SCTCMG 2019

International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»

ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL DISCORDS ROOTS IN ISLAM

Mustafa Bilalov (a)*, Vakhit Akaev (b), Anatoliy Enikeev (c), Mariam Agaeva (d)
*Corresponding author

(a) Dagestan State University, 43, M. Gadzhiev St., Makhachkala, Russia
mibil@mail.ru, 8(928)2864800
(b) Grozny State Oil Technical University named after Academician M.D. Millionshchikov, 100, H. Isaev av.,
Grozny, Russia KNII RAS, 21a, Staropromyslovskoye Highway, Grozny, Russia, akaiev@mail.ru, 89288850475
(c) Kuban State Agrarian University named after I.T. Trubilina, 13, Kalinina Str., Krasnodar, Russia
rizoma69@yandex.ru, 8(988)6045423
(d) Dagestan State University, 43, M. Gadzhiev St., Makhachkala, Russia
marish5515@mail.ru 8(989)8756910

Abstract

The article analyzes the philosophical foundation of the Islamic religion in the al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, al-Gazali, and Ibn Rushd writings, as they were key architects of the Muslim theoretical system and, generally, were Hellenic philosophers. Their ideas were based on Plato and Aristotle intellectual search while studying the problems associated with Islamic theology and metaphysical problems. Rationalistic approaches to the analysis of the world' origin issue, presented in the Muslim philosophers works, came under merciless and thorough criticism of al-Gazali, who, adhering to an irrational approach, destroys the accuracy of peripatetic thinking. Al-Gazali claimed that the world has three structures. It is believed that these ideas were not innovative, they were borrowed and connected with the principle of emanation, unfolded by Ibn Sina. Unlike dualistic, pantheistic doubts, Ibn Sina, al-Gazali tried to assume a posture of strict philosophical monism. Al-Gazali was impressed by the idea of spiritual and moral perfection of man, opposed the pantheistic line in Sufi philosophy. Historical and philosophical method of analyzing the problem allows determining the tendency of discords formation in the Islam philosophy, dating back to the Middle Ages. Logical-epistemological, dialectical analysis gave the problem under consideration a systemic, holistic nature. In historical terms, monotheistic, deistic and pantheistic interpretations of ontological problems, in any way, reflected in theoretical and cognitive discords of the Islam philosophy founders, rationally interpreting the Quran, revealing contradictions. According to the authors, current conflicts between orthodox Islam and Sufism disciples largely remount to philosophical collisions discussed in the article.

1. Introduction

Intra-religious contradictions in Islam have many reasons. Systemic theoretical inconsistencies in its philosophy are the most significant of them. Its ontological and epistemological roots are not only heterogeneous, but also contain conflicting attitudes that significantly influence the Quran and its ayah's interpretation, and the principles and rules for the Hadith transmission. The article identifies key philosophical discords, reflected in the worldview of orthodox Islam and Sufism adherents.

2. Problem Statement

Based on the philosophy key problems, which were considered in the Islam philosophy, presented in the Hellenic Muslim philosophers works, as well as in the Sufi texts of al-Gazali, who studied rational and irrational ways of conceiving the truth, reveal the ontological and epistemological roots of discords in Islam.

3. Research Questions

Theoretical, philosophical understanding of Islam allows for its separation into the Islam ontology and the epistemology. IX-XII centuries were the heyday of rationalistic philosophies in Islam. Al-Farabi set this issue in his philosophy, insisting on the superiority of the philosophical mind over theology, believing that only logic can conceive the truth, but the divine revelation was not denied. Avicenna and Averroes, as eminent Islamic philosophers, did not consider theology above philosophy, they were straining after reconciling reason and faith. In this regard, for al-Gazali, comprehending the truth meant fraught with the mobilization of irrational and mystical spirit's spheres, which is correlated with modern gnoseology and epistemology of the XX-XXI centuries.

4. Purpose of the Study

To identify the ontological and epistemological roots of discords in Islam based on the polemical differences between supporters of rationalistic and irrational-mystical forms of knowledge that existed in Islamic medieval philosophy.

5. Research Methods

Historical and philosophical method of analyzing the problem allows determining the tendency of discords formation in the Islam philosophy, dating back to the Middle Ages and up to the present day. Logical-epistemological, dialectical analysis gave the problem under consideration a systemic, holistic nature.

6. Findings

The bloom of Islam philosophy began under the Abbasid dynasty, who, in the capital of the Caliphate Baghdad, established conditions for the concentration of educated Jews, Greeks, Syrians,

Persians, Arabs, and for translating Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy and other Greek thinkers into Arabic. Al-Kindi (IX century) is considered as the first philosopher among the Arabs; he successfully translated the Greek texts into Arabic. He was interested in mathematics, astronomy, music, pharmacology, but also metaphysics, he wrote such treatises as "On the first philosophy", "On the number of Aristotle books", "On the mind", "On the five platonic bodies", etc. Being associated with Mutazilites, who advocated the use of rational dialectics in Islam, he defended the principle of harmony between philosophical research and prophetic revelation, preceded from the fact that such doctrines as creation of the world out of nothing, bodily resurrection and prophecy are not provable by rational means. That is why epistemology distinguishes between a human science (*ilm insani*), relying on logic, philosophy, and science of the divine (*ilm ilakhi*), available only for the prophets (Korben, 2010).

Later al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes in their teachings consider the problems of being, essence, existence as metaphysics' objects. Al-Farabi, philosopher, scientist of the East of Central Asian origin (IX-X centuries), the first creator of the Arab encyclopedia, depicted in detail the objective idealism of Plato, but still, his outlook was rather close to Aristotle (he was the author of comments on the writings of Aristotle, that he had the honorary nickname "Second teacher") and established the eastern peripateticism.

Metaphysical works and ideas of Ibn Sina had acquired a key character for the subsequent Muslim philosophy. His God was endowed with deistic and pantheistic attributes. His idea of emanating things from the necessary existent, a peculiar act of creation, the flow of possible being from the existential-necessary was borrowed from Neoplatonism. Essential is not only "thinking itself" (Ibn Sina, 1980), but it is thinking about all things, which in fact is the things' existence result. Basically, Ibn Sina (1980), in his views, follows Aristotle, who built his ontology on the traditions of metaphysics that he was establishing. There the nature, the world's being are filled with real content in opposition to the Plato ontology. Note that the emanation is to some extent opposed to the creation of nothing – means the emergence of the universe from God, just as light "flows" from the sun. But, at the same time, it is recognized that God is the main and eternal source of the universe.

It is important to note, running a little ahead, that another Arab naturalist philosopher from Cordoba (XII century) Ibn Rushd (Averroes) also insisted on an important fact for monotheism – recognition of God as the creator of all things. But he justified his conclusion, following also Aristotle, believing in the existence of the primal cause (prime mover). Averroes agreed recognition of universal divine causality (within the Aristotle framework, where God is the prime mover) with empirical causality, including between mental and physical phenomena, and consistently opposed Occasionalism – the denial of causality in the nature sphere – an Islamic theologian of Persian origin from the XI–XII centuries. al-Gazali. He become the main philosophical opponent of Ibn Rushd, although he did not agree with the theory of the emanation of Ibn Sina, the most prominent Islam "golden age" scholar, which did not explain how God acts in all things, denied his ability to create multiplicity. However, it was al-Gazali who was consistently criticized by Ibn Rushd, which in many ways sheds light on the ontological differences between the most important philosophers of Islamic culture.

Ibn Rushd had realized that there is a kind of dividing line from Ibn Sina to al-Gazali in understanding and adapting ancient philosophy to the Muslim religion. According to the theory of al-Gazali, described in his main work "The Resurrection of the Faith Sciences", the world is divided into three

structures: the structure of the explicit and tangible, the structure of the spiritual and the structure of the otherworldly and hidden. It is believed that these ideas were not innovative; they were borrowed and connected with the principle of emanation, unfolded by Ibn Sina. However, unlike the dualistic, pantheistic doubts, Ibn Sina al-Gazali tried to assume a posture of strict philosophical monism. He had been attempting to transform Sunnism in the direction of Sufism, in which al-Gazali was impressed by the idea of moral improvement of man, he simultaneously opposes his pantheistic (or rather panentheistic) content in the Sufi philosophy ontology.

The ontological (and corresponding epistemological ideas) of Ibn Rushd are set forth in the polemical work "Denial of refutation" (Averroes, 1999), directed against al-Gazali's treatise "Denial of the Philosophers". Proceeding from Aristotle, Ibn Rushd insisted on the uncreatedness of the material world, at the same time criticizing all the evidence of al-Gazali about the world eternity. At the same time, which is quite important, Ibn Rushd used strictly rational logical arguments, while al-Gazali always remained in the position of irrationalism, giving him preference over the logical-reasonable.

With all the differences in the metaphysical interpretations of being, these philosophers affirmed in the Islamic philosophical doctrine that God is the creator of the entire material world, he is the Absolute in his qualities; he is not substance; does not mix with the created. These formed the ideological basis of the Muslim religion monotheism. Sufism, the mystical direction of Islam, had shifted from such monotheism.

Sufism is notable for the greater breadth and antiquity of its origins – they are pre-monotheistic religions, other ideas of various civilizations. Exceeding the Islam scope, Sufism had acquired harmony and integrity as the mystical branch of Islam. We have shown the superiority of Sufism over other religious systems according to the plenitude of philosophical ideas (Bilalov, 2003, 2017). Fundamental Islam undoubtedly separates Allah from the material world, when in mystical Islam, God pervades all being with his being. But there is one acuity: Allah is not in everything, He is not everything. This would be naturalistic pantheism (Bruno, Spinoza) when they discover God in matter. The basic ontological doctrine of Sufism "Wehdah al-Wudshud" was pantheism — mystical pantheism, and believed that all things are in Allah. This direction of pantheistic teaching was developed by the Sufism philosophy. Subsequently, supporters of European pantheism – Eckhart, Nikolai Kuzansky, Boehme and other thinkers – had not seen God in nature, but nature in God.

However, well ahead of them, an outstanding digester of the Sufism philosophy, who gave it integrity and logically systemic unity, the Islamic theologian from Andalusia Ibn al-Arabi understood God as integral world and consistently justified Vudzhudizm: there is nothing in the world but the highest Sole, manifested in many ways. Being is not only one, but sole. The pure being goes over the triadic system from comprehension only by the mind or intellectual intuition – the intelligible one to phenomenal many. In the concept of the perfect man the world process's triadic rhythm is presented as alienation of the Logos into Cosmos, and then as withdrawal of its alienation and return to itself in the form of the Gnostic. In Man-Logos, which in the ontological aspect is Universal reality, the whole plurality of phenomenal being is non-differentiated, it is the first epiphany, the phenomenon of the Absolute. Such an understanding of God, as noted above, in tradition and Christian mysticism, in our opinion, is panentheism (an intermediate teaching between theism and pantheism), stating that the Universe rests in God and the world is a way of God manifestation (Bilalov, 2017). Here the key is that pantheism retreats from theism as a religious worldview,

which recognizes the infinity of the divine person, who created the world in a free act of will and subsequently governs this world.

The Vudzhudizm doctrine had disciples in Asia Minor, Iran and North India. But just as in the ontology of orthodox Islamic philosophy, the Sufism metaphysical problems (and they all depend on ontological approaches) were solved ambiguously. Opponents of the Wehdah al-Wudshud doctrine were Arab-Muslim theologian, Salafit Ibn Taimiyah, Ibn Khaldun – 14th century Arab-Muslim philosopher from Tunisia, Ibn Hajar al-Askalani – the famous Egyptian theologian (XIV-XV centuries), many faqih of Syria, Egypt and the Maghreb. As in any other living and developing theoretical system in Islamic philosophy, we observe many creative individuals, whose views not only differ, but also reach outright confrontations. But to understand the different Quran interpretations and the differences of its philosophical interpretations, it is important that the ontology of the Sufism philosophy in all its versions contradicts the basic tenets of orthodox Islam about God's creation of the world out of nothing and shakes the Muslim religion's monotheism.

Religion philosophy studies religion as a specific form of culture. Today, it appears in science as a philosophical discipline that solves the traditional questions of religion with its categorical apparatus. In this role, it is known as philosophical theology. But religion philosophy can consider religion simply as its own, philosophical subject of knowledge, trying, as in many other phenomena, to comprehend its essence, specificity, causes, patterns of development ... However, atheistically directed philosophy was not always objective during the Soviet period in assessing the philosophical heritage of Islam. Nowadays, studies that are empirical at the level of interpretations of the Quran's ayahs and suras have become widespread. Some religion philosophers are often substituted by rivalry with believers and alims in the knowledge of, say, the Quran.

To achieve greater clarity and serenity, the theoretical consideration of Islam by philosophy implies a division into the ontology and epistemology of Islam. And what about the epistemological research of Islam and Sufism? IX-XII centuries were the heyday of rationalistic philosophies in Islam. Such was the philosophical doctrine of al-Farabi. He insisted on the superiority of the philosophical mind over theology, only logic can conceive the truth, although divine revelation has retained its position here. And the most prominent Islamic philosophers, Avicenna and Averroes, did not give a clear superiority of theology over philosophy, tried to reconcile reason and faith.

Rationalism was strengthened by the development of Muslim astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. In Iran, in the astronomical observatory at-Tusi, more than 100 scientists continued the Ptolemy case, which was described in his work under the Arabic name Almagest. They constituted celestial mechanics, continued 900-year astronomical observations, passing the torch to the Europeans during the Renaissance. The Arabs used the Euclidean Principles, perfected the Indian decimal number system by adding the number zero, the mathematician al-Khorezmi reworked arithmetic, initiated algebra, and the aforementioned at-Tusi substantiated trigonometry. The Arabs calculated the pi number to the 16th digit, solved the fourth-degree algebraic equations, determined the sum of the fourth powers of the natural series — all this much earlier than the Europeans. Back in the tenth century, an Arab universal scientist, the "father of optics" Alhazen (Basra) developed an experimental technique for optical research — spherical aberrations, the laws of light refraction, and the magnifying capacity of lenses for vision correction. His

contemporary polymath scientist Al-Biruni from Khorezm explained the causes of changes in lunar phases, calculated the angle of the ecliptic to the equator, determined the radius of the Earth, established the density and specific gravity of many minerals and metals. At the same time, alchemy was transformed into chemistry – the Arabs produced arsenic and antimony, made steel, acetic acid, and dyed leather and fabrics.

Similar to all regions of medieval culture, the development of the natural science beginnings, mathematics and other rational sciences was interpreted philosophically. Ibn Sina, the emanation theory author mentioned above, whose name is associated with the classical philosophy and mathematical sciences bloom, wrote the famous "Canon of Medicine", which the Latin translation has been a textbook in European universities for centuries. In his philosophical positions, the influence of the ancient Stoics is noticeable; there are ideas of Neo-Platonism, although his whole philosophy is permeated with the spirit of Aristotelianism and corresponding rationalism. Ibn Rushd believed that truth is evidence and therefore not available to the theologians, but only to philosophers. But people need religion, people cannot join the truth revealed by complex evidence. Following Ibn Sina, he substantiated epistemological optimism in the era of the religious worldview dominance in the Middle Ages. Thousands of years ago, they argued about the possibility of world cognition through the human, potential, perceiving mind, since its origin comes from the same source as real things. God creates an active, vibrant mind that creates intelligible forms, and the potential mind perceives them – this is how the cognition is realized.

Yahya al-Suhravardi, the Ishrakism philosophy creator, a 12th-century Persian philosopher shared the rationalism of the ancient Greek philosophers, defending the universal status of religion. He believed that the light of the truth is comprehended by intuition and insight and analyzed, explained by rational methods.

The philosophical and metaphysical ideas of Islamic thinkers are significantly close to their epistemological ideas, although the latter are dependent on the former, but they allow us to give a philosophical understanding of the Muslim religion from the knowledge theory point of view. Ibn Rushd used strictly rational logical arguments, while al-Gazali always remained in the position of irrationalism. And it should be noted that, in general, such an approach of al-Gazali, according to the researchers, is justified at the appropriate "stage of the human mind development" (Muminov, 1972). The Neo-Platonism provisions complex is especially significant in the content of Sufism, with its central idea – the idea of emanation – the world's beginning from the original spiritual essence and the possibility of a reverse ecstatic fusion with it. It was this idea of "ecstatic fusion" that Al-Gazali cultivated in "The Denial of the Philosophers" and in another important work, "The Revival of the Religion Sciences". Al-Gazali joined irrational and mystical spheres of the spirit to the process of comprehending the truth as the leading human cognitive abilities – in this sense he is quite contemporary to the gnoseology and epistemology of the XX-XXI centuries. He wrote, "There are many degrees of knowledge", because "Sufism requires a complete transformation of consciousness" of an "undeveloped person". The path to Truth is doubt, this path is followed by faith and knowledge (Gazali, 2001).

At the same time, al-Gazali criticized the Aristotle and Plato followers (al-Farabi and Ibn Sina) for recognizing the decisive role of rational in cognition. Sufis, formerly outlawed in Islam, because of irrationalism, which was unacceptable for kalam and mutazalits for centuries, , gained religious legitimacy, thanks to the great authority of al-Gazali. So Sufism had become more or less recognized in the Islamic

world. This circumstance turned out to be a very negative consequence – the development of fundamental Islam in the philosophical aspect was suspended for many centuries – the time has come for the rule of mysticism in all its manifestations. Only in Muslim Spain, Andalusia, Ibn Badji, Ibn Tufail and Ibn Rushd had continued the traditions of rationalism, borrowed from the Greeks.

7. Conclusion

The main idea of this article is to conceive the ontological and epistemological roots of Muslim philosophy, which are particularly significant for modern religious practice. It is not the first time in the scientific literature that we emphasizing the following: one of the intellectual causes of dissidences in Islam that can cause extremist aspirations can be contradictions between the irrationalistic and rationalistic ways of theoretical conceiving the Islam foundations by the disciples (Bilalov, 2015). That is why, today, within the framework of the new revival thought, Arab and all Muslim philosophy attempts to combine strict reasoned rationality with the irrational elements of cognition, which corresponds to the innovations of modern cognitive culture. Such a combination will make it possible to assess the content and methodological richness of Islam as living and developing by internal contradictions, fluctuations and bifurcations of a synergistically complex spiritual organism.

References

Averroes, I. R. (1999). *Denial of refutation*. Kiev: UTsIMM-Press; St. Petersburg, Aletheia.

Bilalov, M. I. (2003). *Epistemological ideas in the structure of religious consciousness.* Moscow: Academia.

Bilalov, M. I. (2015). Ontological and epistemological differences between Sufism and Salafism. *Islamic Studies. Scientific and theoretical journal, 1*(23), 61–68.

Bilalov, M. I. (2017). *The comprehensibility of truth: palatability, explanability, expressibility*. Makhachkala: Dagestan Book Publishing House.

Gazali (2001). Thoughts and aphorisms about love, beauty, hope, envy and knowledge. In *Sufis: A collection of parables and aphorisms. Ser. "Anthology of Thought"* (pp. 44–45). Moscow: EKSMO-Press.

Ibn Sina (1980). *Selected works in 10 tons.* Dushanbe, Irfon.

Korben, A. (2010). *History of Islamic philosophy*. Moscow: Progress-Tradition, pp. 154–155.

Muminov, G. F. (1972). *From the philosophical heritage of the peoples of the Near and Middle East*. Tashkent, Fan.