

ISLAMIC RATIONALISM: BETWEEN TRADITION AND CONTROVERSY

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Abstrak: *Jauh sebelum filsafat Yunani mempengaruhi pemikiran Islam, Islam sudah memiliki tradisi pemikiran rasional. Studi ini menelusuri peran bahasa dalam pengembangan rasionalisme Islam dan membahas klaim orientalis abad ke-19 bahwa filsafat Islam hanyalah tiruan dari filsafat Yunani. Menggunakan pendekatan penelitian pustaka kualitatif, studi ini menemukan bahwa: (1) Rasionalisme dalam Islam adalah produk asli dari usaha intelektual Islam yang berakar pada Al-Qur'an dan Hadis. Penafsiran terhadap sumber-sumber ini melahirkan sistem rasional Islam, terutama melalui studi bahasa (nahw-sarf), membuktikan bahwa rasionalisme Islam merupakan bagian intrinsik dari tradisinya. (2) Klaim bahwa rasionalisme Islam diadopsi dari pemikiran Yunani dibantah dengan bukti bahwa pemikiran rasional telah dipraktikkan dalam Islam jauh sebelum pengaruh filsafat Yunani. Para filsuf Muslim kemudian mengembangkan ide-ide Yunani, menciptakan bentuk rasionalitas yang unik yang dikenal sebagai hikmah, menunjukkan bahwa filsafat Islam adalah tradisi intelektual yang orisinal.*

Kata Kunci: *Rasionalisme Islam, Logika Bahasa, Hikmah*

Judul: *Rasionalisme Islam: Antara Tradisi dan Kontroversi*

Abstract: Long before Greek philosophy influenced Islamic thought, Islam demonstrated a rich tradition of rational inquiry. This study investigates the pivotal role of language in shaping Islamic rationalism and critically evaluates claims by 19th-century Orientalists that Islamic philosophy merely replicated Greek philosophical principles. Employing a qualitative literature research approach, this study reveals that: (1) Islamic rationalism emerges as an authentic product of intellectual pursuits within Islam, deeply grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith. The interpretative frameworks derived from these foundational texts facilitated the development of a distinctive Islamic rational system, particularly through the rigorous examination of language (nahw-sarf). This underscores Islamic rationalism as an essential element of its intellectual legacy. 2. The contention that Islamic rationalism was derived from Greek philosophy is challenged by evidence demonstrating the early adoption of rational thought within Islamic scholarship, predating significant encounters with Greek ideas. Subsequent Muslim philosophers assimilated and adapted Greek philosophical concepts, culminating in the formation of a unique rational tradition known as hikmah. This evolutionary process highlights the originality and complexity of Islamic philosophical thought as a distinct intellectual tradition.

Keywords: Islamic Rationalism, Linguistic Logic, Hikmah



INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim intellectual discourse, there is a pervasive notion that Islamic philosophy did not originate independently within Islam but rather emerged as a mere medium for transmitting Greek philosophical ideas. This perspective maintains that the primary content of Islamic philosophy is comprised of Greek philosophical concepts translated and repackaged into Arabic, lacking originality and authenticity. Proponents of this view maintain that Islamic philosophers of the medieval period were primarily intermediaries, responsible for preserving and transmitting Greek philosophical heritage to subsequent generations. They argue that these philosophers contributed little to the evolution of philosophical thought themselves. This characterization situates Islamic philosophy within the context of Western intellectual history as a derivative and secondary tradition.¹

These skeptical attitudes towards Islamic philosophy can be traced back to 19th-century Orientalist scholars such as G.T. Tennemann and Ernest Renan, whose works continue to influence scholarly discourse. Tennemann and Renan contended that despite engaging in rational and philosophical pursuits, Islamic thinkers were fundamentally incapable of producing original philosophical ideas. These scholars attributed this perceived deficiency to several factors. First, they argued that Quranic teachings impose constraints on Islamic thinkers, prioritizing adherence to religious dogma over independent critical inquiry. Second, they posited that stereotypes about the intellectual capabilities of the Arab nation, which they characterized as inherently non-philosophical due to their supposed emotional and imaginative tendencies, contributed to this deficiency. Third, they advanced racialized notions that classified Semitic peoples as intellectually inferior compared to the Greeks or Aryans.² According to this perspective, these various factors collectively prevented the emergence of genuinely novel philosophical ideas within Islamic civilisation, resulting in Islamic philosophical output being limited to a derivative reiteration of Greek philosophical doctrines tailored to fit Islamic theological frameworks. Consequently, Islamic philosophy, as portrayed by these Orientalist scholars, becomes synonymous with a mere superficial adoption and adaptation of Greek philosophical thought rather than an independent and creative intellectual endeavor within its own right.

The discourse surrounding rationalism within Islam has been extensively investigated by scholars representing diverse theoretical orientations. M. Umer Chapra, for instance, argues that rationalism can coexist with Islamic teachings, citing classical Muslim intellectuals, particularly figures from the Mu'tazilah school, who emphasized the use of reason in

¹ Musa Kazhim, "Kekhasan Filsafat Islam" Pengantar dalam Majid Farkhy, *Sejarah Filsafat Islam: Sebuah Peta Kronologis* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), xi.

² Sirajuddin Zar, *Filsafat Islam: Filosof Dan Filsafatnya* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2004), 8.

theological and philosophical inquiries.³ Building upon Chapra's insights, Setiawan et al. emphasize the pivotal role of Mu'tazilah thinkers in advancing rationalist thought within Islamic intellectual history.⁴ Moreover, Abd Rahman contributes to this discourse by tracing the evolution of rationalism in Islamic theology through his scholarly writings.⁵ Muhammad Bahar's comprehensive study examines the broader historical development of rationalism, illuminating its multifaceted manifestations within Islamic thought.⁶ Sabara explores the discourse between reason and revelation, which profoundly influences Islamic rationalism by delving into the intricate interplay and philosophical implications of the tension between human intellect and divine guidance, thereby shaping the contours of Islamic rationalistic thought in profound ways.⁷

Further scholarly contributions examine specific rationalist figures and their contributions to Islamic intellectual history. For instance, Abbas examines the rationalist ideas of Muhammad Abduh in his work "*Muhammad Abduh: The Concept of Rationalism in Islam*,"⁸ while Kholis explores Ibnu Rushd's classical Islamic rationalism in his article "*Classical Islamic Rationalism in Ibnu Rushd's Thought*."⁹ In his article "*An Analysis of Ibn Khaldun's Thoughts About Islamic Rationalism*," Amir examines Ibn Khaldun's concept of rationalism, offering insights into the influence of historical context on rational thought.¹⁰ Irfan contributes to the discourse by discussing Harun Nasution's development of rational theological thinking in "*Harun Nasution's Rational Islamic Paradigm: Grounding Harmony Theology*." This article highlights Nasution's efforts to reconcile rationalism with Islamic theological principles.¹¹ Furthermore, Rajali conducts a historical study of Syed Ameer Ali, a prominent 19th-century rationalist thinker, in "*Syed Ameer Ali: A Figure of Rationalism in the Islamic*

³ M. Umer Chapra, "Is Rationalism Possible in the Muslim World?," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 16, no. 4 (January 1, 1999): 103–28, <https://doi.org/10.35632/AJIS.V16I4.2088>.

⁴ Heru Chakra Setiawan and Afif Gita Fauzi, "Rasionalisme Mu'tazilah Dan Pengaruhnya Analisis Historis," *AL-MUFASSIR* 4, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.32534/amf.v4i1.2673>.

⁵ Abd Rahman, "Tradisionalisme Dan Rasionalisme Dalam Pemikiran Teologi Islam," *Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Ilmu Keislaman* 2, no. 2 (2020).

⁶ H Muhammad Bahar and Akkase Teng, "RASIONALIS DAN RASIONALISME DALAM PERSPEKTIF SEJARAH," *JURNAL ILMU BUDAYA* 4, no. 2 Desember (December 1, 2016): 1623–62, <https://doi.org/10.34050/JIB.V4I2>.

⁷ Sabara, "Polemik Akal Dan Wahyu Dalam Lanskap Pemikiran Islam (Antara Rasionalisme Vis a Vis Fideisme)," *Aqidab-Ta: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidab* 1, no. 1 (2018).

⁸ Nurlaelah Abbas et al., "MUHAMMAD ABDUH : KONSEP RASIONALISME DALAM ISLAM," *Jurnal Dakwah Tabligh* 15, no. 1 (2014): 51–68, <https://doi.org/10.24252/JDT.V15I1.338>.

⁹ Nur Kholis, "RASIONALISME ISLAM KLASIK DALAM PEMIKIRAN IBNU RUSYD," *International Journal Ihya' Ulum Al-Din* 19, no. 2 (November 2, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.21580/IHYA.19.2.2160>.

¹⁰ Ahmad Nabil Amir, "An Analysis of Ibnu Khaldun's Thoughts About Islamic Rationalism," *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama Sosiasal Dan Budaya* 5, no. 1 (2021).

¹¹ Muhammad Irfan, "PARADIGMA ISLAM RASIONAL HARUN NASUTION: MEMBUMIKAN TEOLOGI KERUKUNAN," *JURNAL ILMIAH SOSIOLOGI AGAMA (JISA)* 1, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.30829/jisa.v1i2.5434>.

World of the 19th Century,” elucidating Ali’s contributions to advancing rationalist thought within the Islamic intellectual milieu.¹² Collectively, these scholarly endeavors enrich our understanding of how rationalism has evolved within Islamic thought, emphasizing its continuity and adaptation across different epochs and intellectual contexts

From the explanation of several previous studies above, in general it can be grouped into three things, namely discussions related to the position of rationalism in Islam, discussions of the history of groups of Islamic theologians who adhere to rationalism, and studying several Islamic thinkers who have ideas about rationalism in Islam. Meanwhile, in this article the author will try to critically examine the roots of the Islamic rational tradition by presenting historiographic evidence of traces of the Islamic rational tradition.

The aim of this article is, first of all, to respond to the accusations of orientalist who consider that Islamic philosophy is not a genuine product of Islamic intellectuals. Second, it shows that Islamic rationalism and philosophy are not plagiarized from Greece, even though in historical records Greek philosophy played a major role in the development of Islamic philosophy, but Islam itself created the foundation of methodological thinking starting from the rationalization of language. The expected benefit of this article is to provide historical insight into the development of philosophy and rationalism in Islam.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher employs a meticulous approach with the aim of achieving comprehensive and nuanced findings. The methodological framework employed here entails a descriptive approach, specifically employing qualitative analysis through library research. This method involves the scrutiny of various scholarly sources, including books, journals, encyclopedias, articles, and other relevant academic works, in order to underpin the investigation effectively. Both primary and secondary data are collected and subjected to thorough narrative analysis to elucidate the intricate relationships and concepts central to the research topic. Primary data primarily comprises historical texts on Islamic philosophy, while secondary sources encompass a range of scholarly contributions pertaining to the broader theme of rationalism. Through systematic qualitative analysis, findings are synthesized into coherent narratives and hypotheses, which ultimately inform the conclusions drawn from this research endeavor.

¹² MD HASRI BIN RAJALI, “SYED AMEER ALI: TOKOH RASIONALISME DALAM DUNIA ISLAM ABAD KE-19 (SYED AMEER ALI: MUSLIM RATIONALIST IN THE 19TH CENTURY),” *UMRAN - International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 4, no. 3 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.11113/umran2017.4n3.100>.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Polemics on the Existence of Islamic Rationality

Western scholars, traditionally known as orientalists, have held divergent views regarding the existence and nature of Islamic philosophy over different epochs. In the 19th century, many Western scholars adamantly denied the presence of a distinct Islamic philosophical tradition. They viewed Islamic thought as mere derivative or subservient to Greek philosophy, dismissing it as lacking originality or independent development. This perspective stemmed partly from a Eurocentric bias that marginalized non-Western intellectual traditions and underscored the perceived supremacy of ancient Greek philosophical heritage. However, attitudes among Western scholars began to shift notably in the 20th century. Increasingly, scholars recognized the rich and intricate philosophical discourse that emerged within Islamic civilization. This reevaluation was driven by a deeper exploration of primary texts and manuscripts, which revealed a nuanced engagement with philosophical inquiries that spanned metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology. Some scholars began to view Islamic philosophy not merely as a derivative phenomenon but as a distinct intellectual endeavor that made unique contributions to global philosophical discourse. This shift in perspective was pivotal in acknowledging the autonomy and sophistication of Islamic philosophical thought beyond its historical context.

G.T. Tennemann, a prominent figure in this discourse, articulated a skeptical view in the early modern period regarding the originality of Islamic philosophical contributions. Tennemann argued that Islamic thinkers predominantly rehashed and interpreted Aristotle's ideas, often intertwining them with Islamic theological doctrines that emphasized faith over critical inquiry. He identified several factors impeding the development of an indigenous Islamic philosophy, including theological constraints stemming from Quranic teachings, sectarian rivalries within Sunni Islam, incomplete understanding of Aristotelian concepts, and a predisposition towards theological speculation rather than rigorous philosophical inquiry.¹³ Tennemann's critique underscored broader debates within Western scholarship about the nature of Islamic intellectual history and its relationship with classical Greek philosophy.

Tennemann's perspectives on Islamic philosophy were subsequently embraced by subsequent Western scholarship, particularly influencing thinkers such as Ernest Renan (d. 1892). Renan, drawing on his expertise in Semitic languages, argued that Semitic peoples, including Arabs, lacked the inherent capacity for philosophical thought due to their cultural predisposition towards imaginative forms such as poetry. This perspective is articulated in Renan's work, "*Averroes et l'Averroïsme*," where he proposes that Islamic philosophy merely

¹³ Check Abu Ahmadi, *Filsafat Islam*, cetakan I (Semarang: Toha Putra, 1982), 30.

reiterates Greek philosophical concepts without adding substantial originality or depth.¹⁴ Similarly, in “*Histoire Generale et Systeme Compare des Langues Semitiques*,” Renan reiterates this stance, asserting that what is referred to as “Arab philosophy” essentially constitutes a transmission of Greek philosophical ideas into Arabic, primarily through the works of philosophers. Renan’s critique highlights a pervasive Eurocentric bias that has historically marginalized non-Western philosophical traditions as derivative and intellectually inferior.¹⁵

As the 20th century progressed, attitudes towards Islamic and Arabic philosophy gradually evolved towards a more nuanced perspective. Scholars such as L. Gauthier (d. 1897) began to recognize the intellectual capabilities of Arab thinkers, challenging earlier dismissals. Gauthier acknowledged that Arabs, like other nations, possessed the capacity for sophisticated philosophical reasoning. He placed particular emphasis on Islam’s rich semiotic tradition, which he contrasted in a favorable manner with the abstract tendencies of Greek philosophy. Gauthier observed that Muslim philosophers faced a distinctive challenge in reconciling Western philosophical principles with Islamic theological doctrines, navigating a complex terrain where faith and reason intersected. He commended the meticulousness with which Muslim philosophers engaged in this synthesis, appreciating their dedication to intellectual rigor despite the tensions inherent in their dual commitment to Islamic teachings and Western philosophical methodologies. This shift signified a departure from earlier reductionist views, marking a shift towards a more appreciative understanding of the complexities and contributions of Islamic philosophical thought within the broader history of ideas.

Émile Bréhier, a prominent scholar and advocate of the Semitic-Aryan theory, expounds on this subject in his seminal work, “*Histoire de la Philosophie*.” Bréhier asserts that the majority of Arab philosophers were individuals who had embraced Islam and composed their works in Arabic. However, he contends that these philosophers were predominantly of Aryan rather than Semitic descent. This distinction, he argues, is crucial for understanding the intellectual currents that influenced their philosophical pursuits. According to Bréhier, the Arab philosophers’ Aryan heritage played a significant role in shaping their intellectual endeavors. They sought intellectual sustenance not primarily from Semitic traditions but from the rich philosophical legacies of Greek antiquity. This inclination led them to engage deeply with the works of Greek philosophers, which had begun to be translated into Syriac and Arabic by the Nestorians around the 6th century CE. These translations were pivotal in the transmission of Greek philosophical thought into the Islamic world.

Max Horten (1874-1945), a distinguished Orientalist, made a significant contribution to the discourse on Islamic rationality by elucidating the depth of rational thought within the

¹⁴ Compare with Hanafi, *Pengantar Filsafat Islam*, Cetakan II (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1982), 25–27.

¹⁵ Ahmadi, *Filsafat Islam*, 31.

Islamic intellectual tradition. He argued that Islamic philosophy should not be limited to the contributions of philosophers such as Avicenna and Averroes, but should also include the works of the *mutakallimūn*, Islamic theologians engaged in *kalām*. Horten emphasized that their discussions of key issues such as *wujūd* (existence) and the nature of reality often preceded and influenced later Islamic philosophers, establishing a continuum of rational thought. He acknowledged that Islamic philosophers actively engaged with Aristotelian philosophy and expanded upon it, offering novel interpretations that demonstrated considerable intellectual creativity. This synthesis, combined with the unwavering faith of Islamic scholars, provided a unique perspective that distinguished their work. Horten's scholarship underscores the comprehensive nature of Islamic rationality and the importance of recognizing the unique contributions of Islamic scholars to the global philosophical heritage.¹⁶

The Sources of Islamic Rationality

Islamic rational thought is fundamentally rooted in the Qur'an and the Hadith, as emphasized by Sayyed Hossein Nasr, who asserts that Islamic philosophy is based on Islamic revelation, which provides all its principles, inspirations, and main points of discussion. This foundation has radically transformed thought in the Islamic context, giving rise to a "prophetic philosophy" characterized by a deep engagement with the metaphysical and ethical dimensions of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Islamic thinkers integrate these teachings into their philosophical inquiries, addressing existential, epistemological, and metaphysical questions through the lens of divine revelation. This approach shapes the methodology and goals of Islamic philosophy, ensuring that it remains consistent with core Islamic teachings while engaging with broader philosophical discourse. The Qur'an and Hadith thus play a central role in guiding Islamic philosophical inquiry, resulting in a distinctive tradition that underscores the enduring importance of Islamic revelation in shaping Islamic philosophical thought.

The source of Islamic rationality is often identified as the Qur'an, supported by the harmony between textual and contextual interpretations.¹⁷ Despite this, some orientalists, such as Noldeke (1836-1930), who believed the Qur'an was composed by the Prophet Muhammad,¹⁸ and Wansbrough (1928-2002), who skeptically addressed certain phenomena described in the Qur'an like the *Isra' Mi'raj* (17:1), challenge its originality.¹⁹ Logically,

¹⁶ Ibrahim Mazdkur, *Fi Al-Falsafati Al-Islamiyati* (Kairo: Darul al-Ma'arif, 1955), 212.

¹⁷ A. Khudori Soleh, "Mencermati Sejarah Perkembangan Filsafat Islam," *TSAQAFAH* 10, no. 1 (May 31, 2014): undefined-undefined, <https://doi.org/10.21111/TSAQAFAH.V10I1.64>.

¹⁸ Theodore Noldeke, *The Quran: An Introductory Essay*, ed. N.A Newman (Hatfield: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 6.

¹⁹ Ulfiana Ulfiana, "Otentisitas Al-Qur'an Perspektif John Wansbrough," *Ushuluna: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 1, no. 2 (2020): 220, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ushuluna.v1i2.15343>.

phenomena like the *Isra' Mi'raj* are difficult to accept due to the lack of scientific evidence, contrasting with Sufi reasoning, which posits that the dreams of prophets, such as those of Yusuf (12:4) and Ibrahim (37:102), are realities rather than mere imagination. This perspective underscores the differing approaches to understanding the content of Qur'an, with rational analysis often requiring empirical evidence, while mystical interpretations embrace spiritual and metaphysical dimensions.²⁰

The rationality of Islam as derived from the Qur'an is deeply rooted in its linguistic complexity. Although it was revealed to the Arabs in Arabic, the text of the Qur'an contains expressions that were not easily understandable even to native speakers, underscoring the need to develop linguistic methodologies.²¹ This need led to the systematic study of Arabic language and grammar, which in turn facilitated the emergence of rational thought, especially in the fields of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and theology.²² The intricate linguistic structure of the Qur'an thus required scholarly efforts to interpret its meanings accurately, fostering a tradition of rational analysis and intellectual rigor.

Furthermore, empirical evidence in the form of scientific knowledge embedded in the Qur'an supports Islamic rationality.²³ For example, the heliocentric theory later revived by Copernicus (1473-1543) finds an earlier mention in the Qur'an [36:38-40], revealed during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (570-632). This predates Copernicus by several centuries and illustrates that the Qur'an contains insights consistent with later scientific discoveries. Such content is not attributed to Muhammad himself, but to the divine authorship of the Qur'an, emphasizing its role as a source of both spiritual guidance and rational inquiry.²⁴ The presence of scientific principles in the Qur'anic text exemplifies the integration of faith and reason, a hallmark of the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Hikmah: The Rationality of Islam

The philosophy and model of rationality unique to Islam is called *hikmah* (wisdom) by some Muslim intellectuals. Linguistically, the Arabic terms for philosophy are “*al-falsafah*” and “*al-hikmah*”. The term “*al-falsafah*” is a loanword from Greek that was introduced into Arabic during the transliteration of Greek philosophical works in the 7th and 8th centuries. In contrast, “*al-hikmah*” is an indigenous Arabic term that historically predates “*al-falsafah*.” Most

²⁰ Miswari and Dzul Fahmi, “Historitas Dan Rasionalitas Isra' Mi'raj,” *At-Tafkir: Jurnal Pendidikan Hukum Dan Sosial Keagamaan* XII, no. 2 (2019): 164.

²¹ A. Khudori Soleh, “RASIONALISME ISLAM BERAWAL DARI BAHASA,” *LiNGUA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa Dan Sastra* 2, no. 1 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.18860/ling.v2i1.554>.

²² Ahmad Dhairobi Nur and Ahmad Khudori Soleh, “Kontribusi Logika Bahasa Terhadap Rasionalisme Islam,” *Qolamuna: Jurnal Studi Islam* 9, no. 02 (2024): 62.

²³ Rizqon Halal Syah Aji, “Matematika Dalam Rasionalitas Al-Qur'an; Bukti Perennialisme Atas Nalar Saintifik,” *Salam: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Syar-I* 7, no. 9 (2020): 798, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sjsbs.v7i9.16592>.

²⁴ Ahmed Deedat, *The Choice: Dialog Islam-Kristen*, ed. Tim Al-Kautsar, trans. Setiawan Budi Utomo (Jakarta: Al-Kautsar, 1999), 173.

Arabic writers use “*al-hikmah*” to refer to philosophy and “*hakim*” to refer to philosophers, although some argue that “*al-hikmah*” encompasses a broader scope than the conventional understanding of philosophy. These terms continue to be used by scholars and those interested in Islamic studies to refer to philosophy.²⁵

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the debate over the use of “*al-falsafah*” or “*al-hikmah*” has been an important issue since these terms were introduced into Islamic thought and scholarship. He wrote:

“Based on the Qur’an and the Hadith which contain the word *hikmah*, Muslim thinkers from different schools of thought over the centuries have tried to provide a definition of the meaning of *hikmah* and also *falsafa*... each school of thought has tried to define *hikmah* or *falsafa* based on its perspective. And this question remains the main interest of various schools of Islamic thought, especially as long as the schools of Islamic philosophy are studied... the term *hikmah* brings great debate and is claimed by many groups such as Sufis, *Mutakallimun*, and philosophers.”²⁶

Among the classical thinkers who interpreted “*hikmah*” as synonymous with philosophy was Ibn Rushd (1126-1198 C.E.). He understood philosophy as a method of discovering true truth through systematic and structured reasoning, a concept he found reflected in *hikmah*. Ibn Rushdy rooted his interpretation of hikmah in several Qur’anic verses, such as *al-Hashr* [59:2], *al-A’raf* [7:184], *al-An’am* [6:75], *al-Ghashiyah* [88:16-17], and *Al Imran* [3:191], which he saw as exhortations to optimize the use of reason and to engage in rational inquiry into the universe.²⁷ For Ibn Rushdy, these verses provided a basis for encouraging intellectual endeavor and the pursuit of truth, thus integrating rational thought with Islamic teachings. He argued that Islamic law and philosophy were not in conflict, but rather complementary and mutually reinforcing, both embodied in the Qur’anic concept of hikmah.²⁸ This interpretation influenced later thinkers such as Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi al-Maqtul (1153-1191 A.D.). Although Suhrawardi used different terminology, referring to his system as “*al-Hikmah al-Isbrajiyah*” or the philosophy of enlightenment,²⁹ he similarly viewed Qur’anic wisdom as a form of philosophical activity. Thus, both Ibn Rushdy and Suhrawardi emphasized the compatibility and mutual reinforcement of Islamic wisdom and philosophical inquiry.

²⁵ Imam Iqbal, “Filsafat Sebagai Hikmah: Konteks Berfilsafat Di Dunia Islam,” *Refleksi Jurnal Filsafat Dan Pemikiran Islam* 17, no. 1 (January 30, 2017): 23–42, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ref.v17i1.1870>.

²⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “The Meaning and Concept of Philosophy in Islam”, dalam Seyyed Hossein Nasr & Oliver Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Part 1 (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 21.

²⁷ Mukhammad Zamzami, “Hikmah Dalam Al-Qur’an Dan Implementasinya Dalam Membangun Pemikiran Islam Yang Inklusif,” *TEOSOFI: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 6, no. 2 (December 1, 2016): 355–82, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2016.6.2.355-382>.

²⁸ Ibnu Rushd, *Faṣl Al-Maqāl Wa Taqrīr Mā Bayn Al-Sharī’ah Min Al-Ittiṣāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), 27–28.

²⁹ Suhrawardi, *Hikmat Al-Isbrāq* (Teheran: al-Muṣṭafā, 1963), 20.

Apart from Ibn Rushd, another influential thinker who categorized *hikmah* as an activity of rationality was Mulla Sadra (1572-1640 CE). Mulla Sadra introduced the concept of “*al-Hikmah al-Muta’aliyah*,” or transcendental philosophy, which represents a significant school of Islamic philosophy emphasizing a synthesis of theoretical and spiritual knowledge that transcends mere empirical understanding. Mulla Sadra’s transcendental philosophy is characterized by its integration of various strands of Islamic thought, including peripatetic, illuminationist, and Sufi traditions, thereby offering a comprehensive framework that addresses both the metaphysical and the existential dimensions of human experience. His approach is rooted in the belief that true wisdom involves not only rational analysis but also an intuitive and spiritual comprehension of the divine realities. In contemporary times, Armahedi Mazhar (b. 1943) has expanded on the notion of wisdom by introducing “*al-Hikmah al-Wahdatiyah*,” or the philosophy of integralism. Mazhar’s integralism seeks to reconcile and bridge the debates between “*al-Hikmah al-Masyaiyyah*” (peripatetic philosophy) and “*al-Hikmah al-Isbraqiyyah*” (illumination philosophy), proposing a unified framework that draws on the Qur’anic verse from *Surah al-Nisa* [4:113] as a normative basis. This verse underscores the importance of divine guidance in achieving a holistic understanding of wisdom, thereby supporting Mazhar’s argument for a comprehensive and integrative approach to Islamic philosophy.³⁰

The concept of *hikmah* in Islamic thought, despite varying interpretations among scholars, generally encompasses both scientific-theoretical and practical dimensions. First, *hikmah* is intricately connected to the ability to discern and apply knowledge both theoretically and practically, leading to its classification into “*naẓhariyyah*” (scientific-theoretical) and “*amaliyyah*” (practical). Theoretical *hikmah* involves a deep understanding of the principles and laws governing the universe, while practical *hikmah* pertains to the ethical and moral application of this knowledge in everyday life. Second, *hikmah* is closely tied to prophecy, as it is believed that Allah endowed His Prophets and Messengers with revelations and profound insight. This divine *hikmah*, manifested in exact knowledge and a deep understanding of religious matters and the revealed scriptures, elevated the prophets to a status of unparalleled moral and intellectual perfection.³¹ The *hikmah* granted to the prophets thus serves as a model for human conduct, highlighting the intersection of divine guidance and human intellectual endeavor in the pursuit of true *hikmah*.

Discussion

In the nineteenth century, European scholars were skeptical of Islamic philosophy, largely due to the belief that Islam was engaged in the study of philosophy without contributing original philosophical thought. This perspective was compounded by the

³⁰ Armahedi Mazhar, *Islam Masa Depan* (Bandung: Penerbit Pustaka, 1993), 124–31.

³¹ Iqbal, “Filsafat Sebagai Hikmah: Konteks Berfilsafat Di Dunia Islam.”

assertion that Islam, coming from a Semitic culture, was considered inferior and lacking in the rational thought associated with Aryan civilizations.³² Furthermore, critics argued that Islamic teachings, including the Qur'an and the Hadith, discouraged rational inquiry among its adherents. However, these claims lacked substantial foundation and tended to oversimplify Islamic intellectual traditions, thereby marginalizing Islamic rationality

Khazim identifies several factors that contributed to Orientalists' skeptical views of the authenticity of Islamic rationality. First, there was a remarkable interest among Muslim intellectuals in the 19th century in studying and translating Greek philosophical texts. Orientalists often interpreted this as Islam's appropriation of the Greek intellectual heritage, seeing Islamic scholars primarily as custodians who preserved and transmitted Greek traditions rather than as creators of original philosophical ideas. Second, Western scholarship of the period showed limited engagement with Islamic culture in general, and with the vibrant intellectual and artistic developments in Persia in particular.³³ Murtadha Muthahhari, in his work "*Ushul al-Falsafah wa al-Manhaj al-Waqi'i*," criticizes certain intellectuals for their erroneous and confused interpretations of Islamic philosophy, citing instances where scholars such as Edwar G. Browne and Comte de Gobineau misinterpreted key concepts in the works of figures such as Mulla Sadra. For instance, Edwar G. Browne's interpretation of "*asfar*" as the plural form of "*sif*" meaning "omposition," and Comte de Gobineau's understanding of "*safar*" as "journey," leading to his view of "*asfar*" as a record of Mulla Sadra's travels, highlights the varying and sometimes misconstrued readings of Mulla Sadra's texts by Western scholars. A detailed examination of the "*muqaddimah*" elucidates Mulla Sadra's intended meaning behind these terms, emphasizing the importance of contextual and linguistic accuracy in comprehending Islamic philosophical works.³⁴

In order to prove the validity of Islamic philosophy and to free it from the accusation of plagiarism, at least two things must be considered in this case. Firstly, the source of Islamic rationality. If one looks closely at the history of the development of Islamic philosophy, it cannot be denied that there were Greek, Persian, Syriac, and even Indian influences. However, this does not mean that Islam does not have a unique basis for the development of a tradition of thought. According to Oliver Leaman, Muslim philosophers developed philosophical traditions from previous cultures, but these traditions were used to answer internal Islamic problems, so in this case an adaptation process was needed so that

³² Zar, *Filsafat Islam: Filosof Dan Filsafatnya*, 8.

³³ Musa Khazim, "Kekhasan Filsafat Islam" pengantar dalam Farkhy, *Sejarah Filsafat Islam: Sebuah Peta Kronologis*, xxi.

³⁴ The book referred to is al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Ashfar al-'Aqliyah, commonly known as "Ashfar al-Arba'ah," a masterpiece by Mulla Shadra, wherein Shadra lays the foundation for his existential metaphysics, followed by theology and Sufism. See: R Effendi, "Al-Asfār Al-Arba 'at Sebagai Basis Metafisika Mullā Shadrā," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman*, 2021.

these concepts could be used appropriately in Islamic civilization.³⁵ Several scholars who observed Islamic philosophy, such as Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, C.A. Qadir, and Louis Gardet, tried to show the authenticity of Islamic philosophy. According to them, what developed in Islamic philosophy was not the adoption of Greco-Hellenistic philosophy, but was based on the main teachings of Islam, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah.³⁶ Nasr explained that Islamic philosophy is called "Islam" not only because it is practiced and taught in the Islamic world, but also because its principles are explained and derived from the Qur'an and the Hadith. The presence of the Qur'an and its position as revelation changed the philosophical arena of Islamic philosophers. This activity led them to a certain type of philosophy that can be called "prophetic philosophy". In line with Nasr's views, Musa Asy'arie stated that Islamic philosophy is based on the traditions of the Prophet's thought; the logic of thought lies in the ideas that Muhammad adhered to over the years.³⁷

The centrality of the Qur'an in Islamic doctrine catalyzed an interpretive movement aimed at reconciling its normative principles with the practical realities of life. This interpretive imperative led to the emergence of linguistic schools (*nahwu*), which Louis Gardet and Anawati saw as fundamental to the development of rational thought within Islam. The study of language (*nahwu*) subsequently influenced rational discourse in various Islamic disciplines, especially jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology. In *fiqh*, rational methodologies such as *istinbat al-hukm* (derivation of legal rulings) through *istihsan* (legal preference), *qiyas* (analogical reasoning), and terminologies were employed, exemplified by Imam Abu Hanifa (699-766 CE), a prominent figure of the ahl *ar-ra'yu* (the school of legal discretion), prior to the formal introduction of Greek philosophy into Islamic scholarship. Similarly, theological rationalism flourished early on with groups like the Mu'azilah,³⁸ whose doctrines predated the assimilation of Greek philosophical ideas into Islamic intellectual traditions; indeed, Mu'tazilah briefly held sway as the official theological doctrine of the Abbasid caliphate. This historical trajectory underscores the organic development of rational thought within Islam, based on linguistic foundations and indigenous intellectual frameworks prior to external philosophical influences.

Secondly, the concept of *hikmah* in Islamic rationality signifies a deliberate endeavor to harmonize the foundational principles of Islamic teachings with the rational and logical

³⁵ Oliver Leaman, "Introduction", dalam Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 8.

³⁶ Oliver Leaman, *Pengantar Filsafat Islam Terj. M. Amin Abdullah* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 1989), 8; Louis Gardet, *Falsafah Al-Fikr Ad-Din Terj. Subhi Shaleh Dan Farid Jabr* (Beirut: Dar al-Ulum, 1978), 77; C.A Qadir, *Filsafat Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan Dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1991), 30; Muhammad 'Abid Al-Jabiri, *Takwin Al-'Aql Al-'Arabi* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wihdah al-'Arabiyah, 1989), 57.

³⁷ Musa Asy'arie, *Filsafat Islam: Sunnah Nabi Dalam Berpikir* (Yogyakarta: LESFI, 1999), 9–16.

³⁸ Mu'tazilah is one of the theological groups in Islam, known for their high regard for reason. Its founder was Wasil ibn 'Ata' (699-748 CE). (699-748 M).

methodologies of Greek thought. This linguistic choice of “*hikmah*” serves to facilitate the integration of Greek philosophical concepts into the philosophical inquiries arising within Islamic literature. It aims to convey the ideas of Greek philosophers within a framework accessible to Muslim scholars, thereby bridging cultural and intellectual contexts. To elucidate the significance of “*hikmah*,” it is essential to distinguish it from the modern Western conception of philosophy. According to Nasr, Western philosophy has undergone a reduction in scope, primarily focusing on rationalism and empiricism while dissociating from spiritual dimensions.³⁹ In contrast, “*hikmah*” in Islamic philosophy encompasses not only logical and rational activities but also emphasizes spiritual purity and moral integrity. It is intricately linked with the refinement of the soul, reflecting its divine origins and underscoring its holistic approach to knowledge.

Furthermore, the model of rationality that emerged in the Islamic world diverges significantly from its Greek counterpart. Similarly, Islamic philosophy distinguishes itself from classical Greek philosophy by its origins and objectives. Greek rationalism initially evolved as a response to mythological narratives, whereas Islamic rationality developed in response to the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah. This distinction underscores the unique character of Islamic philosophy, which evolves within the framework provided by these sacred texts. Islamic philosophy and rationality thus evolve under the illumination of Quranic teachings, engaging in ongoing dialogues, synthesizing insights, and applying these teachings to the practical realities of Muslim life. This integrative approach reflects Islamic philosophy’s distinctive trajectory, grounded in its foundational texts and enriched through continuous intellectual engagement and application.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis presented above, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, Orientalist accusations that Islamic rationality merely plagiarized Greek philosophical traditions are unfounded. Islamic rational thought predates the incorporation of Greek philosophy into Islamic scholarship, evolving from early linguistic studies into a systematic approach to logical reasoning. This indigenous development underscores the sophistication and originality of Islamic philosophical thought, grounded in its own cultural and intellectual heritage. Secondly, the Qur’an and Sunnah serve as foundational sources of Islamic rationality, advocating for the primacy of reason and rationality within the framework of Islamic teachings. Scholars of Islamic philosophy argue that the integration of rational thought into Islamic discourse reflects Muslims’ ongoing efforts to harmonize divine guidance with practical realities. This dynamic interaction between religious principles and

³⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr “The Meaning and Concept of Philosophy in Islam” dalam Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 21.

rational inquiry has shaped Islamic philosophical traditions, emphasizing the compatibility between faith and reason. Additionally, wisdom constitutes a distinctive feature of Islamic rationality, engaging in a dialogue between Islamic principles and the logical methodologies of Greek thought while prioritizing spiritual values. This holistic approach to knowledge seeks to cultivate not only intellectual rigor but also moral and spiritual integrity, reflecting the broader ethos of Islamic philosophy.

The author acknowledges the inherent limitations encountered during the research process, including constraints in accessing primary historical texts and linguistic barriers, as well as personal limitations in subject expertise. Consequently, the author encourages future researchers to employ relevant historical theories to enhance the comprehensiveness of their investigations into rationalism, thereby advancing scholarly understanding in this field.

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