Metaphysics of Islam (A Synthesis)

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Abstract
The term metaphysics has a long historical background which is extended to Aristotle. It has different meanings and connotation etymologically and terminologically. Religion and philosophy both have their own metaphysics. Islam is a revealed religion. It has its own metaphysics which is known as Metaphysics of Islam. Findings of a being on the basis of the fundamentals of Islam (Metaphysics of Islam) are known as Muslim metaphysics. Metaphysics is a major field of philosophy also. It has a grave importance for it. We may say it as the core of philosophy which is absolutely different from both: Metaphysics of Islam and Muslim metaphysics. In this article, we have tried to describe the prominent features of all above i.e.

- Metaphysics (in philosophy)
- Metaphysics of Islam and
- Muslim metaphysics

Nevertheless our main focus is on Metaphysics of Islam.

Key Words: Metaphysics, Metaphysics of Islam, Muslim metaphysics, Philosophy, Revelation, Reason, Science
Metaphysics

Etymological Meanings

The word metaphysics is a combination of two Greek words i.e. ‘meta’ and ‘physika’. ‘Meta’ means beyond or after while ‘physika’ means physics or physical. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics)

Terminological Meanings (Definition)

There are a number of definitions of metaphysics. In this respect we find a difference of opinion to some extent in philosophers of different ages due to a difference in their religious, cultural and social outlook. But one thing is common among all that the main subject of metaphysical discussions is absolute reality i.e. investigation of the principles of reality, discussion about being qua being, the study of first principles, search for the principles behind physical world, an examination of the nature of reality, an effort to discover the origin of everything, a struggle to know the fundamentals of being, inquiry of the laws behind physics, an analytical study of the substance of this universe, questioning about the nature of this universe, and search to explore the reality and existence. (http://www.google.com.pk/search=define:metaphysics)

The First Use of This Term (Historical Background)

At first this term was used for the writings of Aristotle. But he never used it for his writings by himself. Aristotle wrote on different topics in the form of different books. He wrote many books on physics. He also wrote books which came after the books, written by him on physics. He named to those writings ‘First Philosophy’. Approximately one hundred year after Aristotle (plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaphysics/) or three centuries after Aristotle Andronicus of Rhodes arranged the books of Aristotle. Andronicus named metaphysics to those writings of Aristotle which had come after physics and to whom Aristotle had given the title ‘First Philosophy’. (http://websyte.com/alan/metamul.htm)
Metaphysics and Philosophy

The main field of philosophy is metaphysics. It is also known as the core of philosophy. Every philosopher tries to search for absolute reality and struggles to discover the nature of ultimate reality. In this way every philosopher is a metaphysician. Philosophers have divided philosophy into three main branches i.e. ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Ontology encompasses all metaphysical discussions about ultimate reality. Under the head of ontology, philosophers have described three main approaches in respect of absolute reality: monism, dualism, and pluralism. Each of above has further subdivisions. Here we give a brief account of each.

Monism

According to this approach ultimate reality is one. Monism has been further divided into three kinds: spiritual monism (reality is one but spiritual by its nature) material monism (reality is one but material by its nature) and neutralism (it is one but neither spiritual nor material but it is neutral by its nature and expresses itself sometimes in the form of spirit and sometimes in the form of matter.) (Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2000:589)

Dualism

For dualists, ultimate realities are two: mind and body. Both are independent substances which exist independently. It is impossible to reduce one substance into other. Both are necessary. (Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2000:217)

Pluralism

Pluralists hold that absolute reality is neither one nor two but it is consisted of unlimited and numberless atoms. (W.T.Stace, 2000:88) Further pluralism is of two kinds: spiritual pluralism (ultimate reality is consisted of innumerable atoms which are immaterial by their origin and
nature) and material pluralism (ultimate reality is constituted with numberless atoms which are material by their origin and nature). (Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2000:683)

Philosophy means search for wisdom. Wisdom inquires about the origin of existence or absolute reality. Ultimate reality is the core theme of metaphysics. Metaphysical questions are the centre of philosophy. These discussions constitute the major portion of philosophy. The prominent features of the concept of ultimate reality presented by philosophy are as under:

- Ultimate reality is a metaphysical concept only
- It has no personal and live relationship with this universe and all existents
- There is no reasonable explanation of the beginning and end of this system
- This concept of ultimate reality does not show an organic link between ontology, epistemology, and axiology

Metaphysics of Islam

What is meant by Islam? (Etymological meanings)

Religions are of two kinds: divine and human made. Islam is a divine religion. It is an Arabic word. Its etymological meanings are: safety, peace, security, and well-being.

Definition (Terminological meanings)

Islam means a set of divine principles descended by Almighty Allah on His last prophet Muhammad (SAWW) for the guidance, betterment and well-being of His entire creature.
Metaphysics and Islam

Islam deals with all sorts of questions. Following are the basic questions which are related with the core of Islam on one side and with the metaphysical discussions on the other hand.

- What is the origin of this universe?
- Who is the real creator of all existents?
- What is the nature of absolute reality?
- What is the role of a Prophet?
- Why have we come in this universe?
- Why is there death for every existent?
- Was there any life before this existence?
- Is there any life hereafter?
- What is the relationship between God, human being, and universe?
- What is the goal of this universe?
- What is the suitable role for a being in this universe?
- What is good and what is bad?

The answers of these questions formulate the Metaphysics of Islam. In other words these are the fundamentals of Islam.

Muslim Metaphysics

One should never confuse Muslim Metaphysics with Metaphysics of Islam. Although the basis of Muslim metaphysics is Metaphysics of Islam but there is a remarkable difference in both. The former is consisted of revealed and divine principles while, second is a product of intellectual pursuits of human beings. (Khaliq D. A., 2002:124)

“The intellectual pursuits of the Muslim scholars (of every age) based on Metaphysics of Islam (fundamentals) are known as Muslim Metaphysics. Although the fundamental source for all scholars was fundamentals of Islam but they enriched their findings with other treasuries of knowledge also like Greek, Persian, and Chinese etc. In this respect we may include to the contributions of
non-Muslims who strived in this field despite of having different religions and cultural background.” (Tahir, 2012:1027)

(In this article our main focus is on Metaphysics of Islam. So considering it sufficient we move towards our main subject i.e. metaphysics of Islam.)

**Metaphysics of Islam**

By the answers of above said questions we will be able to present a sketch of Metaphysics of Islam. We discuss about these questions under these heads:

Creator and creation, Prophecy, Goal of Creation, Existence of all the Human Beings Before Their Existence in This World, Death, Life Hereafter, Relationship Between God, Human Being and Universe, Problem of Conduct and Behavior etc.

**Creator and Creation**

In above lines first three questions are related with Absolute Reality, Creator, Creation, and Origin and Nature of this universe. These questions are related with each other and are of same nature. So we deal with them together.


While in *Nahjul Balagha* the concept of *Tauhid* (Oneness of God) has been described as:

“Glory to Allah in the highest; Whose glorification cannot be described in words; Whose blessings and bounties cannot be enumerated by reckoners and enumerators, and homage due to Him cannot be paid even by the most assiduous and preserving attempters. None can fully understand or explain His Being,
however hard he may try. Reason and sagacity cannot visualize Him. Intelligence, understanding, and attainments cannot attain the depth of knowledge to study or scrutinize the Godhead. Human faculties of conception, perception, and learning, and attributes of volition, intuition, cannot perceive Him or fathom the extent of His Might and Glory.” (Ali:137)

Prophecy

Prophecy is the second most important doctrine of Metaphysics of Islam. Islam is not a new religion. It is a continuity of divine guidance started from the first day of creation of human being in the form of first prophet Hazrat Adam (A.S.). Almighty Allah has sent prophets for the guidance of humankind in all ages for every nation. Prophets are the blessed persons selected and appointed by Allah to lead the humankind. (Ed)J.H. & H.A.R., 1961:394

They are the divine link between Allah and His creation. They are impeccable persons. Prophets are the bearers of revelation. They convey the messages of Allah to humankind. The Holy prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SAWW) is the chief of all prophets and seal of the prophecy. Quran has been revealed on Holy Prophet (SAWW) by angel Gabriel (A.S.). (Nicholoson, 1962:141) It is the most basic and authentic source of knowledge in Islam. According to Quran, He (SAWW) is the role model for whole humankind. He (SAWW) is the only source of divine messages and Metaphysics of Islam. Because only He (SAWW) introduces us about Tauhhid, Quran, Previous Prophets and Their Books, Angels, Day of Judgment, Resurrection, Life Hereafter etc. One can get the will of God only by following Him. He (S.A.W.W.) is the only source of religious epistemology. In fact entire Metaphysics of Islam revolves around the Holy Prophet (SAWW). Almighty Allah has described the importance of Prophet Hood in these words:

“And when Allah made a covenant through the prophets: Certainly what I have given you of Book and wisdom---then an apostle comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him. He said: Do you affirm and accept My compact in this (matter)? They said: We do affirm. He said: Then bear witness, and I (too) am of the bearers of witness with you.
Whoever therefore turns back after this, these it is that are transgressors.” (M.H : 80-81)

Goal of Creation

According to Quran, this world is as an examination center. (11: 7) It is a mortal and temporary place. There will be a last day of this universe. Resurrection will be held. There must be a day of judgment. There is an eternal and everlasting life hereafter. (18: 45) People will be rewarded and punished on the Day of Judgment according to their role in the universe. (101:6-9). The ultimate goal of human life is servitude to almighty Allah. (51:56).

Existence before the Existence of This World

According to the Quran, Almighty Allah had taken the witness of His oneness from all the children of Adam (A.S.) before the creation of this world and life. Therefore, He engraved the concept of a God in human beings before descending them in this universe. Quran describes this story and its goals in these words:

“And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! We bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: Surely we were heedless of this. Or you should say: Only our fathers associated others (Allah) before, and we were an offspring after them: Wilt Thou then destroys us for what the vain doers did?” (7:172,173)

Death

One may differ from others on any issue or on any fundamental of faith but no one can differ from others on the fact that death is an undeniable reality. There may be a lot of interpretations of death in both believers and non-believers but nobody can refute to death.

According to Islam, death does not mean destruction or an ultimate end. It is a beginning of a new life. It is a return to Lord. (2:156). The friends (real followers) of Almighty Allah invoke death only. They face to death boldly and happily. (62:6). It provides the opportunity to meet with Lord. Quran has declared it a state of absolute certainty. (74:47). For a true believer death is...
a call of happiness, reward and merry. So he/she works hard in this world to fulfill his/her duties and waits for death anxiously. For a Muslim death means a sign of hope and pleasure which prevents from all disappointments and depressions. According to Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal:

“It is highly improbable that a being whose evolution has taken millions of years should be thrown away as a thing of no use…Life offers a scope for ego-activity, and death is the first test of the synthetic activity of the ego.” (Iqbal, 1989:95)

Life Hereafter

Almighty Allah is absolute good. He has created and designed everything of this universe on good. He is the only guarantor and governor of this universe. According to his scheme every existent of this universe has a goal. In His system nothing is aimless. Allah blessed human beings with reason. Distinctive feature of humankind among all other creation is reason. Rationality necessitates to independence and free thinking. Therefore, every rational being has a freedom of choice.

Almighty Allah sent His prophets to lead humankind to its ultimate goal i.e. obedience of Almighty Allah and welfare of the human beings. Quran is His last revelation on His last Prophet Muhammad (SAWW). It is a divine constitution for humankind. The major subject of Quran is human being. (82: 6) The main purpose of Quran is the guidance and betterment of humankind. (2:257). Islam does not compel to anybody in adoption of faith. (2:256)

“You shall have your religion and I shall have my religion.” (109:6)

Everybody has the right to choose his way. So, everybody is accountable for his/her deeds. This limited span of life and the injustice existing in this world necessitates that there must be a world in which every being would be rewarded or punished for his/her deeds. Consequently, in Metaphysics of Islam, doctrine of life hereafter has a vital importance. So,

- Despite of all injustice and miseries, one would be optimistic always
- There will be a continuous and constant struggle for good
- A being would Endeavour for the betterment and welfare of society without the desire of any reward
Relationship between God, Human Being and Universe

Relationship between God/Absolute Reality, Human being, and universe is an important problem of Metaphysics of Islam. According to Quran:

• Allah is the Absolute Creator
• Human being is the vicegerent of Allah in this universe (2:28-31)
• All human beings have equal rights (49:13)
• Islam did not like to any discrimination on the behalf of color, creed, blood, and generation (49:13)
• Everything of this universe has been created on good (32:7-9)
• There is no separation between spiritual and material (Iqbal:117)
• For a better end and for a successful life hereafter one should preserve the human values in this life
• This world is like an examination centre for a being (33:72)
• Allah has blessed human beings with divine guidance and with the faculties of intuition, reason, and sense perception(2:164)
• So, everything is sacred and related with each other. Metaphysics of Islam is creative by its nature. (55:29)

For success in both the worlds, one should work hard in this life and must use reason and senses to discover the mysteries of this universe under the guidance of revelation.

Problem of Conduct and Behavior

The problem of conduct and behavior is an important issue of Metaphysics of Islam. According to its character Metaphysics of Islam is neither theoretical nor utopian but is practical by its very nature. The practical spirit of metaphysics of Islam emerges to itself in material and physical world. Its basic character is to revolutionize the life of an individual and to develop a society in the light of divine guidance. According to Quran this life and world is not aimless.
“We have not created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them in sport. We have not created them but for a serious end: but the greater part of them understands it not. (44:38, 39)

According to it, this world is not an ultimate destination of a being. It is a temporary station for an eternal life. Every being is accountable for his thinking and actions. (Khaliq D. A., 1990:31) Everyone must be punished or rewarded in life hereafter on the behalf of his/her conduct and behavior, and intentions and actions. Life of this world is a transitional period. This transitional phase is attached on one side with a cognitive and volunteer promise of all the beings in respect of Tauhid (Oneness of Almighty Allah) (7:172,173) and Risalat (prophecy of the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad SAWW and other prophets) (3:80, 81) in the existence happened before this life and with life hereafter on the other side. Allah has created every-thing on good. So, good is absolute while evil is relative. The right way for an ideal conduct and behavior of a being is

- Servitude to Almighty Allah
- Welfare of the humankind

A perfect role model for the above objectives is the life of Hazrat Muhammad (SAWW). The Holy Prophet (SAWW) seems to stand between divinity and humankind. He lived an ideal life. We find a confluence of spirituality and humanity, and theory and action in His personality. To obey Holy Prophet (SAWW) one must be committed that his all movements and prayers would be for the sake of Almighty Allah (6/162) and the direction of his all intentions and actions would be towards Him (6/79). The basic condition to be a Muslim is to following up the life of Holy Prophet (SAWW). So, a Muslim must idealize Him (SAWW) to achieve the will of God and to live a desirable life.

Conclusion

In the light of above said premises we conclude our discussion in these words:

- Fundamentals of Metaphysics of Islam are eternal.
- Its origin is Divine.
- Islam allows to its followers to resolve the issues of their age on the basis of their fundamentals.
• Islam emphasizes to use reason and sense perception in the guidance of revelation but never permits to abstract rationalism.

• In Islam deed is as necessary as an idea. Therefore the nature of Metaphysics of Islam is practical rather than theoretical only.

• In philosophy, the Absolute Reality may be an idea, principle, or concept only but in Islam, Absolute Realty/Allah, is Almighty, All-Power All-Knowing, Perfect, Eternal, The Wise, Infinite, Omnipotent, and Omniscient which has a live relationship with His creation and is nearer to a being than his life vein.

• In philosophy metaphysics depends upon reason while in Religion (Islam) metaphysics depends upon revelation.

• Muslim Metaphysics heals on the basis of Metaphysics of Islam. It is a collection of intellectual pursuits of human beings while Metaphysics of Islam is absolutely divine by its very nature. Muslim metaphysics is as divine as it is near to Metaphysics of Islam.

• Basic tenets of Metaphysics of Islam prepare a being to obey Lord, revolutionize society to discover nature and to be kind for humankind.

• Ultimate nature of Absolute Reality is above and transcendent from all human efforts and understandings.
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Al-Qur’an al Hakeem


