

Arab Philosophy, Arabic Philosophy, Muslim Philosophy, Islamic Philosophy, Theology: Eliminating the Ambiguity in Defining the Terms through the Critical Analysis of their Cardinal Issues

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ABSTRACT

The terms ‘Arab Philosophy’, ‘Arabic Philosophy’, ‘Muslim philosophy’, ‘Islamic philosophy’, ‘Theology’ in popular discourse, as well as among intelligentsia and even in academic circles have been frequently used interchangeably as synonyms. Very sadly, it is rare to bother for appellation and clarification the exact meanings of them. This habitual following has caused fallacious ‘dogmatic’ intellectual absurdity. Because the fact is that each term is an insignia for a particular content of meanings, whole of values, collection of thoughts and genealogy of intellectual conventions. Consequently, this research is critical evaluation as well as an endeavour to eliminate the ambiguity and clarifying the genuine meanings of each term and an attempt of assigning the proper designation to the relevant contents and intellectual legacy. The conceptual distinction among the terms is critically examined in this article. This research reflects that each one constitutes a unique intellectual tradition with distinct techniques, epistemologies, and historical trajectories though academic and popular discourse frequently uses these terms interchangeably but it is wrong habit. This article contributes to a better understanding of the Muslim intellectual heritage by examining the subtle differences and connections between classical literature, contemporary scholarship, and intellectual movements.

Keywords: Arab Mythology, Arabic Philosophy, Cosmology, Epistemology, Hikmah, Ontology, Problems of Muslim / Islamic philosophy, Theology

INTRODUCTION

Every human being, even the Ape-Man or the Cave-Man had a curiosity to know the ‘Phenomena’ around and the ‘Noumena’ behind. The instinct to quench curiosity of having knowledge about the existents which surrounded them (some amongst them were very often dangerous or sometimes beneficial to them). It necessitated to think and to have some explanations about the objects of nature. At that time the human mind was at its initial stage and everyone had no ability to explain the facts of nature but the goad of curiosity was still in their minds. Thus the responsibility and duty of satisfying that instinct of curiosity of the masses was assumed by some more developed minds i.e. the priests, the astrologist, the astronomer, the soothsayers, the magicians or fortuneless. They used their observational knowledge for their own benefits.

By presenting the explanations about the occurrences of nature and by guiding others how to tackle the natural forces they satisfied the minds of the masses on the basis of their mythological and mystical descriptions. That is why, in every civilization there are found a plethora of mythological stories and

descriptions of the creation of natural occurrences known as mythological cosmologies. These imaginative portrayals and conceptual folklores satisfied the minds of the masses regarding the explanation of the 'phenomena' of the world and the mysteries of the 'noumena'. By satisfying the minds through the mythological descriptions, they assumed revered status in the societies.

Later due to rational development, these mythological descriptions failed to satisfy the human mind and they faced critical, analytical and rational attitude. This attitude became the cause of the development of rational approaches. These approaches appeared within the mythological belief systems as criticism and unsatisfying the answers by myths, thus there evolved rational philosophies. So in every culture we find a treasure of mythologies and beliefs along-with a rational, critical and analytical system of philosophies. This is evident that in all the ancient civilizations either Babylonian, Egyptian, Indian or China we easily find a plethora of mythologies as well as movements and schools of rational philosophies. Both served the purpose of satisfying the human natural element of mental satisfaction. So there are philosophies named as Indian Philosophy, Greek Philosophy, Chinese Philosophy, European Philosophy, American philosophy, Muslim Philosophy, African philosophy etc.

But due to the factors such as: variety of religious approaches, territorial or metaphysical versatility, conventional variability of thoughts, differences of socio-cultural visions, variability of theistic, nontheistic, atheistic and humanist attitudes and along with rational, empirical or intuitional epistemological trends there appeared a problem that how to designate a proper noun or strictly defining term to a system of thought or to a trend of philosophy? Generally, any scheme of thought might be given a name on the following accounts:

Firstly, it is done on the basis of unanimity in ideas of any religion for example the Muslim, Hindu, Christian or Jewish philosophy. Because their ideas are same anywhere and all over the world thus they qualify to be called a particular philosophy.

Secondly, the proper noun designation has been assigned on territorial exposition to any set of ideas though they have no unanimity of intellectual trend or no similarity of ideas but expressing territorial affiliations such as American Philosophy which had multiplicity of schools such as Pragmatism, Instrumentalism, Naturalism, Analytical Philosophy, Philosophy of Language, Feminist and Race-Conscious Philosophy. They all are known as American philosophies. No schools had any affiliation to the other.

Thirdly, any proper appellation have been assigned to any set of ideas which have universally accepted tenants and theories i.e. Idealism, Materialism, Existentialism etc. They have no territorial or religious references.

In this context the problem takes place that how we can define or how can we make distinction among the following terms Arab Philosophy, Arabic Philosophy, Muslim philosophy, Islamic philosophy, Theology, and this is the paradigm of this research.

Defining Arab Philosophy within Geographical context: Characteristics of Arab Social Structure before Islam

The Arab Peninsula's topography reflects two facts: it has minimal connection to the outside world because it is surrounded by the seas from three sides and it has been shielded from the external onslaught of ideas from the outside world. In addition, whatever they hold as their cultural, social, political, moral, religious, and intellectual assets—which was the result of centuries of connection and devotion and

followings— they adhere to them steadfastly. These characteristic elements were in their grains and they form their nomadic society.

Arab Nomadic Life and Literary Dimensions of the Pre-Islam

Regarding the social aspects the Arabs took pride of having their unadulterated rituals, conventions, morals, polytheism, social hierarchy, and traditions as their tribal framework of Bedouin life. They had great nature for hospitality, bravery, faithfulness. On intellectual and literary side they possessed poetryⁱ, eloquence, and rhetoric marvelous memorization, genealogy etc. One could express oneself strongly and persuasively through rhetoric and eloquence and through poetry. They use poetry in the fields of war to encourage e their warriors. Poetry served many purposes. It was generally oral and vocal. It was highly rich and cultivated. The poetic expressions were exponent of cultural unity and tradition.ⁱⁱ The other literary aspect was oral recitations of tradition historical events and genealogy. Literature in the form of prose was little which was in the form of legal accounts, letters or pacts and agreements or stories.

The inhabitants were mostly shepherds and lived on sheep and camels. They were constantly moving to search water and grass for their flocks. They were unaware of the values which were associated to any civilized life. Their mental horizon was narrow and their struggle for survival sapped their energies. They had little inclinations for the philosophical speculations and they followed polytheism. Their intellectuality of philosophy was a collection of some pithy sayings.ⁱⁱⁱ

Arab Mythology as initial Philosophy

Like any other ancient civilization there was a dominant factor of mythology which dominated religious, cultural, social and economic life of the Arab peninsula. The religious life was Idolatry or Polytheism and very tribe had its own god. But there was a concept of Supreme God Who was called *Allah* and He was called in times of danger and afterward He was forgotten. Besides that there were others such as *al-Uzza*, *al-Manat* and *al-Laat* and they were considered as daughters of Allah. There were innumerable Deities among them many were personifications of abstraction. Kaa'bah was sanctuary having three and sixty idols inside it. Among them *Habul* was greatest. They also believed in demons and called them *Jinns*, it was believed that the *Jinns* can enter human bodies and in animals also. They believed also that the soul is air-like something and they called it *Nafs* (breath). The death occurred when the humans ceased to take breath. They thought that the murdered man's soul takes its vengeance and it appeared on the deceased's grave in the form of an owl. They performed burial rites and had faith in life here-after.^{iv}

Before Islam, the Arabs lived in these conditions with nomadic temperament and as lover of liberty and as follower of their customs. They had narrow perspective but had pride on their rich traditional values, as well as their deeply ingrained rituals and traditions. That mythology served to satisfy their needs to understand the cosmology but they had little heed to rational speculations. There was great poetry in the name of art and literature but no discussions of rationality or wisdom. That was why they resisted Islam as new mode of life they thought it a threat to their traditional tribal prides and polytheism perhaps the economic and suzerainty elements were the dominant factors. The tribal culture with a powerful headship had dominance in all fields of life thus there had been no need of any reflective thought consequently there was no necessity of any rational approach and only the mythology served their purpose of reflective thought and cosmology.

Emergence of Islam

In such conditions the holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was born in 571 AD. He preached Islam to the Arabs who became adversaries to the new religion. After long struggle the new Religion got dominance and the Arabs became Muslims but their blood grains were still tribal Arab. In the past, to the extent they were adherents to their old traditional values and custom; to the same extreme, at present, they converted into being staunch followers of Islamic rituals and prayers. They were much enthusiastic in performing practices instead of indulgence into reflective thoughts. Consequently there were none any rational philosophies despite the fact the Holy Quran emphasized on thinking, reflection, observation and logic. Thus in the above mentioned conditions it is not easy to call anything as Arab Philosophy in the peninsula of the Arab desert.

Arab Philosophy in *The Rashidun Caliphate* (632 CE to 661 CE).

After the demise of the Holy Prophet (632 CE) there was *The Rashidun Caliphate* which lasted for thirty years. The caliphs were Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali. The Rashidun Caliphate Under Caliph Umar (634-644 CE) experienced significant geographical expansion. Key areas came under Islamic rule such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and parts of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, etc. The expansion occurred rapidly during his reign. That expansion in geography marked the influx of various people having plethora of ideas, different philosophies, versatile approaches to life, multi aspects about religious visions and universality coupled with locality towards epistemology and contradicting yet searching for unifying nexus attitude on ontology.

Thus the paradigm shifted from the just adherence to the practices and following the decrees into the attitudes of raising questions, intellectual and analytical debates about theology and metaphysics. But this new tendency was not like a movement or school of thought yet it was just as intellectual thirst and approach for understanding the rational basis of the theology. Such people having this new temperament of seeking intellectual satisfaction and attitude of asking questions belonged to the new geography called as the Muslim World. Their ideas were considered as Arab philosophies and they were regarded as Arab Philosophers.

The terms *i.e. the Arab Philosophers* and *the Muslim Philosophers* both had been used as synonyms but in real sense they both are different and had been mistakenly used. The former term (*Arab Philosophers*) should be restricted to the philosopher who existed in the real Arab peninsula while the later (*the Muslim Philosophers*) should be used for all those who belonged to the gradually added into geographical boundaries through centuries which was called as *the Muslim World* religiously, socially, politically and geographically. *The Muslim Philosophers* are those who belonged to the gradually changing new geography of the Muslim World from the old Arab peninsula to the expansions till the status of *Hijaz e Muqas*, the fall of the *Caliphate-e-Umayyad* and the establishment of the Kingdom of the Arabia and the rest of the Islamic countries.

The ‘Wisdom’ and ‘Hikmat’ of Ali ibn Abi Talib: (The Founder of The Arab Theosophy and Philosophy).

Ali ibn Abi Talib (600-661 CE) was the cousin and companion of the Holy Prophet. He was at the age of seven / eight years when he embraced Islam and he became the first child of accepting Islam. His all life was under the guidance of the Holy Prophet. Thus he was fully aware of religious teachings of Islam, as well as knower of political circumstances, social affairs, geographical boundaries and he became successor to the Knowledge and *Hikmat* of the prophet of Islam. The Prophet exclaimed about Himself

(PBUH) as the *city of knowledge* while he regarded Ali ibn Abi Talib (*Kam Allah Wajoh*) as the *gate of the city of knowledge*. Having all the knowledge and training under the prophet (PBUH) he had great insight into the various fields of knowledge. His insightful decisions were hallmarks of his intellect, wisdom and judicious rationality. He was a man of letters in the matters of religion, hadith, *fiqah* and *Hikmat* (wisdom).^v

His insight and wisdom is explicitly revealed in his sermons, addresses, letters and proverbial sayings. All had been collected and available as the *Nahaj al- Balagh*. This book revealed his sublimed vision about the subtle philosophical problems, theological issues, theosophical affairs and the issues of *Kalam*. Though these branches of knowledge were not in the form of disciplines of knowledge yet his insight foresaw and probed these branches of knowledge and this book has seeds of all these future sciences. The first sermon of *Nahaj al- Balagh* clearly approaches the problem of *Creation Of The World, Problem Of The Unity Of God And His Attributes*. The whole book showed his views about philosophical issues and cliché such as, *Fatalism, Determinism, Death, Afterlife, Day Of Judgment, Creation Of The World, Mysticism, Sufism, Gnostic Knowledge, Mystic Experience, Rationalism And Revelation, Faith and Reason etc.* and he presented solutions to the philosophical theological and issues of *kalam* (for detail see the authors' article).^{vi} Though he, himself was neither philosopher nor a theologian yet he laid the foundations of these disciplines of knowledge. His views were the guiding principles for these future branches of knowledge yet they were there in seed forms while at times as primary principles.

Thus in the light of the above arguments and presentation, the researcher is absolutely right to claim that Hazrat Ali was the 'First Arab philosopher'. But on the other hand, the fact is that he had insight and wisdom and expressed his thoughts in his *Nahaj al- Balagh* yet they are mere addresses and they do not occupy the status of any systematic approach or cannot be regarded as rationalistic theory which is the main characteristic of any theory to be called as a philosophy. That is why Ali ibn Abi Talib (*Kam Allah Wajoh*) cannot be regarded as a philosopher. But the fact is that his sermons paved the ways for future discussion and establishment of the schools of thoughts.

The question is that if Ali ibn Abi Talib had such a great vision and multi-aspect approach then why he himself could not form any philosophy. The answer is that: first of all, the Arabs were much enthusiastic regarding practical performances. Their temperament was not speculative but emotional and they were staunch adherents towards their traditions and practices. Islam changed their direction yet they were the same tribesmen. Secondly, such problems did not exist at that time as well as after the demise of the Prophet there appeared many other vital issues e.g. The caliphate issue, the false claimers, the expeditions, the geographical expansion, zakat issue, inclusion of follower of other religion into Islam, the political turmoil, the uprisings and the third Caliph's murder and even the succession of Ali as fourth caliphate (he ruled from 656 CE until his assassination in 661), riots and uprisings. Thus he had no to form any systematic philosophy instead he occupied a greater place as staunch follower of religion and successor to the '*city of knowledge*' and *Hikmat* of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). He hinted the metaphysical, epistemological, theological issues with his insight and wisdom in his sermons. He had not developed any system of thought on rational basis but showed his religious nature. Consequently he cannot be regarded as a philosopher in strict sense yet his insight is unchallengeable and he is known as a Wiseman of the Arab and fourth caliph of Islamic state.

The Arab Mental Perspectives and Intellectual Spectrum

In the above mentioned conditions, it is clear that the mental perspective of the Arabs was narrow. So in the early age of Islam and the period of expansion, the problem which had later been called as the problems of philosophy or the *kalam* did not exist and secondly the common view was that Islam is a

complete code of life thus there was no need to have any new set of doctrine and any philosophies. If there were any rational inquires they were ignored by thinking that Islam presents a complete practical and theoretical model about the nature of reality and life. They thought *Quran* and *Hadith* and *Sunnah* as sufficient for living a life.^{vii} Moreover, any rational or new idea was considered as '*Bid'dat*' or '*innovation*' and regarded as '*Kufr*' because they thought if it had been necessary, the Prophet must have discussed the problems. Thus every new idea was named as '*Bid'dat*' or '*Innovation*' or '*Kufr*'. But latter, after inclusion of the people converted from various religions into Islam, there appeared the need to discuss those '*innovations*'. That was the beginning of the Philosophy, *Kalam* and Theology as disciplines of knowledge in the Islamic state. It means that philosophy was not proper activity of the Muslims at that time.^{viii}

The Intellectualization of Knowledge

Moreover, the emergence of such issues caused the broadening of mental horizon. That was due to the Greek translations into Arabic under the *Abbasid Rule* (750 to 1258 CE, succeeded the Umayyad Caliphate) especially under the patronage of The caliph al-Ma'mun who founded the *bayt al-hikma*, (the House of Wisdom, in AH 217/AD 832) in Baghdad. That was not only observatory and library but it was a centre for translations of the Greek texts into Arabic language.

Al Kindi: The Fallacy of Designating the 'First Arab Philosopher'.

The name of Al-Kindi (c.185/801-c. 260/873) is the first one which the books on Muslim or Islamic philosophy starts with. His full name was *Abu Yusuf Yaqub ibn Ishac ibn al-Sabbah ibn Imran ibn Ismail ibn al-Ashath ibn Qais al-Kindi*. The name of *Kinda* tribe among the great tribes of the Arab before Islam was well known. *Ibn al-Ashath ibn Qais* the grandfather of Al-Kindi embraced Islam and he was among the *sahabah* (companions) of the Holy Prophet. He migrated to al-Kufah and lived there. Al-Kindi's father ibn al Sabbah was governor of al-Kufah during the reign of Al Mahdi and al-Rashid the Abbasid Caliphs. There al-Kindi was born (in al-Kufah), in 185/801. ^{ix}

In the books of Islamic philosophy al-Kindi had been known as the 'First philosopher of the Arabs'.^x He got his education in *al-Kufha* and in *al-Basra*.^{xi} Both the cities are located in Iraq and they had never been part of the Arab peninsula yet they had been part of the Muslim state and Baghdad had been capital (established in 762) during the *Abasid reign*.

In the rational atmosphere of the *al-Kufha* and *Al-Basra*, Al-Kindi learnt not only the traditional branches of knowledge such as learning the Quran by heart, Arabic Grammar, literature, *fiqh* and *Kalam* but also he was much interested in Greek philosophy and sciences. For this purpose he learnt the Greek and Syriac languages and himself translated as well as revised many Greek translations. At that time philosophy was in the hands of Syriacs^{xii} who were mainly physicians. It is said that he cure the child of a merchant who caught by sudden paralysis. Astonishing fact is that Al-Kindi cured the paralyzed child by music.^{xiii}

His knowledge was encyclopaedic and he wrote on the topics: philosophy, logic, arithmetic, music, astronomy, geometry, politics, spherical, globular, causality, on metals chemicals, and on *The First Things*. But his hallmark work was the attempt to '*Harmonize Philosophy and Religion*'. Religion depends on revelation but philosophy relied on reason. Religious men thought about philosophers as 'heretics' but philosopher charged them as ignoring the element of reason which was the main criterion of being human as emphasised by the Quran. Thus the dispute was at contrary ploe. Al-Kindi harmonized and conciliated the both fields. He paved the paths of knowledge for Al-Farabi, ibn-Sina and ibn-Rushd.

In the light of the above mentioned geographical background, arguments from the dimensions of his works and his attitude towards systematic knowledge and philosophy as well as towards science, Al-Kindi was genuinely considered as 'First Muslim Philosopher of the Muslim world'. But to call him the '*First Arab Philosopher*', it is a great mistake and intellectual fallacy. His grand-father and the tribe belonged 'the Arab peninsula' but since his grand-father's migration and his brought up in Al-Kufa and Al-Basrah (Iraq), he cannot be considered an Arab Philosopher but just the first 'systematics Muslim Philosopher' or 'the First Philosopher of the Muslim World' or the 'Arabic philosopher' because he wrote in the Arabic language.

The primary and most important factor for determining the character and tradition of the Arabic philosophy was the 'Translation Movement'. Which besides the translation works, established the technical vocabulary. The coining of the word '*falsfah*' was also derived from the Greek '*Philosophia*'. The decisive impact of that movement was its companionship to the Arabic but not to the Islamic. All was 'Arabic philosophy' because it was rendered from the Greek thought ^{xiv}into Arabic language. Yet keep in mind it was not the 'Arab Philosophy'. Only Al-Kindi had been designated as the philosopher of the Arabs and Philosophy spread in the Arabic language. The term '**Arab Philosophy**' has been clarified that it is designated by the geography of the Arab Peninsula while the term 'Arabic Philosophy' is whatever has been written in Arabic about philosophical problems throughout the Islamic World.

Here the question arises that what is the definition and differentiation between the two e.g. 'Muslim Philosophy' and 'Islamic Philosophy'. In general consideration it is that 'the sort of Philosophy which arose within the culture of Islam'.^{xv} But is it correct? Because whatever had been produced by the philosophers who are Muslims and belonged to the religion of Islam, there thought scan be considered as Muslim Philosophy. It is evident fact all such Muslims Philosophers had been charged of '*Kufar*' and they faced '*fatawas*' (e.g. from *Mutazilites*, *ibn Rushd* till *Muhammad Iqbal*) from the orthodox clergy; then how their thoughts could be called the Muslim Philosophy? Moreover, there are a large number of philosophers or the orientalisists who are not Muslims but they are devoted to discuss the problems of the religion of Islam or the philosophy of Islam of the Muslim Kalam. Then how their philosophies could be called Muslim Philosophy'?

'**Metaphysics**', the term '**metaphysics**' is used for the branch of philosophy which deals with the nature, character, constitution and the causes of such beings as the existence of God or super natural or above physical existences, etc.^{xvi} It means the philosophical investigation of the nature and structure of reality. It is broader in scope than science, e.g., physics and even cosmology.^{xvii} Thus, Theology, Kalam, Cosmology, Ontology are the main branches those are to be focused here. and discussions about the **Theology (Kalam)**

The words 'Kalam' or 'Theology' involve the rational defense and explanation of religious beliefs. Its paradigmatic focus is theological rather than purely philosophical concerns. Its center is religion while philosophy is a method and tool for rational debate. Emerging in response to doctrinal disputes, it addresses issues of God's Nature, Free Will, Predestination, and the After Life etc. Major theological schools include the Ash'ari, Mu'tazili, and Maturidi traditions. They perform the task of defending Islamic beliefs using rational theology.

Defining the terms: Muslim Philosophy, Islamic Philosophy, Theology (Kalam).

The intellectual and rational history of the Muslim world since the demise of the Prophet (PBUH) had witnessed the evolution of various as well as diverse schools of thought associated to different philosophies and encompassing theology, jurisprudence, and mysticism. For these diverse schools of thoughts, rational movements and intellectual trends, the terms 'Muslim Philosophy', 'Islamic

Philosophy', and 'Theology', according to the nature of their contents have often been used. Here I try to clarify these categories and the real meanings of the terms by examining their origins, developments, and contemporary relevance. Though there are no hard and fast rules regarding the differentiation of the terms but there are comparative statements to describe the salient features of the above terms.

Muslim Philosophy: Definitions and Historical Context

This term refers to the collection of such philosophical thoughts that have been presented by Muslim thinkers (regardless of whether their works explicitly drawn from Islamic religious doctrines or they are rooted in Islamic teachings or not). It embraced the works and thoughts of philosophers influenced by Greek, Persian, and Indian philosophies, as well as independent rational inquiry. Notable figures as Muslim Philosophers included Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Ibn Rushd (Averroes). This term signifies the works and rational engagement of Muslim intellectuals within the contexts of metaphysical, epistemological, cosmological and ethical, questions through the use of reason, logic, and empirical observation.

The important point is that 'Muslim Philosophy' is not necessarily Islamic in its content or objectives as theological or the debates of the *Kalam*. While its practitioners were Muslims and often engaged with religious questions, their philosophical inquiries could — and often did — incorporate ideas from Greek, Persian, Indian, and other intellectual traditions. Some Muslim philosophers worked to reconcile these external ideas with Islamic beliefs, while others pursued rational inquiry independent of theological constraints.

Majid Fakhry defines **Muslim Philosophy** as the philosophical activity pursued by Muslim thinkers in a religious, cultural, and linguistic context dominated by Islam, although not necessarily always confined by its theological boundaries.^{xviii} While Robert Audi defines Arabic Philosophy is that the 'philosophy produced in Arabic' by thinkers from a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds who were associated with the cultural values of Islamic civilization and lived in cultures where the religion of Islam was predominated.^{xix}

Her both the thinker amalgamated both the terms but Oliver Leaman explains: Muslim philosophy encompasses both those thinkers who wrote as Muslims addressing problems concerning Islam and its doctrines, and those who dealt with more general philosophical issues, sometimes outside explicitly religious frameworks.^{xx} Audi again designates the term 'Islamic philosophy' for the content presented by Muslim philosophers is misleading. For the reason that it suggests a specific religious content that was not necessarily there.^{xxi}

The general description of the term refers to such philosophy which was written in the Islamic world by Muslims, which might engage with Islamic theology, but may also explore purely metaphysical or logical concerns derived from Greek sources (Plato and Aristotle), coupled with Persian, Indian, and Hellenistic traditions. Its scope was the metaphysics, epistemology, politics, medicine, ethics, logic, and cosmology and sometimes independent of religious doctrines. It flourished between the 9th–13th centuries CE (Islamic Golden Age), with revival attempts in the modern era by thinkers like Iqbal and Nasr. Their engaging activities were in rational and Greek philosophy but sometimes clashing with religious orthodoxy.

The term 'Muslim Philosophy' represents a rich, rationalist intellectual tradition carried out by Muslim thinkers, such as Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) who synthesized the ideas of Plato and Aristotle. Ibn Sina

(Avicenna) (d. 1037 CE) who developed a sophisticated metaphysical and psychological system; highly influenced by Aristotle and Plotinus and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (d. 1198 CE) who was known as 'Commentator' of Aristotle; defended the harmony between philosophy and religion.

The term 'Muslim Philosophers' means embracing diverse philosophical influences and often existing both within and outside explicitly Islamic theological concerns. Its significance lies in its attempt to reconcile, critique, or sometimes bypass religious doctrines in the pursuit of universal philosophical truths.

Islamic Philosophy: Definitions and Historical Context

The term Islamic Philosophy hints at first to the 'Islamic' paradigm and then to the 'philosophy' thus it meant the 'systematic philosophical interpretation of Islamic teachings'. Islamic Philosophy is such philosophy that was rooted in Islamic sources, seeking to reconcile revelation and reason. This harmonization of reason with revelation must be grounded in the Qur'an and the Hadith. The exponents of this tradition included the works of Al-Kindi, Al-Ghazali, and Mulla Sadra etc. and focused on metaphysical, epistemological, cosmological and issues of Ethics within an Islamic framework. Their philosophical inquiries were always within an Islamic worldview. According to Oliver Leaman, it is worth mentioning that Islamic Philosophy was practiced by non-Muslim. Many would say that it was carried out by non-Muslims exclusively. The last among them was *Musa b. Maimun* (Maimonides. Born 1135 in Cordoba).^{xxii}

Leaman had thrown light on the distinct Nature of Islamic Philosophy as it is conceivable to understand *Islamic philosophy on its own terms*. It is such a philosophy which deals with topics which do not always appear relevant to contemporary philosophical issues. Moreover it is not necessary to relate Islamic philosophy to modern philosophical thought, nor to the continuation of the themes of Islamic philosophy among the Scholastics such as Aquinas.^{xxiii}

The Common problems of the Above Schools of Thought

The above movements and schools of thought such as 'Arab Philosophy', 'Muslim Philosophy', 'Islamic Philosophy', 'Theology' (Kalam), despite the difference among the methods, approaches features and manners, all have some common problems which were the foundations of the movements and the nexus on the horizon of their thoughts.

The Problems of Cosmology

The Ontology / the Cosmology are two branches of philosophy. The former **Ontology** (*ontos*: existence + *logia*: study) the branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being and it is the philosophical Analysis of reality or any type of existences. The later, **Cosmology** (Greek: world+ science) Cosmogony (Greek: world + begetting) these terms means the creation of the Universe or the world).^{xxiv} This generally describes the science and knowledge of the nature, structure, and origin of the universe as a whole), and usually its traditional concerns is the existence of non-physical entities, e.g., God. It investigates questions which science does not address.^{xxv}

All the schools of thoughts regarding the Cosmology dealt in the issues about the nature of reality such as the theories: *Monism, Dualism, Pluralism, Spiritualism, Materialism, Atomism, Creationism, Deism, Egoism, Nihilism, Emanationism* etc.

Moreover, theologically this branch of metaphysics and 'Kalam' included *Problem of God's Attribute, Eternity and Multiplicity of Attributes (ta'uded-e-qud'ma and Shirk), Existence of The God (Proof for and against), Unity of God, The nature of God's Existence as Wajib al Wajood / Mumkin al Wajood, God as Spiritual Realty or Material and Anthropomorphic (Mujasmiah), Createdness / Uncreatedness of the Holy Quran, Life After death, God's Will and His Providence, Problem of the Grave Sin and the Prophet (PBUH) as Rahmat ul lil Almeen, the Nature of The Angels, The nature of Arsh as physical or just symbol of Divine Authority, Mezan as Material or symbolic, Physical Punishment and Reward as mere states, Heaven and Hell as mere Stations or material beings or just mental conditions, the Eternity of the Universe, Metaphysics vs. Physical world, theory of Evolution or Creation vs. 'Kun', Matters about Faith vs Action, Problem of Essence and Existence, etc.*

The Problems of Epistemology: Focused By The Schools

Epistemology (Greek- *episteme*: knowledge + *Logia*: study) is the branch of philosophy which is study of those whatever are the basis or essence knowledge.^{xxvi} This deals in the issues about the sources, manners constitutions of knowledge. It has many schools regarding the manner of acquiring knowledge. Philosophically there are various schools or the theories about getting knowledge such as Empiricism, Rationalism, Revelation, Gnosticism, Agnosticism, Maa'rifat, *Protaghorianism*. But theologically there were the following main schools e.g. *Qadri'ah, Jab'riah Mur'jiah, Wa'eedyah, Mu'jasm'iyah, Mu'ta'ziah, Asha' irh, Shi'ah*, which focused on the epistemological issues. They approached the following issues: *the Problem of Beatific Vision, Faith and Reason, Pre-destinationism, Fatalism, Freewill, God as Omnipotent and Omniscience, God as Qadir-e-Mutliq or Bound to His Own Principles. Manzilag Bain al Manzilah'tain, the status of the committer of Grave Sin, Problem of defining Justice, Amar Bil Ma'ruf wa Na'hi An'nil Mun'kir, Reason and Revelation, Relation of the God and the Universe, Man's Status in the Universe, Problem of Me'raaj as spiritual or material journey and problem of material conditions, Problem of Space and Time, Mid-Body Problem, Cause and Effect theory. Theories of Knowledge, God's Knowledge of the Particulars and Universals, Prophetic and Mystic Consciousness, Nature of Spirit or Soul, Psyche, Body Resurrection and Immortality of Soul.*

Moreover, the Theories of Ethics (Problem of Good and Evil), Moral Freedom and Responsibility, Defence of Religion against Atheists and other religions' followers, theological answering to the newly Convertors and Harmonization of Religion and Philosophy, Problems about Education and Politics were also discussed by the above schools of thoughts and movements.

Mysticism occupied a great space in certain circles. Mystical issues such as Origin, Manners, Types with especial focus on Mystic Ontology e.g. *Wahdat-al-wajood, Wahdat-al-Shahood* as well as Mystic epistemology about the sources of knowledge and noetic type of Knowledge, Language of religion caused the creation of many mystical traditions and schools of thought.

CONCLUSION

The above terms e.g. '*Arab philosophy*', '*Arabic Philosophy*', '*Muslim Philosophy*', '*Islamic Philosophy*', '*Theology*', and '*Metaphysic*' have been expounded in the light of their core and foremost issues, manners of handling the clichés and dominant mental approaches. Here, through the analytical spectacles and approach of removing the ambiguity through their cardinal issues which expanded through centuries have been focused. In this analytical descriptive research article, I summarize my findings as:

1. '*Arab philosophy*' is confusing term because there were no Arab philosophers in the earlier period of Islam. They were enthusiastic in performing practical engagements.

2. The philosophical issues which were to be the central issues and foundations of subsequent schools of thought might be traced in the addresses of Hazrat Ali (*Karm Ullah Wajoh* Born 599AD- martyred 661 AD). These addresses can be found as *Nahj al Balagh*^{xvii} thus He might be considered the **‘First Arab philosopher’** but not Al-Kindi.
3. Al- Kindi (c.185/801-c. 260/873) has been regarded as the ‘First Arab Philosopher’ because his grand-father belonged to Arab tribe but he had left Arab and lived in Kufah (Iraq). Al-Kindi born and got education in Kufah, Basra and Baghdad (Iraq). Thus it is mistaken view to consider him the **‘First Arab Philosopher’**. He can only be called the **First ‘Philosopher of the Islamic World’** due to his systematic works.
4. The emergence of various multi-dimensional issues due to rational approaches and religious debates caused the establishment and appearance of philosophical schools of thought, theological groups. These issues were the foundational stones of the creation of such schools. They were destined to rule the course of history for centuries. They are still hot debates in modern times.
5. The term **‘Arabic Philosophy’** can be loosely assigned to the writings of all the philosophers who were living in the vast Islamic world and they wrote in Arabic language. Thus their works can be regarded as the *‘Arabic Philosophy’* but calling it ‘Arab philosophy’ is a mistaken idea.
6. **‘Islamic Philosophy’**, is the term that encompasses all the theological issues and philosophical questions discussed within the paradigm of Islam theology. Worth mentioning fact is that it is not necessary that **‘Islamic Philosophy’** must be approached by only the Muslim philosopher. It is discussed by such persons who were not Muslims and clear example is that a great number of ‘Orientalists’ are none Muslim. But their ideas are called ‘Islamic Philosophy’ because they discussed the issue within the framework of Islamic religion.
7. The term **‘Muslim Philosophy’** generally used for the contents presented by the Muslim philosophers but ironically all such philosophers were charged of blasphemy and most of them faced *‘Fatawas’* from the Orthodoxy.

The description of the above terms should not be treated as hard and fast rules but they are approximate definitions because they had been used in these senses for centuries as amalgamated and ambiguous meanings. This research has analyzed such historical descriptions and it is an attempt to clarify the descriptions and the meanings as possible definitions for the future utilization of the terms.

Notes and References

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ⁱⁱ G. E. Von Grunbaum, *Classical Islam: A History 600-1258* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 26.

ⁱⁱⁱ Inayatullah, Shaikh. *Pre-Islamic Arabian Thought*. Vol. 1, in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, edited by M M Sharif, 126-135. (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1983), 127.

^{iv} Shaikh Inayatullah. *Pre-Islamic Arabian Thought*.

^v Cf. Dr Muhammad Iqbal Shah, Dr.Ali Raza Tahir. “The Meanings of the ‘Wisdom’ and the ‘Hikmat’: A Philosophical and Analytical Discourse.” (IJSS) *The Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, Volume 4, No. 2 (2025 July): 33-41.

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^{vi} Cf. Muhammad Iqbal Shah and Ali Raza Tahir. “The Significance of Nahj-ul-Balagh in the Development of Muslim Theosophy: An Analytical Exposition,” *Al-Qamar* Vol 7 no. 2 (2024 April-June): 17-38.

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vii Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy s.v. "Concept of Philosophy in Islam,"

viii Routledge Encyclopaedia.

ix Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany. *Al-Kindi*. Vol. 1, in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, edited by M M Sharif, (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1983), 421.

x Alfred L. Ivry, *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), 3

xi Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany. *Al-Kindi*. 421.

xii The *Syriacs* are an Aramaic-speaking Christian people with roots in the Near East, particularly Mesopotamia and the Levant. They are considered among the first Christians and have a rich cultural heritage rooted in the Aramaic language. While often referred to as Syrian Christians, the term "Syriac" distinguishes them from those who simply reside in Syria.

The Levant is a historical and geographical term referring to a region in the Eastern Mediterranean, encompassing modern-day countries like Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine. It's also sometimes considered to include parts of Turkey and Cyprus. The term originates from the French word "levant," meaning "rising" or "east," and was popularized during the Franco-Ottoman alliance.

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xv Routledge Encyclopaedia.

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xix Robert Audi. 40.

xx Oliver Leaman. *An Introduction To Classical Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

xxi Robert Audi, 40.

xxii Oliver Leaman. *An Introduction*. 30.

xxiii Oliver Leaman. *An Introduction*, X.

xxiv The Winston Encyclopedic Dictionary s.v. 'Cosmology'.

xxv Robert Audi. 563.

xxvi The Winston Encyclopedic Dictionary s.v. 'Epistemology'.

^{xxvii} Ali Ibn Talib, *Nahaj ul Balalgh (Urdu)*. Edited by Syed Sharif Al-Razi. (Lahore: Shia General Book Agency, 1974).