from its physical embodiment and anything physical.

The Nature of the Self

The possibility of survival depends so heavily upon the nature of the self. The self is essentially a conscious being or a subject of consciousness rather than a physical organism. One argument for this conclusion is that it has modal properties¹ which no physical entity can have. Lund talks about the subject of conscious states in his great book, *The Conscious Self* (2005), and argues that the unity of consciousness is due to the existence of a unitary subject of conscious states. This conscious self we experience at the present moment remains one and the same self through time despite numerous changes, and this sense of unity through time can only be explained through a self who remains the same over time. What is both necessary and sufficient for the personal identity of the self and its survival is the existence of the *subject* of conscious states (Lund, 2009, p. 13), which is a metaphysically basic particular. So the self has a deep, irreducible essence consisting of a unitary, non-composite,

1. He has also comprehensively and broadly posited the conscious self based on modal and other properties that the self (as a subject-agent) has, and no physical particular can have in *The Conscious Self* (2005). The reader can find more credit of this argument by acknowledgment of Charles Taliaferro in his works (2018, pp. 50-59; 2017, p. 168).

indivisible subject of conscious states that endures through time while its states change. These experiential states are not part of the self (Lund, 1985, p. 19), but the self has them or is *in* them –in different states at different times.

Mind is constituted of mental states of various types (cognitive, perceptual, emotional, volitional) and they are states of the *self*. The "unity of conscious states" is explained as due to the unitary self at its center. The self is what *has* these states, it *experiences* them. It remains one and the same self over time as its states change. Since it is the carrier of personal identity through time and so must be what survives death if persons survive, it is what in religious contexts is (or should have been) referred to as the soul. These various mental states, or experiences, are conscious states of the *conscious self*. Although many speak of unconscious mental states, or even of an unconscious mind, such talk should not be interpreted as referring to conscious states that the (conscious) self is not conscious of having, but rather as (unconscious) dispositions to have conscious states.

The difficulty often considered most challenging for such a view is centered on causality and to explain how two radically different particulars can be in a cause-effect relationship (Lund, 2009, pp. 63-64). Lund successfully defends this view, utilizing phenomenology and philosophical arguments to show that the interaction is grounded in the irreducible causal properties of the two substances which are *causally accessible* to one another through embodiment. The very existence of the self as a nonphysical substance does not depend upon the existence of the physical substance in which it is embodied, so the cessation of the causal interaction will not prevent its continued existence after death. The

focus of this discussion is on intelligibility and the occurrence of dualistic causation. As Lund shows, whether we consider causation reducible to non-causal features of the items involved or irreducible to anything else, there is no basis for suspicion of the intelligibility of dualistic causation. Given the immateriality¹ of the self possessing agent-causation features, the best explanation of the irresistible immediacy of our volitional experience is that this impression of agency is a reality as it appears to be. If this approach is successful, it shows that dualistic causation—causal interaction between the mental and the physical— reveals nothing problematic about the interaction of two distinct substances; and that dualistic causation is in fact occurring.

Intractionist Dualism; "Trasceiver Theory"

The very fundamental part in picturing an afterlife, as I think, is based on Lund's specific theory called "selective-transmission" theory. This theory is an interactionist theory (Lund, 2003, p. 70) which suggests strong dualism (a strong dualism — a dualism of particulars) (Lund, 2014, p. 62) Although this kind of dualism is a Cartesian dualism, it differs from the original in important respects. The original Cartesian dualism (the dualism first conceived and expressed by the great French philosopher, Rene Descartes) has been the inspiration for many Cartesian-like views held by various past and present philosophers, but hardly any would embrace all aspects of Descartes' original view. Descartes apparently held that no non-human animals are conscious. Moreover, he was not in a position to distinguish

1. The embodied immaterial self which interacts causally with its body could survive due to its intrinsic and logical independence from the body.

between physical and phenomenal space, nor in a position to see how deeply embodied we are. These aspects have been viewed carefully in this study, partly by employing the following conceptions of possibility:

1. Metaphysical Possibility: The logical coherence (i.e., the internal consistency)
2. Natural Possibility: Is it in conformity with the natural law of the actual world?
3. Genuine Possibility: Survival of the individual person is in harmony with all the definitely known facts about the relationship between consciousness and the brain.

After we employ these conceptions, it is certain that the survival of death is metaphysically possible if, as Lund contends, the existence of the self is one thing and the existence of its body is another. But the question that is, in general, of most interest is the question of whether its survival is naturally possible or it contravenes natural law.

Though the self (or soul) and its body are, in Lund's view, distinct entities, they are causally connected, possibly such that, as a matter of natural law, the self depends for its existence upon its present body (or, at least, some body or other). Following Lund, the close association of these two distinct entities is due to a causal connection – a connection that fails to establish that the physical brings the mental into existence and thus is compatible with theories that the source of consciousness is not in the brain (e.g., the filter theory). In view of this, the continued existence of the self beyond the death of its body would be not only metaphysically

possible but might be in accord with the laws of nature (i.e., naturally possible) as well¹.

As far as my research has indicated, there are other interactionist dualist views, but none, I believe, quite like this one. No one has put forth precisely the idea that Lund expresses in the way he does. More specifically, the idea that the brain generates or produces the self and its conscious states has been questioned by others, though perhaps not quite in the way he has. Some well-known philosophers writing in the early years of the twentieth century have done so. William James in his essay *Human Immortality* (1898) did so in suggesting that the brain might have a transmitting function rather than a producing one. And J.M.E. McTaggart pointed out that the fact that the self does not have experience other than by way of its body does not show that a self without a body could not have experience in some other way. Perhaps, he suggested, it is just the existence of the body that presently makes those other ways impossible. He speaks of this in his *Some Dogmas of Religion* (1906, pp. 105-106). More recently, Edward and Emily Kelly (and others) in *Irreducible Mind* (2010), have argued for a number of interesting conclusions that include the irreducibility of consciousness, the central importance of mystical experience, and, most relevant to the specific question, the role of the brain as an organ for limiting or shaping consciousness, but not creating it

1. To put it rather differently, the self is deeply embodied (contingently embodied) and completely embedded in nature, but whose existence might not depend or consist in the existence of the body, and so the physical body is not involved in its personal identity and its survival. For more detail about personal identity and disembodied self, see:

Lund, D. H. (1990). Disembodied Existence, Personal Identity, and the First Person Perspective. *Idealistic Studies*, 20(3), 187-202.

(see, for example, page 575). They speak of the brain as having an inhibiting or filtering effect on the consciousness passing through it. The source of consciousness is taken to be external to the brain. This theory might strike many as simply incredible, but there is empirical evidence that supports it; and it is consistent with, if not made more credible by, the fact that naturalism has failed to provide a plausible explanation of the presence of consciousness in the natural world (as Moreland, (2008), has argued).

In addition to the giant body of the mentioned research, recently Eben Alexander has published a new book defending the filter theory from his scientific points of view as a neurosurgeon (2017). In the following part, we discuss the relationship between the nature of the self, filter theory and the possibility of an afterlife.

The Possibility of Afterlife

Lund considers three possibilities for the specific relationship between the self and its brain (other than the orthodox one—that the self and its experience owe their existence to the activity of the brain);

- Firstly, we can conceive of the brain as a filter (selective dissociator) in which we might expect expansion in consciousness after death.
- Secondly, we can conceive it as a consciousness enhancer, with the result that the consciousness of the self is in a highly diminished condition when separated from its brain.
- Thirdly, we can consider non-intentional consciousness as underlying the other two possibilities in which the self continues to exist as a conscious being even if its intentional consciousness ceases at bodily death.

At this point, it will be worthwhile to explore the possible origin of consciousness and the self. The conclusions that consciousness occurs only in relation to the being whose consciousness it is, and that this being (e.g., the self) is indivisible seem unavoidable. But if the brain acts as a filter or transmitter through which consciousness passes, we should have some plausible conception of the conscious source as it is prior to the effect on it resulting from its passing through the brain. It might be objectless (i.e., non-intentional) then and thus not something we would remember. There are at least two ways to approach an adequate conception of this source.

One is the theistic approach. Given that God exists and is the creator of conscious beings, He does this not by creating physical organisms with brains that produce them. Rather, they already exist as Divine creations, and the natural world with inhabitants consisting of complex physical organisms with brains through which they can filter provides the manner in which they become manifest in that world. The other approach involves mysticism and/or the non-intentional consciousness revealed in it and perhaps in other circumstances.

Considering the second approach that, in Lund's view, involves non-intentional consciousness, why should we believe that such consciousness exists and how might it be understood? Some people (e.g., mystics and some who have attained a deep meditative state) have claimed to have been in a conscious state in which they were aware but not *of* anything. They typically insist that they were not asleep, but fully awake and conscious, though not aware of any bodily sensations, emotions, volitions, sense perceptions, or cognitive activity. They were in a state of “pure” (i.e., non-intentional) consciousness, consciousness without *of*-ness, though

apparently self-illuminating. This seems paradoxical, but yet might be a fundamental form of knowledge.

Addressing this subject is complicated but important. Lund pursues part of it, focusing on the Yogacara School of Indian Buddhism. In this view, death brings the cessation of (intentional) consciousness associated with the body. That kind of consciousness ends at death, at which time there are no objects and no consciousness of objects. There is nothing to be conscious of. But store-consciousness continues. As Lund states, cessation of intentional consciousness is sought and sometimes attained in this life when store-consciousness is reached. After attaining it, maintaining exposure to it is usually brief, before it is relinquished upon returning to intentional consciousness.

Bodily death, then, brings about the cessation of intentional consciousness but not of store-consciousness —the non-intentional consciousness that presumably has always accompanied our consciousness of the intentional kind but remained in obscurity because it is not of any objects and thus of nothing for our intentional consciousness to be conscious of. Because store-consciousness survives bodily death, it is available to re-emerge through an organism with a suitable nervous system.

The reason why Lund refers to the Yogacara School here is that it is a highly respected School of Ancient Buddhist thought that maintains that some consciousness survives bodily death.

As stated, in the Yogacara contention, store-consciousness (i.e., non-intentional consciousness) survives bodily death. Their evidence that non-intentional consciousness exists consists in the testimony of those who have experienced it. It seems that only a few have direct experience of it, but this might not be so. The truth

might be that whenever I am intentionally conscious of, for example, a table, my consciousness includes a consciousness of my consciousness of the table. Otherwise, I would be conscious of the table without any consciousness of this fact. This consciousness of the table would be cut off from me: I would not know of its occurrence. As Jean-Paul Sartre (the famous French philosopher from whom Lund received this insight) said, “In other words, it would be a consciousness ignorant of itself, and unconscious—which is absurd.” (Being and Nothingness, 1953, 1966).

This strikes us as an important insight, for this consciousness of consciousness appears to be a non-intentional consciousness necessarily involved in the constitution of our commonplace intentional consciousness. What distinguishes the mystical experience is that this consciousness of consciousness is experienced alone, without the obscuring overlay of intentional consciousness. Perhaps the latter’s grip on our attention prevents, or makes very difficult, our detection of the underlying and fundamental consciousness—the consciousness that apparently is the source of our intentional consciousness or, at the very least, the necessary condition of (in first-person terms) my consciousness of my being conscious of an intentional object (such as a table) when in fact I am. But noting these relations should not suggest that there is (in the case of one person) more than a single self with a reflexive consciousness of itself, and with its reflexive self-consciousness manifested in the consciousness of being conscious of an intentional object.

It appears that there is within us a consciousness that is non-intentionally conscious of itself. (As Sartre himself points out, the word ‘of’ as used here may be grammatically unavoidable but does not introduce an intentional object.) One could say that this

consciousness is self-conscious or self-aware. Its very nature is to be self-aware. In *Persons, Souls, and Death*, Lund has described metaphorically this reflexive character of non-intentional consciousness as “its self-effulgent or self-shining nature, revealing itself to itself by its own light –apparently the light of non-intentional consciousness.”

Here there are two closely related matters:

- (1) The issue of whether the self-conscious consciousness has a personal and/or an individual nature
- (2) If it has, can the identity of a person reside in it?

In regard to (1), it is important to note that Sartre calls this consciousness the pre-reflective cogito (as distinct from Descartes' Cartesian cogito) and maintains that it is non-personal. This original consciousness (e.g., the consciousness of consciousness of the table) is pre-reflective and non-personal. The “I” does not come into existence until this original consciousness makes itself the object of reflection (i.e., the object of intentional consciousness). But he also tells us that all consciousness is self-consciousness. Apparently, the “I” comes about only on the level of intentional consciousness. It is the result of introducing the subject-object dualism into consciousness with the “I” as intentional object. But the self-consciousness of the original consciousness is not like this. It is not dual. In Sartre's words, it is “...an immediate, non-cognitive relation of the self to itself.” It is always present in the (intentional) consciousness of an object. For every instance of such consciousness is simultaneously a non-intentional consciousness of itself.

So the original consciousness is non-personal even though it is non-intentionally conscious of itself. Personalization comes only when it reflects upon itself and thereby forms an intentional object

of itself, but of itself as objectified. As such, it is distinct from the original consciousness in its non-personal, pre-reflective state. In the words of Sartre, speaking of the original consciousness, “...consciousness is the knowing being in his capacity of *being* and not as being known.” (p. LX). Yet this original consciousness, though non-personal, is a particular or an individual. The original consciousness in me is one particular and the one in you is another. It is not something general, not a universal pan-psychic. Each of these consciousnesses (the one in me and the one in you) is a self-consciousness and each is a particular, but neither is personal. Neither has that set of psychic qualities that are ordinarily thought of as a personality.

Note that Sartre, unlike the mystic, does not claim that he ever experienced non-intentional consciousness by itself, without the overlay of ordinary intentional consciousness. (He seemed to be unfamiliar with the writings of the mystics.) He apparently thought of its existence as more of a theoretical matter, probably known by inference. But such an inference seems well justified. We can note with assurance that we have consciousness of our consciousness of an intentional object, even though our focus on it inevitably puts it in the position of another intentional object.

The question of whether the identity of a person can obtain in or be carried by the pre-reflective self-consciousness has not yet been answered. Sartre’s answer is that it can and does. This answer might strike one as absurd, at least at first. How can my identity as a person consist in something *non-personal*? But on closer examination, the absurdity vanishes. This self-consciousness is the subject that does the thinking and the perceiving that I do, and has the experiences that I have. It is the subject in the subject-object dualism that arises when, by reflecting on itself, puts itself in the position of

the intentional object it brings about. In this manner, a concept of itself, of an Ego, of the psyche, of the personality, and of the person as ordinarily understood come to be. But the original self-consciousness supplies the consciousness involved. Indeed, it is the consciousness of these things and also the consciousness of my consciousness of these things. It is what makes possible my knowing that I am conscious of them when in fact I am.

For Lund, we could be this original self-consciousness. At this moment at least, we don't see how we could exist without it. It strikes us as necessary for our existence and perhaps sufficient for it as well. Accepting sufficiency here would cut very deep, paring away much of what ordinarily comes to mind when we think of persons.

Though Lund finds much of interest in Sartre's view, especially his insight that Lund interprets as about a non-intentional consciousness of our ordinary intentional consciousness, he does not agree with his denial of a self-substance. Although even philosophers of mind who see a central place for the mental, such as those in the Buddhist tradition, try to deny it, their attempts are unconvincing. A plausible account of the continuance of memory, personality, and character traits, as well as the attainment of cessation, with only an event ontology, is certainly challenging if possible at all. Even the Yogacara position, one of the most sophisticated of the Buddhist views, is led to posit something that looks very much like a mental substance in the notion of a store-consciousness.

At this point, the importance of non-intentional consciousness to the survival issue comes fully into view. For it opened up the third possibility that we mentioned earlier—the possibility that the self continues to exist as a conscious being even if death has destroyed its intentional consciousness.

It follows from all these considerations that phenomenological and metaphysical examinations employed in this study show that personal survival is not only conceivable but also in harmony with all the definitely known facts about the relationship between consciousness and the brain¹. In fact, this indicates that survival of death is a genuine possibility. Inquiries into empirical issues uncover facts supporting the claim that this possibility is actualized. The perceptual world that the post-mortem self could encounter would be a phenomenal world constituted largely of phenomenal items. The self is presently at the center of its phenomenal world and would continue to have such centrality in its afterworld. Since the self is the bearer of essential capacities for consciousness and memory, its postmortem existence (assuming that this possibility is actualized) would be as a conscious being with a phenomenal body grounded in pre-mortem memory. If indirect realism is true, the post-mortem phenomenal world would be similar in content to the present perceptual world. Such a subjective, private world could be shared via extrasensory communication with other minds, thus giving that world a public dimension. This could result in a world of rich, meaningful, and diverse experiences created by discarnate selves, largely through telepathic interactions.

In closing, we will address some points regarding the level of certainty we should expect to attain in these matters we discussed in this study. As we all know, deduction is a truth-preserving form of

1. Though Lund has given reasons to believe that the continued existence of the self beyond the death of its body is naturally possible, he has been reluctant to try to quantify this possibility. Is the survival of the self more probable than not, less probable than not, highly probable, or not very probable at all? This is an epistemic issue that largely turns on what empirical investigation can reveal.

reasoning, and that is why it is so valuable. Sound deductive arguments guarantee the truth of their conclusions. But to be sound, every premise must be true and the conclusion must be correctly drawn from them (i.e., must be valid as well). The point we wish to make is about the level of certainty we can attain as to whether each premise is true. The validity of the argument is usually not as hard to establish, especially if the premises are not numerous or complex. So given that the deductive argument in question is valid, you can be as certain that its conclusion is true as the certainty you can have that every premise is true. With respect to the nature of truth, briefly, truths are about how things are, about what is, not what it is believed to be. Relativism about truth strikes us as confused.

In this context, by certainty we do not mean logical certainty—a certainty that conveys a guarantee that error is impossible, e.g., the truth of the conclusion of a sound deductive argument. For this seems unacceptably strong for the certainty presented in arguments appealing to the religious conceptions and Islamic ideologies. Perhaps the certainty we have in mind is grounded in propositions central to Islamic teaching which deem to be authoritative. Perhaps a deductive argument can be formed utilizing such propositions. If one has premises constituted of propositions that owe their truth to theological proclamation, and the conclusion of the argument is validly deduced from them, then it is also true (by theological proclamation).

Considering that Islamic scripture includes propositions claiming that there is an afterlife —propositions that are authoritative within an Islamic religious context, then an effort to show that an afterlife is possible would not be greeted with enthusiasm by those who believe that the certainty of an afterlife is already justified. In this view, its reality has been established by

religious proclamations that are taken to be authoritative.

With that assumption, we might point out that the argument that an afterlife is possible is *consistent* with the certainty of the reality of an afterlife. For whatever is actual is also possible, though the reverse is not true. More persuasive, however, is the point that our argument for the possibility of an afterlife weighs against its being impossible and thus is supportive (even if only weakly) of the certainty that an afterlife is real. Perhaps more important is that our "afterlife-friendly" conclusion is the result of proceeding along a different route from the one that provides the certainty of an afterlife, and our route might well have an appeal to those who don't find convincing an appeal to religious authority.

On a different assumption, Islamic teachings don't say much about the nature of the afterlife. Is it material to the extent that this life is? If so, how is personal identity to be preserved? If entirely immaterial, how is that to be understood? The point to be made here is that this study may be seen as serving a different though complementary purpose—not to justify certainty about an afterlife but to explain what that life might be understood to be. This study has tried to give a general characterization of what it might be to experience such a life, a characterization that is grounded in what we find to be true of us now as we examine what is essential to our present existence. As such, it has an empirical basis to some extent. This study also has examined the phenomenology of self-consciousness, along with features of an afterworld one might seem to encounter, and tried to discern what aspects of our present experience could go with us into an afterlife. Questions about the preservation of personal identity, of afterworld perception, of afterworld communication, and of the dispositional base for the continuation of these activities have been addressed, among others.

It will be also worthwhile to talk about a strong inductive argument. It is one in which the conclusion in fact follows probably from the premises. If, in addition, the premises are true, then the conclusion is probably true. If the latter is the case (i.e., a strong inductive argument with true premises), such an argument is usually called a *cogent* argument. A cogent argument always has a probably true conclusion. An inductive argument does not provide a guarantee that its conclusion is true. The best inductive arguments (the cogent ones) can yield conclusions that are only probably true. This is because their conclusions always go beyond the premises. In other words, their conclusions assert more than what their premises assert. An inductive leap is always involved.

There can be no such leap in a sound deductive argument—a valid deductive argument with true premises. Such an argument can provide certainty (a guarantee) that its conclusion is true. But it can do this because it merely reveals, or restates, what is already implicit in the premises. It merely makes explicit what the premises implicitly assert. It can be helpful in clarifying our understanding of what is contained in the premises. But, other than that, it yields no new knowledge—nothing beyond what the premises assert. Only an inductive argument can do that—by going beyond what is already contained in the premises. This is the inductive leap.

Lund's argument about survival must be of the inductive kind, but his effort is to make it as strong as possible. The premises are grounded in what we know, or have good reason to believe, to be true of us now, as they will form the best basis for an (inductive) inference about what will be true of us after bodily death. The truth about whether the future includes an afterlife in which we continue to exist is not implicit in any premises we can formulate about our conditions now. We must make an inductive leap to reach a

conclusion about our future condition. The premises of the argument we need are not easy to formulate and establish as true, but even if we accomplish such desired conclusion that follows probably from them, the conclusion is (only) probably true. Taken all together, when we view the lines of evidence we discussed collectively, we find that they have a cumulative evidential weight sufficient to conclude that the survival hypothesis is probably true. And based on all the phenomenology and philosophical arguments done by appealing to what seems to be true of living persons in an effort to establish the possibility that only what is logically necessary and sufficient for their existence as persons prior to death, we conclude that the self who is fully embedded in the natural world and deeply embodied in a physical organism would continue to exist after death in a disembodied state, and yet could have a rich variety of experiences in an afterworld encountered after death.

Conclusion

For a long time, the question of the possibility of life after death has been of great importance to a very large number of people. Those who deny this possibility often base their view on a conception of a self as a completely material (or physical) being. In this regard, the empirically-grounded indicators seem to show that the likelihood of survival is not very high. The theory-based arguments would show that survival of death is absolutely (or metaphysically) impossible, at least without miraculous divine intervention. This study, based on Lund's view, proposes and defends a strong dualism (or dualism of particulars) in which a self is an essentially conscious being who is distinct from its physical embodiment and anything physical. What is both necessary and sufficient for the personal identity of the self and its survival is the existence of the *subject* of conscious states,

which is a metaphysically basic particular. So the self has a deep, irreducible essence consisting of a unitary, non-composite, indivisible subject of conscious states that endures through time while its states change. These experiential states are not part of the self, but the self has them or is *in* them –in different states at different times.

The close association of these two distinct entities is due to a causal connection – a connection which fails to establish that the physical brings the mental into existence and is compatible with theories that the source of consciousness is not in the brain (e.g., the filter theory). In view of this, the continued existence of the self beyond the death of its body would be not only metaphysically possible but might be in accord with the laws of nature (i.e., naturally possible) as well. Lund shows that dualistic causation – causal interaction between the mental and the physical– reveals nothing problematic about the interaction of two distinct substances, and that dualistic causation is in fact occurring. He considers three possibilities for the specific relationship between the self and its brain. First, we can conceive of the brain as a filter (selective dissociator) in which we might expect expansion in consciousness after death. Secondly, we can conceive it as a consciousness enhancer, with the result that the consciousness of the self is in a highly diminished condition when separated from its brain. Thirdly, we can consider non-intentional consciousness as underlying the other two possibilities in which the self continues to exist as a conscious being even if its intentional consciousness ceases at bodily death.

Phenomenological and metaphysical examination employed in this study shows that personal survival is not only conceivable but

also in harmony with all the definitely known facts about the relationship between consciousness and the brain. In fact, this indicates that survival of death is a genuine possibility. Inquiries into empirical issues uncover facts supporting the claim that this possibility is actualized. The perceptual world that the post-mortem self could encounter would be a phenomenal world constituted largely of phenomenal items. The self is presently at the center of its phenomenal world and would continue to have such centrality in its afterworld. Since the self is the bearer of essential capacities for consciousness and memory, its postmortem existence (assuming that this possibility is actualized) would be as a conscious being with a phenomenal body grounded in pre-mortem memory. If indirect realism is true, the post-mortem phenomenal world would be similar in content to the present perceptual world. Such a subjective, private world could be shared via extrasensory communication with other minds, thus giving that world a public dimension. This could result in a world of rich, meaningful and diverse experiences created by discarnate selves, largely through telepathic interactions.

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A Critique of the Rational Signification of the Miracle to Prophethood

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Abstract

The present article investigates the signification of miracle to the prophet's prophethood from the rational and logical viewpoints in the context of Islamic theology. After proving the necessity of the prophethood with the help of the 'Rule of Grace', most of the Islamic theologians consider miracle as the main reason for affirming the claim of someone who claims God has called him to prophethood. Most of theologians maintain that miracle is enough evidence for affirming such a claim, but a few of them criticize this idea. That the miracle rationally signifies the prophethood, and being called by God as a messenger can be stated in two ways. One is that the mere issuing of a miracle by the claimant to prophethood can rationally and logically affirm his prophethood. The other is that by adding some introductory items to the miracle and compiling an authentic logical deduction, one can affirm someone's claim to prophethood. It seems that both explanations are defective. The deficiency of the first explanation is that the miracle in itself has no logical signification to prophethood and affirmation of the claimant. At most, it shows the agent's power to perform extraordinary

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actions, not more. The second explanation is faced with numerous critiques such as vicious circle in argument, deficiency in attributing miracle to God, simultaneous fallacy, deficiency in being miracle as a sign of prophethood, non-homogeneity of reason and claim, the drawback of miracle's being extraordinary, criticizing the premises of the argument, and the prophethood's no need for miracle. Finally, the result of the present study is that miracle has no rational signification for prophethood, and prophethood and guiding the human beings do not necessarily require miracle.

Keywords

Miracle, rational signification, prophethood, extraordinariness.

Introduction

The present article deals, in the context of Islamic theology and philosophy of religion, with the signification of miracle to affirmation of a claim to prophethood from the rational and logical viewpoints. In the Islamic theology, miracle – i.e. performing an extraordinary action that others are unable to do – is mentioned as the main reason for verity of the prophet’s claim to prophethood (see: Razi, 1986, vol. 2, p. 97; Qasem bin Muhammad bin Ali, 1412 AH, p. 119; Abul-Hassan Halabi, 1414 AH, p. 39; Naraqī, 1369 SH, p. 101; Mu’ayyedi, 1422 AH, p. 111). By investigating the claims of the Islamic theologians to the effect that miracle is a reason for verity of someone’s claim to prophethood, this article criticizes it and states the logical objections to that claim. Considering the antiquity and scope of the subject of miracle in Islamic theology, many articles have been written on that subject. However, Vahida Fakhkhar Nowghani and Sayyid Murteza Husseini Shahrudi published three articles regarding the signification of miracle to prophethood. They are as follows: “Investigation and Critique of the Rational Signification of Miracles for Verity of a Claim to Prophethood”, “Investigation and Critique of the Theory of Persuasive Signification of Miracles”, and “Comparative Investigation of Signification of Miracle for Verity of Claim to Prophethood from the Viewpoint of Ibn Rushd and Allameh Tabataba’i”. In these articles, the views of Islamic thinkers regarding the signification of miracle is divided into two groups: rational and persuasive. The adherents of the first view believe that miracle has a rational signification to the verity of the claim to prophethood, and that one can logically find the verity of someone’s claim to prophethood by observing a miracle. But the adherents of the second view believe that miracle and performing extraordinary actions have no rational and logical signification to verity of the

claim to someone's being called to prophethood by God; rather, it has just a persuasive and psychological certitude for that claim (Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1394 SH, p. 136). Another article entitled "Investigating the Signification of Miracle for Prophethood" was published from Hamid Ariyan (Ariyan, 1377 SH), wherein the author – while stating various views regarding the signification of miracle – defends the rational signification and criticizes the persuasive signification. The present article has been conducted by considering these contemporary studies and the hypothesis that the author is seeking to prove is rejecting the views of the adherents of rational signification and criticizing their arguments. In this article, by the phrase "signification of miracle for prophethood", we mean signification of miracle for verity of what a claimant to prophethood claims, and the former phrase has been used to observe brevity. Thus, the subject of this article is not the theological evidence for necessity of prophethood in general such as the Rule of Grace or deficiency of human's reason in acquiring true felicity.

1. Definition of Miracle

Literally, the Arabic equivalent for 'miracle' (i.e. *mu'jiza* or *i'jāz*) is derived from the root 'ajz meaning the end of something. Literally, thus, *i'jāz* means making someone unable and creating inability in someone (Ragheb Isfahani, 1390 SH, s.v. 'jz, p. 515; Ahmad Fares bin Zakariya, 1358 SH, vol. 4, p. 234). Therefore, *mu'jiza* is the action that others are unable to do. In defining *mu'jiza*, Khaja Nasiruddin Tusi says, 'It is realization of something that is not usual, or negation of something that is usual, along with extraordinariness and in line with a claim' (Allame Hilli, 1413 AH, p. 275). The condition for *i'jāz* is the extraordinariness of the action and its conformation with the miracle worker who claims it. That is, if he claims that he can extract water from a stone, he must do that.

He must not, for example, turn a stone to wood.

The definition offered by Islamic theologians is a single definition, and they have defined miracle – apart from trivial differences – as follows: “an extraordinary affair in conformation with the miracle worker’s claim, along with a challenge that nobody can do that.” (Fazel Meqdad, 1420 AH, p. 79; Taftazani, 1409 AH, vol. 5, p. 11, Suyuti, 1421 AH, pp. 3-4; Fazel Meqdad, 1420 AH, p. 151; Jamil Hamud, 1421 AH, vol. 1, p. 412; Subhani, 1412 AH, vol. 3, p. 229). ‘Extraordinary’ means something that is not in accordance with the normal current of life, such as turning a stick to snake, making a dead body alive, cleaving the moon apart, and bringing a tree close. The Islamic theologians explain that performing such things are impossible for ordinary people because a miracle is God’s action and is performed through divine power. They maintain that people’s inability in performing something like miracle is either in the action itself (such as making a dead alive), or in the properties of that action (such as the Quran’s eloquence or destroying a city) (Fazel Meqdad, 1420 AH, p. 80).

Allame Hillī says, ‘miracle is an extraordinary affair along with challenging whose aim is affirming a prophet in his prophetic claim. The challenge means that agent tells others if you do not accept my words, do what I have done. And ‘affair’ means an extraordinary action such as cleaving the moon apart or an ordinary action that God has forbidden to be done by ordinary people, such as Arab’s inability in bringing even one verse like the Quran’s verses’ (‘Ubaydali, 1381, p. 436). The important point in a miracle’s signification to verify a prophet’s prophetic claim is what Allame Hillī states as a condition for miracle; that is, the miracle must be God’s action or run through the channel of God’s action. In other words, that action

is performed by God's direct permission, such as the story of Abraham wherein God ordered the fire to be extinguished (O Fire! Be cold and healthy for Abraham/ The Quran, Anbiyā: 69); or God has enabled his prophet to do that, such as miracles done by Moses and Jesus, or like Muhammad's Ascent to the heavens by God's permission. Indeed, God affirms his prophet through the miracle. Thus, miracle is attributed to God ('Ubaydali, 1381 SH, pp. 436-437).

In his definition of miracle, Ayatollah Khou'i refers to the miracle's signification to verity of someone's prophethood as follows: "Miracle means someone who claims a divine office (like a prophet) does something that is beyond the natural laws, others are unable to do it, and it is an attestation for verifying his claim" (Mousavi Khu'i, 1326 SH, p. 35).

In expositing Iji's¹ words in *al-Mawāqif*, as an explanation of the conditions of miracle and the fact that miracle must be God's action or on His part, Jurjani says, 'if a prophet says my miracle is to put my hand on my head while you are unable to do that, and then he does that while others cannot do it, it will be evidence for verity of his claim to prophet'. (Iji and Jurjani, 1325 AH, vol. 8, p. 223).

Therefore, the importance of miracle in Islamic theology is because it is considered as evidence for verity of a persons' claim to prophethood. Now, if there is no such logical and rational relationship between a miracle and proving the verity of a claim to prophethood, the Islamic theologians will face a big challenge in

1. 'Azududdin Iji 'Abdur-Rahman bin Ahmad, the Iranian scientist who was born in Ij, a village in Fars province. His book entitled *al-Mawāqif* is among the most detailed books common in the Sunnite theology.

proving the prophets' prophethood, and knowledge of prophethood of a claimant will be impossible.

2. Expositing the Signification of Miracle to Prophethood and Two Explanations of It

The rational signification of miracle to a claimant's claim to prophethood is one of the issues subject to disagreement among the Islamic theologians and even the western thinkers. In general, there are two views in this regard. Some have regarded signification of miracle to prophethood as a rational signification, while others have considered it as a persuasive one. The adherents of the first view believe that miracle can be considered as a logical and argumentative reason for proving the divine mission of one who claims to be a prophet if doing the miraculous action is rationally a witness for the prophethood of the miracle worker. But the adherents of the second view believe that there is no logical and rational relation between the occurrence of the miracle in the hands of one and his prophetic mission from God, and that the miracle can – at best – persuade some individuals to believe him. The persuasive signification is not found in logics under the discussion of types of significations. It means 'suspicion close to certainty', which is sometimes called certitude. But such a state is not a logical certitude, because the contrary (here that the miracle worker is not a prophet) is still rationally possible. In stating the persuasive signification, it is said that by observing the miracle in the hands of the claimant to prophethood, individuals are psychologically persuaded and accept his/ her claim (see: Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1396 SH, p. 6; 1394 SH, pp. 135-136). In some sources, a view called contingent signification of miracle for prophethood. That is, miracle does not have – in itself – a definite signification for prophethood, and the mere observation of a

miracle cannot verify the claim of the person. Rather, it has a contingent signification; that is, it has the capacity to be used as evidence for prophethood by adding other evidence and preliminaries (see: Ariyan, 1377 SH). As we will mention afterwards, this view is indeed another reading of the second explanation of rational signification of the miracle for prophethood, but under another title.

We can say that the majority of the Islamic theologians are adherents of the first view, and consider the signification of miracle to prophethood as a rational signification. Just a few of the earlier and later Islamic theologians such as Juweyni, Ibn Rushd, Ghazali, Shebli Nu‘man, and Sayyid Ahmad Khan Hendi are critics of the rational signification view (see: Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1396 SH, p. 6; 1394 SH, p. 135; Ariyan, 1377; Guli, 1394 SH, pp. 76-77). Of course, being a critic of the first view does not mean to be adherent of the second view.

By reflecting on the views of opponents and proponents of the miracles' signification to prophethood, I conclude that this issue has not been well explained conceptually and some of the critics of the opponents have nothing to do with the arguments offered by the proponents. Thus, because of some ambiguities in this subject, it is essential to clarify the signification of miracle from the logical viewpoint before stating the views. As we mentioned before, the meaning of 'signification of miracle to prophethood' is that miracle means an extraordinary action done by a person who claims to be a prophet as evidence for his claim to his prophetic mission from God. This is related to general prophethood in the Islamic theology, which is in contrast to the discussions on specific prophethood, i.e. the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam or a certain prophet.

Dilālat (literally, 'signification') in Arabic means guidance, leading, sign, and display; and in logics, it means anything

knowledge of which necessitates knowledge of something else (Nafisi, 1355 SH, vol. 2, p. 1525; Tahanavi, 1996, vol. 1, p. 787). Here, 'anything' means any word or anything other than words. Knowledge means both idea and judgment. The first 'thing' is *dāll* (i.e. 'signifier') and the second thing is *madlūl* (i.e. 'signified'). For example, smoke signifies the existence of a fire, or a footprint signifies the existence of someone who has walked away. In the first division, signification is divided into literal and non-literal, and in the second division, each of them is divided into conventional, natural and rational. The rational signification is the one wherein the reason finds an essential tie between the signifier and signified; and accordingly, it is transferred from the idea or judgement of the signifier to the signified. The essential tie, i.e. the realization of the signifier in 'thing-itself' (*nafs al-amr*), necessitates the realization of the signified or vice versa. For instance, the existence of the fire is considered necessary in case smoke is observed or heat is sensed. This is like transition from cause to effect, or from footprint to walker, or from artifact to the artisan. The natural signification is when the reason finds a natural necessary relation between the signifier and signified, and is – thus – transferred from one to the other, just like the redness of one's figure that signifies his embarrassment. The conventional signification is the one that is merely created by a connection between two things based on a valid tie, and there is no truth for it beyond that convention; just like the signification of words to meanings in a language or signification of signposts to driving rules (Tahanavi, 1996, vol. 1, pp. 787-789; Muzaffar, 1437 AH, pp. 39-43).

Another discussion in logics is pertaining to proof and argument wherein there is some kind of transference from one thing to another. However, this transference is between propositions, not single items. Muzaffar says, 'A proof, for logicians, is compilation of

propositions from which something desired is produced. It is called *ḥujjat* (= proof) for it is argued to prove some desired idea against the opponent. It is also called *dalīl* (= reason) for it serves as a reason for a desired idea. Compilation of these propositions for signification (i.e. guidance) is called *istidlāl* (= argument/ reasoning)' (Muzaffar, 1437 AH, p. 231). Thus, arguing and reasoning is something that is done about propositions, not single items. Reasoning and argumentation is of two types: *mubāshir* (direct) and *ghayr-mubāshir* (indirect). If the premise of the argument is just one proposition and is transferred merely from one proposition to another, it is called *mubāshir*. Like when we conclude from the proposition 'all As are B' that 'some As are B'. If numerous propositions are used to conclude something, it is called *ghayr-mubāshir*, like the following ones: (1) 'all As are B', (2) 'some Bs are C' \rightarrow 'some As are C' (Muzaffar, 1437 AH, pp. 192, 226). The *ghayr-mubāshir* argument is divided into three types as follows: *ghiyās* (deduction), *tamthīl* (analogy), and *istighrā'* (induction). *Ghiyās* (deduction) is defined as follows: 'a collection of some premises that, once accepted, essentially lead to acceptance of another statement'. (Muzaffar, 1437 AH, p. 234). In this definition, transference from something to something else is mentioned because of essential tie between them; this is the very definition of rational signification we mentioned before in three types of signification. As Tahanavi has asserted, the three types of signification can exist both between ideas and between judgments. Consequently, the deductive argumentation also falls under the rational signification. Although the discussion of three types of significations (rational, natural and conventional) – both because of examples mentioned by logicians and because of the status of this discussion in logics in the section of ideas under the discussion of words – seems in the first look that it is a discussion pertaining to ideas and singulars, not propositions and

judgments. It has nothing to do with deduction and indirect reasoning discussed in logics under the titles of propositions and judgments.

What is discussed in regard with miracle is shown in the following question: “what kind of relationship and signification exist between miracle and prophethood?” “Can one rationally find out the verity of someone’s claim to prophethood with occurrence of a miracle?”

Firstly, there is no statement on whether this signification is natural or conventional. Secondly, since there is no relationship – of the three types of signification – between idea of miracle and idea of prophethood, the point of discussion will be the relationship between judgments of miracle and prophethood. In other words, a question is posed as follows: “Does the judgment of ‘Moses performed a miracle’ rationally necessitate the judgment of ‘Moses is God’s prophet’?”

By reflecting on the words of proponents of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood and their opponents, the writer has inferred two readings of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood. One is related to the following questions: “Can we rationally and logically reach the proposition of “X is God’s prophet” from the proposition of “X has performed a miracle?” “Is the first proposition a rational signification to the second one?” The other is pertaining to the question of whether by combining the proposition of “X has performed a miracle” with some other propositions and compiling a deduction one can affirm rationally and logically the proposition that “X is God’s prophet”. In other words, is there any authentic deductive argument to transit us from

miracle to prophethood? It seems that most critiques of the opponents are concentrated on the first issue and the first reading of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood, while the proponents' words and their arguments pertain to the second reading. Of course, some critiques pertain well to the second reading. Thus, the present article has been organized on the basis of a separation between the two issues and the related arguments and critiques.

3. Explanation of the Muslim Theologians' Argument in Signification of Miracle to Prophethood

As mentioned before, the majority of the Islamic theologians, including both Shiites and Sunnites, have considered the occurrence of a miracle in the hands of the claimant to prophethood as evidence for proving his prophetic mission (Qasem bin Muhammad bin Ali, 1421 AH, p. 119; Halabi, 1414 AH, p. 39). In their view, miracle is the main way for knowing one's prophethood. The following statements are amply found in the sources of Islamic theology:

It is noteworthy that one must not hear and accept the words of anyone who claims to be a prophet, because there were numerous persons who came and claimed to be prophets. Thus, a prophet just has a 'proof' and 'demonstration' that affirms his claim to prophethood (Naraqī, 1369 SH, p. 101).

And when God calls someone to prophethood, He may not guide people to follow him except through miracles, because there is no other way to know his prophethood; otherwise, the prophethood would be nonsense (Mu'ayyedi, 1422 AH, p. 111).

Accordingly, the Islamic theologians have a simple common reasoning for proving Muhammad's specific prophethood, which is

based on occurrence of miracles, especially the miracle of the Quran, in his hands (Razi, 1986, vol. 2, p. 76; Allame Hilli, 1363 SH, pp. 183-184; Amudi, 1423 AH, vol. 4, p. 68). This reasoning is as follows:

“Belief in the prophethood of our Prophet, Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) is an obligation, because he claimed to be a prophet and the miracle was running in his hands. Thus, he was truly a prophet and both premises are definite.” (Fazel Meqdad, 1412 AH, p. 79).

Therefore, for Islamic theologians, miracle is a proof and evidence for the prophets’ prophetic mission. But how can a miracle, in one’s hands, be evidence for his prophethood? The answer is that miracle is something that occurs just through divine will and power. As a result, everywhere a miracle is running in the hands of someone, it shows his relationship with God and affirms his claim that miracle has occurred by God. Some Islamic theologians have said:

“Know that this is one of the great principles of religion, and that the difference between Muslims and disbelievers is in belief in the same principle. Thus, it is an obligation to take it important and prove it by offering demonstrations. There is no way to prove the prophethood of the prophets in general and the Prophet of Islamic in particular except with two premises: first, the prophet has claimed to have a prophetic mission from God to people and has brought a miracle based on his own claim in order to affirm his own words. Second, anyone whom God affirms is truthful.” (Muzaffar, 1374 SH, vol. 1, p. 443).

In explaining the rational signification of miracle to prophet’s claim, Khaja Nasir Tusi has argued as follows:

“But that every claimant to prophethood who has a miracle in

proportion to his claim is a prophet is rationally known, because miracle is not from someone other than the Exalted Allah, and its manifestation along with a claim to prophethood denotes affirmation of the prophet by the Exalted God. And anyone who claims to be a prophet and God affirms him is necessarily a prophet.” (Tusi, 1390 SH, p. 456).

As Islamic theologians have asserted, the miracle’s signification of the prophet’s prophethood and his mission from God is just accepted if the miracle is God’s action. Otherwise, miracle is no evidence for someone’s prophethood and his divine mission. In expositing Iji’s words, Jurjani writes: “...the first conditions is that [miracle] is God’s action.... because something that is not from Allah is not affirmed by Him...” (Iji and Jurjani, 1325 AH, vol. 8, p. 223).

Sayyid Murteza maintains that signification of miracle to prophethood has three conditions: (1) miracle is from God and is His action; (2) it breaches the ordinary habits; and (3) it affirms the prophet’s claim. (Sayyid Murteza, 1411 AH, p. 328).

In explaining Nowbakhti’s words in *Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yaqūt*, Allame Hillī says:

“He said, ‘and the condition of miracle is that it must be God’s action or the channel for it. And its aim is affirmation.’ I say, ‘... and the condition of miracle – to be God’s action or channel for it – means that it must be with God’s order or along with obeying Him, because it affirms the prophet through the miracle of Almighty God. Thus, the miracle is necessarily attributed to God... and the aim of a miracle is affirmation.’” (Allame Hillī, 1363 SH, p. 184).

Fakhr Razi says:

“Verily, the miracles, when people are unable to bring like them,

are actions from God and created by Him to affirm His prophet's claim. And creation of miracle following the prophet's claim denotes the affirmation of the one who claims the prophetic mission." (Razi, 1986, vol. 2, p. 97).

Accordingly, for the Islamic theologians, the rational signification of the miracle to prophethood is as follows: (1) the agent of the miracle is God; and (2) simultaneity of the miracle with the prophet's claims shows the affirmation of his claim on the part of God. In his *al-Iqtisād fil-'Itiqād*, Ghazali has well explained the point that miracle serves as God's affirmation of the prophet:

"The Exalted God affirms the prophets and messengers through challenging miracles so that they may affirm their claim and affirmation of a liar is impossible, for everyone to whom God says, 'you are My messenger' gets out of lying. Thus, it is impossible to reconcile God's words that says 'I affirm you are My messenger' with the prophet's being a liar. (Ghazali, 1423 AH, p. 136).

On the logical relationship between miracle and prophethood, some of the contemporary theologians have said:

"Verily, there is a logical tie between the miracle and the affirmation of the claim to prophethood, because when the bringer of miracle is true in his claim, it is natural for him to prove his claim. And if he is false in his claim, God who is to guide His servants does not deserve to enable a liar to prove his claim by a miracle, because when people see him able to perform an extraordinary action, they will have faith in him and act accordingly. Thus, if the claimant to prophethood is a liar, that (enabling him to perform a miracle) will be misguiding people. No doubt, that is contrary to God's justice and wisdom. This is one of

the subsidiary principles of the rule of rational good and evil.”

(Subhani, 1386 SH, p. 122).

Here, some preliminary propositions of the argument has been stated: (3) God is Wise; (4) God attempts to guide His servants; (5) God does not enable a liar who claims he is a prophet to perform a miracle. Thus, God runs miracle just in the hands of the true claimants of prophethood. Thus, miracle reveals the position of prophethood (ideal result).

As a result, the argument of the Islamic theologians on signification of miracle to the prophet's prophethood returns to God's Wisdom. Since Islamic theologians believe that (a) God's purpose in calling the prophets to prophethood is guiding human beings, and (b) miracle is God's action, it is improper for the Wise God to run miracle in the hands of false claimants, for it will lead to people's deviation and not knowing the true prophet. (c) Thus, anyone who claims to be a prophet and has a miracle in his hands is truly God's messenger (Fazel Meqdad, 1412 AH, p. 82; Muhaqqeq Bahrani, 1406 AH, p. 130).

Therefore, it is clear that the meaning of rational signification of miracle to prophethood, for Islamic theologians, is the second reading of the two readings in the previous section. That is, offering a deductive conjunctive argument with several introductions as follows:

1. Miracle is God's action;
2. Coincidence of the occurrence of miracle with the claim of the claimant to prophethood is a sign of God's affirmation of his claim;
3. Occurrence of miracle in the hands of the false claimants leads to people's deviation;

4. Misleading people is an evil action;
5. God is Wise and does not do evil actions;
6. Thus, God does not run any miracle in the hands of the false claimants of prophethood;
7. Conclusion: anyone who performs a miracle is God's true messenger.

If the conclusion of that deduction is added as a major premise of another conjunctive argument to its minor premise – which is a sensory introduction as follows: “the miracle has been performed by the claimant X of the prophethood” – then we can logically and rationally conclude that “X is God's messenger”.

4. First Reading of the Rational Signification of Miracle to Prophethood and Its Critique

By studying the critiques of the opponents of rational signification of the miracle to prophethood, it becomes clear that what they have in mind of the issue is the first reading of the rational signification of the miracle to prophethood. For instance, Abd al-Malik al-Juwayni defines rational signification as what the human's reason achieves with no presupposition by going from the signifier to the signified (like signification of any originated thing to an originator) and says, ‘By observing miracles, the human's reason does not go to the verity of the claimant to prophethood. There is no necessary and logical relation between them. If something such as turning a stick to snake or dragon occurs by God spontaneously in the nature, it does not by itself denote the signified idea (i.e. verity of prophethood)’ (Juveyni, 1416 AH, p. 132; Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1394 SH, p. 138).

Likewise, Ibn Rushd says, ‘The reason is not able, without

presuppositions such as ‘miracle is God’s action’ and ‘prophet is not a liar’, cannot perceive the rational relationship between miracle and prophethood. That is, performing an extraordinary action such as making the dead alive does not by itself signify the prophethood of the miracle worker. And just through the presupposition of the prophetic mission and restricting the occurrence of miracles to prophets, it signifies prophethood of the person’ (Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1393 SH, p. 35; quoted from Ibn Rushd, p. 176).

The source of this error of the critics is perhaps the general and ambiguous statements of some Islamic theologians who merely used those general statements without expositing them, a statement like: “And the way to verify his claim is appearance of miracle in his hands” (Tusi, 1390 SH, p. 214). Or what Allame Hillī has written in expositing Nowbakhti’s words: “For the third issue in proving Muhammad’s prophethood, we must say that Muhammad was God’s messenger because of the miracle in his hands, i.e. the Quran. This is because with the Quran, he challenged opponents and Arabs were unable to confront it.” (Allame Hillī, 1363 SH, pp. 184-185). Seyfuddin Amudi, an Ash‘arite scholar, says in proving Muhammad’s prophethood:

“And what denotes his prophethood specified by the Exalted God is that we can say, ‘Verily, Muhammad was present and claimed to be God’s messenger. And some miracles were running in his hands, and he challenged his opponents with them. However, no one was ready to answer him. Thus, he was the Prophet’” (Amudi, 1423 AH, vol. 4, p. 68).

Anyway, the first reading of the rational signification of miracle – whether it has adherents or not – is something that can be proposed as a hypothesis and mentioning its critiques will help clarify the issue. Thus, the first reading of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood is that from the affirmation of the single

proposition 'X has performed a miracle', we may logically and rationally arrive at the affirmation of the proposition of 'X is God's messenger'. The first proposition, by itself and without adding other premises, denotes rationally the second proposition.

4-1. The Logical Signification of Miracle

It seems axiomatic that the mere affirmation of the proposition 'Moses has performed an extraordinary action' cannot logically lead to verification of the proposition 'Moses is God's messenger'. Miracle by itself has no logical and rational signification to prophethood and verity of the claimant to it. What the miracle signifies is – at best – the power of its agent to do extraordinary action, and nothing more. Performing an extraordinary action such as cleaving the moon the sea apart or turning a stick to snake does never signify the relationship of the miracle worker with God. Miracle, however big, shows the power of its agent to influence the nature and perform strange and extraordinary actions. Many men, throughout history and in our time, perform strange and extraordinary actions that others are unable to do, but nobody claims to be related with God or be God's messenger. The critics stated by Juevyni and Ibn Rushd, previously mentioned here, are statements of this very objection.

5. The Second Reading of the Rational Signification of Miracle to Prophethood and Its Critique

The second reading of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood, which is what the Islamic theologians mean, was formerly mentioned with its six preliminary statements; but it seems that by adding all introductions, it will be a deduction like what follows:

(1) God exists. (2) God is All-Wise. (3) The All-Wise God seeks

some goal by creating His servants. (4) God is the Guide and for guiding His servants and leading them to their goal, He has called some prophets to prophethood. (5) A miracle is evidence for prophethood of the prophets. (6) Miracle is God's action. (7) The simultaneity of miracle with the claim of someone to prophethood is the sign of verity of his prophethood by God. (8) Appearance of miracle in the hands of false claimants of prophethood leads people astray. (9) Leading people astray is evil. (10) The All-Wise God does not do evil. Thus, He does not run any miracle in the hands of false claimants to prophethood. Conclusion: issuing miracle in the hands of a claimant to prophethood is evidence for his prophethood.

5-1. Vicious Circle of the Argument

The main drawback of this argument offered by the Islamic theologians is forgetting the position of the demonstration of miracle, disagreement, and taking for granted the results that all are evidence for proving the prophethood through miracle. Consider human beings who have had various worldviews throughout history. Some were polytheists and believed in many gods. Some believed in god of the Sun and the moon and some were idolaters. Among them, there were individuals who invited people to worship One Invisible God and introduced themselves as messengers of the One God. The addressees had no knowledge of and no faith in the invisible One God. For accepting the claim to prophethood and those individuals' messaging from One God, people demand evidence and proofs. The claimants to prophethood perform extraordinary actions such as turning a stick to dragon, making the dead alive, curing the sick, and the like, and consider those actions as supporting those claims. Now the question is whether, logically and rationally, people can affirm the claims of those individuals by observing those extraordinary

actions or not. Do actions such as turning a stick to dragon, making the dead alive, and curing the sick signify their prophethood from the invisible One God? Here is the point where miracle is offered as the evidence for prophethood. Thus, the addressees of the prophets were individuals who had no knowledge of God or His attributes such as Wisdom and the like. Nor did they accept the principle of prophethood and existence of prophets. The introductions Islamic theologians added to the occurrence of miracle in their arguments to make a demonstrative deduction and arrive at the desired conclusion (i.e. prophethood of the claimants) are introductions that will be proved in next stages after accepting the miracle worker's prophetic mission and having faith in him through the teachings of the prophets. Thus, the arguments offered by the Islamic theologians are based on presuppositions and introductions acceptable only for someone who believes in God and prophets. Taking presuppositions such as existence of God, God's Wisdom, and calling the prophets to prophethood serve as getting results of the arguments from the premises. Having faith in One God in Abrahamic religions, knowledge of His attributes such as Wisdom, Guidance, and sending prophets for guiding people are all affairs coming after affirmation and acceptance of Abrahamic prophets. How can the one who lacks faith in God and His Wisdom and Guidance have presuppositions of God's Wisdom, obscenity of God's deception of people by ignorance, necessity of calling prophets to prophethood, and the miracle's being divine mission and action? Thus, the argument of Islamic theologians in considering miracle as evidence for prophethood is based on taking that claim (i.e. prophethood) as a presupposition and a vicious circle as follows: proving the prophethood depends on miracle; and signification of miracle to prophethood depends on accepting the principle of prophethood. Thus, proving prophethood

is contingent upon accepting prophethood. This argument of the Islamic theologians is just acceptable for believers and those who accept the aforementioned introductions, not for all human beings. That is, for proving the claim of someone who claims to be a prophet (person X), the Islamic theologians must first prove – for their unbelieving addressees – God with some rational arguments; and then, prove God’s attributes such as Guiding and Wise. They, then, must prove the principle of *bi’tthat* (calling to prophethood) and *nubuwwat* (prophethood). Then, they must prove his direct intervention in universe, performing miracles with God’s power, and God’s prevention of miracles in the hands of false claimants to prophethood. After proving all these, they will finally be able to persuade their addressees that now that a miracle is running in the hands of the claimant to prophethood (person X), he is God’s messenger. Accordingly, the demonstration of miracle will be efficient just after having faith in God and principle of prophethood and just for distinguishing the true messenger from the false claimant. Someone may claim that the Islamic theologians have mentioned miracle as evidence for verity of one’s claim to prophethood, with the same method and through the same stages. However, we must note that the historical evidence is contrary to that and throughout history, the prophets were not called to prophethood for guiding the individuals that had faith in God and general prophethood through reason and rational proofs and those who had problem just in discerning a certain prophet. For example, Moses’ opponent was Pharaoh who believed in false gods or claimed to be a god himself.

5-2. Attributing Miracle to God

As some Islamic theologians have stressed, miracle is evidence

for prophethood because its agent in God. In stating the signification of miracle, in Allame Hilli's view and that of other theologians, we stated that they believe it is God who affirms His prophet's claim through a miracle. Thus, miracle is attributed to God ('Ubaydali, 1381 SH, pp. 436-437). Now, the most important objection facing the signification of miracle to prophethood and introduction no. 6 of the argument presented by Islamic theologians is affirmation of God's agency in miracle. If we consider the demonstration of miracle to be proving the messenger's prophethood for unbelievers, the problem arises that in such a position one cannot conclude logically from miracle that God is its agent. Thus, one cannot affirm the miracle worker's claim to prophethood. The reason why God's agency in a miracle is not affirmed is the existence of other probabilities regarding the agency of miracle. The first probability about the agent of the miracle is the miracle itself. The humans' souls are different and individual's tempers are also different. Thus, it is quite likely that the miracle man's soul or temper have certain features that enable him to perform extraordinary actions (Amudi, 1423 AH, p. 38). The second probability is that the miracles or extraordinary actions performed by the claimants to prophethood are of the type of sorcery and enchantment as well as being informed of certain features of some materials that ordinary people are not informed of or able to perform. According to the Quran's verses, the witches could do things such as creating disagreements between a couple or revealing a snake¹ (Amudi, 1423 AH, vol. 4, pp. 38-40). Discerning the difference

1. They would learn from those two that with which they would cause a split between man and his wife (the Quran, Baqara: 102)/ So when they threw, they bewitched the people's eyes and overawed them, producing a tremendous magic. (the Quran, A'rāf: 116).

between sorcery and real divine miracle was impossible for ordinary human beings addressed by the prophets. Thus, the Israelites were deceived by Samiri's calf. The third probability about the agent of the miracle is that it is performed by the non-human beings such as angels, jinns, or demons, especially miracles such as informing people of invisible world and future news. In our time, even some who claim to be related with jinns and demons inform people of lost things and other affairs that make ordinary people surprised. The fourth probability is the performance of the miracle by a human agent other than the one who claims to be prophet. That is, the claimant – after whose claim the miracle is performed before the eyes of people – is not the performer of the miracle. Rather, he is related with someone else in another place through normal or abnormal means such as telepathy and the like, and that person – far away or near – is the one who performs the miracle. This probability is imaginable in miracles such as predicting future events and informing people of invisible world. The fifth probability is that miracle (an extraordinary action) is the product of natural but unusual events and is the result of natural but rare relations and connections such as connection with celestial bodies, lunar eclipse, solar eclipse and other astronomical phenomena that happen once in a hundred years. Those events may happen accidentally in the same time when the person has claimed to be prophet (Amudi, 1423 AH, vol. 4, p. 41). In all these probabilities, an extraordinary action is performed along with a challenge that disables people. Thus, the definition of miracle applies to them. However, the agent of the miracle is not God. As a result, an ordinary person – whether a believer or an unbeliever – cannot logically and rationally observe a miracle and conclude that it has been performed by God to affirm someone's claim to prophethood.

In his *al-Qistās al-Mustaqīm*, Ghazali writes:

“On proving prophethood through miracle, ‘This method does not assure one about someone’s claim to prophethood, because there is a probability of using tricks, sleight of hand, amulet, and the like in performing things such as turning a stick to snake. Even if turning the stick to snake is real, this proves nothing more than doing a strange thing by its agent’” (Ghazali, 1413 AH, pp. 57-58).

In rejecting the third probability, Fakhr Razi says, ‘The prophets have invited people to curse the demons. Now, how could they seek help from them?’ (Razi, 1986, vol. 2, pp. 98-99). In answering Fakhr Razi, we must say, ‘This objection means the rejection of the argument offered by the Islamic theologians, not accusing prophets of having ties with jinns and demons.’ In other words, this is stating the logical objection to the argument offered by the Islamic theologians. That is, from the introduction of issuing a miracle in the hands of the claimant to prophethood, we cannot logically conclude that the miracle man is a divine prophet, and that God was indeed the agent of the miracle to affirm the claim of his messenger. This is because it is probable that the miracle has occurred due to other factors such as ties with jinns and demons. As a result, the theologians’ argument gets invalid because of other probabilities: “when comes a probability, the argument gets invalid.”

5-3. Simultaneous Fallacy

Another objection to considering miracle as evidence for prophethood is that occurrence of miracle following one’s claim to prophethood is logically neither evidence for its realization from God, nor is it affirming the claim to prophethood. The argument of

the Islamic theologians is an instance of fallacy of 'simultaneous' or 'considering a simultaneous event as cause' in logics. One of the well-known fallacies is that whenever two events occur concurrently, one is considered – without any logical justification – a cause for the other. This fallacy is originated from a mistake in understanding or discerning the cause. Many times two events occur simultaneously, but there is no cause-effect relationship between them, or they are both causes together for another effect that we do not know. Besides, a single event or an effect (here, a miracle) may have numerous causes. Thus, without a persuasive justification, we cannot regard it as belonging to a certain cause (i.e. God) (Amudi, 1423 AH, vol. 4, p. 43). Occurrence of a miracle following a prophet's claim may be accidental or – as mentioned before – originated from a power other than God or the power of the messenger himself. It is not possible for people to discern whether a miracle is revealed from God for affirming His messenger or is an extraordinary natural and rare event or originated from other causes and factors. Even if tens of miracles occur concurrent with a messenger's claim to prophethood, no one can logically conclude that these miracles have been from God for affirming the truth of His messenger's claim. This objection is stated for introductions 6 and 7 of the theologians' argument.

5-4. The Drawback of Miracle as the Sign for Divine Mission

Another objection goes to the introduction 5 in the argument offered by the Islamic theologians; that is, the claim that miracle is evidence for prophethood, assigned by God. The question is how we human beings, as addressees of the claimants to prophethood, can know that God has assigned a miracle as a sign of His mission. Any emissary needs a sign of the great person from whom he receives a

mission, a sign that is familiar for the people of that nation. Now the question is how the people who do not know God as the King of the Universe and His special sign can accept a miracle as a sign from Him to affirm a person's claim to prophethood. Another question is why the All-Wise God must assign a miracle, and nothing else, as evidence for His prophetic mission.

Perhaps the answer is that the claimant to prophethood must present a miracle that no one except God is able to perform. In other words, the miracle of the claimant to prophethood must be a divine work and specific to God, like cleaving the moon apart and returning the Sun that has already set and the like. The objection to this answer is that the human beings must know God and His specific works. But how can the infidel person who believes in false gods and does not know the true God affirm that the miracle is a divine action, not a satanic one or something originated from a power in the upper level other than God? This objection returns to the second objection that considers other factors – other than God – as the agent of the miracle.

By proposing this objection, Ibn Rushd says, 'How can we know that emergence of miracles in the hands of some human beings are the special signs of the divine messengers? Knowing this is either through religious code (*Shar'*) or through reason. Proving this through *Shar'* is not possible because *Shar'* will be proved after the prophethood is proved. Thus, the only way is the human reason. But it is impossible for the reason to judge that the miracle is the special sign of a prophetic mission unless it has seen frequently the miracles in the hands of those who claim to be prophets and has not seen in the hands of others. Thus, proving the prophetic mission of the claimant to prophethood is based on two premises: (1) this claimant is a person in whose hands the miracle has appeared;

(2) everyone in whose hands a miracle appears is a prophet. Proving the first premise requires sensory observation of the miracle in the hands of the claimant, but proving the second premise is not possible except after acknowledging the existence of prophets and occurrence of miracles in their hands' (Ibn Rushd, 1998, pp. 174-175). Indeed, Ibn Rushd wants to say that the claim of the Islamic theologians on the basis of the idea that the miracle is evidence for prophethood requires presupposing the main claim, i.e. the principle of prophethood and existence of prophets.

5-5. Non-Homogeneity of the Evidence and the Claim

Another objection to the introduction no. 5 of the argument is that occurrence of an extraordinary action by someone after his claim to prophethood does not logically affirm his claim to prophethood, because there is no homogeneity between these two, i.e. verity of the claim to prophethood and performing the extraordinary action. To clarify this drawback, it is necessary to mention an example. Suppose someone has a claim to own a piece of land. When the judge wants him to present evidence for his claim, he performs an extraordinary action and cures a sick person. Is this evidence for verity of his claim to ownership of the lands? Definitely not. Now, how can we regard Jesus' cure of the sick as evidence for his prophetic mission from God? From the rational viewpoint, the evidence presented by the claimant to prophethood for confirming his claim must be related to his claim and homogenous with it. For example, God Himself must attest to the messenger's prophetic mission, he must present a written letter from God wherein this claim is affirmed, or he must present a revelational word from God in regard with his prophetic mission. As a result, this objection is not applicable to the Last Prophet, Muhammad, whose miracle is the

Quran and the revelational word. But it applies to the miracles of other prophets such as turning the stick to dragon or making the dead bodies alive or curing the sick.

5-6. The Drawback of Extraordinariness of the Miracle

Miracle, according to the definition offered by Islamic theologians, is an extraordinary action that others are unable to do. Now, the question arises as follows: 'how can one be sure of the extraordinariness of an action performed by a claimant to prophethood to affirm his claim?' Extraordinariness is an ambiguous criterion, for ordinariness is a relative idea dependent on the time and place. Many rare natural phenomena, such as lunar and solar eclipses, thunderbolts and horrible storms, were – for people in previous times – unnatural and extraordinary affairs. The philosophers and scientists, due to their information of features of materials, their effect and laws of physics and chemistry, are now able to do actions that are extraordinary for ordinary people. This is while all of those actions are natural phenomena. How can an ordinary human being distinguish the prophets' miracles from such natural phenomena and special knowledge of features of matters? Someone like Abd al-Malik al-Juwayni may say, "Evidently, we know that making the dead alive, turning a stick to dragon, curing the blotch and cleaving the moon apart are things that no man can do. Thus, if someone does such actions and claims to be a prophet and those actions are from God, they are signs for the truth of his claim" (Juwayni, 1416 AH, pp. 127-128). We answer him as follows: "Some of the miracles of the prophets that were previously considered as extraordinary actions are no longer extraordinary today. Today, physicians cure blotch and many other diseases. There are many sick persons who lack any vital signs and are considered dead, but they

are enlivened by physicians' efforts. We may cleave a sea apart with a calculated controlled atomic explosion, or make a fracture on the moon. Turning a stick to a dragon is similar to what witches, magicians, jugglers and filmmakers do.

5-7. The Critique on the Introduction of Wisdom and Guidance

The tenth introduction of the argument presented by the Islamic theologians says God does not permit, out of His Wisdom, that miracle be in the hands of the false claimants to prophethood, because that would deceive people and is an evil act that God does not do. Now, we must ask how many similar events you know throughout history wherein some individuals caused others to go astray but God did not interfere to reveal the liars. How many deviated religious and theological sects did exist that were followed by many people for many years and lived accordingly without being informed by God of their mistake or being prevented to create those sects? When God has nothing to prevent formation of false religions and deviation of their followers, why do you think He will do something regarding the false claimants to prophethood? Did Samiri not deceive Israelites by making a sculpture in the form of a calf that would make a sound?

If, according to the Islamic theologians, the divine Wisdom and Guidance prevent the false claimants to prophethood from performing miracles, it necessitates that God prevent individuals from doing any trickery, sleight of hand, magic, sorcery, rare natural events and anything similar to miracles that the false claimant can use to claim they are prophets and deceive people thereby. In answering this objection, the Islamic theologians have attempted to mention two criteria of 'invincibility' and 'unteachability' for distinguishing miracle from sleight of hand, witchery and the like in

order not to consider preventing them as an obligation for God (Mavardi, 1409 AH, p. 38; Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1396 SH, p. 9).

As some researchers (Vahida Fakhkhar Nowghani and Sayyid Murteza Husseini Shahrudi, 1396 SH, p. 9) have stated, discerning the realization of these two conditions is difficult for the ordinary people. How do they find out whether the action performed by the claimant to prophethood is unbeatable and unteachable or not?

Conclusion

The goal in this study is investigation of the rational signification of miracle to the prophethood of the person who claims to be a prophet. This can be proposed in two forms. First is the following question: “can one affirm the claim of a claimant to prophethood by merely observing the miracle in his hands?” Second, which is what most Islamic theologians mean, is the following question: “can one compile an authentic deduction to arrive at affirmation of the claim of a claimant to prophethood by observing his miracle?” Not distinguishing these two forms sometimes leads to misunderstanding and improper critique of the proponents of rational signification of miracle to prophethood. It seems that most Islamic theologians who are defendants of this signification have meant the second reading of the issue. In this article, both readings of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood were investigated and, while mentioning the views of opponents and proponents, the author has concluded that the miracle does not – by itself – logically denote the prophethood and verity of its claimant (first form). Besides, he concludes that the argument offered by Islamic theologians – who have attempted to combine some premises to explain the rational signification of miracle to prophethood – suffers numerous drawbacks. Thus, the result of this study is that, in both forms,

miracle does not rationally denote prophethood of a person. It must be, thus, investigated in another study whether miracle persuasively signifies prophethood or not. That is, the prophets' miracles must be seen not as rational evidence for their prophethood, but as evidence that persuades ordinary people to accept their claim to prophethood. Another result of the study is that we must pay more attention, in proving the prophets' prophetic mission, to other ways for proving the prophethood mentioned in theological sources.

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