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Is Islamic Philosophy an Authentic Philosophy?

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Abstract

The question of whether Islamic philosophy can be considered as an authentic form of philosophy has been a subject of prolonged discourse. Various perspectives have emerged, presenting three distinct approaches to this matter. The first approach, primarily advocated by orientalist, contends that Islamic philosophy lacks authenticity. Contrarily, the second viewpoint asserts that while Islamic philosophy exhibits eclecticism, it represents a form of creative eclecticism. Finally, the third perspective posits that Islamic philosophy is unequivocally authentic, affirming its rightful place within the realm of philosophical discourse. Regrettably, Islamic philosophy, despite its profound significance during the Middle Ages, has not received the recognition it truly deserves within the pages of philosophical history books. Authors have often allocated only brief sections to this rich philosophical tradition, overlooking its depth and influence. It is frequently emphasized that Islamic philosophy serves as a continuation of Greek philosophy, acting as a vital bridge that connects the realms of Ancient Greek philosophy and medieval Western philosophy. Orientalists regarded Muslim philosophers as mere interpreters of Ancient Greek philosophers, ignoring their philosophical authenticity. Recent studies have revealed that this prejudiced approach of the orientalist is fallacious. Medieval Islamic philosophy, which reached its golden age during the 9th-13th centuries, began to be rediscovered. Islamic philosophy introduced completely novel themes with Sufism and theology, and, developed fresh and innovative perspectives by integrating Greek philosophy. In particular, unique insights and movements have been put forward on subjects such as Ghazalism, Illuminationism, Eastern philosophy, occasionalism, methodical skepticism, the theory of creation ex nihilo, prophecy, the relationship between philosophy and religion, and critical analysis of the ideas put forth by ancient philosophers. While the Western world underwent a “dark age” during The Middle Ages; the Islamic world experienced a remarkable and intellectually vibrant “philosophical” movement. The movement, which can be called the “Miracle of the Muslims”, holds significant prominence within universal culture, in terms of both being an inseparable part of Islamic civilization and a crucial milestone in the development of Western philosophy.

Keywords

Islamic Philosophy; Authenticity; Eclecticism; Golden Age; Islamic Renaissance

Highlights

- Orientalists recognized Islamic philosophy as a bridge between Ancient Greek and Medieval Western philosophy.
- The orientalists, considering Islamic philosophy emerges with the translations made in the House of Wisdom [Bayt al Hikma], ignored the original studies in fields such as mysticism and kalam that preceded this period.
- Islamic philosophers drew upon the views of previous philosophers and built new interpretations and authentic perspectives based on this rich heritage.
- Islamic philosophy demonstrates a creative eclecticism. At the root of this creativity lies the spiritual and intellectual relations of the thinkers with the revelation.
- Medieval philosophy cannot be understood comprehensively without a proper recognition of Islamic philosophy, as philosophy as a whole cannot be grasped thoroughly without familiarity with medieval philosophy.

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İslam Felsefesi Özgün Bir Felsefe midir?

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Öz

İslam felsefesinin özgün bir felsefe olup olmadığı konusu uzunca bir süredir tartışılan bir meseledir. Bu konuda üç farklı yaklaşım bulunmaktadır. Bunlardan ilki, daha çok oryantalistlerin savunduğu İslam felsefesinin özgün olmadığı iddiasıdır. Diğer, İslam felsefesinin eklektik olmakla birlikte bunun yaratıcı bir eklektisizm olduğu şeklindedir. Son görüş ise İslam felsefesinin özgün bir felsefe olduğu görüşüdür. Orta Çağ'ın en önemli felsefesi olan İslam felsefesi ne yazık ki felsefe tarihi kitaplarında hak ettiği yeri bulamamış, yazarlar bu felsefeye çok kısa sayfalar ayırmakla yetinmişlerdir. Buralarda vurgulanan fikirler de İslam felsefesinin Yunan felsefesinin bir devamı olduğu, Antik Yunan ile Orta Çağ Batı felsefesini birbirine bağlayan bir köprü olduğudur. Oryantalistler, Müslüman filozofları birer Antik Yunan filozoflarının yorumcuları olarak görmüşler, onların felsefi özgünlüklerini göz ardı etmişlerdir. Son dönemde yapılan çalışmalar oryantalistlerin bu ön yargılı yaklaşımlarının yanlış olduğunu ortaya koymuş, Altın Çağını 9.-13. yüzyıllar arasında yaşamış olan Orta Çağ İslam felsefesi yeniden keşfedilmeye başlamıştır. İslam felsefesi, tasavvuf ve kelamla yepyeni meseleler ortaya koymuş, Yunan felsefesinden faydalanarak yeni çözümler üretmiştir. Özellikle Gazzâlîcilik, İshrâkîlik, Doğu felsefesi, okazyonalizm, metodik şüphecilik, sudûr ve yoktan yaratma nazariyeleri, nübüvvet, felsefe ve din ilişkisi, kadim filozofları tenkit gibi konular da özgün görüşler ve akımlar ortaya konmuştur. Orta Çağ'da Batı dünyası karanlık bir çağ yaşarken; İslam dünyasında yüksek düzeyde gerçekçi bir "felsefe" hareketi olmuştur. "Müslümanların Mucizesi" denilebilecek bu felsefe hareketi, gerek İslam medeniyetinin ayrılmaz bir parçası olması gerekse Batı felsefesinin gelişmesinde önemli bir basamağı oluşturması bakımından evrensel kültür içinde önemli bir yer tutmaktadır.

Anahtar Terimler

İslam Felsefesi; Özgünlük; Eklektisizm; Altın Çağ; İslam Rönesansı

Öne Çıkanlar

- Oryantalistler İslam felsefesini Antik Yunan ile Orta Çağ Batı felsefesi arasında bir köprü olarak görmüşlerdir.
- İslam felsefesi tarihini Beytülhikme’de yapılan tercümelerle başlatan oryantalistler, bu dönem öncesi tasavvuf ve kelim gibi alanlardaki özgün çalışmaları yok saymışlardır.
- İslam filozofları, önceki filozofların görüşlerinden istifade etmişler, bu zengin birikimden hareketle yeni yorum ve özgün görüşler ortaya koymuşlardır.
- İslam felsefesi yaratıcı bir eklektisizmdir. Bu yaratıcılığın kökeninde ise düşünürlerin vahiyle olan ruhsal ve zihinsel ilişkileri yatmaktadır.
- İslam felsefesi bilinmeyince Orta Çağ felsefesi, Orta Çağ felsefesi bilinmeyince de felsefe layığıyla bilinemez.

Atıf Bilgisi

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Introduction

Although the concept of authenticity can be defined in various ways, it is possible to define its meaning field as 'to bring into existence what does not exist'. In this context, the authenticity of a philosophical product means bringing into existence what does not exist in the tradition of philosophy, in other words, adding new dimensions and elements to the current state of the philosophical field of existence. Therefore, authenticity, on one hand, preserves the continuity of the philosophical tradition, on the other hand, it points to a meaning that expands, deepens, and changes the field of existence of the philosophical tradition. In this context, there are generally three main perspectives regarding the authenticity of Islamic philosophy. The first perspective claims that Islamic philosophy, including the orientalist perspective, is not authentic. The second perspective recognizes the eclectic nature of Islamic philosophy, and this is seen as a creative one. The last view asserts that Islamic philosophy is indeed an authentic philosophy.

Western perspectives on Islamic philosophy and its authenticity have not generally been free from bias. In the historical writing of the philosophy of Islam, which emerged in the 19th century in the West, the conviction that the Islamic philosophy lacks authenticity, that it constitutes a typical example of syncretism and is a continuation of Greek thought, has been propagated in some way. The fact that Islamic philosophy is generally given a small place within Western histories of philosophy, and that it is sometimes not even included at all, also reflect the prejudice that Islamic philosophy is not authentic. Besides Western scholars those who worked on Islamic philosophy, such as Dieterich Tiedemann (1748-1803), Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann (1761-1819), Heinrich Ritter (1791-1869), Johann Gottlieb Buhle (1763-1821), Salomon Munk (1803-1867) and Gustave Dugat (1824-1894), who recognize the authenticity of Islamic philosophy, the majority, above all Johann Jacob Brucker (1696-1770), August Schmölders (1809-1880), Duncan B. Macdonald (1863-1943), T. J. de Boer (1866- 1944), Max Horten (1874-1945) and Roger Arnaldez (1911-2006), are of the opinion that the historical role of Islamic philosophy consists only in the transmission of Greek philosophy to the West. For instance, according to Roger Arnaldez, Islamic philosophers brought nothing new about the problems that constituted the importance of classical Greek thought; they followed neither Plato nor Aristotle, because they failed to see the philosophical aims of these philosophers. Philosophy has always had a makeshift presence in Islam, with philosophers often transitioning early to pursue science or mysticism. According to him, Islamic philosophers created an eclectic philosophy by using the materials of Aristotelianism and Stoicism.¹

Renowned orientalist De Boer asserts that Islamic philosophy has always been an eclectic philosophy dependent on works translated from Greek. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about a genuine essence of Islamic philosophy. Islamic philosophy is only a bridge between Ancient Greece and the Middle Ages! He sees Islamic philosophy as the

¹ Roger Arnaldez, "İslam'da Felsefî Düşünce Nasıl Kötürümleşti?" ["Comment est ankylosée la pensée philosophique dans l'Islam"], trans. Ahmet Arslan, *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 28 (1-2) (Ocak 1970), 231-241.

product of a selective assimilation of Greek philosophy. According to him, this philosophy did not make a significant contribution to general intellectual development. Again, he argues, this philosophy nevertheless deserves our historical attention. Its silhouette can be seen behind Greek curtains, and it may also offer a clue as to the conditions under which philosophy in general arose. In describing Islamic philosophy, De Boer not only touches upon Aristotelian influence but also emphasizes much more Platonist heritage than his predecessors.² His approach, which is to see Islamic philosophy as a passive tool protecting Greek philosophy, is now falsified, and the view that Islamic philosophy is an authentic philosophy that enriches philosophy by influencing and shaping European philosophy is also accepted in the West. The primary limitation of orientalists, who see Islamic philosophy as a bridge between Antiquity and Medieval Western philosophy, is that the works of important thinkers in the field of theology and mysticism were not translated in the first period, because of which they perceive Islamic philosophy as predominantly composed of Peripatetic thinkers.

The German orientalist Max Horten, on the other hand, places overemphasis on Indian effects and Persian elements within Islamic philosophy, in his work *Die Philosophie des Islam: in ihren Beziehungen zu den philosophischen Weltanschauungen des westlichen Orients*, viewing Islamic philosophy as “the seemingly intuitive Persian wrestling with a Semitic worldview.” According to him, Islamic philosophy was designed by Persians. He offers us a bundle of ideas that the Aryan race can develop under the multicolored influence of the Southern sun of East and West. His way of thinking, emphasizing this ethnocentric based ‘Aryan race’, reminds us of Ernest Renan, who in his work *Histoire g n rale et syst me compar  des langues semitiques* (History and Systematic Comparison of Semitic Languages, Paris, 1852) states that Islamic philosophy is nothing but the expression of Greek philosophy in Arabic letters and who regards philosophy as the “Greek Miracle” and the genius of Western Christianity. Following Renan’s racist approach, orientalists such as Horten and Gauthier argued that the Semitic spirit was fragmented; whereas the Aryan race had the ability to synthesize and analyze.

According to Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), too, “Arabic philosophy is not important as original thought. Men like Avicenna and Averroes are essentially commentators. Speaking generally, the views of the more scientific philosophers come from Aristotle and the Neoplatonists in logic and metaphysics, from Galen in medicine, from Greek and Indian sources in mathematics and astronomy, and among mystic’s religious philosophy has also an admixture of old Persian beliefs. Writers in Arabic showed some originality in mathematics and in chemistry -in the latter case, as an incidental result of alchemical research. Mohammedan civilization, the dark ages intervened. The Mohammedans and the Byzantines, while lacking the intellectual energy required for innovation, preserved the apparatus of civilization education, books, and learned leisure. Both stimulated the West when it emerged from barbarism -the Mohammedans chiefly in the fifteenth. In each case the stimulus produced new thought better than any produced by the transmitters- in the one case scholasticism, in the other Renaissance (which however had

² T. J. de Boer, *İslam’da Felsefe Tarihi* [*The History of Philosophy in Islam*], trans. Yaşar Kutluay (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fak ltesi Yayınları, 1960), 23.

other causes also).”³ When the works of historians of philosophy and science, such as Russell, are examined, it is observed that they devoted a few pages to Islamic philosophy in the Middle Ages, and that they made a direct transition from Greek thought to the Renaissance as if the years 750-1200 never happened.

Another orientalist, Simon van den Bergh, translated Averroes’s work *Tahāfūt al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence) into English, and, regrettably, two epigraphs he added before the notes section are attention-grabbing in terms of his implications on authenticity. The former one, attributed to Epicurus, is the sentence “Only the Greeks philosophize!”; the latter one is the following sentence taken from the famous work of Maimonides called *Dalālat al-hā’irīn* (The Guide for the Perplexed):

It should be known that what the Muslims, whether Ash’ari or Mu’tazila, put forward on theological issues were borrowed from the Greeks and Syrians.⁴

One of the reasons for this attitude towards Islamic philosophy is the prejudice against the East and Islam. In this context, the following generalization made by the contemporary thinker Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), although he is known as the philosopher of “the philosophy of the Other”, is remarkable: “Humanity consists of the Testament (Bible) and the Greeks. All the rest is exotic dance... This is not racism.”

The bias and inaccuracy of such statements, made at the beginning of the last century, have been revealed and are no longer valid. The perspectives of other orientalists studying Islamic philosophy are similar. It is obvious that there is a Western-centric fanaticism in all these. However, it should be acknowledged that there are well-intentioned and self-sacrificing orientalists in the Eastern world there are well-intentioned and self-sacrificing orientalists in the Eastern world who have increased interest in Islamic philosophy and revealed methodologies.

A thorough examination of the books and commentaries of Islamic philosophers that have reached us, their translations to the Latin world, and the effects they had in the Latin-Christian world, reveals the obvious bias in dismissing this philosophy. In short, it is extremely wrong to see Islamic philosophy as a simple compilation or an incomplete or distorted repetition of Greek philosophy.⁵ Islamic philosophers both saved the philosophical heritage they received from other elements, especially Greek, and succeeded in adapting them by transforming them, and made novel research, new interpretations, original works, and original inventions based on this wealth of knowledge.

Recent studies have debunked the erroneous notions propagated by orientalists, who claim that Islamic philosophy lacks originality, that Islam inherently maintains a conservative stance towards science and philosophy, and that the Semitic races possess a disposition unfavorable to philosophical pursuits. These prejudiced beliefs further suggest that any progress in the realm of philosophy within the Islamic world can be attributed solely to Persians belonging to the Indo-European racial group. However, thorough investigations conducted in recent years have illuminated the fallacious nature

³ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1948), 447-448.

⁴ Averroes, *Tahāfūt al-Tahāfut: The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, trans. Simon van den Bergh (London: Luzac and Company Limited, 1978), 2/1.

⁵ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *İslam Düşüncesi* (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2015), 208.

of these claims, thereby dismantling such prejudices, and establishing a more accurate understanding of the contributions and achievements of Islamic philosophy. Furthermore, the notion that philosophers within the Islamic tradition lack significance in the progression of universal philosophy, merely serving as conduits for transmitting ancient philosophical legacies to the Western world and failing to contribute original perspectives or make groundbreaking discoveries in any significant philosophical domain, has been discredited. Recent studies have effectively undermined the credibility of these biased orientalist perspectives, resulting in a decline in support for such claims.⁶ It is now widely recognized that Islamic philosophers have made substantial and original contributions to the field, challenging the previously held misconceptions and shedding light on their significant role in the development of philosophical thought.

In addition to those who argue for the authenticity of Islamic philosophy, there are also those who argue that although Islamic philosophy is eclectic, this is a creative form of eclecticism. These proponents question whether an authentic thought in the absolute sense is possible. In light of this, the issue of whether Greek thought, which was conceived as an almost miraculous monument of originality, is original or not can be deeply questioned. In fact, in Plato's dialogue *Timaios* (22b), we read, "O Greeks, you are like children before the tradition in Egypt!", indicating that Greek thought is based on ideas ranging from India to Phoenicia, from Egypt to Babylon. According to some rumors, Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras (570-495 BC), Anaxagoras (500-428 BC), and even Pyrrhon (360-272 BC) went to India to learn wisdom. According to Nietzsche, actual philosophy only took place in the Pre-Socratic period. According to philosophers, like Whitehead (1861-1947), all Western philosophy was regarded as footnotes to Plato; or, as the Vienna Circle claims, the real philosophy is the analytic philosophy they made, and previous studies were seen as empty and meaningless. If we set aside such extreme interpretations, it can be emphasized that there is a kind of continuity and tradition in the history of philosophy and science. Here again, we can recall the response of the 11th-century Jewish poet and philosopher Yehuda Halevi to this concern, which is particularly strong among Jewish and Muslim thinkers: "Do not be tempted by Greek wisdom, it may produce beautiful flowers but bear no fruit."

In this context, it becomes evident that Greek philosophers have contacts and debts to other cultures, especially to Egypt, Babylon, Persia, and India. Therefore, in the final analysis, all great systems of thought are meaningful expressions of eclecticism, both in methodology and in doctrine, which might be perceived as contrary to authenticity. Eclecticism in Islamic philosophy, on the other hand, is creative eclecticism rather than doctrinal eclecticism, and in this context, the eclectic attitude of Islamic philosophers bears a creative quality in terms of making a unique contribution to the intellectual accumulation of humanity. At the root of this creativity lies the spiritual and mental relations of the thinkers with the revelation.

According to the understanding that acknowledges creative eclecticism in Islamic philosophy, it is wrong to see eclecticism as a patchwork without deserving respect, as an effort with no chance of success, as a stage before death, and categorically as something

⁶ Ahmet Arslan, *İslam Felsefesi Üzerine* (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 1999), 36.

bad and negative. What matters is whether this eclecticism is a simple gathering or a creative eclecticism. Accordingly, creative eclecticism can enable authentic, creative, critical, analytical, problem-solving, and broad perspectives. Therefore, to say that Islamic philosophy has an eclectic structure does not mean that it is not authentic. These philosophers were able to present highly original inventions and ideas in certain aspects within the general eclecticism.⁷

Those who argue for the authenticity of Islamic philosophy emphasize that its uniqueness should be attributed to both its very existence and its essence. Accordingly, the existence of Islamic philosophy as an impressive historical reality carries inherent authenticity. Islamic civilization made possible the emergence of a tradition of philosophy, and with its historical existence invalidating all objections claiming that it does not qualify as “philosophy.” Islamic philosophy symbolizes a unique achievement in terms of humanity’s intellectual and scientific adventure.

The authenticity of Islamic philosophy, in terms of its essence, is closely connected to the “differentia” that distinguishes it from other philosophical traditions. This difference coincides with the very point of distinction that separates Islamic civilization from other civilizations. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that Islamic philosophy is a genuine form of philosophy, characterized by its own unique temporal context within the framework of Islamic civilization. The aim of “establishing a philosophical tradition”, which Islamic philosophers wanted to achieve and managed to attain to a certain degree, expresses a unique value in terms of the historical internal dynamics of Islamic civilization.⁸

Authenticity is manifested in the philosopher’s ability to pose and solve problems of their era, or to clarify previously posed problems, or to shed light on new dimensions that were hitherto unnoticed. Below are a few examples highlighting the authenticity of Islamic philosophy without going into details:

First of all, Islamic philosophy is a unique philosophy that presents novel inquiries through Sufism and theology, offering new solutions by making use of Greek philosophy. It offers innovative solutions by synthesizing diverse intellectual streams such as Ghazalism, Illuminationism, Eastern philosophy, occasionalism, methodical skepticism, the theory of creation from nothing, prophecy, the relationship between philosophy and religion, and critical analysis of ancient philosophers, explanation of the concept of love (*‘ışk*).⁹ Islamic philosophers have changed the perspective of individuals, objects, and the world that have existed until that day, thus creating a new field of problems. This transformative process is directly related to the notion of authenticity. For instance, the orientation of the philosophical tradition, whose interest is nature-oriented, to the field of human and society-centered problems is, of course, related to authenticity. First, Islamic philosophers tried to comprehend the world in a very different model from the Greek thought, so they put forward a new philosophical model.¹⁰

⁷ Arslan, *İslam Felsefesi Üzerine*, 82.

⁸ İlhan Kutluer, “İslam Felsefesi Hangi Anlamda Özgündür?”, *İslam Felsefesinin Özgünlüğü*, ed. Mehmet Vural (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2009), 29-46.

⁹ Mehmet Bayrakdar, *İslam Felsefesine Giriş* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2022), 148-154.

¹⁰ Ahmet Arslan, “İslam Felsefesinin Özgünlüğü Sorunu”, *Felsefe Tartışmaları* 14 (1993), 61-102.

The works of Islamic philosophers clearly exhibit a profound connection with the Transcendent Being. A significant majority of these works begin with the name of God, with expressions of gratitude towards God, and prayers to Prophet Muhammad, and with another gratitude to God for allowing the work to be complete. Therefore, Islamic philosophy carries the spirit of revelation. The metaphysics, ethics, and politics that it puts forward are generally based on the Qur'an. In addition, the feature that distinguishes Islamic philosophy from other philosophies and can be seen as its most original aspect is the philosophy of "prophecy", that the source of philosophy is wisdom, that is, the prophetic candle (*mishkat al-nubuwwah*). In fact, according to Corbin, the most central concern of Islamic philosophy has been the philosophy of prophecy.

Islamic philosophers have developed a new method and tradition in the form of criticism and counter criticism by criticizing not only the earlier philosophers but also Muslim philosophers. However, in their critiques, they followed the principle of fairness, avoiding unjust and arbitrary criticism. For example, al-Ghazali's critique of Tahāfut and Peripatetic philosophers, especially Al-Farabī and Avicenna, and then Averroes's answer to this. Then, albeit mostly in the form of a Ghazalian commentary, this tradition of Tahāfut continued for centuries in the Ottoman Empire and in other countries, while very original ideas emerged.

The tradition of annotation in Islamic philosophy is one of its authentic aspects. Although the author and commentator tradition of Islamic philosophy seems to support those who doubt its authenticity, in fact, the tradition of commentary is not a kind of self-repetition, it is an exploratory, creative, lively source of thought. Since the commentators are often also philosophers or scientists, they approach the text with their own culture, perception, and view, and reproduce the text in a way. The original text is made more understandable and illuminated by means of commentaries, just like the explanation and interpretation of Aristotle's texts through Alexander of Aphrodisias or Averroes. While explaining the text, the commentators make the difficult parts more understandable, ensure the correct understanding of the text, and can come up with very original new ideas with a kind of creativity. Considering that even many concise works in Islamic thought have been made original and deep commentaries, it will be understood that commenting is a philosophical activity in terms of the methods used and assumptions etc. In this context, we can say that Islamic thinkers prefer to read and understand the texts they engage in, regardless of the author's intention, historical and cultural environment. As a result, it is seen as a necessity for the classical Islamic philosophy tradition to succeed in integrating the commentaries of the Western world into their own philosophical histories.

Throughout history, the field of Islamic philosophy has involved translation, commentary, annotation, epitomizing, summarizing, connecting, arranging, arrangement, classification etc. Since many works of Islamic philosophy remain undiscovered, there is a need for studies in this field. In this respect, it is of great importance to review and critically publish the foundational works of Islamic philosophy. Over the past two centuries, there have been Eastern and Western thinkers who have made significant contributions to this field. Besides thinkers living in the Islamic geography, such as Abdulrahman Bedewī, Muhammad Abū Rīde, İbrahim Madkour,

Muhsin Mahdī, Usman Amin, al-Hudeyrī, Farīd Jabr, Ehwani, Fawzi an-Nashshar, and Kurdī, orientalist such as Johann Georg Wenrich (1787-1847), Gustav Flügel (1802-1870), Salomon Munk (1803-1867), William Cureton (1808-1864), Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (1808-1899), Marcus Joseph Müller (1809-1874), August Schmölders (1809-1880), Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890), Moritz Steinschneider (1816-1907), Friedrich Dieterici (1821-1903) and Léon Gauthier (1862-1949) are among those who have made this kind of works.

The proofs on the existence of God presented by Islamic philosophers are among such features that distinguish Islamic philosophy apart from other philosophical traditions. For example, Avicenna's famous proof, which relies solely on the conceptual analysis God's existence, and which will later be repeated by St. Anselm, Descartes, and Spinoza, and called the 'ontological proof', is just one of them.

Furthermore, Islamic philosophers drew attention to the problems they formulated and the metaphors they used to explain these problems. For instance, the distinction between "essence" and "existence", initially introduced by Al-Farabī and later developed by Avicenna, is one of the original problems. As an example of the metaphor used by Al-Farabī, it can be given that through the Active Intellect (Wahibu's-suwar), which has the ability to take forms, the first matter (hayula/hyle) emerges and forms the foundation of the Sublunar World, and thanks to the Active Intellect in the hierarchy of intellects, the potential intellect and the rational being come into the realm of actualization. Accordingly, just as the senses of sight, which remain dormant in potentiality without perceiving anything in the darkness, become active when the sun rises, the faculties of the mind also become actualized through the Active Intellect.

Again, Avicenna's famous metaphor, the "Flying Man", which he used to prove the view that the soul is a self-contained substance independent of matter, and which Descartes repeated verbatim (*l'homme volant*) later, for the same purpose, is another example.¹¹

Islamic philosophers have made notable contributions by employing a new method and tradition that involves critical evaluations not only of ancient philosophers but also of Muslim philosophers. We can observe that Islamic philosophers, began writing works where they exposed the contradictions, inconsistencies, and dilemmas in the thoughts of past philosophers, especially since the 10th century, when the translation activities came to an end.¹² The first examples that come to mind in these works, which can be referred to as the tradition of doubts (Shukuk), are Abu Bakr al-Razi's *Kitāb al-Shukuk 'alā Galinus* (Doubts About Galen), Avicenna's preface to his work titled *al-Hikmet al-Mashriqiyyah* (Eastern Philosophy) where he expressed his doubts about Aristotle, Jabir ibn Aflah's *Kitāb al-Hay'a fī Islahi al-Majisti* (Book on the Correction of Ptolemy's Almagest), Omar Khayyam's *al-Shukuk 'alā Batlamyus* (Doubts About Ptolemy), Ibn al-Haytham's *Makāle fī al-Shukuk 'alā Batlamyus* (Doubts About Ptolemy) and Maimonides's criticisms directed towards Galen's medical understanding in his *Fusul al-Kurtubī*. As an example of Muslim philosophers criticizing each other, we can mention Al-Ghazali's criticism of philosophers such as Al-Farabī and Avicenna in his work titled *Tahāfut*, followed by Averroes's response to it. Subsequently, this tradition of criticism, often in the form of commentary,

¹¹ Arslan, "İslam Felsefesinin Özgünlüğü Sorunu", 101-102.

¹² Mehmet Bayrakdar, "İslam Felsefesinin Özgünlüğü Üzerine", *İslam Felsefesinin Özgünlüğü*, ed. Mehmet Vural (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2009), 25-26.

continued for centuries in the Ottoman Empire and other countries, giving rise to highly original ideas. Another example of this is Suhrawardī criticizing Avicenna, Averroes criticizing Avicenna, and Ibn Hazm and Ibn Khaldun criticizing al-Kindī.

Within the tradition of criticism, Muslim scholars aimed not to take sides but to be on the side of the truth. They avoided excessive criticism, disrespect towards authors, and gadhered to scientific, just, and fair practices. For example, the commentaries and corrections written by Banū Mūsā brothers on the famous work of Apollinios of Perge in the conic area are published by Abū Nasr b. Iraq. He studied and defended Apollinios by revealing some of the mistakes of Banū Mūsā brothers. Thus, the tradition of answering unfair criticism has also been formed. Muslim philosophers and scholars aimed to criticize and transcend the static physics of Aristotle, Euclidean geometry, Ptolemy's astronomy, Hippocratic, and Galen medicine, and to create a new paradigm with an understanding based on tawhid.

In Islamic thought, a significant methodological approach emerged through the practice of posing questions and providing answers in discussions. In such discussions that often took the form of correspondence, the questions were referred to as “al-hawamil” and the answers as “al-shawamil”. The most important examples on this subject in Islamic thought are the scientific debates between Abu'l-Hodayl al-Allāf and Al-Nazzām, Avicenna and Al-Birunī, again Al-Birunī and Abū al-Wafa' al-Buzjanī, Ibn Miskawayh and Abū Hayyān al-Tawhīdī, and between Avempace and Ibn Hasdāy (1175-1240). The works written on this subject are generally called *Al-Hawamil wa al-Shawamil*. The style used in these correspondences is also admirable. For example, Al-Birunī clearly expresses this when he was unsure, had partial knowledge, or did not comprehend an issue being posed to him; he would apologize and promised to explain this matter elsewhere. The tradition of Al-Hawamil (Question) and al-Shawamil (Answer), which is a methodology specific to Islamic philosophy, started in the Western world only in the 17th century, being influenced by Muslims. The first examples of this are the scientific and philosophical correspondences between Newton (1643-1727) and Leibniz (1646-1716).

The autobiographical writings by Islamic philosophers, detailing especially their philosophical and theological adventures, can also be cited as an example of original studies in Islamic philosophy. Examples of these studies are Harith al-Muhāsibī's *Kitāb al-Wasaya* (Advices/Wills), Abū Bakr al-Razī's *Rasa'il falsafiyya* (The Philosophical Way of Life),¹³ Avicenna's *Sirat al-Shaykh al-Ra'is* (The Life of the Great Master),¹⁴ Ghazalī's *al-*

¹³ Ebû Bekir er-Râzî, “es-Sîretü'l-felsefiyye: Ebû Bekir Râzî: Filozofça Yaşama”, trans. Mahmut Kaya, *İslam Filozoflarından Felsefe Metinleri* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2003), 73-82.

¹⁴ For the translated text of Avicenna's autobiography, which he dictated to his student, Cuzcânî, see. Avicenna (Avicenna), *The Life of Ibn Sînâ*, trans. W. E. Gohlman (New York: SUNY Press, 1974); For another English translation, see. Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 22-30; Gutas says that the allegations about Avicenna's indulgence in alcohol and lust were inserted into the text by Beyhakî and should not be taken into account. Dimitri Gutas, “Ibn Sînâ's Life”, *Avicenna's Legacy*, ed. M. Cüneyt Kaya (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2010), 1-10; see also Dimitri Gutas, “Ibn Sînâ's Sect and Birthplace Issue”, *Avicenna's Legacy*, ed. M. Cüneyt Kaya (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2010), 13-29; İbn Sînâ, “eş-Şeyh er-Reis'in (İbn Sînâ) Hayatı (Otobiyoğrafî) (Life of ash-Sheikh er-Reis (Ibn Sînâ) (Autobiography)”, trans. A. Açıkgenç, M. H. Kırbaşoğlu, *Risâleler* (Ankara: Kitâbiyât Yayınları, 2004), 11-30.

Munqidh min al-Dalāl (Deliverance from Error), Ruzbihan Baqlī's *Kashf al-asrār* (The Removal of Secrets),¹⁵ Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's *Sayr wa-Suluk* (The Voyage),¹⁶ and the autobiographical information in the preface of Mullā Sadrā's *Asfar e Arba* (Four Journeys).¹⁷

Similarly, the tradition of narrating the complex issues of philosophy with appropriate literary arts and symbolic stories is a method that draws attention in Islamic philosophy and has also influenced Western philosophy. For this purpose, great importance has been given to metaphors, which were seen as a kind of bridge to truth. An example of this would be: Suhrawardī's *Qissat alghurba al-gharbiyya* (The Story of Journey to the West) and *Risalat al-Tayr* (The Treatise of the Bird), Avicenna and Ibn Tufail's *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan*, many *Salamān* and *Absāl* stories, and the romantic and symbolic stories of Ibn Hazm called *Tawq al-hamamah* (The Ring of the Dove). While reading the works of Islamic philosophers, we can see the excitement and joy they felt in their adventures in pursuit of truth.

Although Islamic philosophy proceeds mainly on a metaphysical-based theoretical plane, the principles it puts forward have shown themselves in the field of value (axiology). The emphasis on tawhid in Islamic aesthetics and art can be found in almost every work. Islamic art, based on an idealist ontology, lacks icons, representations, and narratives; rather, it seeks perfection through mathematical and geometric forms. Not the visible face of being, but the invisible face, the ideal, the abstract, the inner direction is concentrated on. In this sense, art is handled within the relation among the creator, the creation and the created. Islamic art, like in miniatures, has brought forth the appearance of minor and particular art structures where there are no two dimensions, light, and shadows. Therefore, there is no subject-object distinction in these products. The theoretical foundation of Islamic philosophy has played a significant role in the emergence of original ideas and products in the fields of architecture, music, fine arts, and so on in the realm of value philosophy.

Muslim scholars actively engaged in the scientific and cultural legacy of other nations. Especially in the 11th and 12th centuries, scholars continued the discussion by expanding the scope of the results obtained elsewhere and integrating them with theoretical structures that were foreign to their field in origin. In addition, with the expansion of the Islamic geography, traditions with different cultural and scientific backgrounds became the elements of civilization whose scientific language was Arabic, and these new methods led to the emergence of new disciplines, such as algebra, which were sometimes unforeseen.¹⁸

Thinkers and scientists such as Abū Bakr er-Rāzī, Al-Birunī, Ibn al-Haytham and Kamāl al-Dīn al-Fārisī placed significant emphasis on experimentation and observation,

¹⁵ See. At the request of a friend, Ruzbihan Baqlī wrote his autobiographical work *Kashf al-asrār*, which includes the dreams he has had since his youth, when he was fifty-five years old. This work is one of the exceptional examples of Sufi literature.

¹⁶ Nasîrüddîn et-Tûsî, "Seyru Süluḳ: Yolculuk ve İntisap", trans. Murat Demirkol, *e-Şarkiyat İlmî Araştırmalar Dergisi* 6 (Kasım 2011), 125-139.

¹⁷ Mollā Sadrā, "An Annotated Bibliography of the Works of Mullā Sadrā with a Brief Account of his Life", trans. İbrahim Kalın, *Esfârü'l-erba'a, Islamic Studies* 42 (2003), 21-62.

¹⁸ Rüşdi Raşid (ed.), *İslam Bilim Tarihi* (İstanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2006), 11.

resulting in the development of a scientific methodology based on induction. This scientific mindset, which allowed for the creation of a novel paradigm, has prevailed in the Islamic world for a considerable period of time. Thus, disciplines, such as experimental sciences, medicine, chemistry, and biology, which rely on both empirical evidence and theoretical foundations, have experienced advancements.

Another contribution of Muslim scholars lies in their adoption of citation and referencing methods and employing footnotes. As we often see in translated and copyrighted works, the name of the cited philosopher or scientist is often mentioned with praise and respect. For example, when referring Socrates, they used the adjective Sukrat az-Zāhid (The Virtuous Socrates), when talking about Plato, they said Eflātun-i ilāhī (Saint Plato) or el-'Azam al-akbari'l-ilāhī (The Greatest of the Elders), and they called Aristotle the "Grand Master", "Sheikh", "al-Mu'allim al-awwal" (The First Teacher). In contrast, it has been observed, as noted in the works of Fuat Sezgin, a renowned scholar in the field of Islamic science history, that Western scholars approached the Muslim knowledge with an indifferent attitude, neglecting to attribute their sources or acknowledge the Muslim thinkers. Except for a few Western philosophers like Roger Bacon (1214-1294) and Eckhart (1260-1327), who referred to Islamic thinkers such as Al-Farabī, Avicenna, and Averroes as "Master" or "Pagan Master" (Heidnische Meister) when grounding their ideas, most Western thinkers and scientists have engaged in plundering by refraining from referencing the works of Islamic thinkers. There are many examples of this type of plundering. It is only a small example that the African Konstantin wrote his name on the translations he made from Arabic as if he had written them himself. Therefore, the tradition of citing all the names from which the narration is taken, which is very important in Islamic thought, especially in hadith methodology, has been applied in other sciences as citing sources.

The fact that Western scholars distorted and changed Muslim studies that they benefited from constitute a significant area of research. Al-Samawal al-Maghribī (d. 1175), who is of Jewish origin, can be given as an example. His book, titled *Iḥām al-yahud* (The Prophet's Dream and Samawal's Islamic Story and Silencing the Jews) which criticizes Judaism and depicts his conversion to Islam, was translated into Latin by Alfonso Buenombre in 1339. However, in this translation, the word "Islam" was replaced by "Christianity" and translated as if he had embraced Christianity.¹⁹ Similarly, Michael Scotus, who translated Nur al-Din al-Bitrujī's astronomy work *Kitāb al-Hay'ah* under the name *De motibus Celorum Circularibus* into Latin in 1217, replaced the word "God" with "Jesus", he further manipulated and translated the verses of the Qur'an as if they were quotations from the Bible.

Islamic philosophers perceived philosophy as a comprehensive system of sciences that laid the theoretical foundations of intellectual, scientific, and artistic pursuits. In this context, another area to search for authenticity in Islamic thought is scientific and artistic endeavors. Undoubtedly, the unique achievements of Islamic philosophers and scientists in these fields cannot be ignored. For example, any historical account of science would be

¹⁹ İhsan Fazlıoğlu, "Semev'el el-Mağribi", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. Erişim 25 Haziran 2023. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/semevel-el-magribi>

incomplete without considering the development of the inductive scientific method by prominent Muslim scientists like Al-Birunī and their contributions in the field of science.

Within Islamic thought, numerous scientists have produced novel ideas, and many others, still unknown, are waiting to be explored. Therefore, it is of great importance to bring these thinkers and works to light. For, still lacking a comprehensive bibliography, the vast contemporary interpretations of Islamic philosophy would only present an incomplete picture.

After all, while the Western world was experiencing a dark age during the Middle Ages, there has been a highly realistic “philosophy” movement in the Islamic world. This philosophical movement, which can be named as the “Miracle of the Muslims”, has an important place in the universal culture in terms of both being an inseparable part of Islamic civilization and an important step in the development of Western philosophy.²⁰ The original views and new methods put forward by Islamic philosophers deeply influenced many philosophies, especially medieval Christian philosophy, and New Age philosophy.

According to rightful determination of Dimitri Gutas, one of the contemporary Islamic philosophers, this philosophical tradition, which has profoundly influenced Islamic culture for more than ten centuries, is an extremely rich, yet highly active and largely autonomous intellectual movement. Unfortunately, this tradition is relatively unknown both in the East and the West. This thought, which has encountered the problem of legitimacy from time to time in the civilization it has developed since its birth, has been and continues to be one of the most neglected and negatively judged intellectual movements of the said civilization. One of the primary reasons for this case is that although the judgments formed by orientalist working on Islamic philosophy are still maintained, the studies have not reached a sufficient level despite the recent scientific studies that reveal its value.

In the words of Etienne Gilson, medieval philosophy cannot be fully comprehended without a proper understanding of Islamic philosophy, and vice versa. The medieval English philosopher Roger Bacon (1214-1294) asserts that “Philosophy must be learned from Arab thinkers, and anyone who does not take the trouble to learn Eastern languages should not attempt to grasp the wisdom and philosophies.” (*Metaphysics*, IV, 6). Roger Bacon was not alone. Another English philosopher John of Salisbury (1115-1180) often reminds his readers of his gratitude to Islamic philosophers. This fact is well-known among orientalist. As the Swiss medieval philosopher Ruedi Imbach (b. 1946) said, “Medieval Western metaphysics is lively and wild, born of the marriage of different species; but yet, it is an illegitimate child.” The conclusion reached by Fuat Sezgin, who devoted his life to the study of the history of science, is meaningful in this context: “Western civilization is the child of Islamic civilization!”

In this context, the importance of Islamic philosophy within contemporary philosophy increases. In Western Philosophy, the preoccupation with Islamic philosophy was a phenomenon peculiar only to the German romantics of the 18th and 19th centuries, and the romantic zeal for ‘Oriental wisdom’, which was partly the driving force of the

²⁰ Arslan, *İslam Felsefesi Üzerine*, 45.

orientalists until the beginning of the 20th century, now, this has come to an end. As it did in the past, Islamic philosophy offers valuable insights and potential solutions to the challenges of our time. Therefore, any study that neglect Islamic philosophy will inevitably be incomplete.²¹

²¹ See. Mehmet Vural (ed.), *İslam Felsefesinin Özgünlüğü* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2009); also see. Mehmet Vural, *İslam Felsefesi Tarihi* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2019), 479-493.

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