

The Difference between Islamic Humanology and Other Approaches to Humanology

A Review of the Concept of Humanology in Islamic Philosophy

Islamic humanology, **Islamic** self-knowledge, or more precisely, **Islamic philosophy** is the discovery of the basic principles of **thought** presented by Islam. The oneness of God is the truth of Islam, and according to **Muslim thinkers**, blind following is not permissible in Monotheism. In **Islam**, everyone must find out the **truth** of monotheism, and discovering the reality of monotheism is only achievable by **reflecting** on its **reason** and searching within ourselves. In this article, we aim to look at the roots of this kind of thinking and the nature of the answers in this school of thought. We also want to discover and study this school of thought by carefully examining its mechanism.

Characteristics of Islamic Philosophy

Islamic philosophy uses **human** existence to know the dimensions, characteristics, and essence of **human beings**. Discovering, examining, and understanding the laws that govern creation by using our Fitrah¹ are among the features of this **philosophy**. In this **school of thought**, scholars evaluate the **facts** presented in sources such as the Quran and the life story of the Household of Prophet Muhammad (PBUT) based on the **innate truths** embedded in **human beings**. They study and examine whether these **facts** conform to the innate

¹. "Fitra" or "fitrah" is the state of purity and innocence Muslims believe all humans to be born with. Fitrah is an Arabic word that is usually translated as "pure primordial nature," "original disposition," "natural constitution," or "innate nature." According to Islamic theology, human beings are born with an innate inclination of tawhid (Oneness), which is encapsulated in the fitrah along with compassion, intelligence, ihsan and all other attributes that embody the concept of humanity. (<https://www.al-islam.org/tags/fitrah>)

characteristics of humans or not. To do this, they consider the fitri (innate) desires of **human beings**.

The knowledge which is gained this way is not based on mental or experimental facts, but rather it comes from our **human essence** and can be measured by our **intellect** and **fitrah**.

Islamic philosophy is a philosophy that offers acceptable and rational answers to all intellectual concerns of human beings, i.e., issues like death, nonexistence, desires, etc. When facts come from within us, a sound **heart** and **intellect** testify to their truth, and discovering them resolves many **intellectual challenges** that human beings face.

An Overview of Islamic Philosophical Schools

From the 2nd century AH (8th century CE) onwards, a scientific movement in the field of **philosophy** emerged in the **Islamic** world when Muslims translated **philosophical** works from Greek, especially the writings of Aristotle, Galen,² and some dialogues of Plato, into Arabic.

Figures such as Kindi³ and Alfarabi,⁴ who can be considered as founders of the principles and fundamentals of **Islamic philosophy**, tried to present a new **philosophy** that was compatible with **Islamic** thought.⁵ Avicenna expanded and completed this **philosophy** through his theoretical work on various topics and developing new principles and subcategories.⁶

² Greek physician, writer, and philosopher

³ Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi (the first self-identified philosopher in the Arabic tradition)

⁴ Abu Nasr Muhammad al-Farabi

⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol. 1, Book 3, Chapters 21 & 23.

⁶ *ibid*, Chapter 25.

The Mashsha'i **philosophy** uses a completely argumentative method and is considered the first **school of Islamic philosophy**. The foundations of this **school** have been influenced by the theories of Aristotle. The Mashsha'i philosophy considers **intellectual** understanding superior to other methods of cognition.⁷ The Mashsha'i **philosophical** system reached its peak in Iran with the emergence of Avicenna.

The **philosophy** of Ishraq (Illumination), founded by Suhrawardi,⁸ emphasizes not only **rational** methods but also spiritual journey and **intuition**.⁹ Unlike the Mashsha'i **philosophy**, Ishraq recognizes the superiority of spiritual illumination and purification of the **heart**.

Mulla Sadra¹⁰ attempted to create a philosophical school that overcame the weaknesses of previous **philosophical schools** by combining **rational, transmitted (naqli)**,¹¹ and **intuitive** methods. The **school** he founded is known as the 'Transcendent **Theosophy**.'¹² In the Transcendent **Theosophy**, the three sources of knowledge, namely **divine revelation, reason**, and spiritual **intuition**, are closely related so that each acts as a complement and standard for the other. In fact, Mulla Sadra's great achievement was expressing mystical concepts by using the language of **philosophy** and **reason**. Mulla Sadra's philosophy is rational, intuitive, and Islamic. He has founded a rational and intuitive philosophy based on the Islamic religious law.¹³

⁸. Shihab al-Din Yahya ibn Habash Suhrawardi

⁹. *Nasr*, Vol. 1, Book 3, Chapter 19.

¹⁰. Iranian philosopher

¹¹. Transmitted evidence, or "naqli" evidence, includes knowledge that is transmitted through various religious sources, such as the Quran, Hadith, and other Islamic texts, as well as the teachings and writings of Islamic scholars and authorities.

¹². Hikmat-e Muta'aliyah

¹³. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mulla-sadra/>

Avicenna, Suhrawardi, and Mulla Sadra, who are the most important figures in these schools of thought, each attempted to incorporate and adapt Islamic principles within the framework of Greek philosophy. They tried to present a new form and classification of Islamic principles. However, the core principles of Islamic thought are ultimately derived from the Quran and the teachings as well as life stories of the Fourteen Infallibles (PBUT).

What we refer to as Islamic philosophy and Islamic humanology in this series of articles are the same authentic concepts found in these two credible sources. These sources are considered the most reliable sources for extracting Islamic thought in terms of credibility, historical record, and authenticity. The issues raised in the Islamic thought gradually improve the understanding of readers, to the point where they become fully equipped with a comprehensive understanding of the Islamic worldview.

The Main Difference between Islamic Thought and Other Schools of Thought

The conflict that occurs between religion and **philosophy** in other **schools of thought** does not exist in **Islamic thought**. **Islamic thought** does not consider **reason** and **revelation** contrary to each other, but rather it regards them as harmonious and complementary. In addition, Islam is the only religion that never forbids its followers from thinking. Instead, it always recommends reflecting on all aspects of the universe as well as on the whys and hows of its laws. This is because Islamic principles are based on mathematics and the laws of the universe and do not contradict what the intellect achieves.

The only problem that Islamic philosophy has faced is that in recent times, it has departed from the fundamental principles of Islam and has engaged with transmitted (naqli) and intuitive discussions. Its thinkers have withdrawn from

addressing the real and intellectual questions and concerns of people. So the general public and thinkers of other schools of thought do not have a proper understanding and knowledge of Islamic thought. Nowadays, many religious intellectuals consider Islam separate from reason and intellect, just like Christianity.

The Quran, the heavenly book of **Islam**, places a great value on the **intellect** and invites **people** to **reflect** and use **reason** in numerous instances. In fact, rationality is so significant in **Islam** that it asks its followers to set aside blind following and use **reasoning** to prove the truth of Islam.

Islamic philosophy presents a **rational** view of **religion**, the universe, death, **human beings**, and related issues by using reasoned arguments. Since **Islamic philosophy** does not limit itself to predetermined vocabulary or forms, it benefits from other fields as well. In **Islamic philosophy**, the ideal for humans is reaching their final destination, so it uses the **heart** and **revelation**, in addition to **reason**, to achieve this goal.

In this article, we examined the viewpoints, characteristics, and journey of **Islamic thought**. We stated that **Islamic philosophy** seeks to understand the dimensions, characteristics, and essence of **human beings** by using **humans** themselves. It also aims to find the **fitri (innate) truths of humans** based on **religious** sources and the teachings of the Infallibles. This way of thinking relies on gaining accurate information, so it tries to correct the ways of acquiring knowledge and analyzing it from the very beginning. The ultimate goal is to solve the problems that **human beings** face and guide them to reach the ultimate goal of their existence.

If you are interested in a brief comparison of different methods of **humanology**, we recommend reading the article "A Review and Comparison of Various Approaches to Humanology."

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