

**Between Western Philosophy
And Islamic Philosophy
(An Effort To Examine The Common Point
And The Point of Difference)**

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Abstract: This study wants to analyze the common points and the points of difference between Western and Islamic philosophy. This is qualitative research using the exploratory-analytical method. This study finds that Western and Islamic philosophy has contributed to each other. The common point between Western and Islamic Philosophy lies in transmitting the truth. Meanwhile, we can see the point of difference in three aspects. First is the source of knowledge. Western philosophy comes from reason and the five senses, while Islamic philosophy is not only that but also from otority (al-Quran and al-Sunnah). Second, the characteristics of knowledge. Characteristics of knowledge in Western philosophy, namely, sceptical, rational-empirical, dichotomous, and positivistic-objective; while Islamic Philosophy, namely, Qur'anic, harmonisation of reason and revelation, theocentric, and value point of view. The third is the truth value of knowledge. The truth value of knowledge in Western philosophy is relative, while Islamic philosophies are absolute and some are relative.

Keywords: *Western Philosophy, Islamic Philosophy, Meeting Point, Difference Point.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The assumption of Islamic philosophy is an imitation of Greek philosophy is still developing today. Although there have been many objections against it—the views keep flowing. However, it was Greek philosophy that came first and expressed philosophical views. However, this assumption cannot claim that Islamic philosophy imitates the philosophical views previously expressed by Greek philosophy. Islamic philosophy may influence by Greek philosophy. It just needs to be underlined—that influenced doesn't mean plagiarizing (Zar, 2004).

Orientalist from America Oliver Leaman, in the journal “History of the Development of Islamic Philosophy”, states that Islamic philosophy is not a *copy-paste* of Greek philosophy or the result of translations of the works of Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others (Wahyuningsih, 2021). Among Muslim leaders who focus on philosophical studies also comment on this matter. Among them, Prof. Sirajuddin Zar, in his book “Islamic Philosophy: Philosophers and Their Philosophy”, states that Islamic philosophy was born because of the Qur'an as a source of encouragement (Zar, 2004: 16-17).

In its development, both Western and Islamic philosophy wandered the world in their ways, although with the same goal of finding the truth. Both show each other's existence. Between the two of them had been at their respective peaks. They had also felt the blow of the waves so that they almost lost in world civilisation. However, the character of philosophy can never be silent; free and radical—making philosophy revive and give something new that was unexpected in both the Western and Islamic worlds.

Regardless of the method of thinking, the philosophy is free and radical. However, each has its character, the freedom and radicalism of Western and Islamic philosophy. The two cannot be generalised or distinguished because Western and Islamic philosophies come with their methods and objectives. It becomes interesting to examine between the two—find a discussion about the common point and the point of difference.

We can find the differences between Western and Islamic philosophy research in the research by Hendri Saputra entitled “The Thoughts of Western and Islamic Philosophers on the Concept of Motion Dynamics”, examines the phenomenon of motion dynamics and its implications in learning physics (Saputra, 2022). *Second*, the research entitled “Construction of Islamic Philosophy on Greek Philosophy and Modern Western Philosophy” was written by Sofuan Jauhari in 2020, focusing on the existence of Greek philosophy and modern Western philosophy (Jauhari, 2020).

Third, research by Anthony R. Etuk in 2021 entitled “The Enduring Influence of St. Augustine in Western Philosophy” review the thoughts of St. Augustine, who influenced the development of Western philosophy (Etuk, 2021). *Fourth*, research by Abdulrashid Musa et al. in 2018 entitled “An Overview on al-Kindi’s Translations at House of Wisdom: An Islamic Philosophical Reflection” focused on examining al-Kindi’s contribution as a Muslim philosopher to the development of science in Islam (Abdulrashid, 2018). *Fifth*, research by Fuad Mahbub Siraj in 2015 entitled “The relevance of Islamic Philosophy in the Modern Era” focused on how is the relevance of Islamic philosophy in the modern era, especially on philosophy, religious studies and science (Siraj, 2015). *Sixth*, research by Fuad Mahbub Siraj in 2014 entitled “Cosmology in The Perspective of Islamic Philosopher” focused on the concept of cosmology in the Islamic philosopher thought (Siraj, 2014).

Based on the explanation above, this research will compare Western and Islamic philosophy by asking the question what is the difference between Western philosophy and Islam and the common point and difference between Western philosophy and Islamic philosophy.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is qualitative research using the exploratory-analytical method. In this case, the existing data was collected, then explored between one data with other data to get an explanation, then data analysis is carried out to lead to a conclusion. The sources of this research are books and journals related to Western and Islamic philosophy. The author researches comparative studies between Western and Islamic philosophy because there are still many views on Islamic philosophy that are considered imitations of Greek philosophy.

C. WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Generally, Western philosophy had originated in the 6th century BC when humans questioned and discussed the origin of the universe. Thales was considered the first human to give his view of the universe's origin, which he said came from water (Saibatul, 2021). Other philosophers gave their views on the origin of the universe. This early development of philosophy is called the Ancient Greek Age. At this time also appeared Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others, who brought philosophy into a science, and Greek philosophy was at its peak (Nurohman, 2021).

In subsequent developments, philosophy in the West experienced a decline because religious authorities limited the development of philosophical thought. Freedom of thought is not like in previous centuries. Philosophical thinking is allowed if it does not conflict with religion. In this century, a prominent feature is theocentric. That is, religion as the centre of truth, which is different from that—it is considered to have deviated from or opposed to religious dogmas (Musakkir, 2021).

With all the drama of power that came from religious doctrines, the Middle Ages made people lose their temper and carry out rebellions. It was started by Copernicus and Galileo with their revolutionary views and mushroomed (growing rapidly) with the birth of philosophers who expressed the importance of freedom of thought and real human action. Descartes and Hobbes are considered pavers that marked the existence of the modern age. There is no longer truth whose standard is religion in this century but comes from the human ego, scientific discoveries, or science (Kalumbang, 2018).

The continuation of the modern age is enjoyed today or is called Contemporary Western philosophy. This periodisation of philosophy arose against the background of anxiety in seeing the modern age, which tends to think that reason is everything and ignores values and norms. Thus, the main focus of Contemporary Western philosophy is to deconstruct the development of thought that occurred in the modern century. In this contemporary century, sects exist that were the result of deconstruction in the previous century, for example, logical positivism, neo-Marxism, pragmatism, neo-Kantianism, phenomenology, existentialism, and others (Maskhuroh, 2020).

D. ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

As mentioned earlier, Islamic philosophy is not an imitation of Greek philosophy. However, Greek philosophy influences the development process of Islamic philosophy. A. Khudori Soleh emphasised that learning something or someone does not mean repeating what is in him. Cannot separate the name of an idea present in civilisation from the situation and conditions of each culture and the facts in history that Islamic thought rationale existed before Greek philosophy. Then the question is, where did the emergence of rationality in Islam? The answer comes from the Islamic tradition itself—from Muslim scientists who delve into the source of their religion (Soleh, 2014).

The birth of Islamic philosophy as a discipline in the intellectual treasury of Islam came from the movement of translation of works of Greek philosophy into Arabic, which was officially pioneer by the Caliph al-Makmun (813-833 AD). Islamic philosophy includes one of the chains of philosophical thought. It holds an important position in the history of human intellectual thought. The study of Islamic philosophy is as important as other philosophies. The West is familiar with Greek philosophy thanks to the services of Islamic philosophy, which not only “bridges” it to the Western world, but it nourishes and develops it (Siraj, 2015).

The Qur’an and hadith as primary sources in the teachings of Islam encourage its adherents to think much and deeply. The words used by the Qur’an in describing the activity of thinking are *‘aqala* (45 verses), *nazhara* (30 verses), *tadabbara* (several verses), *tafakkara* (16 verses), *faqih* (16 verses), *tazakkara* (40 verses), *fahima* (several verses), *Ulû al- bâb*, *ulû al- ’ilm*, *ulû al- abshâr*, *ulû al- nuhâ* and the word of the verse itself. The command to think is also found in the verses of *kauniyyat* which encourage Muslims to think and reflect on events in the universe. Similarly, the hadiths that give a high value to the intellect. So, thinking a lot and deeply is a clear and firm teaching in Islam. Suppose philosophy is said to think radically and profoundly. In that case, this understanding is in line with the content of the Qur’an and hadith, which encourages its adherents to think deeply about everything, so that it reaches of all foundations, namely God the Creator of the universe. Therefore, Ibn Rusyd said that philosophy is not haram in Islam; even philosophical law is obligatory or at least recommended (Siraj, 2015).

Keep in mind that Islamic philosophy is a religiously philosophy, but it does not ignore the issues of philosophy. So, the assertiveness about the existence of Islamic philosophy must be seen from the basic teachings of the religion. Because in fact, if there is no inspiration of the Qur'an as a source of encouragement, then philosophy in the Islamic world in the true sense never existed. While Greek civilization and thought (as well as others) only complemented in speeding up the birth process alone. Indications in this direction show that although the Arabs of Jahiliyyah had relations with some of the surrounding areas, the culture and thought in those areas did not affect them. Perhaps, in this case, the statement of Seyyed Hossein Nasr can be accepted when he said that the Islamic scholars of the past in studying the universe was not merely the impulse of the scientific soul contained in them. Was the inspiration of religious teachings to express the wisdom of the Creator in creation- Him and to pay attention to the revelations of God in the universe.

Thus, like other people, Muslims have succeeded in formulating a philosophy that is in line with the principles of their religion and social conditions. If different philosophies do not appear, the philosophy in Islam will still appear. It occupies a key position in the history of philosophical thought, which had successfully bridged Greek philosophy to the Western world when it was still shrouded in darkness, backwardness, and ignorance. The urge to think a lot and profoundly distinguishes between Islam and Christianity. Christian scripture (I Corinthians 1, 1: 21-4) is dogmatic and strictly forbids philosophical thinking. The result of this prohibition is that there is a separation between religion and philosophy (as well as science). This separation gives rise to a very misleading secular notion, which will eventually give birth to the idea of a dead God and so on.

As for Islam, the development of philosophy is driven by scholars in the spirit of the Qur'an. In other words, it considers the elements of *rûh al-fikr al-Islâmî*. Thus, the acceptance of Greek philosophy (as well as different philosophies) by Islamic philosophers was not haphazard but through a strict filter of the Qur'an. They reject every doctrine that is contrary to the Qur'an, and they accept and develop every philosophy that is not contrary to the basic principles of Islamic teachings.

Freedom of thought in Islam is limited only by the text of the verse, which is *al-muhkamât*, absolutely true. Text like this is minor. Suppose this is following the development of human dynamics. In general, the text of *al-*

muhkamât is related to worship, such as prayer and others. However, in terms of how prayer is performed, it no longer belongs to al-muhkamât, because it requires an interpretation of how and where it performed. Therefore, if such texts in Islam are extensive and detailed, then the dynamics of society regulated by the system will be bound and hinder society's development. Precisely that thought in philosophy (as well as others) can be said not to be as narrow and not as accessible as free. It is not narrow because the Qur'an, with its various verses and hadiths in its different editors, encourages its people to do thinking activities. At the same time, it is not as accessible because it is limited by the text of the verse that is al-muhkamât. On this basis, philosophy in Islam can develop and does not depart from its basic teachings and other Islamic sciences such as fiqh and others. In other words, Islamic philosophy never discards or violates verses.

Thus, Islamic philosophy differs in principle from Greek philosophy. The character of Islamic philosophy is a theist (godly), while the nature of Greek philosophy is secular and atheist. In simple terms, can summarize the form of Islamic philosophy into three:

Islamic philosophy discusses issues that have been mentioned by Greek philosophy as long as it does not contradict the basic principles of Islamic teachings, such as the universe and the spirit. However, in addition to the way the solution in Islamic philosophy is different from Greek philosophy, also Islamic philosophers develop and add to it the results of their thinking. As with engineering, philosophy as the parent of science is deepened and refined by generations to come.

Islamic philosophy discusses issues that previous philosophies have not discussed, such as the philosophy of prophethood (al-nazhariyyat al-nubuwwat). In Islamic philosophy there is a reconciliation between religion and philosophy, between faith and wisdom, between revelation and reason. Such forms are often seen in Muslim philosophers' minds, such as *al-madînah al-fâdhillah* (Main State) in the philosophy of al-Farabi; that the head of state is a prophet or a philosopher. Similarly, al-Farabi's opinion on *nazhariyyat al-nubuwwat* (prophetic philosophy): that the prophet and the philosopher both received the truth from the same source, namely the Active Mind (Mind X), which is also called Gabriel. But it differs only in terms of technique, the philosopher through the intellect mustafad with exercises, while the prophet with a strong imagination that he acquires without training.

Therefore, the knowledge obtained by the prophet (revelation) cannot possibly be contrary to the knowledge acquired by philosophers. The situation as above arises and the development of Islamic philosophy under the auspices of a religion that is not inferior to the accuracy and precision in solving problems compared to other philosophies. Islamic philosophers have discussed the issue of existing reality, where it comes from and where it ends, and ways to obtain the truth of proper knowledge and set the measure of right and wrong, good and evil, and the theory of happiness. They have even developed and added research results. Likewise, the matter of divinity has put forward a discussion not only of the existence of God but of His attributes and oneness, as well as *qadha* and *qadar*, which are not found in Greek philosophy. Therefore, what is called Islamic philosophy is the profound (radical) thinking of Muslims in matters of divinity, prophethood, man, and the universe based on the teachings of Islam.

Islamic philosophy is the result of the thinking of Muslims as a whole. It mentioned that the thought of Muslims is the encouragement of the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith. The high position of the intellect in these two sources of Islamic teachings met with the significant role of intelligence and knowledge that flourished in the civilizations of other peoples, especially the Greek, Persian and Indian cultures. In other words, Muslims are the inheritors of the three societies of the nations that have previously inherited the civilizations of the surrounding countries such as Babylon, Egypt, Hebrews, and others.

E. BETWEEN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Both in the Islamic world and the West, philosophy was born and developed with the same goal of finding the truth. Sometimes reason wins against myth, and sometimes the reason is forced not to move by religion with a variety of doctrines, also sometimes reason can show its existence again, and sometimes there is also intuition in philosophy (Adhim, 2018: 3). It shows how philosophy goes on, like a spinning wheel—from time to time; philosophy is at the bottom, then at the top, and when the wheel stops and then turns again until it reaches its destination.

The character of philosophy that continues to rotate—actively moves like that, partly because of the strict methodology of thinking that exists in it. Both Western and Islamic philosophies with this methodology of thinking

lead people to discuss, research, and test the truth and accountability of ideas and thoughts. In a sense, making an idea can justify thought intellectually and scientifically (Bagir, 2020: 39). Philosophy, both Western and Islamic—deserves a thumbs up, regardless of the pros and cons that have occurred, as well as the upheaval it has created.

Furthermore, with a strict methodology of thinking, both in the West and Islam gave birth to a scientific revolution that made epistemology undergo a substantial change. So that the understanding of life becomes more complex and the urge to know the world becomes more complicated, even though the fruit can produce new knowledge (Husaini, 2019: 7). Philosophy in the two worlds seems never to cease to play its role in world civilisation. As an actor, philosophy continues to work hard at acting until the director says stop.

Historically, there have been mutual contributions between Western and Islamic philosophy. It cannot forget that the data on Greek philosophy that appeared first accelerated the development of philosophy in the Islamic world (Zar, 2004: 17). However, Western civilisation nearly drowned and lost its life in the Middle Ages. Islamic civilisation progressed with the birth of philosophers and their works, which were later considered to have helped revival in the West with the birth of the modern age (Obaid, 2010).

F. THE COMMON POINT AND THE POINT OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Talking about the meeting point between Western philosophy and Islam, it can see that the root purpose of its presence is to find the facts of truth in life. The case when referring to the meaning of philosophical thought to find wisdom—the way to the truth. Philosophers in the West and Islam have tried hard, of course, to analyse this universal phenomenon so that their curiosity is personally curated, as well as the general public who want to understand the signs that God has raised through His creations.

The points of difference between Western and Islamic philosophy can see in several categories, including the following:

First is the source of knowledge. Knowledge in Western philosophy is a rational idea built on empirical experience and has teste for truth. The source comes from reason (rationalism) and experience / the five senses (empiricism) so that it affects the truth, which is realism (according to reality) and idealism (found in human ideas). Knowledge in Islamic philosophy is summarised in

the word “*al-ilmu*”. It means the arrival of an active and creative soul to the meaning of something from God to produce truth and reality through the senses, reason, and science. The source comes from two things: (1) *Divine* (sourced from God), which consists of three parts; al-Qur'an, al-Sunnah, and intuition (inspiration). (2) Human sources (sourced from humans) are divided into two; senses and common sense.

Second, the characteristics of knowledge. The characteristics of knowledge in Western philosophy are; (1) Skeptical (departing from doubt). (2) It is rational-empirical, so it is anthropocentric. (3) It is dichotomous (separation between values and facts). (4) It is positivistic-objective, which allows for criticism of the knowledge obtained so that the truth is relative and anti-metaphysical (denies God's role).

While the characteristics of knowledge in Islamic philosophy are; (1) Relying on spiritual power (al-Qur'an), this means that the character of knowledge in Islam comes from God, who is omniscient in knowledge, and the process is to obtain knowledge must pay attention to the values of Islamic teachings so that the resulting truth is pure as desired by its Creator (God). (2) There is harmony between revelation and reason. In principle, in Islam, reason and revelation are not contradictory but complementary; the goal is to lead to the truth, as al-Kindi's description gives an idea of harmonisation between religion and philosophy. (3) Has a theocentric orientation. Any knowledge in the philosophy of orientation upholds God as the creator and regulator of the universe. (3) Bound value. There is no knowledge in philosophy that leads to immorality or away from agreed values.

The third is the Truth Value of knowledge. The truth of knowledge in Western philosophy is relative because knowledge develops continuously so that the truth of current knowledge can refute by the truth of knowledge that comes next when it is no longer relevant. Meanwhile, in Islamic philosophy, the truth value of knowledge is divided into 2 (two) categories, namely, (1) Absolute (al-Qur'an) truth that is original and authentic but has a double implication (*al-sunnah and Ilham*). (2) Relative (reason and senses) are open to debate.

G. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can conclude that Western philosophy and Islam have a relationship. The emergence of Greek philosophy first

accelerated the development of philosophy in the Islamic world. On the other hand, the advancement of Islamic civilisation in the Middle Ages became a dark period of philosophy and science in the West; due to the progress of Islamic civilisation—the West was able to rise again to meet the modern age. The meeting point between Western philosophy and Islam lies in the goal to lead to the truth. Meanwhile, the point of difference between the two can see in three aspects: *First*, the source of knowledge. Western philosophy comes from reason and the five senses, while Islamic philosophy comes from reason and the five senses and texts (al-Quran and al-Sunnah). *Second*, the characteristics of knowledge. Characteristics of knowledge in Western philosophy, namely, sceptical, rational-empirical, dichotomous, and positivistic-objective, while Islamic philosophy has the characteristics of knowledge, namely, Qur’anic, harmonisation of reason, and revelation, theocentric, and bound by values. *The third* is the truth value of knowledge. The truth value of knowledge in Western philosophy is relative, while Islamic philosophies are absolute and some are relative.

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