

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Assignment: Philosophy and Islamic philosophy

Topic: Comparison between the Islamic and the unislamic manner of philosophy

Summary: Philosophy is the method by which one tries to reach conclusions about some topic that is beyond the grasp of current human knowledge. There are various ways that different people use to understand reality, but not all such philosophical methods enable the seeker to arrive at correct knowledge.

Unislamic philosophic research – which is based on guesswork and assumptions as well as a pre-existing mindset – hinders true perception and thus does not allow the seeker to arrive at correct knowledge. On the other hand, the Islamic method of philosophy enables the seeker to arrive at true and unbiased knowledge. It is therefore necessary to use only Islamic methods of understanding

and reaching the truth. The following verses and their explanation describe the differences between the two methods and provide guidelines on the proper method of conducting philosophical research in order to understand some topic.

Commentary of Surah Yunus Verses 66 – 67

أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا
يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ
إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ
مُبْصِرًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ

Translation:

Note it well that all the dwellers of the heavens and of the earth belong to Allah; and those who invoke, besides Allah, partners (they have set up with Him) follow nothing but conjectures and merely indulge in guess-works. It is He Who made the night for you to rest in it and gave to the day its light. Indeed there are Signs in this for those who listen (to the Message). (10: 66 – 67)

Explanation:

﴿Note it well ... Indeed there are Signs in this for those who listen.﴾ This is a concise statement of a very important subject and requires a detailed explanation. The Quran declares in a few words that all religions other than the Revealed one are false because they have been founded on mere philosophical research for the primary cause of the origin of the universe. The philosophical research is, after all, based on guess-work, and is in its very nature incapable of reaching the Truth. The right way of arriving at the Truth is to make a study of the signs (example, day and night) and of the Message of the Prophets in a unbiased manner. This is the only way of discovering the Truth; otherwise, if one follows wrong ways one shall always arrive at wrong conclusions.

Let us now consider the several methods that different people have adopted in search of this knowledge:

- The mushriks (polytheists) base their search wholly and solely on superstition.

- The hermits and ascetics pretend and claim that they acquire that knowledge by means of contemplation and meditation and see the reality by peeping into the hidden. But the fact is that they do not see the reality; it is only a trick of their own imagination. They form a mental image and then concentrate their mind on it and eventually it takes the shape of the “reality.”
- The so-called philosophers claim to base their researches on rationalism but it is really only assumptions and guess-work, even though they may give “logical” arguments and “sound” reasons in its support.
- Then there are the scientists: though they follow the scientific method of research in the physical world, they abandon it completely in regard to their investigation into metaphysics and start to follow conjectures, surmises, and guesswork.

On top of that, these groups invariably suffer from prejudices and are not inclined to understand the point of view of those who differ with them, and, therefore, obstinately stick to their own theories.

In verses 66 and 67, the Quran declares that this way of search for knowledge is basically wrong, as if to say, “The real cause of your deviation is that you base your search of Reality on mere surmise and guesswork, and then, because of your prejudices, refuse to listen even to reasonable things. The result is that you have not only failed to arrive at the truth but you have also failed to judge rightly the Revealed Religion presented by the Messengers.”

In contrast to the above ways of research, the Quran presents its own way and asserts that it alone is the correct, rational, and scientific way of arriving at the Truth. This is as follows: The prerequisite for research is that you should give up your preconceived prejudices and listen to the Message of those who claim that their information about the Reality is based on “Knowledge” and not on surmises, guessworks, meditations and contemplations, abstract deductions, etc. Then consider deeply the Signs in the universe to which the Quran invites your attention. If these also point to the Reality they claim to reveal, then there is no reason why you should deny the Truth taught by those Messengers. **This is the basis of the philosophy of Islam.** What a pity

that even Muslim philosophers have forsaken this way and followed in the footsteps of Plato and Aristotle!

The Quran has taught this method at many places and has over and over again presented many a phenomenon as a proof of the Reality, and taught the people how to arrive at the right conclusion so as to perceive the Reality. Accordingly, in verse 67, the Sign of the night and the day has been presented for the deep consideration of the people. The change of day and night is a wonderful Sign and clearly points to the Universal Designer and the All-Powerful Ruler; because it takes place by the turning of the earth on its axis and in relation to the sun with mathematical precision. This alteration is due to the great wisdom of the Designer and has a great purpose behind it because of its innumerable benefits for all that exists on the earth. This points out also to the Providence of the Creator because it demonstrates conclusively that He has made perfect arrangements for the existence of His creation. Moreover, this also shows that the Universal Designer is One and also that He is not playful but Wise and purposeful. This alteration also points towards the great Reality that He, being the

Benefactor and Lord, is worthy of worship, and none else. This is because every other being is provided with its requirements by this alteration of day and night and none provides others; therefore none of them can be the Lord and the Master. In the light of these Signs, how can any other religion, based on mere surmise and guesswork, be considered to be true when it is compared with the Revealed religion which is based on such clear Signs as these.

Commentary of verses from The Meaning of Quran (Translation of Tafheem-ul-Quran) by Syed Abu Al-Ala' Maududi

Questions:

1. Describe the difference between the Islamic manner of philosophical research and other types of philosophical research.
2. What are the requirements for correctly arriving at true conclusions when searching for the truth?
3. Describe how the alteration of the day and night is a sign and what inferences can be drawn from it.
4. Research the various ways people have used to understand the unknown / unseen (both in the past and today) and talk about how the methods used were incorrect / imperfect and lead to wrong beliefs.

Your answer should contain material from the lesson but may also contain information from other credible sources. When including information from other works, give the source of your findings.

Suggested reading: Scientific information in the Quran <http://www.islam-guide.com>