

Introduction to Islamic Epistemology

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- Epistemology comes from ancient Greek words: ἐπιστήμη (knowledge, wisdom) and λόγος (discourse, talk, principle).
- Epistemology is the study of knowledge in general, trying to answer questions such as: What is knowledge? How is knowledge possible? What are its sources? What is its structure, and what are its limits?
- In short, epistemology deals with issues pertaining to the definition, methodology, and classification of knowledge.

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What is knowledge?

- PLATO: Knowledge is justified true belief' (*μετα λογου αληθη δοξα*) – Theaetetus 3D.
- DESCARTES: I think, therefore I am (*cogito ergo sum*) > Rationalism
- LOCKE: There is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses (*Nihil est in intellectu, quod non antea fuerit in sensu*) > Empiricism
- KANT: Thoughts without content are blank, insights without concepts are blind (*Gedanken ohne Inhalt sind leer, Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind*) > analytic vs. synthetic

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Knowledge in Islam

قَالَ أَهْلُ الْحَقِّ : حَقَائِقُ الْأَشْيَاءِ ثَابِتَةٌ وَالْعِلْمُ بِهَا
مُتَحَقِّقٌ خِلَافاً لِلْسُّوْفِسْطَائِيَّةِ . (العقائد النسفية)

“Orang-orang yang Mengetahui Kebenaran berkata:
Hakikat, esensi dari segala sesuatu itu wujud. Dan
mengetahuinya dapat terjadi, benar terbukti, bisa
dicapai – bukan seperti pendapat kaum sophist.”

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Knowledge is possible

- Knowing is not impossible
- Man can know the truth
- Truth is knowable
- Against sophism and its kins:
 - solipsism
 - skepticism
 - relativism
 - agnosticism

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Sophism = السوفسطائية

- Nothing really or truly exists.
- Even if something exists, nothing can be known about it.
- Even if something could be known about it, knowledge about it can't be communicated to others.
- Objective knowledge is impossible - Gorgias, Protagoras, Pyrrho, Sextus.

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Solipsism = العنادية

- the world does not exist independently from our mind. It is but an illusion in the observer's mind.
- the self is the whole of reality
- the external world and its contents are representations of that self having no independent existence.
- even if an external world possibly exists, or that only the self exists, it remains impossible to prove either way
- Knowledge must be solely built upon the individual self and its states.

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Skepticism = الشكوكية

- an attitude of doubt or a disposition to distrust and incredulity either in general or toward a particular object.
- the view that knowledge which is true and certain is impossible.
- the method of suspended judgment, systematic doubt, or criticism that is characteristic of skeptics

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Relativism = العندية

- there is no absolute truth.
- truth is always relative to some particular frame of reference and hence subjective:
- 'true for you; not for me!' attitude.
- all points of view are equally valid and that no framework or standpoint is uniquely privileged over all others .
- Protagoras' doctrine: "Man is the measure of all things"

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Agnosticism = اللّا أدريّة

- Truth is unknown and unknowable, simply because 'I don't know'.
- Non-committal attitude: neither accept nor reject; neither believe nor disbelieve any claim of knowledge.
- "I neither affirm nor deny the immortality of man. I see no reason for believing it, but, on the other hand, I have no means of disproving it." – T.H. Huxley

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How knowledge is possible

وأسباب العلم للخلق ثلاثة: الخبر الصادق
والحواس الخمس والعقل السليم والإلهام ليس
من أسباب العلم (العقائد النسفية)

"The causes of knowing for creatures [like man] are three: true report, the five senses, and sound reason" (al-'Aqa'id an-Nasafiyah)

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3 methods of research

- Traditional method < الخبر الصادق
- Empirical method < والحواس الخمس
- Rational method < والعقل السليم

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Traditional method:

- Knowledge by description, by transmission, by transfer, by communication.
- Acquiring knowledge by means of learning from reliable, authoritative sources such as parents, teachers, professors, scholars, scientists, Prophets whether directly or indirectly (through writings) .
- For instance, knowledge about reality and nature we gained at home, school, university, from books, documents, newspapers, etc.
- E.g. knowledge about galaxies, germs, history

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Empirical method

- Acquiring knowledge by means of sense perception, sense observation, experience & experiments.
- Sense data are equally valid source of knowledge .
- However, we reject both positivism and empiricism which teach that no belief, statement, or theory is true unless and until it is proven by the senses.
- We employ empirical approach without falling into empiricism and positivism, precisely because we recognize the limits of our senses.

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Rational method:

- Acquiring knowledge of the truth by means of rational processes including but not limited to:
- Inductive reasoning < استقراء
- Deductive reasoning. < قياس / استنباط
- Analogical reasoning < قياس / تمثيل
- Since we adopt rational methods, we are not irrational and yet we reject rationalism

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Points to bear in mind:

- All these methods of acquiring knowledge about reality, the world, natural phenomena etc. are universal in the sense that they are used by all men of knowledge in all places and at all times regardless of their race, language, culture, religion, gender and field of interest.
- Thus, in terms of method used for acquiring knowledge, there is no significant difference between the Islamic and non-Islamic epist.

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Ilmuwan Muslim:

- Pakai metode empiris tanpa menganut empirisisme etc.
- Menggunakan pendekatan logical-rational namun tidak terjebak dalam rasionalisme
- Menghindari perangkap2 relativisme, skeptisisme dan agnostisisme

Ilmuwan Non-Muslim

- Pakai metode empiris dan menganut empirisisme, positivisme, materialisme, naturalisme, behaviorism evolusionisme
- Masuk dalam perangkap rasionalisme atau bahkan irrasionalisme dan aneka ragam sophisme.

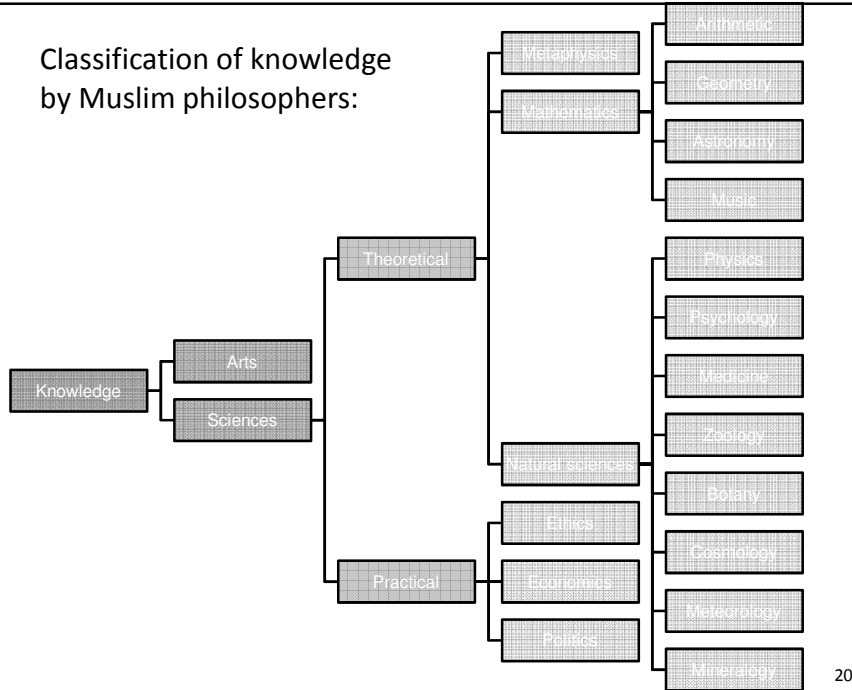
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قال القاضي الباقلاني: Imam al-Baqillani

”تنقسم علوم المخلوقين على قسمين: منها علم ضرورة ومنها علم نظر واستدلال. والضروري علم يلزم المخلوق لزوما لا يمكنه معه الخروج عنه ولا الانفكاك منه ولا يتهيأ له الشكل في متعلقه ولا الارتياب فيه. والنظري علم يقع بعقب استدلال وتفكرونظر. والضروري من ستة طرق.“ (كتاب التمهيد 26-31)

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Classification of knowledge by Muslim philosophers:



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Economics in Islam

- The science of household management (*'Ilm tadbir al-manzil = οικονομια*).
- Alternative name: the science of efficient, thrifty management of the resources of a person, community, nation, etc. (*'ilm al-iqtisad*) e.g. Baqir Sadr's *Iqtisaduna*.
- *Tadbir*: to pay attention to where things lead.
- *Manzil*: collective residence, settlement, an economic unit based on cooperation among its members in pursuit of common goals.

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Terima kasih

والسلام

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