COURSE GUIDE

ISS107
INTRODUCTION TO ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION

ISS107: Introduction to Islamic Philosophy is a two-credit unit compulsory course for the first-year degree students of Islamic Studies at the National Open University of Nigeria. Anyone who wants to have an insight into the realm of Islamic thought will also benefit from the book. The Course opens students' eyes to the world of scholasticism, critical thinking, and perfect reasoning in line with the call of Islam to philosophise in many of the Qur'anic verses and Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Unlike the ancient Greek as well as other Western non-Muslim philosophers, Islamic Philosophy is seen as field that should lead one to the knowledge of God as the Ultimate Reality worthy to be worshipped and to be served alone

THE COURSE

ISS107: Introduction to Islamic Philosophy is a foundational course that introduces students to the definition and scope of terms used in the course material to the personality of some great Muslim philosophers. Its course guide furnishes you with all what you will need for your success in the course. It includes what you are expected to know in each unit, the type of course materials needed, and how to achieve maximum benefit from the course. You will also be acquainted with information on periodic tutorials and different types of assessment that are available for you in this course.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE

As you progress through this course, you will learn:
The general aim of this course ISS107 is to introduce you to the way Islam addresses the concept of philosophy. It is a course that will shed light on some areas of ambiguity in the universe which were philosophically solved by great men of thought. The way Islam calls mankind to reflect on the existence of life and what the entire universe contains goes with the principle of critical thinking and thus, philosophy. Many verses of the Qur'an call men to reflect deeply on some natural entity, which shall be seen later in subsequent discussion. At the end of this course, you will be able to understand the essence of reasoning and logical thinking in finding solutions to the problems of reality and causes. Likewise, it will lead you to understand how philosophy is to be used to buttress the monotheism of the Supreme Being.

In a course like **ISS107: Introduction to Islamic Philosophy**, students are expected to learn the foundational ideas, methods, and branches of philosophy. The course usually introduces critical thinking, reasoning,

and major philosophical questions about life, knowledge, morality, and existence.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN ISS107:

Here are some things students will learn in the course:

- **Meaning and Nature of Philosophy**: Definition of philosophy, origin and development of philosophical thought, importance of philosophy in human life and society.
- **Branches of Philosophy**: Metaphysics (study of reality and existence), epistemology (study of knowledge), ethics (study of morality), logic (study of reasoning) and aesthetics (study of beauty and art).
- **Critical and Rational Thinking**: How to think logically and analytically, identifying valid and invalid arguments and evaluating ideas critically.
- **Philosophical Methods**: Socratic method, dialectical reasoning, observation and reflection and argumentation and analysis
- **Major Philosophers and Their Ideas**: Ancient philosophers, medieval and modern philosophers, African and Islamic philosophical traditions.
- **Philosophy and Religion**: Relationship between faith and reason, philosophical arguments about God and religion and moral and spiritual questions.
- **Ethics and Human Conduct**: Meaning of right and wrong, moral responsibility, justice, freedom, and human values.
- **Philosophy in Everyday Life**: Application of philosophy to leadership, politics, education, and society, problem-solving and decision-making skills and understanding different worldviews and perspectives.
- **Introduction to Logic**: Deductive and inductive reasoning, logical fallacies and construction of sound arguments
- **Development of Intellectual Skills**: Independent thinking, effective communication of ideas and research and analytical writing skills.

COURSE AIMS

The course aims are to:

- explain basic philosophical concepts and theories.
- think critically and logically.
- analyse arguments and ideas effectively.
- relate philosophy to contemporary social and moral issues.
- appreciate different philosophical traditions and perspectives.

COURSE LARNING OBJECTIVES

To achieve the aims outlined above, the following objectives are set. Each study unit also contains specific objectives to guide your learning.
By the end of this course, you will be able to:

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR ISS107:

Introduction to Islamic Philosophy

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- define philosophy and explain its nature, scope, and importance in human life.
- identify and explain the major branches of philosophy such as:
- demonstrate an understanding of the historical development of philosophy and the contributions of major philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.
- develop critical, logical, and analytical thinking skills for examining ideas and arguments.
- distinguish between valid and invalid arguments through the study of logic and reasoning.
- examine philosophical issues relating to reality, knowledge, morality, religion, and human existence.
- analyse different philosophical schools of thought and their relevance to contemporary society.
- apply philosophical principles to personal, social, political, and ethical problems.
- demonstrate the ability to communicate philosophical ideas effectively through discussion and writing.
- appreciate the role of philosophy in promoting intellectual development, tolerance, and responsible citizenship.
- relate philosophy to other disciplines such as religion, science, education, and politics.
- cultivate independent thinking and the ability to question assumptions rationally and objectively.

WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units carefully and other relevant materials stated in the section on further reading. Each study unit contains SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES (SAEs) and Facilitator Marked Assignments (TMAs), and at each point in the course, you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of the course is a final examination. You will also find listed components of the

course, what you have to do, and how you should allocate your time to each study unit to complete the course successfully and in good time.

COURSE MATERIALS

Major components of the course are:
1) Course Guide
2) Study Units
3) References
4) Presentation Schedule

STUDY UNITS

The study units in this course (ISS107) are as follows:

MODULE 1 FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Unit 1 Meaning and Scope of Islamic Philosophy
Unit 2 Sources of Islamic Philosophy
Unit 3 Historical Development
Unit 4 Major Themes in Islamic Philosophy
Unit 5 Relationship between Philosophy and Revelation

MODULE 2 MAJOR PHILOSOPHERS AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Unit 1 Al-Kindi and the Early Philosophers
Unit 2 Al-Farabi and the Ideal State
Unit 3 Ibn Sina and the Philosophical Synthesis
Unit 4 Al-Ghazali and the Critique of Philosophy
Unit 5 Ibn Rushd and the Defence of Philosophy

MODULE 3 THEMES AND CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

Unit 1 Islamic Philosophy and Science
Unit 2 Islamic Philosophy and Ethics
Unit 3 Revivalist Thinkers and Modern Islamic Thought
Unit 4 Challenges to Islamic Philosophy in the Modern World
Unit 5 The Future of Islamic Philosophy

PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

The presentation schedule included in this course material provides the important dates for this year to complete Facilitator-marked assignments and

Facilitations attendance. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against falling behind in your work.

ASSESSMENT

There are three aspects in the assessment of the course. First is a set of Self- Assessment Exercises (SAEs), second is a set of Facilitator-marked assignments (TMAs), and third is a written end of semester examination. In tackling the assignments, you are expected to be sincere in attempting the exercises; you are expected to apply the information, knowledge and techniques gathered during the course. The assignments must be submitted to your Facilitator against formal deadlines stated in the presentation schedule and the assignment file. The work you submit to your Facilitator for assessment will make up 30% of your total course mark. At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final written examination of two hours' duration. This examination will make up the remaining 70% of your total course mark.

FACILITATOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS (TMAS)

Assignment questions referred to as TMA (Facilitator Marked Assignments) for each study unit in this course are stated. You will be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your reading and study units. However, it is desirable for you to demonstrate that you have read and researched more widely than the required minimum. Using other references will give you a broader viewpoint and may provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a TMA (Facilitator-marked assignment) form to your Facilitator. Make sure that each assignment reaches your Facilitator on or before the deadline given in the presentation schedule and assignment file. If, for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your Facilitator before the assignment is due to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extensions of time will not be granted after the due date unless in exceptional circumstances. You are encouraged to submit all assignments.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination for this course will be for two hours' duration, and it has a value of 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions, which reflect the type of self-testing,

practice exercises and Facilitator-marked assignments (Facilitator-attended-to problems) you have previously encountered in this study material.

Use the time between the last study unit and sitting for the examination to revise the entire course. You might find it useful to review your setup self-tests, Facilitator-marked assignments and Facilitator comments on them before the examination. The final examination covers information from all parts of the course.

COURSE MARKING STRUCTURE

The following table lays out how the actual course marking is done.
Table I: Course Marking Structure

Stages of Assessment	Percentage of Scores
Assessments	30%
Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE

Course Material

In Open and Distance Learning (ODL), the study units replace the University Lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of ODL. You can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecturer. In the same way that the lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at the appropriate points. Each of the study units follows a common format.

The first item is the table of contents, followed by an introduction to the subject matter of the study unit and how it is integrated with the other study units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the study unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the study unit, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this, you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the study unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually come from either a reading section or other sources. You will be directed when needed.
Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs) are included throughout the study units. Working through these SAEs will help you to achieve the objectives of the study units and prepare you for the assignments and examination.

You should do every SAE as you come to it in the study unit. There will also be numerous examples given in the study units. Work through these when you come to them too.

The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your Facilitator immediately. Remember that your Facilitator's job is to help you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your Facilitator to provide necessary guidance. You are encouraged to take note of the following tips:

1. Read this course guide thoroughly.
2. Organise a study schedule. Refer to the course overview for more details. You should note that it is expected of you to devote at least 2 hours per week for studying this course. The number of hours to be devoted for intensive study stated above is outside other need driven academic activities like self-help, group discussion and instructional facilitation. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the study units. Important information, e.g. details of your Facilitations, and the date of the first day of the semester, is available. You need to gather all this information in one place, such as in your diary or a wall calendar. Whatever method you choose, you should write your own dates for working on each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your Facilitator know before it is too late for him to help you. Turn to unit 1, read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
4. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the table of contents at the beginning of each unit. It will be helpful for you to always read both the study unit you are working on and one of the materials for further reading on your desk at the same time.
5. Work through the Unit. The content of the unit itself has

been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit, you will be instructed to read sections from other sources. Use the unit to guide your reading.

6. Keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing all your assignments carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and, therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.
7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your Facilitator.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your Facilitator for marking, do not wait until you get it back before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your Facilitator‘s comments, both on the Facilitator-marked assignment form and also as written on the assignment itself. Consult your Facilitator as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the course guide).

Online Facilitation and Learning Resources

As you embark on your learning journey in the Introduction to Islamic philosophy, you will have access to a comprehensive suite of resources designed to enhance your understanding and engagement with the course content. These resources have been carefully selected to exemplify the very smart education principles you will be studying.

Online Facilitation

Throughout this course, experienced facilitators will guide your learning process through regular interaction and feedback. These subject-matter experts will moderate discussions, answer questions, clarify complex concepts, and share relevant examples from practice. The facilitators serve as both mentors and role models, demonstrating effective digital pedagogy through their own

teaching approaches.

Videos

The course incorporates a variety of instructional videos that bring theoretical concepts to life. These include recorded lectures, demonstrations of smart technologies in action, case studies, expert interviews, and analytical commentaries. The videos are strategically embedded within modules to illustrate key discussions on philosophy, providing you with visual models of innovative pedagogical approaches.

Course Materials

Your course materials consist of carefully structured text-based content, interactive elements, and embedded activities. These materials incorporate principles of instructional design specific to digital learning environments, featuring clear learning objectives, concept explanations, practical examples, reflective questions, and assessment opportunities. All materials are designed according to smart education principles, with scaffolded learning paths that can adapt to different levels of prior knowledge.

URLs

Throughout the course, you will be directed to curated external resources via URLs. These links connect you to research papers, educational tools, exemplary smart education implementations, and communities of practice. Each URL is accompanied by guidance on how to critically engage with the resource and apply insights to your own educational context.

Synchronous and Asynchronous Sessions

This course blends both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced) learning experiences:

Synchronous sessions include scheduled webinars, collaborative workshops, and live discussions where you interact directly with facilitators and peers. These sessions provide opportunities for immediate feedback, collaborative problem-solving, and the development of a learning community.

Asynchronous elements allow you to engage with course content at your own pace and convenience. These include discussion forums, reflective activities, project work, and self-assessment exercises. Asynchronous learning provides flexibility while encouraging deep engagement with concepts and their practical applications. Through thoughtful integration of these varied

resources, the course itself serves as a model of effective smart education pedagogy, allowing you to experience as a learner the approaches you will later implement as a learner in the field of Islamic philosophy.

There are 8 hours of Facilitations provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these Facilitations together with the name and phone number of your Facilitator as soon as you are allocated a Facilitation group.

Your Facilitator will mark and comment on your assignments. He will also keep a close watch on your progress or any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your Facilitator-marked assignments to your Facilitator well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your Facilitator and returned to you as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to contact your Facilitator by telephone, e – mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary. Contact your Facilitator if: You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings. You have difficulty with the Self–Assessment Exercises. You have a question or problem with an assignment, with your Facilitator‘s comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment. You should try your best to attend the Facilitation. This is your only chance to have a face-to-face academic contact with your Facilitator and to ask questions on problems encountered in the course of your study.

To gain the maximum benefit from course facilitation, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.
I wish you the best of luck and success in the course.

MAIN COURSE

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MODULE 1 FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Unit 1 Meaning and Scope of Islamic Philosophy

Unit Structure

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1.3.1 Definition of Islamic Philosophy
1.3.2 Concept of Islamic Philosophy
1.3.3 Core Features of Islamic Philosophy
1.4 Nature of Islamic philosophy
1.5 Relationship of Islamic Philosophy with Other Islamic Sciences
1.6 Summary
1.7 References/Further Readings
1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



1.1 Introduction

Have you ever wondered how questions about existence, knowledge, morality and the purpose of human life can be examined through reason while remaining rooted in Islamic teachings? Such questions lie at the heart of Islamic philosophy. It represents the intellectual effort of Muslim thinkers to understand reality, human existence and the relationship between humanity and the Creator through reason and revelation.
In this unit, you will explore the meaning, concept and major characteristics of Islamic philosophy. You will also examine its nature and scope, including areas such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic, political philosophy and cosmology. The unit further considers how Islamic philosophy developed through engagement with earlier traditions, especially Greek philosophy.

Finally, you will examine the relationship between Islamic philosophy and other Islamic sciences, including *kalām*, *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *taṣawwuf* and *manṭiq*. By the end of the unit, you should have a foundational understanding of Islamic philosophy and its place within the wider Islamic intellectual tradition.

Before you begin exploring the details of Islamic philosophy, take a moment to study the infographic below. It provides a visual overview of the key ideas you will encounter in this unit, including the meaning, core features, nature, major areas, and relationship of Islamic philosophy with other Islamic sciences. As you study the unit, return to the infographic to connect the concepts and reinforce your understanding.

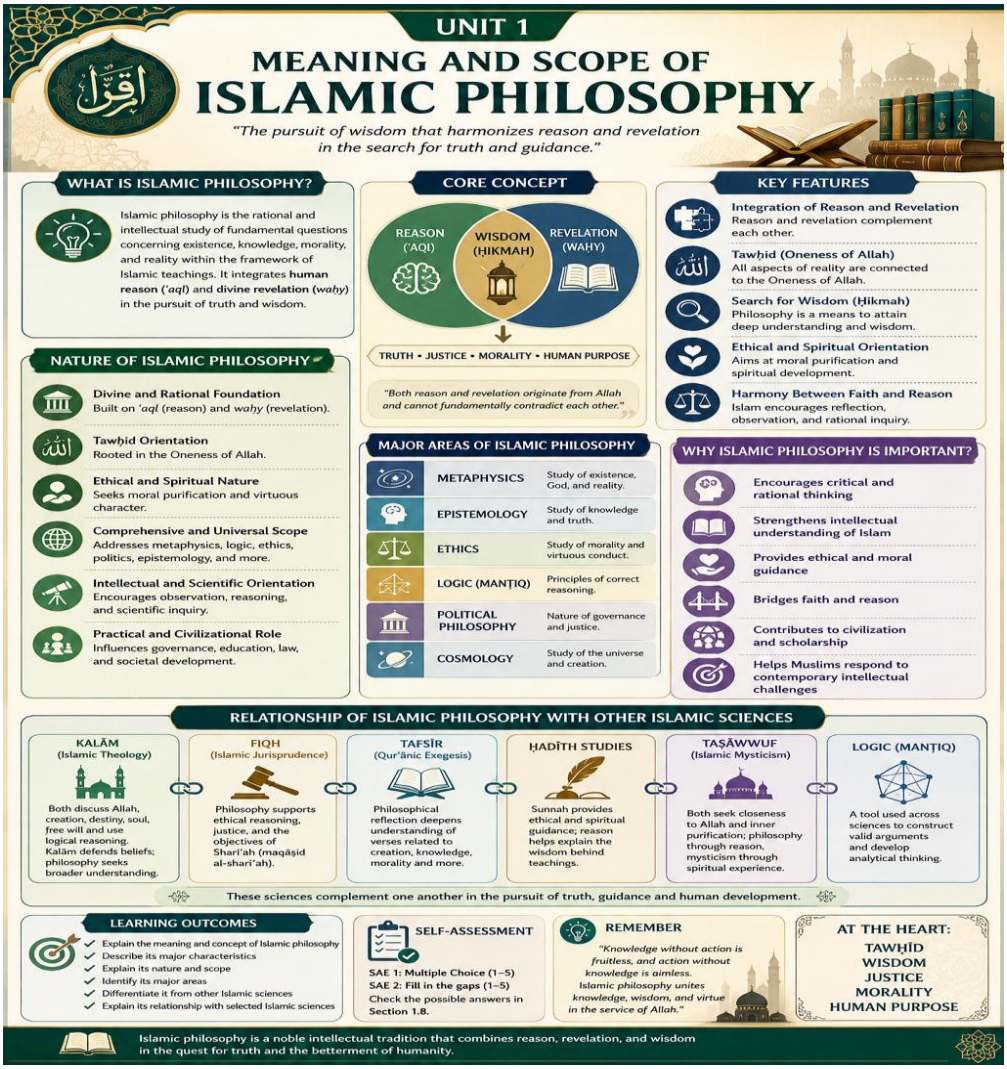


Figure 1.1: Unit at a Glance: Meaning and Scope of Islamic Philosophy
Source: Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the meaning and concept of Islamic philosophy
- describe the major characteristics of Islamic philosophy
- explain the nature and scope of Islamic philosophy
- differentiate Islamic philosophy from selected Islamic sciences and
- explain the relationship between Islamic philosophy and selected Islamic sciences.



1.3 Definition of Philosophy

Think About This

What kinds of questions make you stop and think deeply? Questions about truth, knowledge, morality, existence and the purpose of life are at the heart of philosophy. In this section, you will explore what philosophy means, the questions it addresses and its key features. You will then see how this search for wisdom takes a distinctive form within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Philosophy is the systematic and rational study of fundamental questions concerning existence, knowledge, truth, morality, reality, and human life. The term "philosophy" is derived from the Greek words *philo* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom), which together mean "love of wisdom."

According to Bertrand Russell (2004), philosophy is concerned with questions that cannot be answered solely by science or ordinary experience, such as the nature of reality, the meaning of life, and the basis of moral values. Similarly, Socrates viewed philosophy as the pursuit of truth and self-knowledge through critical questioning and reasoning. Philosophy involves logical reflection and critical thinking aimed at understanding:

- The nature of reality (*metaphysics*)
- The sources and limits of knowledge (*epistemology*)
- Principles of correct reasoning (*logic*)
- Moral values and human conduct (*ethics*)
- Society and governance (*political philosophy*)

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, philosophy (*falsafah*) is understood as the rational search for wisdom and truth within the framework of divine guidance and human reasoning.

Key Features of Philosophy

1. Critical Thinking – Examines ideas logically and systematically.
2. Rational Inquiry – Relies on reasoning and evidence.
3. Search for Truth – Seeks understanding of reality and existence.
4. Universal Scope – Addresses questions affecting humanity as a whole.
5. Reflective Nature – Encourages deep reflection about life and the universe.

Islamic philosophy is one of the major intellectual traditions developed within Islamic civilisation. It represents the systematic use of reason and

reflection in understanding reality, existence, morality, knowledge, and humanity's relationship with Allah. The discipline emerged through the interaction between Islamic teachings and earlier philosophical traditions, especially Greek philosophy, while remaining rooted in the worldview of the Qurʾān and Sunnah (Fakhry, 2004). The Arabic term commonly associated with philosophy is *falsafah*, derived from the Greek word *philosophia*, meaning "love of wisdom." In the Islamic context, philosophy developed as a rational and intellectual effort to understand both revealed and observable realities within the framework of Islamic belief and values.

1.3.1 Definition of Islamic Philosophy

Islamic philosophy may be defined as the rational and intellectual study of fundamental questions concerning existence, knowledge, ethics, and reality within the framework of Islamic teachings and worldview. According to Majid Fakhry (2004), Islamic philosophy refers to the philosophical tradition produced by Muslim thinkers who sought to harmonise reason and revelation. Similarly, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2006) explains that Islamic philosophy is not merely philosophy practiced by Muslims, but a form of wisdom guided by Islamic spiritual and metaphysical principles. Islamic philosophy differs from secular philosophy because it recognises divine revelation as a legitimate source of knowledge alongside human reason. Thus, Muslim philosophers viewed revelation and rational inquiry as complementary rather than contradictory.

1.3.2 Concept of Islamic Philosophy

The concept of Islamic philosophy revolves around the relationship between:

- Reason (*ʿaql*)
- Revelation (*waḥy*)
- Human existence
- The universe
- Moral and spiritual realities

Islamic philosophy attempts to answer questions such as:

- What is the nature of existence?
- What is the purpose of human life?
- How can humans attain true knowledge?
- What is the relationship between the Creator and creation?
- What constitutes justice and morality?

Think About It:

Which of the questions listed above is most closely related to human existence? Explain your choice in one or two sentences.

*The question **"What is the purpose of human life?"** is most directly related to human existence because it asks about the meaning and purpose of human life. Other questions may also relate to existence, depending on how they are considered.*

Unlike purely speculative philosophy, Islamic philosophy operates within the moral and theological boundaries established by Islam.

1.3.3 Core Features of Islamic Philosophy

The core features of Islamic philosophy can be treated as follows:

1. Integration of Reason and Revelation: A central feature of Islamic philosophy is the belief that reason and revelation originate from Allah and therefore cannot fundamentally contradict each other (Leaman, 1999).
2. *Tawḥīd* Worldview: Islamic philosophy is based on the principle of *tawḥīd* (the Oneness of Allah), which shapes its understanding of existence, ethics, and knowledge.
3. Search for Wisdom (*Ḥikmah*): The Qurʾān frequently emphasises wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and reflection. Muslim philosophers regarded philosophy as a means of attaining wisdom and deeper understanding.
4. Ethical and Spiritual Orientation: Islamic philosophy is not limited to theoretical inquiry but also seeks moral purification and spiritual development.

The major areas of Islamic Philosophy are Metaphysics (Study of existence, God, and reality), Epistemology (Study of knowledge and truth), Ethics (Study of morality and virtuous conduct), Logic (Principles of correct reasoning), Political Philosophy (Nature of governance and justice), and Cosmology (Study of the universe and creation). Islamic Philosophy is important because

Islamic philosophy remains important because it encourages critical and rational thinking, strengthens intellectual understanding of Islam, provides ethical guidance, bridges faith and reason, contributes to civilisation and scholarship, and helps Muslims respond to contemporary intellectual challenges. Therefore, Islamic philosophy represents a rich intellectual tradition that combines reason, revelation, and wisdom in the search for truth and understanding. Rooted in Islamic teachings yet open

to rational inquiry, it addresses fundamental questions about existence, morality, and human purpose. Through its integration of intellectual reflection and spiritual values, Islamic philosophy continues to play an important role in both classical and contemporary Islamic thought.

1.4 Nature and scope of Islamic philosophy

You have already encountered some of the core features of Islamic philosophy. In this section, we will examine these features more closely and consider how they shape the nature and scope of Islamic philosophical thought. The nature of Islamic philosophy refers to its essential characteristics, foundations, objectives, and methods within the broader framework of Islamic thought. Islamic philosophy developed as an intellectual tradition that combines rational inquiry with divine revelation to understand reality, existence, morality, and human purpose. Unlike secular philosophy, Islamic philosophy operates within the worldview of Islam and recognises the Qurʾān and Sunnah as fundamental sources of truth (Fakhry, 2004). Islamic philosophy is therefore both rational and spiritual, theoretical and practical, intellectual and ethical. It seeks not only to attain knowledge but also to guide humanity toward wisdom, moral refinement, and closeness to Allah. The characteristics of Islamic philosophy are discussed as follows:

1. **Divine and Rational Foundation:** One of the primary characteristics of Islamic philosophy is its integration of:
- Human reason (*ʿaql*)
- Divine revelation (*waḥy*)

Muslim philosophers believed that reason and revelation complement one another because both originate from Allah. Therefore, true philosophical inquiry cannot contradict authentic revelation (Nasr, 2006).

2. ***Tawḥīd*** **(Monotheistic) Orientation:** Islamic philosophy is rooted in the principle of *tawḥīd* (Oneness of Allah). This principle shapes its understanding of:
- The universe
- Human existence
- Ethics
- Knowledge
- Society

Everything in creation is viewed as connected to and dependent upon Allah.

3. **Ethical and Spiritual Nature:** Islamic philosophy is not merely speculative or theoretical. It aims at:

- Moral purification
- Spiritual growth
- Development of virtuous character

Thus, knowledge is closely linked to ethical responsibility and righteous conduct.

4. **Comprehensive and Universal Scope:** Islamic philosophy addresses a wide range of human concerns, including:

- Metaphysics
- Logic
- Epistemology
- Ethics
- Politics
- Cosmology

It attempts to provide a holistic understanding of life and reality.

5. **Harmony Between Faith and Reason:** A major feature of Islamic philosophy is the attempt to reconcile:

- Religious faith
- Rational inquiry

Muslim philosophers argued that Islam encourages reflection, observation, and intellectual investigation.

6. **Intellectual and Scientific Orientation:** Islamic philosophy encouraged:

- Scientific inquiry
- Logical reasoning
- Observation of nature

This contributed significantly to the advancement of medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and other sciences during Islamic civilisation.

7. **Practical and Civilisational Role:** Islamic philosophy was not confined to abstract thought alone. It influenced:

- Governance
- Education
- Law
- Ethics
- Civilisation

Philosophers sought solutions to social and political problems based on justice and wisdom.

Table 1.1: Characteristics of Islamic Philosophy

Characteristic	Explanation
Tawḥīd	Based on belief in the Oneness of Allah
Rational	Encourages logical reasoning
Spiritual	Seeks moral and spiritual purification
Ethical	Promotes virtuous conduct
Comprehensive	Covers various aspects of human life
Harmonious	Balances faith and reason

Pause and Reflect

Which two characteristics of Islamic philosophy best demonstrate the relationship between intellectual inquiry and Islamic belief? Give a brief reason for your choice.

Model answer

The two strongest examples are the integration of reason and revelation and the harmony between faith and reason. Both demonstrate that Islamic philosophical inquiry uses rational reflection while remaining connected to Islamic teachings and revelation.

Studying the nature of Islamic philosophy helps students to understand the relationship between faith and reason, appreciate Islamic intellectual heritage, develop critical and analytical thinking, recognise the ethical dimension of knowledge, and apply philosophical reflection to contemporary issues.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

1.5 Relationship of Islamic Philosophy with Other Islamic Sciences

Islamic philosophy developed as an important intellectual discipline within the broader framework of Islamic studies. Although it focuses on rational inquiry and philosophical reflection, it is closely connected to other Islamic sciences such as theology (*kalām*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), *ḥadīth* studies, and mysticism (*taṣawwuf*). These disciplines collectively contribute to the understanding of Islam and complement one another in various ways. The relationship between Islamic philosophy and other Islamic sciences demonstrates the integrated nature of Islamic intellectual tradition, where reason and revelation work together in the pursuit of truth and guidance. Following are the relationship of Islamic Philosophy with other Islamic sciences:

1. Relationship with *Kalām* (Islamic Theology)

Islamic philosophy shares a close relationship with *kalām*, which is the discipline concerned with defending Islamic beliefs through rational arguments. Areas of Relationship include:

- Both discuss the existence and attributes of Allah.
- Both address questions about creation, destiny, free will, and the soul.
- Both employ logical reasoning in explaining religious doctrines.

The differences are:

- *Kalām* primarily aims to defend orthodox Islamic beliefs.
- Islamic philosophy seeks broader metaphysical and intellectual understanding through rational inquiry.

Scholars such as Al-Ghazali critically engaged with philosophers while also utilising philosophical reasoning in theology.

2. Relationship with *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence)

Islamic philosophy also relates to *fiqh*, the science of Islamic law. Areas of relationship include:

- Philosophy contributes to ethical reasoning and justice.
- Philosophical logic assists jurists in legal interpretation.
- Philosophical reflection supports the objectives of *Sharīʿah* (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*).

For example, Muslim philosophers discussed concepts such as:

- Justice
- Governance
- Human welfare
- Moral responsibility

These concepts influence Islamic legal thought and social order.

3. Relationship with *Tafsīr* (Qurʾānic Exegesis)

Islamic philosophy interacts with *tafsīr* by helping scholars reflect deeply on Qurʾānic verses related to:

- Creation
- Nature
- Human existence
- Knowledge
- Morality

Philosophical reasoning enables broader intellectual interpretation while remaining guided by revelation.

4. Relationship with *Ḥadīth* Studies

Islamic philosophy benefits from the Sunnah and teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). Areas of relationship include:

- *Ḥadīth* provides ethical and spiritual guidance.
- Philosophers often relied on Prophetic teachings concerning morality and wisdom.
- Rational reflection helps explain the wisdom behind certain teachings.

However, scholars of *ḥadīth* maintained strict adherence to authenticity and transmission standards.

5. Relationship with *Taṣawwuf* (Islamic Mysticism)

Islamic philosophy and *taṣawwuf* both emphasise:

- Spiritual purification
- Knowledge of Allah
- Inner moral development

While philosophy often approaches truth through rational inquiry, Sufism emphasises spiritual experience and purification of the soul. Thinkers such as Ibn Arabi combined philosophical reflection with mystical spirituality.

6. Relationship with Logic (*Manṭiq*)

Logic became an important tool in Islamic philosophy and other Islamic sciences. The importance of logic includes:

- Helps in constructing valid arguments
- Assists in theological and legal reasoning
- Promotes critical and analytical thinking

Muslim scholars widely used logic in:

- Theology
- Jurisprudence
- Debate
- Philosophical inquiry

The interaction between Islamic philosophy and other Islamic sciences involved strengthens intellectual understanding of Islam, encourages balance between faith and reason, promotes ethical and spiritual development, enriches Islamic civilisation and scholarship, and helps address contemporary issues using integrated knowledge. Generally, Islamic philosophy maintains a close and complementary relationship with other Islamic sciences. While each discipline has its unique focus

and methodology, all contribute toward understanding divine guidance and human existence. Through its interaction with theology, jurisprudence, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, and mysticism, Islamic philosophy became an essential component of the rich intellectual tradition of Islam.

Imagine that a learner says: "Islamic philosophy, *kalām* and *taṣawwuf* are exactly the same because they all deal with Islam and questions about Allah."

Using what you have learned, explain in two or three sentences why the statement is not entirely accurate.

Model answer

The three disciplines have areas of overlap, but their primary approaches differ. **Islamic philosophy** emphasises rational and philosophical inquiry, **kalām** primarily uses rational arguments to explain and defend Islamic beliefs, while **taṣawwuf** places greater emphasis on spiritual purification, spiritual experience and inner moral development.

Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following question to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option: **1. The term philosophy is derived from Greek words meaning:** A. Search for truth B. Love of wisdom C. Study of religion D. Knowledge of science **2. Which of the following best describes Islamic philosophy?** A. Rejection of revelation B. Separation of ethics from knowledge C. Rational inquiry within the framework of Islam D. Study of science alone **3. The principle of *Tawḥīd* in Islamic philosophy refers to:** A. Human freedom B. Unity of knowledge C. Oneness of Allah D. Political authority	

4. Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of Islamic philosophy?
A. Ethical orientation
B. Spiritual development
C. Complete rejection of reason
D. Harmony between faith and reason

5. Islamic philosophy seeks to harmonise reason with:
A. Politics
B. Economics
C. Revelation
D. Culture

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:
6. The Islamic science concerned with defending Islamic beliefs through rational arguments is called _____.
7. Islamic philosophy contributes to Islamic jurisprudence by supporting ethical and legal _____.
8. The science of Qurʾānic interpretation is known as _____.
9. Islamic mysticism that focuses on spiritual purification is called _____.
10. The tool used in Islamic philosophy to construct valid arguments and analytical thinking is known as _
11. A student argues that philosophical inquiry has no place in Islamic thought because philosophy depends entirely on human reason. Which feature of Islamic philosophy most directly challenges this view?

A. Comprehensive scope
B. Integration of reason and revelation
C. Political philosophy
D. Cosmology
_____.



1.6 Summary

Islamic philosophy is the rational and intellectual study of fundamental questions concerning existence, knowledge, morality and reality within the framework of Islamic teachings. It combines human reason (*ʿaql*) with divine revelation (*waḥy*) in the search for truth and understanding. Rooted in the principle of *tawḥīd*, it addresses areas such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic, political philosophy and cosmology.

The nature of Islamic philosophy is characterised by the integration of reason and revelation, ethical and spiritual orientation, comprehensive scope, and harmony between faith and reason. It encourages critical thinking, scientific inquiry and intellectual reflection while recognising the ethical dimension of knowledge. It therefore contributes to the understanding of creation, humanity and the Creator.

Islamic philosophy also maintains a close relationship with other Islamic sciences, including *kalām*, *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *taṣawwuf* and *manṭiq*. Although these disciplines have different areas of emphasis, they complement one another in the pursuit of knowledge, guidance, morality, and human development within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

These disciplines complement one another in understanding Islamic teachings. Islamic philosophy contributes rational and ethical analysis to theology and law, while revelation-based sciences provide spiritual and doctrinal guidance. This relationship reflects the integrated nature of Islamic intellectual tradition, where reason and revelation work together in the pursuit of truth, morality, and human development within Islamic philosophy.



1.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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1.8. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. C
5. C

6. *Kalām*
7. Reasoning
8. *Tafsīr*
9. *Taṣawwuf*
10. Logic (*Manṭiq*)
11. Answer: B. Integration of reason and revelation.

Unit 2 Sources of Islamic Philosophy

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Learning Outcomes
2.3 Qur'an and Sunnah as Sources of Islamic Philosophy
 2.3.1 The Qurʾān as a Source of Islamic Philosophy
 2.3.2 The Sunnah as a Source of Islamic Philosophy
2.4 Greek Influence as an External Source of Islamic Philosophy
 2.4.1 The Translation Movement of Greek Philosophy and Areas of Influence
2.4.2 Islamisation of Greek Philosophy and Its Significance and Influence
2.5 Rational inquiry
2.6 *Kalām* and philosophy
 2.6.1 Meaning of *Kalām*
 2.6.2 Importance of *Kalām* and Philosophy:
2.7 Summary
2.8 References/Further Readings
2.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



2.1 Introduction

From the previous unit, you learnt what Islamic philosophy is and how it developed as an intellectual tradition. But what shaped the questions Muslim philosophers asked and the methods they used to explore them? In this unit, you will examine the major sources and intellectual influences that contributed to the development of Islamic philosophy. Islamic philosophy developed from a rich combination of divine guidance, rational inquiry, and intellectual interaction with earlier civilisations. As a major branch of Islamic philosophy, it derives its principles and methods from several interconnected sources that shaped the growth of philosophical thought in the Muslim world. These sources provided Muslim philosophers with both spiritual foundations and intellectual tools for understanding existence, knowledge, morality, and the universe. The primary source of Islamic philosophy is the Qurʾān, which repeatedly encourages reflection, reasoning, observation of nature, and the pursuit of wisdom. Qurʾānic teachings on creation, human purpose, justice, morality, and the nature of reality inspired Muslim thinkers to engage in philosophical inquiry. Closely related to the Qurʾān is the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), which provided practical explanations and ethical guidance that influenced Islamic philosophical thought. Another important source is human reason (ʿ*aql*), which occupies a central position in Islamic intellectual tradition. Muslim

philosophers believed that reason is a gift from Allah that enables humanity to understand divine signs, discover truth, and reflect upon creation. Through rational inquiry and logical analysis, philosophers explored questions relating to metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and politics.

Islamic philosophy was also influenced by the translation movement during the Abbasid period, when works of Greek, Persian, and Indian scholars were translated into Arabic. Muslim philosophers studied and engaged critically with the ideas of thinkers such as Aristotle and Plato while adapting their ideas to the Islamic worldview. This interaction contributed to the emergence of a unique philosophical tradition rooted in Islamic teachings. In addition, disciplines such as *kalām* (Islamic theology), *taṣawwuf* (Islamic mysticism), and scientific inquiry also contributed to the development of Islamic philosophy. These sources collectively enriched Muslim intellectual life and enabled philosophers to address both spiritual and rational dimensions of human existence. This unit therefore introduces students to the major sources that shaped Islamic philosophy and explains how revelation, reason, and intellectual interaction combined to form one of the most influential traditions in the history of human thought.



2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- identify the major sources and intellectual influences that shaped Islamic philosophy;
- explain the contributions of the Qur'an and Sunnah to Islamic philosophical thought;
- describe the influence of Greek philosophy and the translation movement on Islamic intellectual development;
- examine how Muslim philosophers adapted Greek philosophical ideas within an Islamic framework;
- explain the meaning and role of rational inquiry (*ʿaql*) in Islamic philosophy;
- distinguish between *kalām* and Islamic philosophy in terms of their objectives and approaches; and
- discuss the contribution of *kalām* and philosophy to Islamic intellectual development.

Before you explore each source and influence in detail, take a moment to study the flowchart below. It provides a visual overview of how the Qurʾān and Sunnah, Greek intellectual influence, rational inquiry, and *kalām* contributed to the development of Islamic philosophy. As you

study the unit, return to the flowchart to see how the different elements connect.

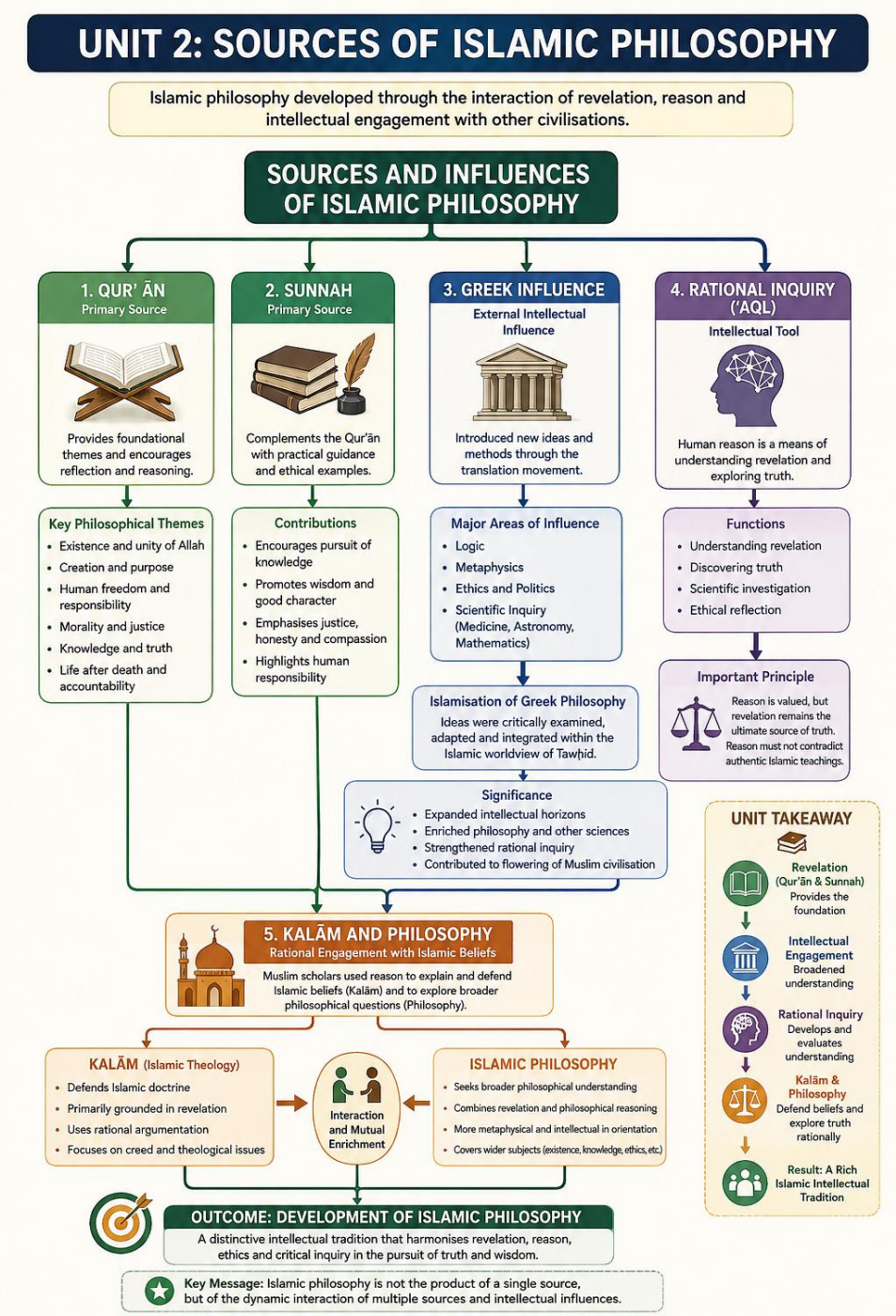


Figure 2.1: Sources and Influences of Islamic Philosophy
Source: Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026.



2.3 Qurʾān and Sunnah as Sources of Islamic Philosophy

The Qur'an and Sunnah provided the foundational framework of Islamic thought. We now turn to an important external influence that introduced Muslim scholars to new philosophical concepts and methods: Greek philosophy. The Qurʾān and the Sunnah constitute the primary and most authoritative sources of Islamic philosophy. Unlike secular philosophical traditions that rely solely on human reasoning, Islamic philosophy is deeply rooted in divine revelation. Muslim philosophers derived many of their intellectual, ethical, and metaphysical ideas from the teachings of the Qurʾān and the practical example of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). These two sources shaped the worldview, objectives, and methodology of Islamic philosophical thought (Fakhry, 2004).

2.3.1 The Qurʾān as a Source of Islamic Philosophy

The Qurʾān serves as the foundational source of Islamic intellectual and philosophical inquiry. It repeatedly encourages human beings to reflect upon creation, use reason and intellect, seek knowledge and wisdom, observe the natural world, and contemplate the purpose of existence. Verses of the Qurʾān address philosophical themes such as:

- **The existence and unity of Allah:** (Qurʾān 112:1–4; 2:255; 21:22). For example, Allah says in Qurʾān 112 verses 1-4:

ﷲ ٱلصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌۢ ۝ الإخلاص: ١ – ٤

Say: He is Allah, the One. Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, And there is none comparable to Him.

- **The origin and purpose of creation** (Qurʾān 51:56; 3:191; 67:2; 23:115). Allah says in Qur'an 51 verse 51 and 56:

ﷲ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ..... ۝ وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And do not make with Allah another deity. Indeed, I am to you from Him a clear warner.

- **Human free will and responsibility** (Qurʾān 18:29; 76:3; 13:11; 99:7–8). Allah says in the Qur'an 18 verse 29:

ﷲ وَقُلِ ٱلْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَن شَآءَ فَلْيُؤْمِن وَمَن شَآءَ فَلْيَكْفُرْ ۚ

And say: The truth is from your Lord. So whoever wills—let him believe; and whoever wills—let him disbelieve. (Qur'an 18 verse 29).

- **Morality and justice** (Qurʾān 16:90; 4:135; 5:8; 49:13)

ﷲ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِٱلْعَدْلِ وَٱلْإِحْسَٰنِ وَإِيتَآئِ ذِى ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ ۝ النحل: ٩٠

Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed. (Qur'an 16 verse 90).

- **Knowledge and truth** (Qurʾān 20:114; 39:9; 96:1–5; 17:36)

ٱلۡحَقُّ ... طه: ١١٤

And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge. (Qur'an 20 verse 114).

- **Life after death** (Qurʾān 22:7; 23:15–16; 75:3–4; 99:6–8)

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُم بَعۡدَ ذَٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمۡ يَوۡمَ ٱلۡقِيَٰمَةِ تُبۡعَثُونَ المؤمنون: ١٥ - ١٦

Then indeed, after that you will surely die. Then indeed, on the Day of Resurrection, you will be resurrected. **(**23:15–16).

Again, Allah says: "Do they not reflect within themselves?" (Qurʾān 30:8). This emphasis on reflection and rational inquiry laid the intellectual foundation for the development of Islamic philosophy. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2006), the Qurʾān provided Muslim thinkers with a worldview that integrated spirituality, rationality, and ethics into a unified system of thought.

2.3.2 The Sunnah as a Source of Islamic Philosophy

The Sunnah refers to the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). It complements the Qurʾān by providing practical guidance and ethical examples. The Sunnah contributed to Islamic philosophy by encouraging wisdom and reflection, promoting justice, moderation, and morality, explaining ethical conduct and social relations, and demonstrating the practical application of Islamic teachings. The Prophet emphasised the importance of seeking knowledge and wisdom, which inspired Muslim scholars to engage in intellectual inquiry and scientific investigation.

1. *Ḥadīth* on Seeking Knowledge

حَدَّثَنَا كَثِيرُ بْنُ قَيْسٍ، قَالَ: كُنْتُ جَالِسًا مَعَ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ فِي مَسْجِدِ دِمَشْقَ، فَجَاءَهُ رَجُلٌ فَقَالَ: يَا أَبَا الدَّرْدَاءِ، إِنِّي جِئْتُكَ مِنْ مَدِينَةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ لِحَدِيثٍ بَلَغَنِي أَنَّكَ تُحَدِّثُهُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ، مَا جِئْتُ لِحَاجَةٍ، قَالَ: فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ:

«مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا، سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ»

Whoever follows a path in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. (Sunan Ibn Majah and Sahih Muslim with similar wording).

2. *Ḥadīth* on Wisdom and Understanding Religion

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، عَنْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي قَيْسٌ، عَنِ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ:

لَا حَسَدَ إِلَّا فِي اثْنَتَيْنِ: رَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا فَسُلِّطَ عَلَى هَلَكَتِهِ فِي الْحَقِّ، وَرَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْحِكْمَةَ» «فَهُوَ يَقْضِي بِهَا وَيُعَلِّمُهَا

There should be no envy except in two cases: a man whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it rightly, and a man whom Allah has given wisdom, and he judges and teaches with it. (Sahih al-Bukhari & Sahih Muslim).

These *Aḥādīth* are significance because they demonstrate that Islam strongly encourages seeking beneficial knowledge, teaching wisdom, intellectual inquiry, reflection, and learning the ethical application of knowledge, as they inspired generations of Muslim scholars to excel in: philosophy, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, theology and jurisprudence. The *Aḥādīth* also contributed greatly to the flourishing of Islamic civilisation. They also influenced Muslim philosophers such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd who attempted to harmonise rational philosophy with the teachings of the Qurʾān and Sunnah.

Table 2.1: Philosophical Themes Derived from the Qurʾān and Sunnah

Theme	Explanation
Tawḥīd	Unity and Oneness of Allah
Ethics	Moral responsibility and justice
Knowledge	Importance of learning and reflection
Human Purpose	Worship and stewardship on earth
Accountability	Belief in the Hereafter and judgment

2.4 Greek Influence on Islamic Philosophy

The encounter with Greek philosophy introduced Muslim scholars to new forms of logical and philosophical reasoning. Let us now examine the place of reason itself in Islamic philosophical thought. One of the major external influences on Islamic philosophy came from Greek philosophical traditions. During the Abbasid period, Muslim scholars translated numerous Greek works into Arabic, especially in fields such as logic, metaphysics, ethics, medicine, and political philosophy. However, Muslim philosophers did not merely imitate Greek philosophy; rather, they critically examined, modified, and integrated it within the Islamic worldview (Leaman, 1999).

Pause and Reflect

Why do you think Muslim scholars translated and studied Greek philosophical works instead of simply rejecting them because they originated outside the Islamic tradition?

Suggested answer:

The engagement allowed Muslim scholars to critically examine useful intellectual ideas, adapt those compatible with Islamic teachings, and use them to develop philosophy, theology, and scientific inquiry.

2.4.1 The Translation Movement of Greek Philosophy and Areas of Influence

The translation movement flourished particularly during the reign of the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad. Institutions such as *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* (House of Wisdom) became centres for translating Greek scientific and philosophical texts into Arabic. Works of Greek philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates were studied extensively by Muslim scholars. The areas of Greek influence are:

1. **Logic:** Greek logic, especially Aristotelian logic, influenced methods of reasoning and argumentation in Islamic philosophy and theology.
2. **Metaphysics:** Greek discussions about existence, causality, and the nature of reality contributed to Muslim philosophical debates concerning Allah, creation, and the soul.
3. **Ethics and Politics:** Ideas regarding justice, virtue, and governance influenced Muslim discussions on political philosophy and ethical conduct.
4. **Scientific Inquiry:** Greek scientific methods encouraged observation, experimentation, and rational analysis in various fields of knowledge.

2.4.2 Islamisation of Greek Philosophy and Its Significance Influence

Muslim philosophers adapted Greek thought to Islamic teachings by rejecting ideas that contradicted Islam, integrating philosophy with *tawḥīd,* and reinterpreting philosophical concepts within an Islamic framework. For example, Ibn Rushd defended the compatibility of philosophy and religion, while Al-Ghazali criticised certain philosophical ideas that conflicted with Islamic theology. The influence of Greek philosophy on Islamic philosophy is significant because the interaction with Greek philosophy expanded intellectual inquiry in the Muslim world, encouraged critical thinking and scientific development, contributed to the growth of philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and mathematics, and influenced later European intellectual traditions.

Table 2.2: Comparison Between Islamic and Greek Philosophical Influence

Aspect	Greek Philosophy	Islamic Philosophy
Source of Knowledge	Human reason	Reason and revelation
View of God	Philosophical concept	Tawḥīd (Oneness of Allah)
Ethics	Rational virtue	Moral teachings based on Islam
Purpose	Intellectual understanding	Intellectual and spiritual guidance

In summary, the Qurʾān and Sunnah provided the spiritual and ethical foundations of Islamic philosophy, while Greek philosophy contributed intellectual tools and methods of rational inquiry. Muslim philosophers successfully integrated these influences to develop a unique philosophical tradition that harmonised revelation with reason and contributed significantly to world civilisation.

2.5 Rational Inquiry in Islamic Philosophy

Reason was not used only for philosophical speculation. Muslim scholars also employed rational argument to explain and defend Islamic beliefs. This brings us to *kalām*, the Islamic discipline of rational theology. Rational inquiry occupies a central position in **Islamic philosophy**. Islam encourages human beings to think, reflect, observe, and seek knowledge through the use of reason (*ʿaql*). Muslim philosophers regarded rational inquiry as an essential means of understanding Allah's creation, discovering truth, and deepening faith. Consequently, reason became one of the major tools employed in the development of Islamic philosophical thought (Leaman, 1999). The Qurʾān repeatedly calls upon believers to reflect upon the universe and use their intellect. This emphasis inspired Muslim scholars to engage in intellectual, scientific, and philosophical investigation.

Think About This

A student observes a natural phenomenon and begins asking why it occurs. She investigates possible explanations, compares evidence, and reaches a conclusion. How does this process illustrate rational inquiry?

Suggested answer:
It illustrates rational inquiry because the student uses observation, reasoning, evidence, and critical thinking to investigate a question and reach a reasoned conclusion.

2.5.1 Meaning of Rational Inquiry

Rational inquiry refers to the systematic use of reason, logic, observation, and critical thinking to investigate questions relating to existence, knowledge, morality, human purpose, and reality. In Islamic philosophy, rational inquiry operates within the framework of Islamic teachings and does not reject divine revelation.

2.5.2 Qurʾānic Foundation of Rational Inquiry

The Qurʾān frequently encourages reflection and contemplation. For example, Allah says:
﴿أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ﴾

Do they not reflect upon the Qurʾān? (Qurʾān 4:82)
Another verse states:
﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ﴾

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are signs for people of understanding. (Qurʾān 3:190).

These verses demonstrate that Islam encourages intellectual reflection and reasoning. The verses also present the role of reason in Islamic Philosophy as follows:

1. **Understanding Revelation:** Reason helps human beings understand the meanings and implications of divine revelation.
2. **Discovering Truth:** Muslim philosophers believed that reason assists humanity in distinguishing truth from falsehood.
3. **Scientific Investigation:** Rational inquiry encouraged the development of medicine, astronomy, mathematics, physics, and philosophy, especially during the golden age of Islamic civilisation.
4. **Ethical Reflection:** Reason helps in understanding justice, morality, and human responsibility.

Major Muslim philosophers and rational inquiry, such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd, emphasised the importance of reason and logical analysis in understanding both religion and the universe. Although Islam values reason, Muslim scholars maintained that there is a limit to rational inquiry in Islam, based on the submission that human reason is limited, revelation remains the ultimate source of truth, and rational inquiry should not contradict authentic Islamic teachings. Thus, Islamic philosophy seeks harmony between reason and revelation rather than conflict between them.

Table 2.3: Functions of Rational Inquiry in Islamic Philosophy

Function	Explanation
Reflection	Encourages contemplation of creation
Understanding	Helps interpret revelation
Scientific Inquiry	Promotes observation and research
Ethical Judgment	Assists moral reasoning
Intellectual Growth	Develops critical thinking

2.6 *Kalām* and Philosophy

You have seen that Islamic philosophy employed rational inquiry in exploring questions about existence, knowledge, and morality. But Muslim scholars also used reason specifically to explain and defend Islamic beliefs. This intellectual discipline is known as kalām. Kalām refers to Islamic theology, a discipline that uses rational arguments to explain and defend Islamic beliefs. Islamic philosophy and *kalām* developed side by side within the Muslim intellectual tradition and often addressed similar theological and metaphysical questions (Fakhry, 2004). Although they share some similarities, *kalām* and philosophy differ in objectives, methodology, and scope.

2.6.1 Meaning of *Kalām*

Kalām literally means "speech" or "discourse." In Islamic scholarship, it refers to the science of theology concerned with defending Islamic creed through rational and logical argumentation. Theologians discussed issues such as the existence and attributes of Allah, free will and predestination, prophethood, revelation, resurrection, and divine justice. The relationship and differences between *Kalām* and philosophy, major schools of *Kalām*, interaction between the two of them, and their importance are discussed as follows:

1. **Relationship Between *Kalām* and Philosophy:** Both disciplines employ rational inquiry, use logic and argumentation, address metaphysical questions, and defend intellectual understanding of Islam. However, their approaches differ.

2. **Differences between *Kalām* and Philosophy are discussed in the table below:**

Table 5:

Kalām	**Islamic Philosophy**
Defends Islamic doctrine	Seeks broader philosophical understanding
Based primarily on revelation	Combines revelation and philosophical reasoning
More theological in nature	More metaphysical and intellectual
Focuses on creed	Covers wider philosophical subjects

3. Major Schools of *Kalām*: Important theological schools include Ashʿariyyah, Māturīdiyyah, and Muʿtazilah. The Muʿtazilah particularly emphasised rationalism and intellectual inquiry.

4. Interaction Between Philosophers and Theologians: Muslim philosophers and theologians often debated important issues concerning the creation of the universe, the nature of the soul, divine attributes, and human freedom. For example, Al-Ghazali criticised certain philosophical ideas in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) while Ibn Rushd responded in *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence). These debates enriched Islamic intellectual history.

2.6.2 Importance of *Kalām* and Philosophy:

The interaction of *Kalām* and philosophy contributed to the development of rational theology, intellectual defence of Islam, expansion of philosophical inquiry and growth of Islamic scholarship.

In conclusion, rational inquiry played a major role in the development of Islamic philosophy by encouraging reflection, scientific investigation, and intellectual growth within the framework of Islam. Similarly, *kalām* employed rational methods to defend Islamic beliefs and address theological questions. Together, philosophy and *kalām* contributed significantly to the richness and sophistication of Islamic intellectual civilisation.

Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. The primary sources of Islamic philosophy are:
A. Greek books and science
B. Qurʾān and Sunnah
C. Politics and economics
D. Roman literature

2. Which institution became famous for translating Greek works into Arabic during the Abbasid period?
A. Al-Azhar
B. Bayt al-Ḥikmah
C. Dār al-Iftāʾ
D. Cordoba Library

3. Which Greek philosopher greatly influenced Islamic logic?
A. Homer
B. Aristotle
C. Euclid
D. Pythagoras

4. Islamic philosophy differs from Greek philosophy because it:
A. Rejects all rational thinking
B. Relies only on politics
C. Combines reason with revelation
D. Focuses only on science

5. Which Muslim scholar criticised some Greek philosophical ideas that contradicted Islamic theology?
A. Ibn Sina
B. Al-Farabi
C. Al-Ghazali
D. Al-Kindi

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

1. The Arabic term for reason or intellect in Islamic philosophy is _____.

2. The Islamic discipline that defends religious beliefs through rational arguments is called _____.

3. The Qurʾān encourages believers to reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the _____.

4. The Muslim theologian who criticised some philosophical ideas in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* was _____.

5. Islamic philosophy seeks harmony between reason and _____.

6. A Muslim philosopher studies an idea from Greek philosophy and evaluates it against Islamic teachings before accepting, modifying or rejecting it. Which process does this best illustrate?

A. Blind imitation
B. Islamisation of philosophical thought
C. Rejection of rational inquiry
D. Political philosophy



2.7 Summary

Unit 2 examined the major sources that contributed to the development of Islamic philosophy. The unit explained that Islamic philosophy emerged through the interaction of divine revelation, rational inquiry, theology, and external intellectual influences, especially Greek philosophy. These sources collectively provided the intellectual and spiritual foundation for Muslim philosophical thought. The Qurʾān and Sunnah were identified as the primary sources of Islamic philosophy. The Qurʾān encourages reflection, reasoning, observation, and the pursuit of knowledge, while addressing themes such as the existence and unity of Allah, creation, morality, justice, accountability, and life after death. The Sunnah complements the Qurʾān by providing practical guidance, ethical teachings, and encouragement toward wisdom and learning. Together, they establish a worldview that harmonises faith and reason.

The unit also discussed the influence of Greek philosophy during the Abbasid period through the translation movement. Muslim scholars studied the works of philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato in areas like logic, metaphysics, ethics, and political philosophy. However, Muslim philosophers critically adapted Greek ideas within the framework of Islamic teachings and the principle of *tawḥīd*. In addition, the unit highlighted the importance of rational inquiry (*ʿaql*) in Islamic philosophy. Reason was viewed as a means of understanding revelation, exploring creation, and discovering truth. This emphasis on rational thinking contributed to scientific and intellectual advancements in Islamic civilisation. Finally, the unit examined the relationship between *kalām* (Islamic theology) and philosophy. Both disciplines employed logic and rational argumentation to address theological and metaphysical questions, although *kalām* focused mainly on defending Islamic doctrine. Overall, the unit demonstrated that Islamic philosophy developed as a balanced intellectual tradition integrating revelation, reason, ethics, and critical inquiry.

2.8 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

Leaman, O. (1999). *An introduction to classical Islamic philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*. State University of New York Press.

Sharif, M. M. (Ed.). (1963). *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Otto Harrassowitz.

**2.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. B
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. C
6. B
7. *ʿAql*
8. *Kalām*
9. *Earth*
10. Al-Ghazali
11. Revelation

Unit 3 Historical Development of Islamic Philosophy

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Learning Outcomes
3.3 Early Muslim thinkers
3.3.1 Background of Early Muslim Intellectual Thought
3.3.2 Significance of Early Muslim Thinkers
3.4 Islamic Philosophy during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods
3.4.1 Islamic Philosophy during the Umayyad period
3.4.2 Islamic Philosophy during the Abbasid period
3.5 Translation movement
3.5.1 Background of the Translation Movement
3.5.2 Bayt al-Ḥikmah (House of Wisdom)
3.6 Decline and Revival of Islamic Philosophy
3.7 Summary
3.8 References/Further Readings
3.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



3.1 Introduction

How did Islamic philosophy develop from early Muslim intellectual discussions into a rich tradition of philosophical, theological and scientific thought? The answer lies in a long history of engagement with revelation, reason and the intellectual traditions encountered by Muslim scholars. As the Muslim world expanded, scholars engaged with Greek, Persian, Indian and other traditions while developing their own approaches to questions of existence, knowledge, ethics and human purpose.

This intellectual development became particularly prominent during the Abbasid period, when translation and scholarship flourished in Baghdad and elsewhere. Thinkers such as Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd made important contributions to Islamic intellectual history. This unit traces these developments from the early Muslim period through the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, examines the translation movement, and considers the later transformation and revival of Islamic philosophical thought.



3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- trace the major stages in the historical development of Islamic philosophy
- identify major Muslim thinkers and describe their contributions to Islamic philosophical thought
- differentiate between the major intellectual developments of the Umayyad and Abbasid periods
- explain the role of the Translation Movement and Bayt al-Ḥikmah in the development of Islamic philosophy
- identify major factors that contributed to the decline and revival of Islamic philosophy.

Before you begin, take a moment to explore the historical journey below. Notice how Islamic philosophical thought developed from early intellectual discussions, through the Umayyad and Abbasid periods and the translation movement, and later experienced decline and revival. As you study the unit, return to this timeline to see where each thinker, event, and development fits.



Figure 3.1The journey of Islamic Philosophy: From Early Thoughts to Intellectual Revival
Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026.

3.3 Early Muslim thinkers

Now that you have seen the major stages in the historical development of Islamic philosophy, let us begin with the scholars who laid its intellectual foundations. Who were these early Muslim thinkers, what questions did they explore, and how did their ideas shape the development of Islamic philosophical thought? The following thinkers represent important stages in the development of Islamic philosophical thought. The emergence of Islamic philosophy was greatly influenced by the contributions of early Muslim thinkers who sought to harmonise reason, revelation, and intellectual inquiry. These scholars played a foundational role in the development of philosophical, theological, scientific, and ethical thought within Islamic civilisation. Drawing inspiration from the Qurʾān and

Sunnah, as well as engaging with Greek, Persian, and Indian intellectual traditions, early Muslim thinkers established a rich intellectual heritage that influenced both the Muslim world and later European scholarship (Fakhry, 2004).

3.3.1 Background of Early Muslim Intellectual Thought

During the early Islamic centuries, Muslim scholars became increasingly concerned with questions relating to the nature of existence, human reason, divine attributes, morality and ethics, knowledge and truth, and politics and governance. The expansion of the Islamic empire exposed Muslims to foreign philosophical traditions, particularly Greek philosophy. As a result, scholars began translating and critically studying classical works in logic, metaphysics, medicine, and ethics. This intellectual interaction contributed significantly to the rise of Islamic philosophical thought (Leaman, 1999). The major early Muslim Thinkers are discussed as follows:

1. Al-Kindī (c. 801–873 CE)

Al-Kindī is often described as one of the earliest major philosophers in the Islamic world and is sometimes referred to as the "Father of Islamic Philosophy." He was among the first Muslim scholars to systematically integrate Greek philosophical ideas with Islamic teachings. Al-Kindī emphasised the compatibility of reason and revelation and argued that philosophy could help human beings attain truth and wisdom. His contributions covered philosophy, logic, mathematics, medicine, and astronomy. Al-Kindī believed that all forms of knowledge ultimately originate from Allah and that philosophy should serve religion rather than oppose it (Nasr, 2006).

2. Al-Fārābī (c. 872–950 CE)

Al-Fārābī made major contributions to political philosophy, logic, and metaphysics. He attempted to synthesise the ideas of Plato and Aristotle within an Islamic framework. Al-Fārābī emphasised the role of reason in achieving human perfection and virtuous society. One of his most famous works, *Al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* (The Virtuous City), discussed the ideal Islamic society governed by wisdom and justice (Fakhry, 2004).

3. Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) (980–1037 CE)

Ibn Sīnā was one of the greatest philosophers and physicians in Islamic history. His intellectual contributions covered metaphysics, logic, psychology, medicine, and questions concerning theology and human knowledge. Ibn Sīnā developed sophisticated arguments concerning the existence of Allah, the soul, and the relationship between reason and

revelation. His works, especially *Al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb* (The Canon of Medicine), influenced both Islamic and European intellectual traditions for centuries (Sharif, 1963).

Before proceeding, watch the short video below for a visual introduction to **Ibn Sīnā.** You may access it through the embedded player, the QR code, or the web link.

https://youtu.be/uC_D7POHQ-0?si=2d-1TJ3r_qJRhpEj



4. Al-Ghazālī (1058–1111 CE)

Al-Ghazālī played an important role in critically examining the philosophical tradition. Although he valued logic and rational inquiry, he challenged philosophical positions that he considered incompatible with Islamic theology. In his famous work *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), he challenged some metaphysical positions held by Muslim philosophers.

Al-Ghazālī sought to balance reason, theology, and spirituality within Islamic thought (Leaman, 1999).

5. Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (1126–1198 CE)

Ibn Rushd defended the harmony between philosophy and religion. In response to Al-Ghazālī, he wrote *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence), arguing that philosophy and revelation are compatible when properly understood. Ibn Rushd became highly influential in medieval Europe due to his commentaries on Aristotle and his defence of rational philosophy (Nasr, 2006).

Pause and Reflect

Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā all engaged with ideas from earlier intellectual traditions. Why might engaging with ideas from another civilisation strengthen rather than weaken a philosophical tradition?

Suggested Answer:

Engaging with other intellectual traditions can expose scholars to new concepts and methods. Through critical evaluation, they can accept, modify or reject ideas and develop new approaches within their own intellectual framework.

3.3.2 Significance of Early Muslim Thinkers

The contributions of early Muslim thinkers:

- Advanced philosophical and scientific inquiry
- Encouraged rational and critical thinking
- Preserved and developed classical knowledge
- Influenced later Islamic scholarship
- Contributed to European intellectual revival

Their intellectual legacy remains important in contemporary studies of philosophy, theology, ethics, and science. In summary, the early Muslim thinkers played a crucial role in the historical development of Islamic philosophy. Through their engagement with revelation, reason, and foreign intellectual traditions, they established a dynamic philosophical heritage that contributed significantly to global civilisation. Their works demonstrate the ability of Islamic thought to harmonise faith, reason, ethics, and scientific inquiry within a unified intellectual tradition.

3.4 Islamic Philosophy during Umayyad and Abbasid periods

The development of Islamic philosophy during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods marked a significant stage in the intellectual history of Islamic civilisation. These periods witnessed the gradual emergence and expansion of philosophical, theological, and scientific thought among Muslims. While the Umayyad period laid the early foundations of intellectual inquiry, the Abbasid era became the golden age of Islamic philosophy due to extensive scholarly activities, translation movements, and interaction with foreign intellectual traditions (Fakhry, 2004).

3.4.1 Islamic Philosophy During the Umayyad Period (661–750 CE)

The Umayyad dynasty was primarily focused on political administration, territorial expansion, and consolidation of the Islamic empire. Nevertheless, important intellectual developments that began to emerge during this period are discussed below:

1. Early Theological Discussions
During the Umayyad era, Muslims began engaging in theological debates concerning free will and predestination, divine justice, human

responsibility, and leadership and governance. These discussions contributed to the rise of early theological schools such as Qadariyyah, Jabriyyah, and Murjiʾah. Such debates laid the foundation for later Islamic theology (*kalām*) and philosophical reflection (Leaman, 1999).

2. Contact with Foreign Civilisations

As the Islamic empire expanded into Byzantine and Persian territories, Muslims encountered Greek philosophy, Persian intellectual traditions, and Indian sciences. This interaction stimulated curiosity and encouraged the study of logic, medicine, astronomy, and philosophy.

3. Development of Rational Inquiry
Although philosophy had not yet become fully institutionalised, the Umayyad period witnessed the beginning of rational and intellectual inquiry among Muslim scholars. Discussions concerning theology and governance encouraged the use of reasoning and debate.

3.4.2 Islamic Philosophy During the Abbasid Period (750–1258 CE)

The Abbasid era represents the peak of intellectual and philosophical development in Islamic civilisation. Abbasid caliphs strongly supported scholarship, scientific research, and translation activities. The following developments took place:

1. The Translation Movement

One of the most important developments during the Abbasid period was the translation movement centred in Baghdad, especially in Bayt al-Ḥikmah (House of Wisdom). Greek works by philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato were translated into Arabic alongside Persian and Indian scientific texts (Nasr, 2006). This movement exposed Muslim scholars to logic, metaphysics, ethics, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy.

2. Emergence of Muslim Philosophers
The Abbasid period produced major Muslim philosophers, including Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. These scholars attempted to harmonise Greek philosophy with Islamic teachings. They contributed significantly to logic, metaphysics, political philosophy, ethics and medicine.

3. Growth of *Kalām* (Islamic Theology)
The Abbasid era also witnessed the development of *kalām*, particularly through theological schools such as Muʿtazilah and Ashʿariyyah. The Muʿtazilah emphasised rationalism and human free will, while the Ashʿarites sought to balance reason and revelation.

4. Scientific and Intellectual Advancement

The Abbasid period became famous for advancements in medicine, mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, and philosophy. Muslim scholars integrated rational inquiry with Islamic values, contributing greatly to world civilisation.

Activity: Think Like a Translator

Imagine that you are a scholar in Abbasid Baghdad and have just received a Greek philosophical text. What three questions would you ask before accepting the ideas in the text?

Table 3.1: Comparison Between the Umayyad and Abbasid Periods

Umayyad Period	Abbasid Period
Early stage of intellectual inquiry	Golden age of philosophy
Focus on political expansion	Strong support for scholarship
Initial theological debates	Systematic philosophical development
Limited translation activities	Extensive translation movement
Foundations of kalam	Flourishing of philosophy and sciences

The Umayyad and Abbasid periods were significant because they were able to contribute to the growth of rational inquiry, the development of Islamic theology, the preservation of ancient knowledge, scientific and philosophical advancement, and the integration of reason and revelation. These achievements later influenced both Islamic and European intellectual traditions. Islamic philosophy developed progressively during these periods. While the Umayyad era introduced early theological and intellectual discussions, the Abbasid period transformed Islamic civilisation into a global centre of philosophy, science, and scholarship. Through translation, rational inquiry, and scholarly engagement, Muslim thinkers established a rich intellectual tradition that significantly shaped world civilisation and demonstrated the compatibility of reason and revelation.

3.5 Translation movement

The translation movement was one of the most significant developments in the history of Islamic philosophy and Islamic civilisation. It refers to the large-scale effort by Muslim scholars to translate scientific, philosophical, and literary works from Greek, Persian, Syriac, and Indian languages into Arabic. This movement played a major role in the growth of philosophy, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and other sciences in

the Muslim world during the Abbasid period (Fakhry, 2004). The translation movement not only preserved ancient knowledge but also enabled Muslim scholars to critically study, refine, and expand earlier intellectual traditions within an Islamic framework.

3.5.1 Background of the Translation Movement

The translation movement gained momentum during the Abbasid dynasty, particularly between the 8th and 10th centuries CE. Abbasid caliphs strongly encouraged scholarship and intellectual development. As the Islamic empire expanded, Muslims encountered the intellectual traditions of Greece, Persia, India, and Byzantium. This interaction stimulated interest in philosophy, science, medicine, and logic (Leaman, 1999).

3.5.2 Bayt al-Ḥikmah (House of Wisdom)

The centre of the translation movement was Bayt al-Ḥikmah (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad. It functioned as a library, a research centre, a translation institute, and an academic institution. Scholars gathered there to translate and study classical works from various civilisations. Major works translated by Muslim scholars from philosophers and scientists include works by Aristotle, Plato, Galen, Hippocrates, and Ptolemy. These translations covered subjects including logic, metaphysics, ethics, medicine, astronomy, and mathematics. Prominent translators and scholars that plated important roles include:

1. Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq: A famous translator and physician who translated many Greek medical and philosophical texts into Arabic.
2. Thābit ibn Qurrah: Known for contributions to mathematics, astronomy, and translation.
3. Al-Kindī: Al-Kindi helped integrate translated philosophical ideas into Islamic thought and encouraged philosophical inquiry.
Impact of the Translation Movement
1. Preservation of Ancient Knowledge: The movement preserved many Greek and ancient scientific works that may otherwise have been lost.
2. Development of Islamic Philosophy: Muslim philosophers critically engaged with translated ideas and developed original philosophical systems.
3. Scientific Advancement: The movement stimulated major developments in medicine, mathematics**,** astronomy**, c**hemistry, and physics**.**
4. Intellectual Growth: It encouraged rational inquiry, critical thinking, and scholarly research throughout the Muslim world.
5. Influence on Europe: Arabic translations and Muslim scholarly works later influenced the European Renaissance through Latin translations.

Muslim Response to Greek Philosophy: Muslim scholars did not blindly imitate Greek thought; instead, they critically examined philosophical ideas**, r**ejected concepts contradicting Islam, and adapted useful ideas within the framework of *tawḥīd* and revelation. This process produced a uniquely Islamic intellectual tradition (Nasr, 2006).

In conclusion, the translation movement was a turning point in the historical development of Islamic philosophy and civilisation. Through the translation and critical study of foreign intellectual works, Muslim scholars preserved ancient knowledge and transformed it into a dynamic Islamic intellectual tradition. The movement encouraged scientific progress, rational inquiry, and philosophical reflection while maintaining the principles of Islamic teachings. Its influence extended beyond the Muslim world and contributed significantly to global intellectual history.

3.6 Decline and Revival of Islamic Philosophy

After experiencing remarkable growth during the Abbasid era, Islamic philosophy later entered a period of decline in some parts of the Muslim world. Political instability, social changes, foreign invasions, and intellectual disagreements contributed to the weakening of philosophical and scientific activities. However, Islamic philosophy did not disappear completely. Various revival movements and modern intellectual efforts later emerged to renew philosophical inquiry and reconnect Islamic thought with contemporary realities (Fakhry, 2004). The following are the Causes of the Decline of Islamic philosophy:

1. Political Instability: The weakening of the Abbasid caliphate reduced state support for scholarship and intellectual institutions. Internal conflicts and political fragmentation negatively affected academic activities.

2. Mongol Invasion: The Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258 CE caused massive destruction of libraries, educational institutions, and scholarly centres, including Bayt al-Ḥikmah (House of Wisdom). This greatly disrupted philosophical and scientific development.

3. Intellectual Opposition: Some scholars criticised certain philosophical ideas that appeared to conflict with Islamic teachings. Works such as *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* by Al-Ghazali challenged aspects of Greek-influenced philosophy and reduced its influence in some circles (Leaman, 1999).

4. Shift Toward Conservatism: In some regions, intellectual activities became increasingly limited to traditional religious studies, while philosophical and rational sciences received less attention.

5. Colonialism and Western Dominance: Colonial rule and the restructuring of educational institutions in parts of the Muslim world also affected traditional systems of learning and shaped later debates about knowledge, education, and intellectual independence.

Revival of Islamic Philosophy: Although philosophy declined in some areas, it continued to survive through Islamic theology (*kalām*), Sufism, Persian philosophical traditions, and Ottoman intellectual scholarship. Thinkers such as Mulla Sadra contributed to the continuation of Islamic philosophical thought. Factors that contributed to the revival of Islamic philosophy are discussed as follows:

1. Modern Reform Movements: Modern Muslim intellectuals sought to revive Islamic philosophy by reconciling Islamic teachings with modern science, reason, and contemporary social realities.

2. Educational Reforms: Universities and Islamic institutions reintroduced philosophy, logic, and critical thinking into their curricula.

3. Contemporary Muslim Thinkers: Modern scholars such as Muhammad Iqbal**,** Fazlur Rahman, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr contributed significantly to the revival of Islamic philosophical discourse.

4. Engagement with Modern Challenges: Contemporary Islamic philosophy addresses issues such as ethics**,** human rights**, s**cience and religion**,** technology**,** globalisation, and **s**ocial justice

Importance of the Revival: The revival of Islamic philosophy encourages intellectual renewal**,** promotes critical thinking**, s**trengthens Islamic scholarship**, b**ridges tradition and modernity, and responds to contemporary challenges.

Table 3.2: Decline and Revival of Islamic Philosophy

Decline Factors	**Revival Factors**
Political instability	Educational reforms
Mongol invasion	Modern scholarship
Intellectual opposition	Reintroduction of philosophy
Colonial influence	Contemporary research
Reduced patronage	Global academic engagement

In summary, the decline of Islamic philosophy resulted from political, intellectual, and social challenges that weakened scholarly activities in many Muslim societies. Nevertheless, Islamic philosophy survived through various intellectual traditions and later experienced revival through modern reform movements and contemporary scholarship. Today, Islamic philosophy continues to play an important role in

addressing modern intellectual, ethical, and social issues while preserving the rich heritage of Islamic civilisation.

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Who is commonly referred to as the "Father of Islamic Philosophy"?
A. Ibn Rushd
B. Al-Ghazālī
C. Al-Kindī
D. Ibn Sīnā

2. Which Muslim philosopher wrote *Al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* (The Virtuous City)?
A. Al-Fārābī
B. Ibn Sīnā
C. Al-Ghazālī
D. Ibn Khaldūn

3. The translation movement that greatly promoted Islamic philosophy flourished during the _____ period.
A. Rashidun
B. Umayyad
C. Abbasid
D. Ottoman

4. Bayt al-Ḥikmah (House of Wisdom) was established in:
A. Cairo
B. Damascus
C. Baghdad
D. Cordoba

5. Which theological school emphasised rationalism and human free will during the Abbasid era?
A. Murjiʾah
B. Muʿtazilah
C. Jabriyyah
D. Khawārij

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

6. The major intellectual centre destroyed during the Mongol invasion of Baghdad was called _____.

7. The large-scale effort to translate Greek and foreign works into Arabic is known as the _____ movement.

8. The Muslim scholar who wrote *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* was _____.

9. One important factor that contributed to the revival of Islamic philosophy was educational _____.

10. Modern Islamic philosophy addresses contemporary issues such as science, ethics, and _____.



3.7 Summary

This unit examined the historical development of Islamic philosophy from the early Muslim period through the Umayyad and Abbasid eras and into later periods of transformation and revival. It highlighted the contributions of major Muslim thinkers, including Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd, who engaged with questions of reason, revelation, existence, knowledge, ethics and society. The unit also explained how early theological debates and encounters with other intellectual traditions contributed to the development of Islamic thought. The unit further explored the Abbasid period and the translation movement, through which Greek, Persian, Indian and other works became available in Arabic. Bayt al-Ḥikmah was discussed in relation to this wider scholarly environment, while the contributions of translators and scholars such as Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq and Thābit ibn Qurrah were highlighted. The translation movement enabled Muslim scholars to study, critique and develop earlier intellectual traditions, contributing to advances in philosophy, medicine, mathematics and astronomy.

Finally, the unit examined the later transformation and revival of Islamic philosophy. Political changes, intellectual debates and the disruption of major centres of learning affected philosophical activity in some regions, but philosophical thought continued in different forms and later experienced renewed interest. Modern Muslim thinkers have continued to engage Islamic philosophical traditions with contemporary questions concerning science, ethics, technology, society and human knowledge.



3.8 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

Leaman, O. (1999). *An introduction to classical Islamic philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*. State University of New York Press.

Sharif, M. M. (Ed.). (1963). *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Otto Harrassowitz.

**3.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):**

1. C
2. A
3. C
4. C
5. B

6. Bayt al-Ḥikmah (House of Wisdom)

7. Translation

8. Al-Ghazālī

9. Reforms

10. technology

Unit 4 Major Themes in Islamic Philosophy

Unit Structure:

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Learning Outcomes
4.3 Metaphysics
4.4 Epistemology
4.5 Ethics
4.6 Cosmology
4.7 Summary
4.8 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
4.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

In Unit 3, you traced the historical development of Islamic philosophy, from early Muslim thinkers and the Umayyad and Abbasid periods to the translation movement and the later revival of philosophical thought. You are now ready to move from **when and how Islamic philosophy developed** to **the questions it sought to answer**. In this unit, you will explore four major themes: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and cosmology.



4.1 Introduction

Have you ever wondered what it means to exist, how we know what is true, what makes an action right or wrong, or how the universe came into being? These are some of the fundamental questions explored in Islamic philosophy. Building on the historical development discussed in the previous unit, this unit introduces the major themes through which Muslim philosophers examined human existence, knowledge, morality, and the universe.

Islamic philosophy developed through reflection on the Qurʾān and Sunnah, rational inquiry, and engagement with other intellectual traditions. Muslim philosophers explored questions about the existence and unity of Allah, creation, knowledge, ethics, the soul, and the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds. Thinkers such as Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rushd contributed significantly to these discussions while seeking to harmonise philosophical reasoning with Islamic teachings.

In this unit, you will examine four major themes: **metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and cosmology**. As you explore each theme, consider how revelation and reason work together in addressing fundamental questions about reality, knowledge, morality, and existence.

4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- identify the major themes discussed in Islamic philosophy;
- explain the major concepts associated with metaphysics and epistemology in Islamic philosophy;
- discuss major ethical principles in Islamic philosophical thought;
- explain the Islamic philosophical understanding of cosmology and the relationship between the Creator and creation;
- examine the relationship between revelation, reason, and knowledge in Islamic philosophy; and
- relate the major themes of Islamic philosophy to contemporary intellectual and ethical questions.

Before you begin, take a moment to explore the infographic below. It provides a quick overview of the four major themes you will encounter in this unit. As you study each section, return to the infographic and consider how the themes connect.



Figure 4.1: Major Themes in Islamic Philosophy
Source: Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026.



4.3 Metaphysics in Islamic Philosophy

Let us begin with metaphysics, which asks some of the most fundamental questions about existence and reality. How do we understand Allah, creation, the soul, and the relationship between the Creator and creation? Metaphysics is one of the central themes in Islamic philosophy. It deals with questions concerning existence, reality, creation, causality, and the nature of Allah. Muslim philosophers developed metaphysical ideas by combining Qurʾānic teachings with rational inquiry and philosophical reflection. Influenced partly by Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle and Plato, Muslim thinkers examined the relationship between the Creator and creation, the soul, and the ultimate purpose of existence (Fakhry, 2004). Here are the major themes in Islamic metaphysics:

1. Existence of Allah: Muslim philosophers argued rationally for the existence and unity of Allah (*tawḥīd*). Ibn Sina described Allah as the "Necessary Being" whose existence is independent and eternal (Nasr, 2006).
2. Creation of the Universe: Islamic metaphysics teaches that Allah created the universe with purpose and wisdom. Philosophers debated whether creation occurred in time or eternally through divine will.
3. The Soul: The human soul was viewed as spiritual and immortal. Philosophers examined its relationship with the body and its destiny after death.
4. Causality: Muslim philosophers studied cause-and-effect relationships in nature while affirming Allah as the ultimate cause of all existence.

Table 4.1: Major Issues in Islamic Metaphysics

Theme	Explanation
Tawḥīd	Unity and existence of Allah
Creation	Origin and purpose of the universe
Soul	Nature and immortality of the soul
Causality	Relationship between causes and effects

Pause and Reflect

Ibn Sīnā described Allah as the Necessary Being whose existence is independent. Why do you think Muslim philosophers were interested in developing rational arguments about the existence of Allah?

Suggested Answer:

Muslim philosophers sought to use reason to deepen understanding of

fundamental Islamic beliefs and to demonstrate that philosophical inquiry could be used to explore questions about existence and the nature of the Creator.

4.4 Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy

Having explored questions about existence and reality, we now turn to a related question: how can we know what is true? This leads us to epistemology, the study of knowledge and its sources. Epistemology refers to the study of knowledge, its sources, nature, and limits. In Islamic philosophy, epistemology examines how human beings acquire true knowledge and understand reality. Muslim philosophers recognised both revelation and reason as valid sources of knowledge (Leaman, 1999). Islamic epistemology encourages learning and scholarship, harmonises faith and reason, supports scientific inquiry, and protects truth from falsehood. The sources of knowledge in Islamic philosophy are:

1. Revelation (*Waḥy*): The Qurʾān and Sunnah are the highest and most reliable sources of knowledge in Islam.
2. Reason (ʿ*Aql*): Reason enables humans to think critically, analyse evidence, and understand creation.
3. Sense Perception: Knowledge may also be acquired through observation and experience.
4. Intuition and Spiritual Insight: Some Muslim philosophers and Sufis emphasised spiritual purification as a means of attaining higher knowledge.

4.5 Ethics in Islamic Philosophy

Knowing what is true is only part of the philosophical journey. How should such knowledge shape human conduct? We now examine Islamic ethical thought and its emphasis on justice, responsibility, and virtuous character. Ethics in Islamic philosophy concerns moral values, human conduct, and the distinction between right and wrong. Islamic ethical thought is rooted in the Qurʾān and Sunnah while also benefiting from philosophical reasoning. Muslim philosophers emphasised virtues such as justice, honesty, wisdom, moderation, and compassion (Nasr, 2006). Major ethical principles in Islamic philosophy are:

1. **Justice (ʿ*Adl*):** Justice is a fundamental moral principle in Islam that applies to individuals and society.
2. **Responsibility:** Human beings are morally responsible for their actions and accountable before Allah.
3. **Moderation:** Islam encourages balance and avoidance of excess.

4. **Virtue and Character:** Good moral character is central to Islamic ethical teachings.

Table 4.2: Ethical Virtues in Islamic Philosophy

Virtue	Meaning
Justice	Fairness and equality
Honesty	Truthfulness in actions
Wisdom	Proper use of knowledge
Moderation	Balance in behaviour

Think About This

A student discovers that a classmate has accidentally received extra marks in an assessment. Nobody else has noticed the error. The student has to decide whether to report it.
Which Islamic ethical principle is most directly involved in this situation?

Suggested Answer:

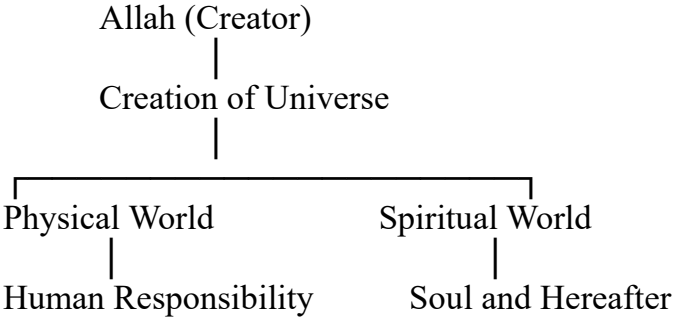
Justice and moral responsibility are directly involved because the student has a responsibility to act fairly and honestly.

4.6 Cosmology in Islamic Philosophy

Our discussion of morality leads naturally to a broader question about humanity's place in creation. We now turn to cosmology and examine how Islamic philosophers understood the origin, order and purpose of the universe. Cosmology in Islamic philosophy studies the origin, structure, and order of the universe. Muslim philosophers viewed the universe as a purposeful creation of Allah and examined the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds (Sharif, 1963). Here are the major themes in Islamic cosmology:

1. **Unity and Order of the Universe:** The universe reflects divine wisdom, harmony, and organisation.
2. **Relationship Between Creator and Creation:** Allah is the Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos.
3. **Human Position in the Universe:** Humans are regarded as vicegerents (*khulafā'*) responsible for maintaining balance and justice on earth.
4. **Scientific Observation:** Islamic cosmology encourages observation of nature and contributes to developments in astronomy and natural sciences.

Diagram: Islamic Cosmological View



In summary, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and cosmology are major themes in Islamic philosophy that explore existence, knowledge, morality, and the universe. Muslim philosophers harmonised revelation with rational inquiry to address fundamental questions concerning Allah, humanity, and creation. These themes continue to influence contemporary Islamic intellectual and ethical discussions.

Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Metaphysics mainly studies:
A. Language only
B. Physical exercise
C. Existence and reality
D. Trade and commerce

2. Ibn Sīnā described Allah as the:
A. Material Being
B. Necessary Being
C. Temporary Being
D. Invisible Force

3. Epistemology is the study of:
A. Politics
B. Astronomy
C. Knowledge
D. Economics

4. Which is considered the highest source of knowledge in Islam?
A. Observation
B. Imagination
C. Revelation
D. Tradition alone

5. The Arabic term for reason in Islamic philosophy is:
A. Waḥy
B. ʿAql
C. Fiqh
D. Sharīʿah

6. A student observes that two people disagree about whether a particular claim is true. One person relies on observation and evidence, while the other considers revelation and reason. Which theme of Islamic philosophy is most directly concerned with this question?
A. Cosmology
B. Epistemology
C. Ethics
D. Political philosophy

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

7. The study of morality and human conduct in Islamic philosophy is called _____.

8. The Islamic moral principle of fairness and equality is known as _____.

9. The study of the origin and structure of the universe is known as _____.

10. Human beings are regarded in Islam as Allah's _____ on earth.

11. Islamic cosmology teaches that the universe reflects divine _____ and order.



4.7 Summary

This unit examined four major themes in Islamic philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and cosmology. Metaphysics explores existence, reality, creation, causality, the soul, and the nature of Allah, while epistemology examines knowledge and its sources, including revelation, reason, sense perception, and spiritual insight. Muslim philosophers sought to understand these questions through a combination of Islamic teachings and rational inquiry.

The unit also examined ethics, focusing on principles such as justice, responsibility, moderation, honesty, wisdom, and good character. Cosmology considers the origin, structure, and order of the universe and the relationship between the Creator and creation. Islamic cosmological thought also emphasises human responsibility as vicegerents on earth. Overall, these themes demonstrate how Islamic philosophy addresses fundamental questions about reality, knowledge, morality, and existence while seeking to harmonise revelation, reason, and ethical responsibility.



4.8 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

Leaman, O. (1999). *An introduction to classical Islamic philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*. State University of New York Press.

Sharif, M. M. (Ed.). (1963). *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Otto Harrassowitz.

4.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. C
2. B
3. C
4. C
5. B
6. Answer: B

7. Ethics
8. Justice (*ʿadl*)
9. Cosmology
10. Vicegerents (*khulafāʾ*)
11. Wisdom

Unit 5 Relationship between Philosophy and Revelation

Unit Structure

5.1 Introduction
5.2 Learning Outcomes
5.3 Reason and Revelation in Islamic Philosophy
5.3.1 Meaning of Reason and Revelation
5.3.2 Relationship Between Reason and Revelation
5.3.3 Views of Muslim Thinkers
5.4 *Falsafah* and *Kalām* in Islamic Philosophy
5.4.1 Meaning and Differences between *Falsafah* and *Kalām*
5.4.2 Relationship Between *Falsafah* and *Kalām*
5.5 Classical scholars' views on Philosophy and Revelation
5.6 Summary
5.7 References/Further Readings
5.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



5.1 Introduction

What happens when human reason encounters divine revelation? Can reason and revelation work together in the search for truth, or are they necessarily in conflict? These questions have occupied Muslim philosophers and scholars for centuries and have shaped important debates in Islamic philosophy, theology, ethics and spirituality.

In Islam, revelation refers primarily to the Qurʾān and Sunnah, while philosophy involves rational inquiry and critical reflection on existence, knowledge, morality and reality. Many Muslim thinkers argued that reason and revelation ultimately come from Allah and therefore cannot genuinely contradict each other when properly understood. Thinkers such as Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd explored ways of harmonising philosophical reasoning with Islamic teachings, while scholars such as Al-Ghazālī critically examined philosophical positions that they considered inconsistent with Islamic doctrine.

In this unit, you will explore the relationship between reason and revelation, examine the differences and connections between falsafah and kalām, and consider how classical Muslim scholars responded to the relationship between philosophy and divine guidance**.**

5.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the meanings of reason (ʿaql) and revelation (waḥy) in Islamic philosophy;
- examine the relationship between reason and revelation;
- differentiate between falsafah and kalām in terms of their focus and approach;
- discuss the relationship between falsafah and kalām;
- compare the views of selected classical Muslim scholars on philosophy and revelation; and
- explain how debates about reason and revelation contributed to Islamic intellectual development.

Before exploring the debate in detail, study the infographic below. It provides a visual roadmap of the relationship between reason, revelation, falsafah and kalām. As you progress through the unit, return to the diagram and consider how the ideas and scholars discussed connect.

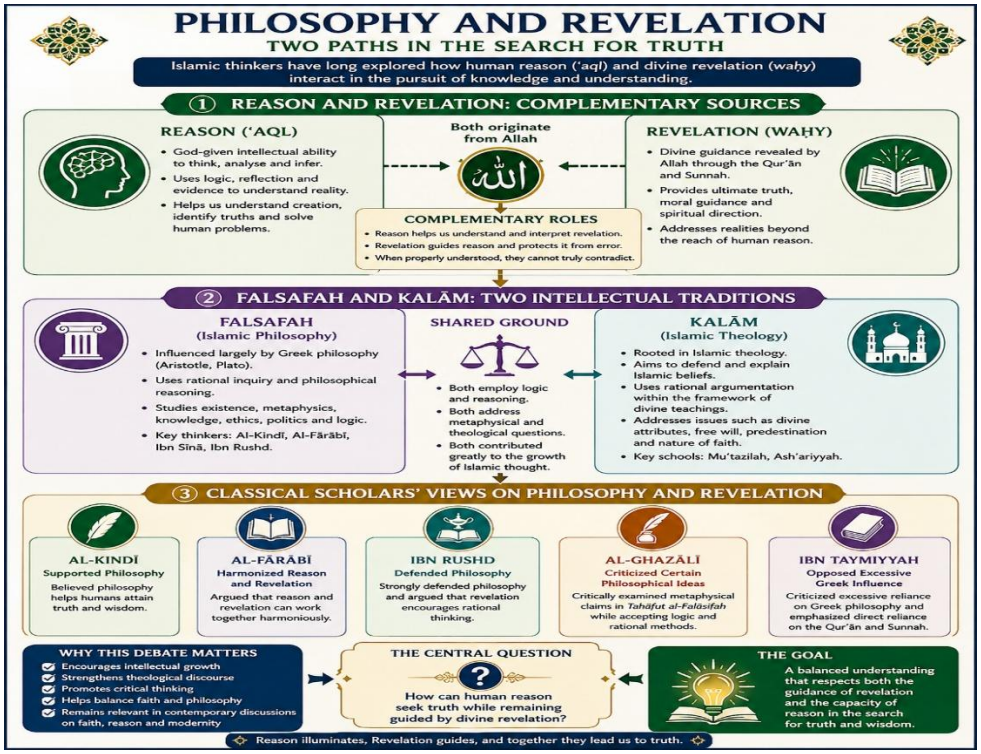


Figure 5.1: Relationship between Philosophy and Revelation
Source: Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026.



5.3 Reason vs. Revelation in Islamic Philosophy

The infographic has introduced the central relationship explored in this unit: reason and revelation. Let us begin by examining what these two concepts mean and how Muslim scholars understood their respective roles in the search for truth. One of the most important discussions in Islamic philosophy concerns the relationship between reason (*ʿaql*) and revelation (*waḥy*). Muslim scholars debated whether human reason alone is sufficient to attain truth or whether divine revelation is necessary for proper guidance. While some philosophers emphasised rational inquiry, Islamic theologians maintained that revelation remains the ultimate source of truth (Fakhry, 2004).

5.3.1 Meaning of Reason and Revelation

Reason refers to the intellectual ability of humans to think, analyse, infer, and understand reality through logic and reflection, while revelation refers to divine guidance communicated by Allah through the Qurʾān and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW).

5.3.2 Relationship Between Reason and Revelation

Many Muslim scholars believed that reason and revelation complement one another because both originate from Allah. Reason helps humans understand creation and interpret revelation, while revelation guides reason and prevents error (Nasr, 2006). However, disagreements emerged concerning the limits of reason, interpretation of religious texts, philosophical speculation, and human free will and predestination.

Pause and Reflect

Imagine that a philosophical argument appears to conflict with an established teaching of the Qurʾān. What questions should a Muslim thinker consider before accepting or rejecting the argument?

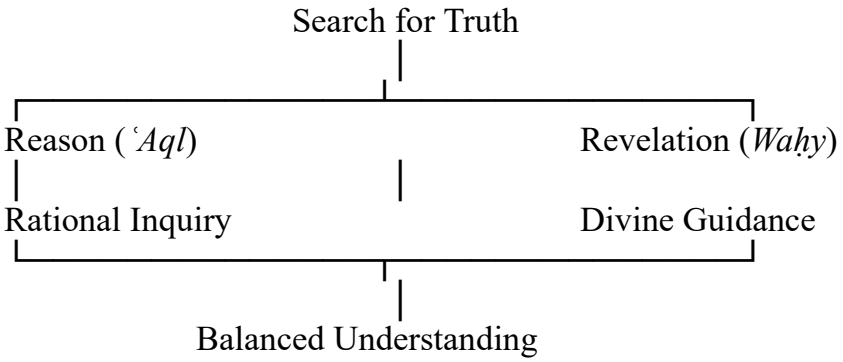
Suggested Answer:

A Muslim thinker should examine the strength of the philosophical argument, consider whether the Qurʾānic teaching has been correctly understood and interpreted, and determine whether the apparent conflict is genuine or results from a misunderstanding of either the argument or the revelation.

5.3.3 Views of Muslim Thinkers

Philosophers such as Ibn Rushd argued that philosophy and revelation cannot contradict each other when correctly understood, while some theologians feared that excessive philosophical speculation could weaken faith and lead to incorrect interpretations of Islamic teachings.

Diagram: Relationship Between Reason and Revelation



The importance of discussion on reason and revelation encouraged intellectual growth, strengthened theological discourse, promoted critical thinking and helped harmonise faith and philosophy.

5.4 Falsafah and Kalām in Islamic Philosophy

We have seen that Muslim scholars debated how reason and revelation should relate to one another. These debates also gave rise to different intellectual approaches. Two of the most important were falsafah and kalām. Let us now examine what these traditions meant and how they differed. Falsafah and Kalām are two important intellectual traditions in Islamic civilisation. Although both deal with theological and philosophical issues, they differ in method, focus, and objectives (Leaman, 1999).

5.4.1 Meaning and Differences between *Falsafah* and *Kalām*

Falsafah refers to Islamic philosophy influenced largely by Greek philosophical traditions, especially Aristotle and Plato. Muslim philosophers used logic and rational analysis to study existence, knowledge, ethics, politics and metaphysics. Prominent philosophers include Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina.

Kalām refers to Islamic theology that developed to defend Islamic beliefs through rational argumentation. Theologians addressed issues such as divine attributes, free will, predestination and nature of faith. Major theological schools included Muʿtazilah and Ashʿariyyah.

Table 5.1: Differences Between *Falsafah* and *Kalām*

Falsafah	***Kalām***
Influenced by Greek philosophy	Rooted mainly in Islamic theology
Focuses on philosophical reasoning	Focuses on defending doctrine
Uses broad rational inquiry	Uses rational theology
Studies metaphysics extensively	Emphasises religious beliefs

5.4.2 Relationship Between *Falsafah* and *Kalām*

Despite differences, both traditions used logic and reasoning, influenced Islamic intellectual history, and addressed metaphysical and theological questions.

5.5 Classical Scholars' Views on Philosophy and Revelation

Although falsafah and kalām differed in their methods and objectives, both became important parts of Islamic intellectual history. Their relationship becomes clearer when we consider how individual Muslim scholars responded to philosophy and revelation. Let us now examine the views of some of these classical scholars. Classical Muslim scholars held different views regarding philosophy and revelation. Some scholars supported philosophical inquiry, while others criticised aspects of Greek-influenced philosophy that conflicted with Islamic teachings (Sharif, 1963).

The Scholars who supported philosophical inquiry are (1) Al-Kindī, who believed that philosophy helps humans attain truth and wisdom, (2) Al-Fārābī, who argued that reason and revelation can work together harmoniously and (3) Ibn Rushd who strongly defended philosophy and argued that revelation encourages rational thinking. However, there are other scholars who criticised philosophical inquiry. These are (1) Al-Ghazali, who criticised certain metaphysical claims of philosophers in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* while accepting logic and rational methods, and (2) Ibn Taymiyyah, who also criticised excessive reliance on Greek philosophy and emphasised direct reliance on the Qurʾān and Sunnah.

Table 5.2: Classical Scholars' Views

Scholar	**View on Philosophy**
Al-Kindī	Supported philosophy
Al-Fārābī	Harmonised reason and revelation
Ibn Rushd	Defended philosophy
Al-Ghazālī	Criticised some philosophical ideas
Ibn Taymiyyah	Opposed excessive Greek influence

In summary, the relationship between reason, revelation, *falsafah*, and *kalām* shaped the development of Islamic intellectual history. Muslim scholars sought different ways to balance rational inquiry with divine guidance. Their debates enriched Islamic philosophy and theology and continue to influence contemporary discussions concerning faith, reason, and modernity.

Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Table 5.3: Self-Assessment Exercises

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B.

Column A	Column B
1. Reason	A. Divine guidance
2. Revelation	B. Intellectual inquiry
3. *Waḥy*	C. Qurʾān and Sunnah
4. *ʿAql*	D. Human reasoning
5. Ibn Rushd	E. Harmony of philosophy and religion

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

6. *Falsafah* in Islam was largely influenced by:
A. Roman law
B. Greek philosophy
C. Indian mythology
D. Chinese literature

7. *Kalām* primarily focuses on:
A. Military science
B. Commercial law
C. Defending Islamic beliefs
D. Agricultural studies

8. Which of the following is associated with *Falsafah*?
A. Metaphysics
B. Trade policy
C. Geography only
D. Poetry alone

9. Theological schools such as the Muʿtazilah belong to:
A. Astronomy
B. *Kalām*

C. Linguistics
D. Mathematics

10. One similarity between *Falsafah* and *Kalām* is that both use:
A. Mythology
B. Political propaganda
C. Logic and reasoning
D. Superstition

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

11. The scholar who wrote *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* was _____.

12. _____ strongly defended the harmony between philosophy and revelation.

13. Al-Kindī believed philosophy helps humans attain _____ and wisdom.

14. Ibn Taymiyyah criticised excessive reliance on _____ philosophy.

15. Classical Muslim scholars debated the relationship between reason and _____.



5.6 Summary

You have now followed the debate from the basic concepts of reason and revelation to the intellectual traditions of falsafah and kalām and finally to the positions of major classical scholars. Before you complete the unit, pause to bring these ideas together. This unit examined the relationship between philosophy and revelation in Islamic intellectual thought. It explained the meanings of reason (ʿaql) and revelation (waḥy) and showed how Muslim scholars debated their respective roles in the search for truth. While reason enables reflection, analysis and understanding, revelation provides divine guidance through the Qurʾān and Sunnah. Many Muslim thinkers therefore regarded reason and revelation as complementary, although some warned against philosophical positions that could conflict with Islamic teachings.

The unit also examined **falsafah and kalām**, highlighting their similarities and differences. Falsafah employed philosophical reasoning to explore questions of existence, knowledge and metaphysics, while kalām used rational argument to explain and defend Islamic beliefs. Finally, the unit considered the views of scholars including Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Rushd, Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyyah. Their different

positions demonstrate the richness of Islamic intellectual debate and the continuing importance of balancing **reason, revelation and responsible intellectual inquiry**.

5.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

Leaman, O. (1999). *An introduction to classical Islamic philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*. State University of New York Press.

Sharif, M. M. (Ed.). (1963). *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Otto Harrassowitz.

5.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise (SAEs)

Answers

1 B
2 C
3 A
4 D
5 E
6. B
7. C
8. A
9. B
10. C

11. Al-Ghazālī
12. Ibn Rushd
13. Truth
14. Greek
15. Revelation

MODULE 2 MAJOR PHILOSOPHERS AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

In the previous module, you explored the sources, historical development, and major themes of Islamic philosophy. You are now ready to meet some of the thinkers who gave these ideas a distinctive philosophical expression. We begin with **Al-Kindī**, one of the earliest major philosophers in the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Unit 1 Al-Kindi and the Early Philosophers

Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction
1.2 Learning Outcomes
1.3 Biography of Al-Kindi
1.3.1 Early Life and Background
1.3.2 Al-Kindī's Role in the Translation Movement and Intellectual Contributions
1.3.3 His Death
1.4 Major and Features of Al-Kindī's Works
1.5 Views on metaphysics and ethics
1.5.1 Al-Kindī's Metaphysical Views
1.5.2 Al-Kindī's Ethical Views
1.6 Summary
1.7 References/Further Readings
1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



1.1 Introduction

What happens when a civilisation encounters new ideas and begins to examine them through its own intellectual and religious tradition? During the Abbasid period, Muslim scholars encountered Greek philosophical and scientific works through the translation movement centred in Baghdad. Among the thinkers who played an important role in this intellectual encounter was Al-Kindī, widely regarded as the first major philosopher in the Islamic tradition.

Al-Kindī sought to demonstrate that reason and revelation could work together in the search for truth. His writings addressed philosophy, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, logic, ethics, and metaphysics, while his engagement with Greek thought helped establish philosophical inquiry within the Muslim intellectual tradition. His approach influenced later thinkers and contributed to the development of Islamic philosophy.

In this unit, you will explore the life and intellectual contributions of Al-Kindī, examine some of his major works, and consider his views on metaphysics and ethics. You will also see how his ideas helped lay an important foundation for the later development of Islamic philosophy.



1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the early life and intellectual background of Al-Kindī;
- explain Al-Kindī's contributions to the translation movement and Islamic philosophy;
- identify major works and areas of scholarship associated with Al-Kindī;
- explain Al-Kindī's major views on metaphysics and ethics; and
- assess the significance of Al-Kindī's philosophical ideas to the development of Islamic philosophy.



1.3 Biography of Al-Kindī

Al-Kindi was one of the earliest and most influential philosophers in Islamic civilisation. He is widely recognised as the "Father of Islamic Philosophy" because he was the first Muslim thinker to systematically introduce and develop philosophy within the framework of Islamic teachings. Al-Kindī contributed significantly to philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, logic, music, and ethics during the Abbasid period (Fakhry, 2004).

1.3.1 Early Life and Background

Al-Kindī's full name was Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī. He was born around 801 CE in Kūfah, Iraq, into a noble Arab family associated with the tribe of Kindah. His father served as a governor during the Abbasid era, which provided Al-Kindī with access to quality education and intellectual opportunities. He later moved to Baghdad, the intellectual centre of the Abbasid caliphate, where he studied philosophy, mathematics, medicine, logic, astronomy and languages. Baghdad during this period was famous for the translation movement and scholarly activities centred in Bayt al-Ḥikmah (House of Wisdom) (Nasr, 2006).

Take a moment to study the infographic below. Notice how the major concepts in this unit are connected. Can you explain the relationship between them in your own words?

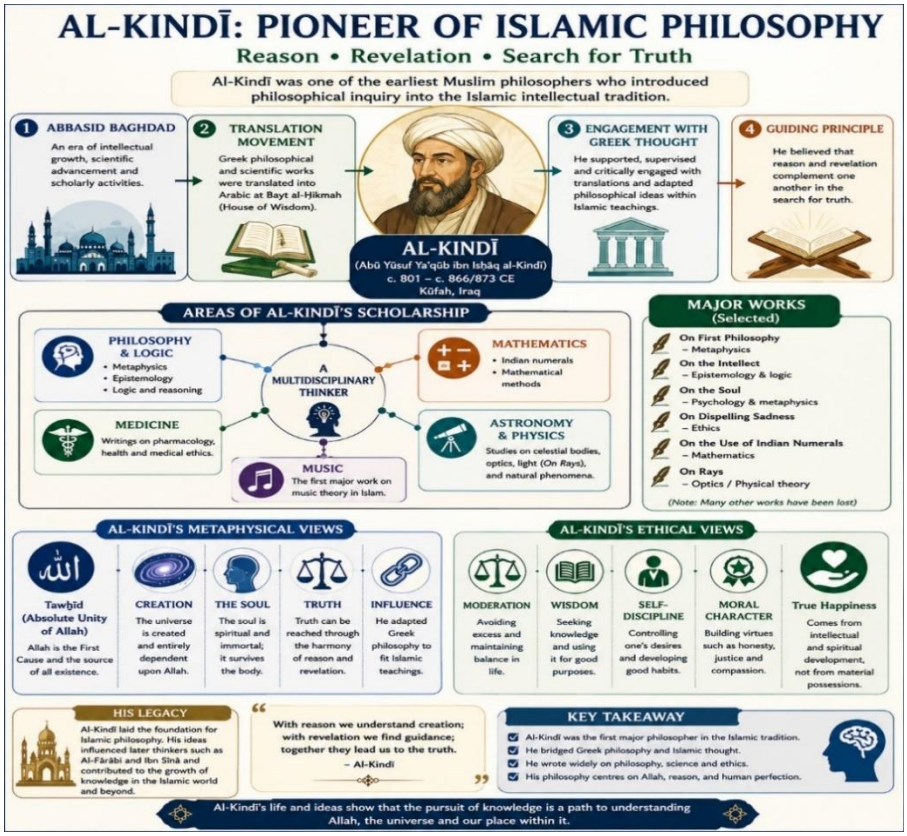


Figure 1.X: Visual Overview of the Key Concepts in Unit 1, Module 2
Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026.

1.3.2 Al-Kindī's Role in the Translation Movement and Intellectual Contributions

Al-Kindī participated actively in the translation movement by supervising and supporting the translation of Greek philosophical and scientific works into Arabic. He sought to harmonise Greek philosophy with Islamic beliefs rather than merely imitate foreign ideas. Al-Kindī wrote numerous works covering various fields such as metaphysics, ethics, logic, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and music theory. He believed that philosophy and revelation complement one another because both ultimately lead to truth.

Pause and Reflect
Why do you think Al-Kindī considered it important for Muslim scholars to engage with knowledge from other civilisations?

Suggested Answer
Al-Kindī regarded the search for truth as an intellectual activity that could benefit from knowledge from different traditions. His engagement with Greek thought enabled Muslim scholars to examine, adapt and develop philosophical ideas within an Islamic intellectual framework.

1.3.3 His Death

Al-Kindī died around 873 CE. Despite challenges and opposition from some political authorities and scholars, his intellectual legacy greatly influenced later Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina.

1.4 Major Works and Features of Al-Kindī's Works

You have now seen how Al-Kindī's background and involvement in the intellectual life of Baghdad shaped his philosophical outlook. But what did he actually write about? Let us now examine some of his major works and the features that distinguish his approach. Al-Kindī authored many important philosophical and scientific works. Although some have been lost, several remain influential in the study of Islamic philosophy. His notable works are:

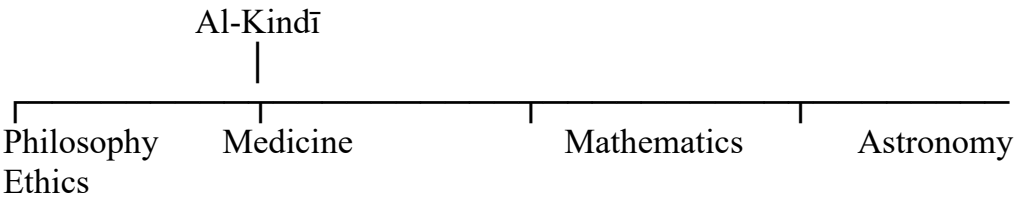
Table 1.1

Work	**Area of Study**
On First Philosophy	Metaphysics
On the Intellect	Epistemology and logic
On the Soul	Psychology and metaphysics
On the Use of Indian Numerals	Mathematics
On Rays	Physics and optics

Features of His Works

1. Harmony Between Philosophy and Religion
Al-Kindī emphasised that philosophy and Islam seek the same truth.
2. Rational Inquiry
He promoted the use of reason and logic in understanding the world.
3. Scientific Approach
His writings encouraged observation and intellectual investigation.

Areas of Al-Kindī's Scholarship



1.5 Views on Metaphysics and Ethics

Al-Kindī's wide-ranging scholarship was not simply a collection of studies in different subjects. His works reflected a broader attempt to

understand truth, existence, and human well-being through reason while remaining committed to Islamic beliefs. Let us now examine two important dimensions of his thought: metaphysics and ethics.

1.5.1 Al-Kindī's Metaphysical Views

Al-Kindī believed in the absolute unity of Allah (*tawḥīd*) and argued that Allah is the ultimate cause of all existence. He maintained that the universe is created and dependent upon Allah. His major metaphysical ideas include that Allah is the First Cause, the universe has a beginning, the soul is spiritual and immortal, and truth can be reached through reason and revelation. He was influenced by Greek philosophy but carefully adapted philosophical concepts to fit Islamic teachings (Leaman, 1999).

Think About This

If everything in the universe is dependent on something else for its existence, what question might a philosopher ask about the ultimate source of existence?

A philosopher may ask whether there must be a first or ultimate cause that does not depend on anything else for its existence. For Al-Kindī, this leads to the recognition of Allah as the First Cause.

1.5.2 Al-Kindī's Ethical Views

Al-Kindī believed that ethics should guide humans toward happiness and spiritual perfection. He emphasised moderation, wisdom, self-discipline, and moral purification. According to Al-Kindī, true happiness comes from intellectual and spiritual development rather than material pleasures.

Table 1.2: Al-Kindī's Views on Metaphysics and Ethics

Metaphysics	Ethics
Allah as First Cause	Importance of moral character
Creation of the universe	Moderation and self-control
Immortality of the soul	Pursuit of wisdom
Harmony of reason and revelation	Spiritual happiness

Pause and Reflect

A student becomes unhappy because she does not have the material possessions enjoyed by her classmates. Based on Al-Kindī's ethical ideas, what approach would help her deal with this situation?

Al-Kindī would encourage the student to develop self-discipline, moderation, and intellectual and spiritual development rather than allowing material possessions to determine her happiness.

Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B.

Column A	Column B
1. Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī	A. House of Wisdom
2. Kūfah	B. Full name of Al-Kindī
3. Bayt al-Ḥikmah	C. Place of birth
4. Translation Movement	D. Greek works translate Arabic
5. 873 CE	E. Approximate year of deat

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

6. Al-Kindī is commonly known as the:
A. Father of Modern Science
B. Father of Islamic Philosophy
C. Founder of Sufism
D. Father of Sociology

7. Which work of Al-Kindī deals with metaphysics?
A. On the Soul
B. On Rays
C. On First Philosophy
D. On Music

8. Al-Kindī contributed greatly to the Abbasid _____ movement.
A. Political
B. Translation
C. Military
D. Agricultural

9. Which field was NOT associated with Al-Kindī's scholarship?
A. Astronomy
B. Medicine
C. Mathematics
D. Agriculture

10. Al-Kindī encouraged the use of _____ in understanding reality.
A. Mythology
B. Superstition

C. Reason and logic D. Tribal customs
Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word: **11.** Al-Kindī believed that Allah is the _____ Cause of all existence. **12.** According to Al-Kindī, the soul is spiritual and _____. **13.** Al-Kindī taught that true happiness comes from spiritual and _____ development. **13.** One important ethical principle emphasised by Al-Kindī is _____. **15.** Al-Kindī believed that philosophy and _____ complement one another.



1.6 Summary

You have now followed Al-Kindī from his intellectual beginnings in Abbasid Baghdad to his contributions to philosophy, science and ethics. Before moving on, pause to bring the main ideas together. This unit examined Al-Kindī, one of the earliest major philosophers in the Islamic intellectual tradition. It explored his background in Abbasid Baghdad, his involvement in the translation movement, and his contributions to philosophy, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, logic and ethics. Al-Kindī engaged critically with Greek philosophical ideas and sought to demonstrate that rational inquiry and Islamic teachings could contribute to the search for truth.

The unit also examined selected works associated with Al-Kindī and identified major features of his philosophical approach, including rational inquiry and the relationship between philosophy and religion. His metaphysical thought emphasised Allah as the First Cause, the created nature of the universe and the spiritual nature of the soul. His ethical thought emphasised moderation, wisdom, self-discipline and the pursuit of intellectual and spiritual happiness.

Overall, Al-Kindī's contributions helped establish philosophical inquiry within the Islamic intellectual tradition and influenced later Muslim philosophers. His work illustrates the interaction of **reason, revelation and intellectual engagement** in the development of Islamic philosophy.



1.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

Leaman, O. (1999). *An introduction to classical Islamic philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*. State University of New York Press.

Sharif, M. M. (Ed.). (1963). *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Otto Harrassowitz.

**1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):**

1. B
2. C
3. A
4. D
5. E

6. B
7. C
8. B
9. D
10. C

11. First
12. immortal
13. intellectual
14. moderation
15. revelation

Unit 2 Al-Farabi and the Ideal State

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Learning Outcomes
2.3 Biography of Al-Fārābī
2.3.1 His Early Life, Education and Intellectual Career
2.3.2 His Death
2.4 His Political Philosophy
2.5 Logic and Science
2.5.1 His Contributions to Logic
2.5.2 His Views on Science
2.6 Ethics
2.7 Summary
2.8 References/Further Readings
2.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



2.1 Introduction

From the previous unit, you have seen how Islamic philosophy developed through engagement with questions of knowledge, reason and human existence. In this unit, we turn to one of its most influential thinkers, Al-Fārābī, who explored these questions in relation to society, leadership and human happiness. Often called the "Second Teacher" after Aristotle, Al-Fārābī made significant contributions to philosophy, logic, political thought, ethics and science.

One of his most important works, *Al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* (The Virtuous City), presents his vision of an ideal society in which human beings cooperate to attain true happiness and perfection. He emphasised justice, knowledge, moral leadership and spiritual and intellectual development, while also identifying societies that fail to pursue these ideals. His political philosophy was influenced by Greek thought, particularly Plato, but he adapted these ideas within an Islamic intellectual context.

As you study this unit, you will examine Al-Fārābī's life and intellectual career, his political philosophy and concept of the ideal state, his contributions to logic and science, and his ethical ideas. You will also consider why his ideas about leadership, knowledge, virtue and social organisation remain important to the study of Islamic philosophy.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the major events in the life and intellectual career of Al-Fārābī;
- explain Al-Fārābī's concept of the virtuous or ideal state;
- identify the major characteristics of the virtuous society and the qualities of the ideal ruler;
- explain Al-Fārābī's contributions to logic and his classification of the sciences;
- describe the major ethical principles in Al-Fārābī's philosophy; and
- discuss the influence and continuing significance of Al-Fārābī's philosophical ideas.

2.3 Biography of Al-Fārābī

Al-Fārābī was one of the greatest philosophers in Islamic intellectual history and an important contributor to Islamic philosophy. He is widely known as the "Second Teacher" after Aristotle because of his extensive contributions to philosophy, logic, political theory, ethics, and science (Fakhry, 2004). Al-Fārābī's intellectual background helps us understand why questions of knowledge, reason, society, and human happiness became central to his philosophy. We can now examine how these concerns shaped his ideas about political organisation and leadership.

2.3.1 His Early Life, Education and Intellectual Career

Al-Fārābī's full name was Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī. He was born around 872 CE in Farab (present-day Kazakhstan). He later travelled to major intellectual centres such as Baghdad, where he studied logic, philosophy, mathematics, music, language, and science. Baghdad during this period was a centre of scholarship and philosophical learning under the Abbasid caliphate. Al-Fārābī became famous for his mastery of Aristotelian logic and political philosophy. He sought to harmonise Greek philosophy with Islamic teachings and contributed greatly to the development of Islamic philosophical thought. He wrote numerous books on logic, political philosophy, ethics, metaphysics, and music theory.

2.3.2 His Death

Al-Fārābī died around 950 CE in Damascus. His works later influenced philosophers such as Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd.

2.4 His Political Philosophy

Al-Fārābī's political philosophy focused on the concept of the ideal society and virtuous leadership. His most famous political work is *Al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* (The Virtuous City), where he discussed the qualities of an ideal ruler and the structure of a successful society (Leaman, 1999). His discussion on the structure of a society centred on:

The following infographic summarises how Al-Fārābī connects virtuous leadership, social cooperation and moral development to the achievement of true happiness. Study the relationships among the elements before continuing with the detailed discussion.

1. **The Virtuous City:** According to Al-Fārābī, human beings are social by nature and require cooperation to achieve happiness and perfection.
2. **Characteristics of the Virtuous City**

- Justice
- Cooperation
- Moral leadership
- Pursuit of knowledge
- Spiritual and intellectual development

3. **The Ideal Ruler:** Al-Fārābī believed the ruler should possess:

- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Justice
- Good moral character

The ruler guides society toward virtue and happiness.

4. **Classification of Societies:** Al-Fārābī classified societies into:

- Virtuous societies
- Ignorant societies
- Corrupt societies

Only the virtuous society can achieve true happiness.

Table 2.1: Types of Societies According to Al-Fārābī

Type of Society	Characteristics
Virtuous Society	Justice and moral guidance
Ignorant Society	Lack of true knowledge
Corrupt Society	Moral and political decay

Pause and Reflect
Imagine that you are selecting a leader for a community. Which two qualities would you consider most important among wisdom, knowledge, justice and good moral character? Explain briefly why you selected them.

Possible Answer

There is no single correct combination, responded is properly justified. For example, a learner may select wisdom and justice, arguing that a leader needs wisdom to make sound decisions and justice to treat members of society fairly. The important point is that Al-Fārābī regarded moral and intellectual qualities as essential to effective leadership.

2.5 Logic and Science

Al-Fārābī made important contributions to logic and science. He believed logic is essential for correct thinking and accurate understanding. His works helped develop logical reasoning in Islamic philosophy (Nasr, 2006).

2.5.1 His Contributions to Logic

Al-Fārābī explained Aristotelian logic, organised branches of logic, emphasised critical thinking, and promoted rational analysis. He considered logic a tool for distinguishing truth from falsehood. In this sense, logic was not merely a theoretical subject for Al-Fārābī; it provided a method for organising thought, evaluating arguments, and avoiding errors in reasoning.

2.5.2 His Views on Science

Al-Fārābī supported scientific inquiry and classified sciences into different branches such as mathematics, physics, metaphysics, political science, and linguistics.

2.6 Ethics

Al-Fārābī's idea of the ideal society cannot be separated from his understanding of ethics. A society cannot become virtuous simply through good political structures; its members must also develop the virtues needed to live good and purposeful lives. Ethics occupied an important place in Al-Fārābī's philosophy. He believed that the ultimate goal of human life is happiness achieved through virtue, wisdom, and moral conduct. Major ethical principles include:

1. **Happiness:** True happiness is spiritual and intellectual rather than material.
2. **Virtue:** Moral virtues help individuals and societies achieve perfection.
3. **Moderation:** Balance and self-control are essential for ethical living.
4. **Education:** Ethical behaviour can be developed through proper education and training.

Table 2.1: Ethical Values in Al-Fārābī's Philosophy

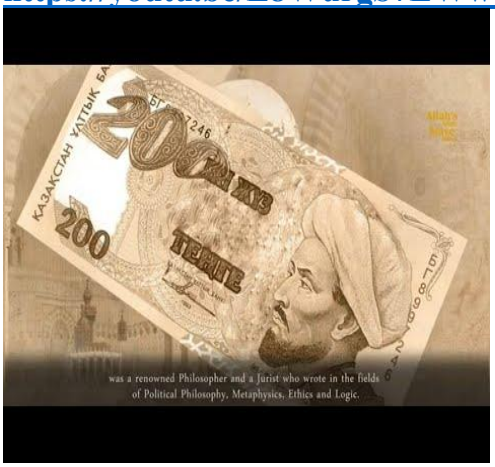
Value	Meaning
Wisdom	Proper understanding
Justice	Fair treatment
Moderation	Avoidance of excess
Virtue	Moral excellence

Watch and Learn

Before proceeding, watch the short video below for a visual introduction to

Al-Farabi. You may access it through the embedded player, the QR code, or the web link.

https://youtu.be/L8WurgS7EWw?si=4fHHa4dzk2sjIH7u



Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Al-Fārābī is known as the:
A. First Scientist
B. Second Teacher
C. Father of Medicine
D. Founder of *Kalām*

2. Al-Fārābī was born in:
A. Baghdad
B. Damascus
C. Farab
D. Cairo

3. Which philosopher greatly influenced Al-Fārābī?
A. Socrates
B. Aristotle
C. Descartes
D. Kant

4. Al-Fārābī died around:
A. 750 CE
B. 872 CE
C. 950 CE
D. 1050 CE

5. Which city was a major centre of learning for Al-Fārābī?
A. Makkah
B. Baghdad
C. Madinah
D. Cordoba

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

6. Al-Fārābī's famous political work is called _____.

7. According to Al-Fārābī, human beings are _____ by nature.

8. Al-Fārābī considered _____ a tool for distinguishing truth from falsehood.

9. The ideal ruler according to Al-Fārābī should possess wisdom and _____.

10. Al-Fārābī classified sciences into branches such as mathematics and _____.

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B.

Column A	Column B
11. Happiness	A. Moral excellence
12. Virtue	B. Spiritual fulfillment
13. Moderation	C. Avoidance of excess
14. Wisdom	D. Proper understanding
15. Justice	E. Fair treatment

2.7 Summary

In this unit, you have examined the life and intellectual contributions of Al-Fārābī, one of the most influential philosophers in Islamic intellectual history. You learnt about his political philosophy, particularly his concept of the virtuous city, in which human beings cooperate under wise, just, and morally upright leadership to attain true happiness and perfection.

You also examined Al-Fārābī's contributions to logic and science. He regarded logic as an important means of organising thought and distinguishing truth from falsehood, while his classification of the sciences reflected his broad intellectual interests. His ethical philosophy emphasised happiness, virtue, wisdom, justice, moderation and education. Overall, Al-Fārābī connected knowledge, ethical conduct, leadership and social organisation. His ideas contributed to the development of Islamic philosophy and influenced later Muslim philosophers. His thought therefore provides an important basis for understanding philosophical discussions of leadership, society, knowledge and human happiness.

2.8 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

Leaman, O. (1999). *An introduction to classical Islamic philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*. State University of New York Press.

Sharif, M. M. (Ed.). (1963). *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Otto Harrassowitz.

**2.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):**

1. B
2. C
3. B
4. C
5. B

6. *Al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*
7. social
8. logic
9. justice
10. philosophy

1 1 B
12 A
13 C
14 D
15 E

Unit 3 Ibn Sīnā and the Philosophical Synthesis

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Learning Outcomes
3.3 Biography of Ibn Sīnā
3.3.1 Early Life, Education, Career and Intellectual Development
3.3.2 His Philosophical Influence and Death
3.4 Essence and existence
3.4.1 Meaning of Essence and Existence
3.4.2 Necessary and Contingent Beings
3.5 Psychology
3.5.1.1 Concept of the Soul
3.5.1.2The Floating Man Argument
3.6 Proof of God
3.6.1.1Argument from Contingency
3.6.1.2Characteristics of the Necessary Being
3.7 Influence on Europe
3.8 Summary
3.9 References/Further Readings
3.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



3.1 Introduction

What makes something exist? How do we know that we exist? And can human reason help us understand the existence of God? These are some of the questions that occupied Ibn Sīnā, one of the most influential philosophers, physicians, and scientists in Islamic intellectual history. Known in the West as Avicenna, Ibn Sīnā developed a comprehensive philosophical system by engaging with Greek philosophy, particularly the works of Aristotle and Neoplatonic thinkers, while working within an Islamic intellectual context.

Ibn Sīnā is particularly known for his distinction between essence and existence, his discussions of the soul and consciousness, and his argument for the existence of the Necessary Being. His major works, including *Al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb* (The Canon of Medicine) and *Al-Shifāʾ* (The Book of Healing), demonstrate the breadth of his intellectual interests. His ideas later influenced Islamic philosophers as well as scholars in medieval Europe.

In this unit, you will examine Ibn Sīnā's life and intellectual development, his views on essence and existence, his understanding of the soul, his argument from contingency and his influence on Europe. As you

progress, notice how his ideas about existence, knowledge and human consciousness are connected to his broader attempt to understand reality through reason and philosophical inquiry.



3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the major events in the life and intellectual development of Ibn Sīnā
- explain Ibn Sīnā's distinction between essence and existence
- distinguish between necessary and contingent beings in Ibn Sīnā's philosophy
- explain Ibn Sīnā's views on the soul and the Floating Man argument
- describe Ibn Sīnā's argument from contingency for the existence of the Necessary Being; and
- discuss Ibn Sīnā's contributions to philosophy and medicine and his influence on European intellectual thought.



3.3 Biography of Ibn Sīnā

Ibn Sīnā, known in the Latin West as Avicenna, was one of the greatest scholars in the history of Islamic philosophy. He was a philosopher, physician, scientist, logician, and theologian whose contributions greatly influenced both the Muslim world and medieval Europe. Ibn Sīnā is especially remembered for his works in philosophy and medicine, which combined rational inquiry with Islamic intellectual traditions (Fakhry, 2004).

3.3.1 Early Life, Education, Career and Intellectual Development

Ibn Sīnā's full name was Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sīnā. He was born in 980 CE near Bukhara in present-day Uzbekistan, which was then part of the Sāmānid Empire. His father was an educated government official who ensured that Ibn Sīnā received a quality education from an early age. By his teenage years, Ibn Sīnā had already mastered several disciplines, including Qurʾānic studies, logic, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, and theology. He was known for his exceptional intelligence and strong memory. According to historical accounts, he completed the study of medicine at a young age and soon became a respected physician (Nasr, 2006).

Ibn Sīnā gained fame after successfully treating a Sāmānid ruler, which granted him access to the royal library containing numerous scholarly works. This opportunity expanded his intellectual development and

enabled him to study Greek philosophy, especially the works of Aristotle and Neoplatonic thinkers. Throughout his life, Ibn Sīnā travelled to different cities due to political instability. During these travels, he served as a physician, teacher, scholar, and political adviser. Despite political challenges, he continued writing and teaching extensively. Ibn Sīnā wrote more than 200 works covering fields such as philosophy, medicine, logic, psychology, ethics, astronomy, and mathematics. His most famous works include *al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb* (The Canon of Medicine) and a*l-Shifāʾ* (The Book of Healing). These works became highly influential in both Islamic and European intellectual traditions.

3.3.2 His Philosophical Influence and Death

Ibn Sīnā developed a comprehensive philosophical system that harmonised Islamic teachings with rational philosophy. His discussions on the Necessary Being, the soul, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics became central topics in later Islamic philosophy. His works influenced later Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Rushd and theologians, as well as medieval European scholars including Thomas Aquinas.

Ibn Sīnā died in 1037 CE in Hamadan, Persia (modern-day Iran). Although his life was relatively short, his intellectual legacy remained influential for centuries in philosophy, medicine, theology, and science. Ibn Sīnā's wide-ranging intellectual career provides the background for understanding his philosophical system. One of the central questions in that system concerns existence itself: what does it mean for something to exist, and what is the relationship between what a thing is and the fact that it exists? We now turn to his distinction between essence and existence.

Table 3.1: Important Facts About Ibn Sīnā

Aspect	**Details**
Full Name	Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sīnā
Birth	980 CE near Bukhara
Known As	Avicenna
Major Fields	Philosophy, medicine, logic
Famous Works	*Al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb*, *Al-Shifāʾ*
Death	1037 CE in Hamadan

In summary, Ibn Sina was one of the most remarkable intellectual figures in Islamic civilisation. Through his contributions to philosophy, medicine, science, and theology, he established a comprehensive intellectual system that combined rational inquiry with Islamic thought. His writings influenced generations of Muslim and Western scholars and continue to be studied in contemporary philosophy and history of science.

3.4 Essence and Existence

One of the most important philosophical contributions of Ibn Sīnā was his distinction between essence and existence. This theory became central to Islamic philosophy and later influenced medieval European philosophy (Fakhry, 2004).

3.4.1 Meaning of Essence and Existence

Essence (*māhiyyah*) refers to the nature or definition of a thing — what a thing truly is. For example, the essence of a human being is rationality and humanity, and the essence of a tree is its nature as a living plant. Existence (*wujūd*), on the other hand, refers to the actual reality or being of a thing. A thing may be understood in the mind, but it only truly exists when it has actual reality. Ibn Sīnā argued that essence and existence are separate in created beings; a thing's essence does not necessarily guarantee its existence, and only Allah possesses necessary existence.

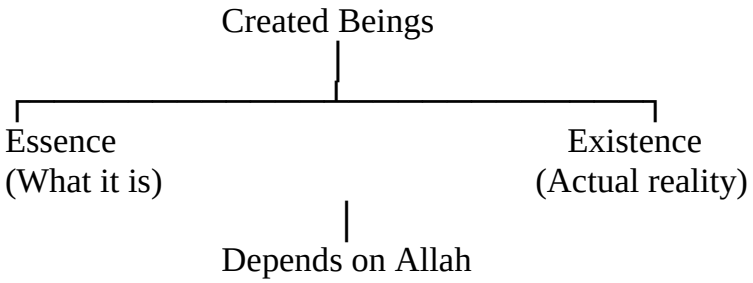
3.4.2 Necessary and Contingent Beings

Table 3.2:

Type of Being	**Description**
Necessary Being	Exists by itself and cannot fail to exist
Contingent Being	Depends on another cause for existence

According to Ibn Sīnā, Allah alone is the Necessary Being, while all creation is contingent.

Essence and Existence



3.5 Psychology

Ibn Sīnā made important contributions to psychology by studying the soul, human perception, intellect, and consciousness. His psychological theories combined philosophy, medicine, and spirituality (Leaman, 1999).

3.5.1 Concept of the Soul

Ibn Sīnā believed that the soul is spiritual and immaterial; the soul survives after death, and human beings possess rational faculties that distinguish them from animals. He also believed in faculties of the soul and divided the soul into different faculties:

1. **Vegetative Faculty:** Responsible for growth and nutrition.
2. **Animal Faculty:** Responsible for movement and sensation.
3. **Rational Faculty:** Responsible for thinking and reasoning.

Beyond describing the faculties of the soul, Ibn Sīnā was also interested in a deeper question: how can a person be aware of the self? His famous Floating Man argument was designed to explore this question.

3.5.2 The Floating Man Argument

Ibn Sīnā proposed the famous "Floating Man" thought experiment to prove self-awareness. He argued that a person suspended in space without sensory contact would still be aware of his own existence.

Table 3.3: Faculties of the Soul

Faculty	Function
Vegetative	Growth and nutrition
Animal	Sensation and movement
Rational	Thinking and reasoning

Pause and Reflect

Imagine that you suddenly became aware of yourself without seeing your body, hearing any sound, or touching anything around you. What, if anything, would convince you that you exist?

Possible Answer:

Ibn Sīnā would argue that awareness of one's own existence does not necessarily depend on sensory contact with the external world. The thought experiment is intended to show that self-awareness is possible even when sensory information is absent.

3.6 Proof of God

You have seen that Ibn Sīnā distinguishes between necessary and contingent beings. This distinction is not merely a classification of things that exist; it forms the basis of one of his most important arguments for the existence of Allah. Ibn Sīnā developed philosophical arguments to

prove the existence of Allah. His proof is based mainly on the distinction between necessary and contingent beings (Nasr, 2006).

3.6.1 Argument from Contingency

According to Ibn Sīnā, everything in the universe is contingent; contingent beings require causes; an infinite chain of causes is impossible; therefore, there must be a Necessary Being, and this Necessary Being is Allah.

The argument from contingency brings together several ideas you have encountered in this unit. Study the infographic below to see how Ibn Sīnā moves from the distinction between contingent and necessary beings to his argument for the existence of Allah.

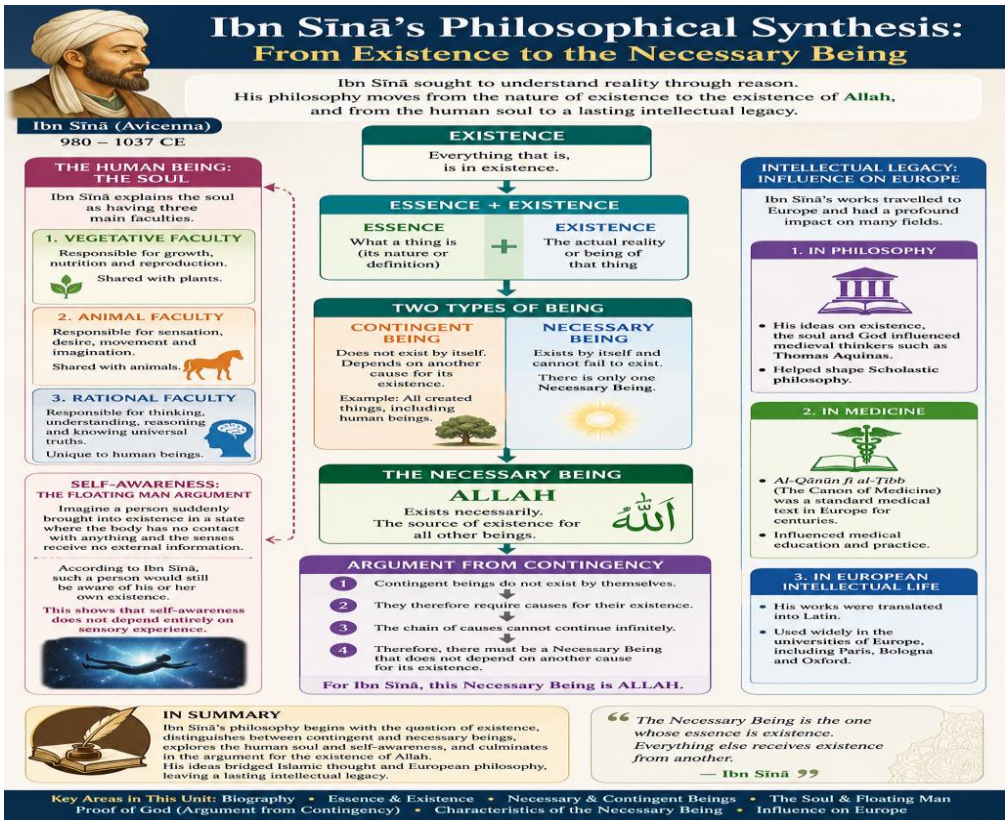


Figure 3.1 Ibn Sīnā's Philosophical Synthesis: From Existence to the Necessary Being
Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026

3.6.2 Characteristics of the Necessary Being

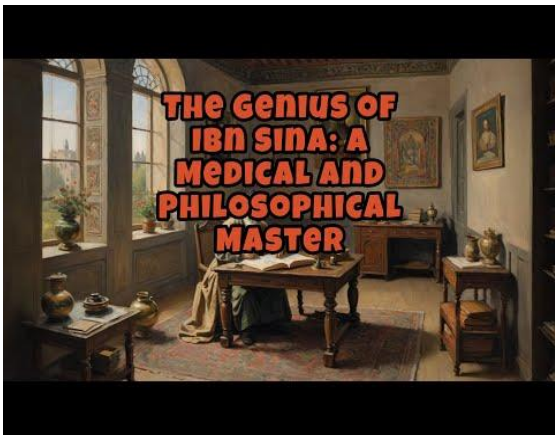
Ibn Sīnā argued that the Necessary Being is Eternal, Perfect, has no beginning or end, and is independent of all things. The importance of his proof greatly influenced Islamic theology, medieval philosophy, and Christian scholasticism.

3.7 His Influence on Europe

Ibn Sīnā's works had a profound influence on medieval European philosophy, science, and medicine. His writings were translated into Latin and studied extensively in European universities (Sharif, 1963). His influences are as follows:

1. **Influence on Philosophy:** European scholars adopted many of his ideas concerning metaphysics, logic, psychology, and theology. His distinction between essence and existence influenced scholastic philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas.
2. **Influence on Medicine:** His medical encyclopedia *Al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb* remained an important textbook in Europe for centuries.
3. **Influence on Education:** His works became standard references in universities, medical schools, and philosophical studies.

Watch the short video below for a visual introduction to Ibn Sīnā. You may access it through the embedded player, the QR code, or the web link. **https://youtu.be/qh9nCk9zED0?si=9gRV41174x7xyhEC**



Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Ibn Sīnā is also known in the West as:
A. Averroes
B. Avicenna
C. Alfarabius
D. Algazel

2. Ibn Sīnā was born around:
A. 750 CE
B. 872 CE
C. 980 CE
D. 1100 CE

3. Essence refers to:
A. Physical appearance
B. Actual reality
C. The nature of a thing
D. Political authority

4. According to Ibn Sīnā, Allah is the:
A. Contingent Being
B. Necessary Being
C. Material Being
D. Symbolic Being

5. Which of the following is one of Ibn Sīnā's famous works?
A. *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*
B. *Al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*
C. *Al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb*
D. *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

6. Ibn Sīnā's famous thought experiment is called the _____ Man argument.
7. The rational faculty of the soul is responsible for _____ and reasoning.
8. According to Ibn Sīnā, Allah is the _____ Being.
9. Contingent beings require _____ for their existence.
10. Ibn Sīnā believed that the soul is spiritual and _____.

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B.

Column A	Column B
11. *Al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb*	A. Medical textbook
12. Thomas Aquinas	B. Influenced by Ibn Sīnā
13. Metaphysics	C. Study of existence
14. Europe	D. Translation of Ibn Sīnā's works
15. Scholasticism	E. Medieval intellectual tradition

16. Which of the following best illustrates Ibn Sīnā's distinction between a necessary being and a contingent being?
A. A contingent being exists independently of all causes.
B. A necessary being depends on another being for its existence.
C. A contingent being depends on another cause for its existence.
D. A necessary being can either exist or not exist.



3.8 Summary

In this unit, you have examined the life and philosophical contributions of Ibn Sīnā, one of the most influential thinkers in Islamic intellectual history. You learnt about his distinction between essence and existence and his classification of beings as necessary or contingent. According to Ibn Sīnā, Allah is the Necessary Being, while created beings are contingent and depend on causes for their existence.

You also examined Ibn Sīnā's psychology, particularly his understanding of the soul and its vegetative, animal, and rational faculties. His Floating Man argument illustrates his discussion of self-awareness and the relationship between consciousness and sensory experience. You further studied his argument from contingency for the existence of the Necessary Being.

Finally, you considered Ibn Sīnā's influence on philosophy, medicine, and intellectual life in medieval Europe. His works contributed significantly to the development of Islamic philosophy and left a lasting mark on world intellectual history.



3.9 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

Leaman, O. (1999). *An introduction to classical Islamic philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*. State University of New York Press.

Sharif, M. M. (Ed.). (1963). *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Otto Harrassowitz.

**3.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):**

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. B
5. C

6. Floating
7. thinking
8. Necessary
9. causes
10. immaterial

11. A
12. B
13. C
14. D
15. E
16. C

Unit 4 Al-Ghazali and the Critique of Philosophy

Unit Structure

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Learning Outcomes
4.3 Biography of Al-Ghazālī
  4.3.1 Education, Intellectual Development and Appointment
  4.3.2 His Major Works
  4.3.3 His Influence, Legacy and Death
4.4 *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*
4.5 Sufism and philosophy
4.6 Ethics and epistemology
4.7 Summary
4.8 References/Further Readings
4.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



4.1 Introduction

In the previous unit, you examined how Ibn Sīnā developed a comprehensive philosophical system that brought together reason, metaphysics and Islamic thought. In this unit, we turn to Al-Ghazālī, one of the most influential scholars in Islamic intellectual history, who critically examined some of the philosophical ideas developed by thinkers such as Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Known as *Ḥujjat al-Islām* (Proof of Islam), Al-Ghazālī valued reason and logic but questioned the ability of human reason to establish certain truths without the guidance of revelation.

His most famous critique appears in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), where he challenged philosophical views concerning the eternity of the universe, Allah's knowledge of particulars, and bodily resurrection. However, Al-Ghazālī did not simply reject intellectual inquiry. His own intellectual journey led him towards Sufism, where he emphasised spiritual purification and inner certainty.
In this unit, you will examine Al-Ghazālī's life, critique of philosophy, understanding of Sufism, and contributions to ethics and epistemology. You will also consider how he sought to relate reason, revelation, and spiritual experience in the search for true knowledge.



4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the major events in the life and intellectual development of Al-Ghazālī;
- explain the major philosophical issues criticised by Al-Ghazālī in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*;
- discuss Al-Ghazālī's views on the relationship between philosophy, reason and revelation;
- explain the role of Sufism and spiritual experience in Al-Ghazālī's search for certainty;
- identify the major ethical principles and sources of knowledge discussed by Al-Ghazālī; and
- discuss the influence of Al-Ghazālī's ideas on Islamic intellectual thought.



4.3 Biography of Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazālī's full name was Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī al-Ṭūsī. He was born in 1058 CE in Ṭūs, in present-day Iran. His father was a simple and pious man who encouraged religious learning. After the death of his father, Al-Ghazālī and his brother were placed under the care of a religious scholar who supervised their education. From an early age, Al-Ghazālī showed remarkable intelligence and dedication to learning. He studied Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*kalām*), logic, philosophy, and Sufism.

4.3.1 Education, Intellectual Development and Appointment

Al-Ghazālī later travelled to Nishapur, one of the major intellectual centres of the Muslim world, where he studied under the famous theologian Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī. Under his teacher, Al-Ghazālī mastered Shāfiʿī jurisprudence, Ashʿarite theology, logic and philosophy. After the death of al-Juwaynī, Al-Ghazālī gained recognition for his exceptional scholarship and debating skills. Due to his intellectual reputation, Al-Ghazālī was appointed as a professor at the famous Niẓāmiyyah College in Baghdad by the Seljuk vizier Niẓām al-Mulk. Baghdad at that time was one of the greatest centres of learning in the Islamic world. At the Niẓāmiyyah, Al-Ghazālī taught Islamic law, theology, logic and philosophy. His lectures attracted many students and scholars.

Despite his success and fame, Al-Ghazālī experienced a spiritual and intellectual crisis. He became dissatisfied with worldly status and questioned the certainty of knowledge obtained solely through rational inquiry. As a result, he left Baghdad, abandoned his prestigious position, and travelled for several years in search of spiritual purification. During this period, he devoted himself to worship, reflection, and Sufi practices.

This experience deeply influenced his later writings.

4.3.2 His Major Works

Al-Ghazālī authored numerous influential books covering theology, jurisprudence, ethics, philosophy, and spirituality. The following are his important works, amongst others:

Table 4.1:

Work	**Subject Area**
Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn	Spirituality and ethics
Tahāfut al-Falāsifah	Critique of philosophy
Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl	Spiritual autobiography
Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah	Explanation of philosophy

As a critique of philosophy, Al-Ghazālī, in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), criticised certain ideas of Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. He opposed philosophical views concerning the eternity of the universe, denial of bodily resurrection, and Allah's knowledge of particulars. However, Al-Ghazālī accepted logic and rational methods that supported Islamic teachings.

4.3.3 His Influence, Legacy and Death

Al-Ghazālī greatly influenced Islamic theology, Sufism, Islamic jurisprudence, ethics and education. His writings shaped Sunni Islamic thought and influenced later Muslim scholars as well as medieval European thinkers. Al-Ghazali was one of the most remarkable scholars in Islamic history. Through his mastery of theology, philosophy, jurisprudence, and spirituality, he contributed significantly to Islamic intellectual development. His critique of philosophy, combined with his emphasis on spirituality and ethics, helped shape Sunni Islamic thought and established a balance between reason, revelation, and spiritual experience. Al-Ghazālī died in 1111 CE in Ṭūs. His intellectual and spiritual legacy continues to influence Islamic scholarship throughout the world.

Stages in Al-Ghazālī's Intellectual Journey

Early Education
|
Study under al-Juwaynī
|
Teaching in Baghdad
|
Spiritual Crisis
|
Sufi Retreat
|
Major Scholarly Works

4.4 *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers)

One of the most important works of Al-Ghazālī is *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers). In this work, Al-Ghazālī critically examined certain philosophical doctrines promoted by Muslim philosophers such as Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Although he appreciated logic and rational inquiry, he argued that some philosophical conclusions contradicted Islamic teachings and revelation (Fakhry, 2004). The main purpose of *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* was to defend Islamic orthodoxy, criticise the metaphysical doctrines of the philosophers, demonstrate the limitations of human reason, and establish the superiority of revelation in matters beyond rational certainty. The following are the main philosophical issues criticised:

1. **Eternity of the Universe:** The philosophers argued that the universe is eternal. Al-Ghazālī rejected this idea and maintained that Allah created the universe in time.
2. **Allah's Knowledge:** Some philosophers claimed that Allah knows only universal realities and not particular events. Al-Ghazālī opposed this view and affirmed that Allah possesses complete knowledge of all things.
3. **Bodily Resurrection:** Al-Ghazālī criticised philosophers who denied bodily resurrection after death, arguing that resurrection is a fundamental Islamic belief.

Al-Ghazālī's use of logic: even though he criticised certain philosophical doctrines, he accepted logic**,** rational argumentation, and intellectual inquiry. He believed these methods were useful when guided by revelation (Leaman, 1999). This book had a major impact and influence on Islamic theology**,** philosophy**,** Sufism, and medieval intellectual debates**.** The work later inspired Ibn Rushd to write *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence) in defence of philosophy.

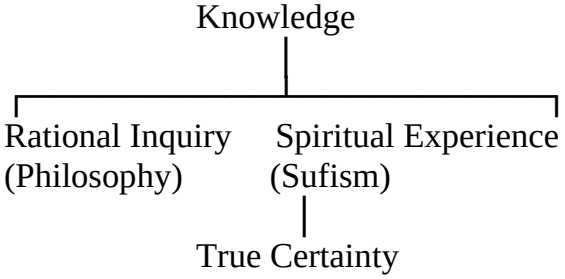
Table 4.2: Philosophical Issues Criticised by Al-Ghazālī

Issue	Philosophers' View	Al-Ghazālī's Position
Eternity of the world	Universe is eternal	Universe was created
Allah's knowledge	Knows universals only	Knows all particulars
Resurrection	Spiritual only	Bodily and spiritual

4.5 Sufism and Philosophy

Al-Ghazālī sought to harmonise spirituality and intellectual inquiry through the integration of Sufism and philosophy. After experiencing a spiritual crisis, he concluded that rational knowledge alone could not provide complete certainty or inner peace (Nasr, 2006). Al-Ghazālī's spiritual transformation began after leaving his teaching position in Baghdad and devoting himself to worship, meditation, asceticism, and spiritual purification. This experience strengthened his commitment to Sufism. Al-Ghazālī established a relationship between Sufism and philosophy since he believed that philosophy can help develop rational understanding; Sufism provides spiritual certainty and closeness to Allah, while true knowledge combines intellect and spiritual experience. He also criticised excessive rationalism, arguing that philosophers relied excessively on reason while neglecting revelation, spiritual purification, and inner experience. He emphasised that certain truths can only be attained through spiritual discipline and divine guidance. He also believed that Sufism is a path to certainty; according to Al-Ghazālī, intellectual knowledge alone is insufficient, spiritual experience leads to certainty (*yaqīn*), and purification of the heart is essential for understanding divine truths.

Al-Ghazālī's Integration of Knowledge



The following infographic brings together the central ideas you have studied so far. Observe how Al-Ghazālī distinguishes between the proper use of reason and philosophical claims that he considered inconsistent with revelation, and how his intellectual journey ultimately connects rational inquiry with spiritual experience in the search for certainty.



Figure 4.1 Al-Ghazālī and the Critique of Philosophy; Reason, Revelation and Certainty.
Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026.

4.6 Ethics and Epistemology

The following infographic brings together the central ideas you have studied so far. Observe how Al-Ghazālī distinguishes between the proper use of reason and philosophical claims that he considered inconsistent with revelation, and how his intellectual journey ultimately connects rational inquiry with spiritual experience in the search for certainty. Al-Ghazālī made significant contributions to ethics and epistemology. He believed that knowledge and moral conduct are closely connected and that true learning should transform human behaviour (Sharif, 1963). In ethics, Al-Ghazālī emphasised moral purification, sincerity, self-discipline, moderation, and justice. He believed that ethical behaviour leads to spiritual happiness and closeness to Allah. In epistemology, Al-Ghazālī studied the nature and sources of knowledge. He identified several sources like sense perception, reason, revelation, and spiritual intuition.

He argued that revelation and spiritual insight provide the highest level of certainty. He classified knowledge as follows:

Table 4.3: Classification of Knowledge

Type of Knowledge	**Source**
Sensory knowledge	Human senses
Rational knowledge	Reason and logic
Religious knowledge	Revelation
Spiritual knowledge	Mystical experience

Pause and Reflect

Think about a situation in which you learned something through personal observation and another situation in which you accepted something based on religious teaching. How were the two forms of knowledge different?

Possible Answer:

Knowledge gained through observation depends on sensory experience, while religious knowledge is based on revelation. Al-Ghazālī recognised different sources of knowledge but placed particular importance on revelation and spiritual insight in attaining certainty about divine matters. According to Al-Ghazālī, knowledge should lead to righteous action; true knowledge strengthens faith, and knowledge without morality is dangerous.

Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Al-Ghazālī was born in:
A. Baghdad
B. Damascus
C. Ṭūs
D. Cairo

2. Al-Ghazālī is famously known by the title:
A. Shaykh al-Raʾīs
B. Ḥujjat al-Islām
C. Al-Muʿallim al-Thānī
D. Imām al-Falāsifah

3. Which institution appointed Al-Ghazālī as a professor?
A. Bayt al-Ḥikmah
B. Al-Azhar
C. Niẓāmiyyah College
D. University of Cordoba

4. Which of the following is Al-Ghazālī's famous critique of philosophy?
A. *Al-Shifāʾ*
B. *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*
C. *Al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb*
D. *Al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*

5. Al-Ghazālī studied under which famous scholar in Nishapur?
A. Ibn Rushd
B. Al-Kindī
C. Al-Juwaynī
D. Ibn Khaldūn

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:
6. Al-Ghazālī's famous critique of philosophy is called *Tahāfut al-* _____.
7. Al-Ghazālī rejected the philosophical doctrine of the _____ of the universe.
8. According to Al-Ghazālī, true certainty can also be achieved through spiritual _____.
9. Al-Ghazālī left Baghdad because of a spiritual and intellectual _____.
10. Al-Ghazālī believed that philosophy should operate under the guidance of _____.

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B.

Column A	**Column B**
11. Sensory perception	A. Mystical experience
12. Rational knowledge	B. Human senses
13. Religious knowledge	C. Revelation
114. Spiritual knowledge	D. Reason and logic
5. Ethical behaviour	E. Spiritual happiness and closeness to Alla



4.7 Summary

In this unit, you have examined the life and intellectual contributions of Al-Ghazālī, one of the most influential scholars in Islamic intellectual history. You learnt about his critique of philosophy in *Tahāfut al-*

Falāsifah, particularly his objections to philosophical views concerning the eternity of the universe, Allah's knowledge of particulars and bodily resurrection. Although he criticised certain philosophical doctrines, Al-Ghazālī recognised the value of logic and rational inquiry when guided by revelation.

You also examined his intellectual and spiritual journey towards Sufism. He argued that rational knowledge alone could not provide complete certainty and emphasised spiritual purification and experience in the search for *yaqīn*. Finally, you explored his contributions to ethics and epistemology, including his views on moral conduct and different sources of knowledge. Al-Ghazālī's thought therefore connects reason, revelation, spirituality and ethical action in the search for true knowledge.



4.8 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Al-Ghazālī, A. Ḥ. M. (n.d.). *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. Dār al-Maʿrifah.

Al-Ghazālī, A. Ḥ. M. (2000). *Tahāfut al-falāsifah* (M. E. Marmura, Trans.). Brigham Young University Press.

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

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**4.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):**

1. C
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. C

1. Falāsifah
2. eternity
3. experience
4. crisis
5. revelation

1. B
2. D
3. C
4. A
5. E

Unit 5 Ibn Rushd and the Defence of Philosophy

Unit Structure

5.1 Introduction
5.2 Learning Outcomes
5.3 Biography of Ibn Rushd
5.3.1 Education, Intellectual Development, Career and Public Service
5.3.2 Major Works and Death
5.4 *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*
5.5 Reason and Faith
5.6 Commentary tradition
5.7 Summary
5.8 References/Further Readings
5.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



5.1 Introduction

In the previous unit, you examined Al-Ghazālī's critique of philosophy and his emphasis on revelation and spiritual certainty. This unit introduces Ibn Rushd, one of the most important philosophers of the Islamic intellectual tradition, who responded to that critique by defending philosophy and rational inquiry. Known in the West as Averroes, Ibn Rushd was also a jurist, physician and influential commentator on Aristotle.

Ibn Rushd argued that reason and revelation ultimately lead to the same truth when properly understood. In his famous work *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence), he responded to Al-Ghazālī's criticism of philosophers and defended the use of rational investigation in understanding religious truth. He also explored the relationship between reason and faith and contributed significantly to the interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy.

In this unit, you will examine Ibn Rushd's life and intellectual development, his response to Al-Ghazālī, his views on reason and faith, and his commentary tradition. You will also consider how his ideas influenced Islamic scholarship and medieval European thought.



5.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the major events in the life and intellectual development of Ibn Rushd;
- explain Ibn Rushd's response to Al-Ghazālī's critique of philosophy;
- discuss Ibn Rushd's views on the relationship between reason and revelation;
- explain the role of *taʾwīl* and rational inquiry in Ibn Rushd's thought;
- describe Ibn Rushd's contribution to the commentary tradition on Aristotle; and
- discuss the influence of Ibn Rushd on Islamic and medieval European intellectual traditions.



5.3 Biography of Ibn Rushd

Ibn Rushd, known in the Latin West as Averroes, was one of the greatest philosophers and intellectual figures in the history of Islamic philosophy. He was a philosopher, jurist, physician, theologian, and commentator whose works greatly influenced both the Muslim world and medieval Europe. Ibn Rushd is especially famous for defending philosophy and rational inquiry against criticisms raised by some theologians, particularly Al-Ghazali (Fakhry, 2004). Ibn Rushd's full name was Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Rushd. He was born in 1126 CE in Cordoba (Qurṭubah), in Muslim Spain (Al-Andalus). He came from a respected family of judges and legal scholars. His grandfather and father both served as chief judges, which exposed him to Islamic law and scholarship from an early age. He studied Islamic jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, medicine, mathematics, logic and astronomy. Cordoba during this period was an important intellectual centre where Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scholars interacted and exchanged ideas (Leaman, 1999).

5.3.1 Education, Intellectual Development, Career and Public Service

Ibn Rushd received a broad education in both religious and rational sciences. He was deeply influenced by the works of Aristotle and became one of the greatest commentators on Aristotelian philosophy. He believed that reason and revelation are compatible, philosophy helps humans understand divine truth and rational inquiry strengthens religious understanding. His intellectual mission focused on harmonising

philosophy with Islam. Ibn Rushd served in several important positions, including Judge (*Qāḍī*), royal physician, Scholar and teacher. He worked under the Almohad rulers of Muslim Spain and gained recognition for his scholarship and legal expertise.

5.3.2 Major Works and Death

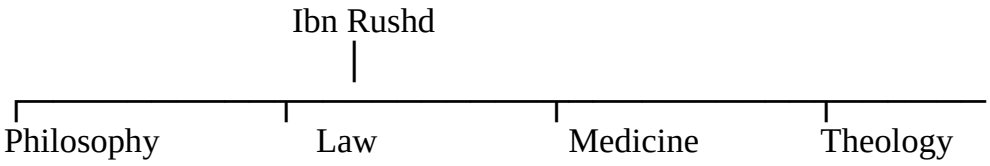
Ibn Rushd authored many important works in philosophy, medicine, theology, and law. Some of his most famous writings include:

Table 5.1:

Work	**Field**
Tahāfut al-Tahāfut	Philosophy
Bidāyat al-Mujtahid	Islamic law
Kulliyyāt fī al-Ṭibb	Medicine
Commentaries on Aristotle	Philosophy and logic

One of Ibn Rushd's greatest contributions was his defence of philosophy against theological criticism. In *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence), he responded to Al-Ghazālī's attack on philosophy. He argued that the Qurʾān encourages reflection and reasoning., truth obtained through revelation cannot contradict truth reached by reason and qualified scholars should engage in philosophical inquiry. Despite his intellectual achievements, Ibn Rushd later faced opposition from conservative groups who opposed philosophy. Some of his books were banned, and he was temporarily exiled by political authorities. However, his reputation was later restored, and his works continued to spread throughout the Islamic world and Europe. Ibn Rushd's writings were translated into Latin and Hebrew and became highly influential in medieval European universities. His commentaries on Aristotle greatly influenced Christian scholastic philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas. Ibn Rushd died in 1198 CE in Marrakesh, Morocco. His intellectual legacy remains significant in philosophy, law, theology, and science.

Major Areas of Ibn Rushd's Scholarship



Ibn Rushd was one of the most influential philosophers of the medieval Islamic world. Through his defence of philosophy, commentaries on Aristotle, and contributions to law and medicine, he helped shape both Islamic and European intellectual traditions. His efforts to harmonise reason and revelation remain an important part of philosophical and theological discussions today.

5.4 *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)

Ibn Rushd's broad intellectual training prepared him to engage with one of the central debates of Islamic philosophy: the relationship between reason and revelation. His most direct response to this debate came in *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, where he challenged Al-Ghazālī's criticism of the philosophers. One of the most important works of Ibn Rushd is *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence). In this work, Ibn Rushd defended philosophy and rational inquiry against the criticisms raised by Al-Ghazālī in his famous book *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) (Fakhry, 2004). Al-Ghazālī had criticised Muslim philosophers, particularly Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, for holding philosophical views that he believed contradicted Islamic teachings. Ibn Rushd wrote *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* in response, arguing that philosophy and Islam are compatible when philosophical arguments are properly understood and interpreted. The major arguments are discussed below:

1. **Harmony Between Religion and Philosophy:** Ibn Rushd argued that both philosophy and revelation seek truth.
2. **Importance of Rational Inquiry:** He maintained that the Qurʾān encourages reflection, reasoning, and intellectual investigation.
3. **Critique of Misinterpretation:** He believed some theological criticisms misunderstood the methods and goals of philosophy.

Tahāfut al-Tahāfut became one of the most influential philosophical works in Islamic intellectual history. It strengthened the position of rational philosophy within Islamic scholarship and later influenced medieval European thought (Leaman, 1999).

Table: Comparison Between Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd

The following table highlights the major differences between Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd in their approaches to philosophy, reason and religious truth.

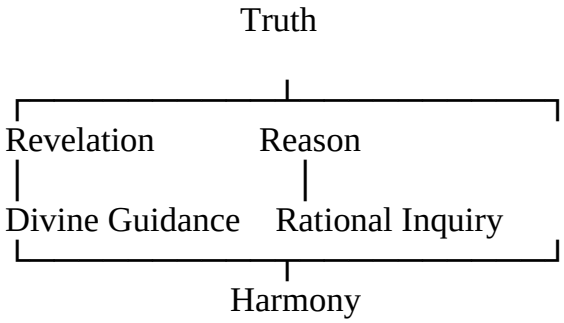
Table 5.2:

Issue	Al-Ghazālī	Ibn Rushd
Philosophy	Criticised some doctrines	Defended philosophy
Reason	Limited by revelation	Complementary to revelation
Metaphysics	Opposed some philosophical views	Supported rational interpretation
Goal	Protect Islamic belief	Harmonise reason and faith

5.5 Reason and Faith

Ibn Rushd strongly believed that reason and faith are not contradictory. According to him, both originate from Allah and therefore must ultimately agree (Nasr, 2006). He discussed the relationship between reason and revelation by explaining that revelation provides divine guidance, reason helps humans understand creation and truth, and proper interpretation removes apparent contradictions. He argued that philosophical inquiry is beneficial for qualified scholars capable of rational analysis. For interpretation of Scripture, he submitted that when literal interpretations of Scripture appear to conflict with reason, allegorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*) for deeper understanding is used. For the importance of rational thinking, Ibn Rushd emphasised critical thinking, logical analysis, intellectual reflection, and scientific inquiry. He believed these activities strengthen faith rather than weaken it.

Relationship Between Reason and Faith



Pause and Reflect

Imagine that a person encounters a religious statement that appears, at first sight, to conflict with a rational conclusion. According to Ibn Rushd's position, should a person immediately reject either reason or revelation? Why?

Possible Answer:

No. Ibn Rushd maintained that reason and revelation ultimately agree because both originate from Allah. Where an apparent conflict occurs, qualified scholars should interpret carefully to seek a deeper understanding rather than immediately rejecting either source.

5.6 Commentary Tradition

Ibn Rushd became famous for his extensive commentaries on the works of Aristotle. His commentaries played a major role in preserving and explaining Greek philosophy within the Islamic and European intellectual

traditions (Sharif, 1963). According to Ibn Rushd, types of commentaries include short commentaries, middle commentaries, and long commentaries. These works clarified difficult philosophical concepts and made Aristotelian philosophy more accessible. Accordingly, the commentary tradition was important because it preserved ancient philosophical knowledge, encouraged critical analysis, influenced Islamic scholarship, and contributed to European scholasticism.

Table 5.3: Features of Ibn Rushd's Commentary Tradition

Feature	Explanation
Preservation	Protected Greek philosophical texts
Explanation	Clarified difficult concepts
Interpretation	Connected philosophy with reason
Influence	Affected Islamic and European scholarship

You have now examined Ibn Rushd's response to Al-Ghazālī, his understanding of the relationship between reason and revelation, and his contribution to the commentary tradition. Study the infographic below to see how these ideas connect and how Ibn Rushd's defence of rational inquiry contributed to his wider intellectual legacy.

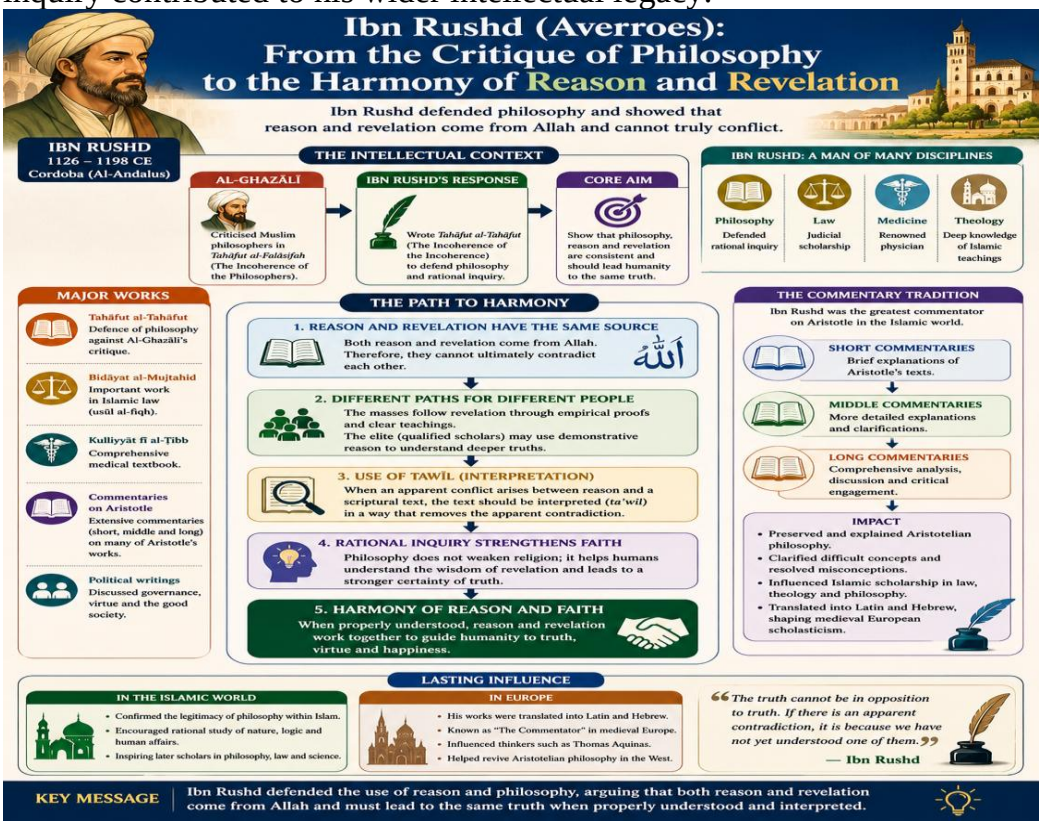


Figure 5.1: Ibn Rushd: From the Critique of Philosophy to the Harmony of Reason and Revelation

Source: Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026

Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Ibn Rushd is known in the West as:
A. Avicenna
B. Averroes
C. Algazel
D. Alfarabius

2. Ibn Rushd was born in:
A. Baghdad
B. Damascus
C. Cordoba
D. Cairo

3. Which philosopher greatly influenced Ibn Rushd?
A. Plato
B. Socrates
C. Aristotle
D. Descartes

4. Ibn Rushd wrote *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* mainly to defend:
A. Sufism
B. Poetry
C. Philosophy
D. Astronomy

5. Ibn Rushd died in:
A. 1037 CE
B. 950 CE
C. 1198 CE
D. 1258 CE

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B

Column A	Column B
6. *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*	A. Harmony between reason and faith
7. Al-Ghazālī	B. Critic of philosophy
8. Ibn Rushd	C. Defender of philosophy
9. Taʾwīl	D. Allegorical interpretation
10. Rational inquiry	E. Search for truth through reason

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

11. Ibn Rushd became famous for his commentaries on the works of _____.
12. The commentary tradition helped preserve ancient _____ knowledge.
13. Ibn Rushd wrote short, middle, and _____ commentaries.
14. Latin translations of Ibn Rushd's works influenced medieval _____ universities.
15. The commentary tradition encouraged critical _____ of philosophical ideas.



5.7 Summary

In this unit, you examined the life and intellectual contributions of Ibn Rushd, one of the most influential philosophers of the Islamic intellectual tradition. You learnt about his response to Al-Ghazālī in *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, where he defended philosophy and rational inquiry against criticisms of philosophical thought. Ibn Rushd maintained that reason and revelation ultimately seek the same truth and that apparent conflicts can be addressed through proper interpretation.

You also examined his views on reason and faith, including the role of *taʾwīl* and rational investigation in understanding religious truth. Finally, you explored Ibn Rushd's commentary tradition and its role in preserving and explaining Aristotelian philosophy. His works influenced Islamic scholarship and were later translated into Latin and Hebrew, contributing to medieval European philosophy and scholasticism.



5.8 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

Ibn Rushd. (2001). *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (S. Van Den Bergh, Trans.). Gibb Memorial Trust.

Leaman, O. (1999). *An introduction to classical Islamic philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

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Sharif, M. M. (Ed.). (1963). *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Otto Harrassowitz.

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy – Averroes (Ibn Rushd)
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy – Ibn Rushd (Averroes)

**5.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):**

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. C
5. C
6. A
7. B
8. C
9. D
10. E
11. Aristotle
12. philosophical
13. long
14. European
15. analysis

MODULE 3 THEMES AND CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

In the previous module, you explored major Muslim philosophers and their contributions to Islamic philosophical thought. You examined how thinkers such as Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd approached questions of reason, revelation, knowledge and human understanding. In this module, you will extend that discussion to the relationship between Islamic philosophy and science, examining how Muslim scholars approached the study of nature and the pursuit of knowledge.

Unit 1 Islamic Philosophy and Science

Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction
1.2 Learning Outcomes
1.3 Scientific tradition
1.3.1 Development of the Scientific Tradition
1.3.2 Characteristics of the Islamic Scientific Tradition
1.4 Philosophical underpinnings
1.5 Modern debates
1.6 Summary
1.7 References/Further Readings
1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



1.1 Introduction

What happens when the search for knowledge becomes both an intellectual pursuit and a spiritual responsibility? The relationship between Islamic philosophy and science represents an important achievement of Islamic civilisation. Muslim scholars regarded the study of nature as a means of reflecting on the wisdom and order of Allah's creation. Philosophy and scientific inquiry therefore developed alongside one another in fields such as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography and logic.

During the Abbasid period, particularly through the translation movement centred in Baghdad, Muslim scholars studied and expanded knowledge from Greek, Persian and Indian sources. Thinkers such as Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd and Al-Bīrūnī made significant contributions to philosophical and scientific knowledge. They emphasised reasoning, observation, experimentation and critical analysis.

In this unit, you will examine the development and characteristics of the Islamic scientific tradition, its philosophical foundations, and contemporary debates concerning science, religion, technology and ethics.



1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the relationship between Islamic philosophy and the development of science;
- describe the development and major characteristics of the Islamic scientific tradition;
- identify the contributions of selected Muslim philosophers and scientists;
- explain the philosophical principles that influenced scientific inquiry in Islamic civilisation;
- discuss the relationship between faith, reason and the study of nature; and
- examine contemporary debates concerning science, technology, ethics and Islamic thought.



1.3 Scientific Tradition

The scientific tradition in Islamic philosophy developed from the belief that the study of nature is a means of understanding the wisdom and power of Allah. Muslim scholars regarded scientific inquiry as an important intellectual and spiritual activity encouraged by the Qurʾān and Sunnah (Nasr, 2006). To understand this tradition more clearly, it is useful to examine how scientific learning developed within the Muslim world and the characteristics that distinguished its intellectual approach.

1.3.1 Development of the Scientific Tradition

The Islamic scientific tradition flourished particularly during the Abbasid period. Through the translation movement in Baghdad, Muslim scholars studied and expanded knowledge inherited from Greek, Persian, and Indian civilisations. Muslim scholars contributed significantly to medicine, mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, geography, and optics. These are major Muslim scientists and philosophers:

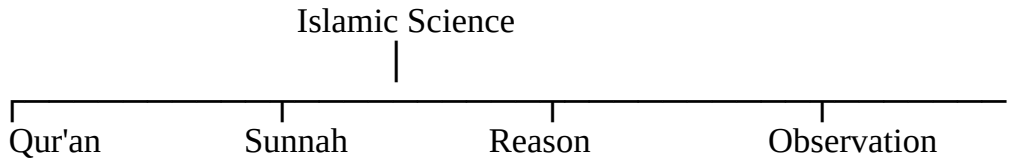
Table 1.1:

Scholar	Contribution
Al-Kindi	Philosophy and mathematics
Ibn Sina	Medicine and philosophy
Al-Biruni	Astronomy and geography
Ibn al-Haytham	Optics and scientific method
Ibn Rushd	Philosophy and rational inquiry

1.3.2 Characteristics of the Islamic Scientific Tradition

1. Integration of Faith and Reason: Scientific inquiry was seen as compatible with religious belief.
2. Observation and Experimentation: Muslim scientists emphasised empirical observation and experimentation.
3. Preservation and Expansion of Knowledge: Muslim scholars translated, preserved, and improved earlier scientific works.
4. Ethical Responsibility: Scientific activity was guided by moral and spiritual values.

Sources of the Islamic Scientific Tradition



Pause and Reflect

Why do you think observation and experimentation were important to Muslim scholars in the development of scientific knowledge?

Possible Answer:

Observation and experimentation enabled Muslim scholars to investigate the natural world, test ideas, and develop knowledge based on evidence. These approaches complemented reasoning and were understood within a broader intellectual and religious framework.

1.4 Philosophical Underpinnings

The development of scientific activity was not separate from Islamic philosophical thought. Certain philosophical principles shaped how Muslim scholars understood nature, knowledge, and the purpose of scientific investigation. Islamic philosophy provided the intellectual foundation for scientific development in Muslim civilisation. Muslim

philosophers believed that the universe operates according to divine order and rational principles that can be studied through human reason (Fakhry, 2004). Major philosophical foundations in Islam are:

1. ***Tawḥīd*** **(Unity of Allah):** The belief in one Creator encouraged the idea that the universe is orderly and purposeful.
2. **Rational Inquiry:** Muslim philosophers emphasised the importance of logic and critical thinking.
3. **Causality:** Muslim philosophers examined the natural world in terms of cause-and-effect relationships.
4. **Harmony Between Revelation and Science:** Science and revelation were viewed as complementary rather than contradictory.

The works of Aristotle and Plato influenced Muslim thinkers, but these ideas were adapted within the framework of Islamic teachings.

Table 1.2: Philosophical Principles and Scientific Impact

Philosophical Principle	**Scientific Impact**
Tawḥīd	Belief in order and unity
Rational inquiry	Encouraged investigation
Causality	Development of natural sciences
Ethics	Responsible scientific practice

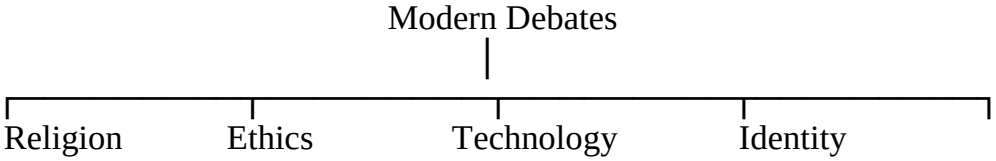
1.5 Modern Debates

The relationship between Islamic thought and science is not only a historical question. It remains relevant today as Muslims respond to new scientific discoveries, emerging technologies, and changing intellectual environments. Modern debates concerning Islamic philosophy and science focus on the relationship between religion, modern scientific discoveries, secularism, and technological advancement. Contemporary Muslim scholars continue to discuss how scientific progress should relate to Islamic ethics and values (Leaman, 1999). Major contemporary debates are:

1. **Science and Religion:** Some scholars argue that science and religion are harmonious, while others debate the limits of scientific explanation.
2. **Technology and Ethics:** Modern technologies such as artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and biotechnology raise ethical questions within Islamic thought.
3. **Western Scientific Influence:** There are discussions about balancing modern scientific advancement with Islamic identity and moral principles.

4. **Revival of Islamic Scientific Tradition:** Many Muslim scholars advocate reviving the classical Islamic approach that integrated science, ethics, and spirituality.

Contemporary Issues in Islamic Philosophy and Science



You have now examined how Islamic philosophical ideas influenced the pursuit of scientific knowledge and how this intellectual tradition continues to raise questions about science, ethics and technology. Study the infographic below to see how faith, philosophical principles and scientific inquiry are connected within the themes discussed in this unit.

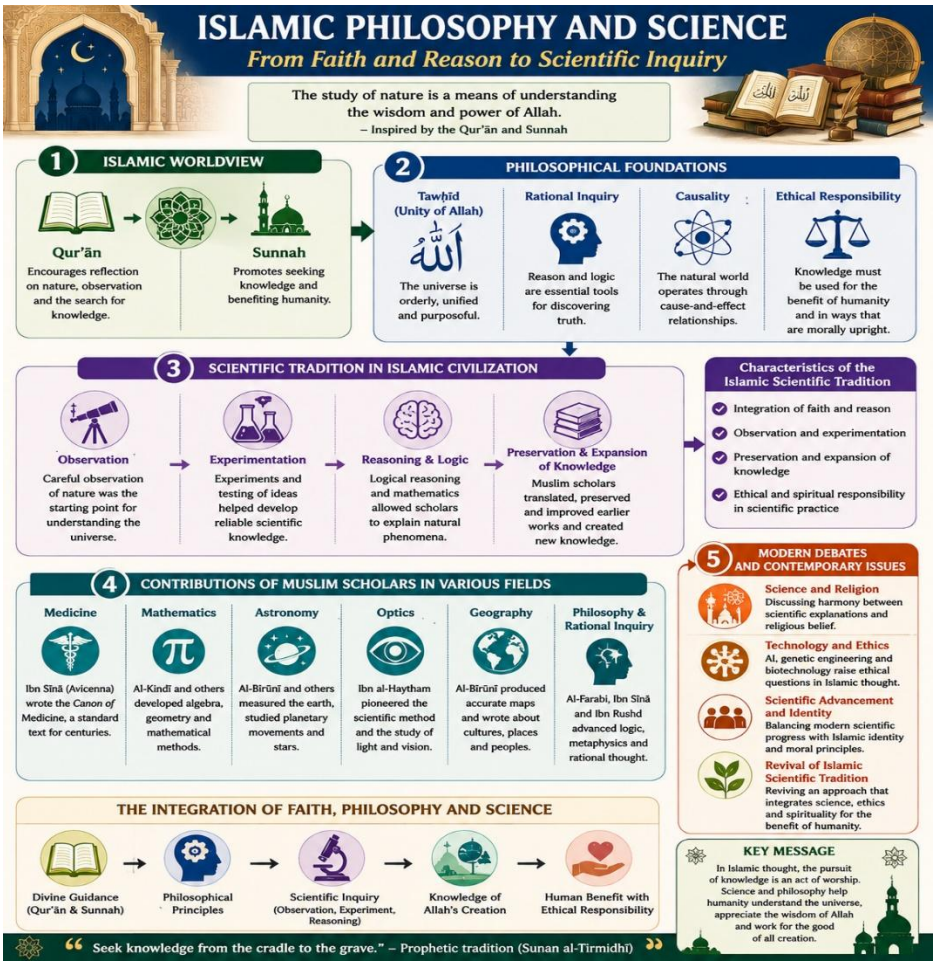


Figure 1.1 Islamic Philosophy and Science: From Faith and Reason to Scientific Inquiry
Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026.

Pause and Reflect

A Muslim university student is researching the ethical use of artificial intelligence. The student wants to benefit from modern scientific and technological knowledge while ensuring that its use does not conflict with Islamic ethical values. What issues should the student consider?

Possible Answer:

The student should consider the benefits and risks of the technology, its effects on individuals and society, principles of ethical responsibility, and how scientific advancement can be pursued while maintaining Islamic moral values.

⚠Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Which Muslim scholar is famous for contributions to optics?
A. Ibn Rushd
B. Ibn al-Haytham
C. Al-Fārābī
D. Al-Ghazālī

2. Tawḥīd refers to the:
A. Study of astronomy
B. Unity of Allah
C. Scientific experimentation
D. Political leadership

3. Muslim scientists emphasised observation and:
A. Isolation
B. Speculation
C. Experimentation
D. Mythology

4. Which Greek philosopher greatly influenced Islamic philosophy?
A. Newton
B. Darwin
C. Aristotle
D. Freud

5. Islamic philosophy viewed science and revelation as:

A. Contradictory
B. Independent
C. Complementary
D. Unrelated

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

6. Modern debates discuss the relationship between science and _____.

7. The revival of the Islamic scientific tradition emphasises ethics and _____ responsibility.

8. Artificial intelligence and biotechnology raise important _____ questions.

9. Muslim philosophers believed that studying the universe reveals the wisdom of _____

10. Islamic scientific tradition combined faith, philosophy, and rational _____.



1.6 Summary

In this unit, you examined the relationship between Islamic philosophy and science and how the pursuit of knowledge developed within Islamic civilisation. You learnt about the growth of the scientific tradition during the Abbasid period and the contributions of Muslim scholars to fields such as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, optics and geography.

You also examined the philosophical foundations that influenced scientific inquiry, including Tawḥīd, rational inquiry, causality, and the relationship between revelation and science. Muslim scholars viewed the study of nature as an important means of understanding the order and wisdom of creation while recognising the importance of ethical responsibility.

Finally, you explored contemporary debates concerning science, religion, technology and Islamic identity. These debates demonstrate the continuing importance of questions about how scientific advancement can be pursued alongside moral and spiritual values.



1.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

Leaman, O. (1999). *An introduction to classical Islamic philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*. State University of New York Press.

Sharif, M. M. (Ed.). (1963). *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Otto Harrassowitz.

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**1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):**

1. B
2. B
3. C
4. C
5. C

6. Religion
7. Spiritual
8. Ethical
9. Allah
10. inquiry

Unit 2 Islamic Philosophy and Ethics

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Learning Outcomes
2.3 Ethics in Islamic thought
  2.3.1 Foundations of Islamic Ethics
  2.3.2 Characteristics of Islamic Ethics
2.4 Virtue theory
  2.4.1 Influence of Greek Philosophy
  2.4.2 Importance of Virtue Theory
2.5 Social ethics
2.6 Summary
2.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources
2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



2.1 Introduction

Welcome to Unit 2. What makes an action right or wrong, and what kind of character should a good person develop? These questions lie at the heart of ethics. In Islamic philosophy, ethical reflection is closely connected with faith, reason, spiritual development, and human responsibility. The Qurʾān and Sunnah provide fundamental moral guidance, while Muslim philosophers and theologians used philosophical reasoning to explore questions of virtue, justice, happiness and moral conduct.

Muslim philosophers such as Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd and Al-Ghazālī contributed to discussions of virtue, self-discipline, moral education and the relationship between reason and morality. They also engaged with ideas from Greek philosophy, particularly those of Aristotle and Plato, while interpreting them within an Islamic framework.

In this unit, you will examine the foundations and characteristics of Islamic ethics, the development of virtue theory, and the application of ethical principles to social life.



2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- identify the major foundations and characteristics of Islamic ethics;
- explain the role of reason, revelation and moral responsibility in Islamic ethical thought;

- analyse the concept of virtue and its importance in Islamic philosophy;
- discuss the influence of Greek philosophical thought on Islamic virtue theory;
- explain the major principles of Islamic social ethics; and
- apply Islamic ethical principles to selected contemporary social and moral issues.



2.3 Ethics in Islamic Thought

Ethics occupies an important position in Islamic philosophy because Islam emphasises moral conduct, justice, responsibility, and spiritual purification. Islamic ethical thought is primarily derived from the Qurʾān and Sunnah, while Muslim philosophers and theologians further developed ethical theories through rational reflection and philosophical analysis (Fakhry, 2004). To understand Islamic ethical thought, it is first necessary to examine the sources from which its moral principles are derived and the characteristics that shape ethical behaviour.

2.3.1 Foundations of Islamic Ethics

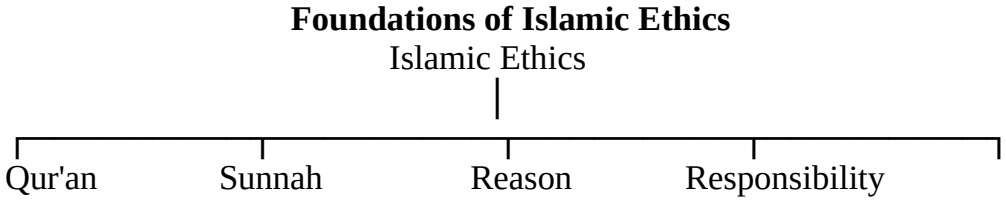
Islamic ethics is based on the belief that Allah is the ultimate source of morality. Ethical values are therefore connected to divine revelation. Human reason, spiritual consciousness, and social responsibility. The Qurʾān repeatedly encourages virtues such as honesty, patience, justice, mercy, humility, and kindness. Sources of Islamic ethics are:

Table 2.1:

Source	**Description**
Qurʾān	Primary source of moral guidance
Sunnah	Practical example of ethical conduct
Reason	Rational understanding of morality
Ijmāʿ	Scholarly consensus
Qiyās	Analogical reasoning

2.3.2 Characteristics of Islamic Ethics

1. **Divine Foundation:** Morality originates from Allah's guidance.
2. **Balance:** Islam promotes moderation between extremes.
3. **Accountability:** Humans are morally responsible for their actions.
4. **Universal Morality:** Ethical teachings apply to all people and societies.



Pause and Reflect

Why do you think accountability is an important characteristic of Islamic ethics? How might belief in accountability influence a person's behaviour?

Possible Answer

Accountability reminds individuals that their actions have moral consequences. It can encourage people to act responsibly, avoid wrongdoing, and consider how their behaviour affects others.

2.4 Virtue Theory

Knowing what is morally right is only one part of ethical living. Islamic ethical thought also asks which qualities a person should cultivate to live a good, morally responsible life. This leads us to the idea of virtue. Virtue theory in Islamic philosophy focuses on developing good character and moral excellence. Muslim philosophers believed that ethical virtues help individuals attain happiness, spiritual purification, and closeness to Allah (Leaman, 1999). Major ethical virtues are:

1. **Justice:** Fairness and giving others their rights.
2. **Wisdom:** The proper use of knowledge and reason.
3. **Courage:** Strength in facing difficulties and challenges.
4. **Temperance:** Self-control and moderation.

2.4.1 Influence of Greek Philosophy

You encountered Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā in the previous module as major contributors to Islamic philosophy. Their ethical thought also demonstrates how Muslim philosophers engaged with Greek philosophical ideas while developing them within an Islamic intellectual framework. Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina adopted and modified aspects of the virtue ethics of Aristotle within an Islamic framework.

Table 2.2: Major Virtues in Islamic Ethics

Virtue	Meaning
Justice	Fairness and equity
Wisdom	Sound judgment
Courage	Moral strength
Temperance	Self-control

2.4.2 Importance of Virtue Theory

Virtue theory teaches that ethical behaviour develops through practice. Repeatedly practising good conduct helps individuals develop good character and strengthen their ability to act morally. In this way, morality improves both the individual and society, while spiritual and moral discipline remain closely connected.

2.5 Social Ethics

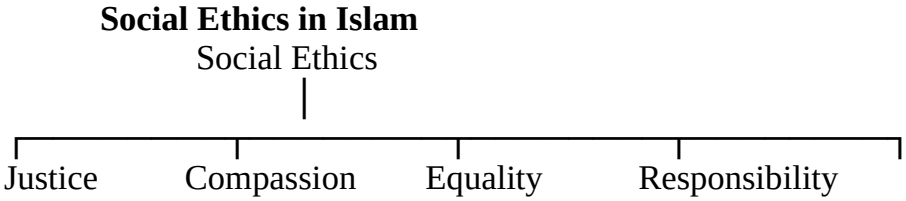
Ethical behaviour does not stop at the individual. The values developed through personal morality also shape relationships, institutions and communities. Islamic social ethics therefore extends principles such as justice, compassion and responsibility into everyday social life. Islamic social ethics concerns moral behaviour within society. It emphasises justice, cooperation, human dignity, compassion, and social responsibility. Islamic philosophy teaches that ethical conduct should shape family life, economic relations, politics, education, and community interactions (Nasr, 2006). Principles of social ethics are:

1. **Justice:** Islam strongly emphasises social and economic justice.
2. **Compassion:** Helping the poor and vulnerable is a moral duty.
3. **Equality:** All humans are equal before Allah regardless of race or status.
4. **Responsibility:** Individuals are accountable for their treatment of others.

Social ethics can be applied as follow:

Table 2.3: Applications of Social Ethics

Area	Ethical Principle
Family	Respect and care
Economy	Honesty and fairness
Politics	Justice and accountability
Education	Knowledge and morality



Pause and Reflect

A business owner discovers that a cheaper method of production would increase profits but would involve misleading customers about the quality of the product. Which principles of Islamic social ethics are relevant to this situation?

Possible Answer:

Honesty, fairness, justice, and responsibility are relevant. The business owner should avoid misleading customers and act fairly because Islamic social ethics emphasises responsible conduct in economic relations.

⚠Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. The primary source of Islamic ethics is the:
A. Greek philosophy
B. Qurʾān
C. Roman law
D. Mythology

2. Islamic ethics teaches moderation between:
A. Wealth and poverty
B. Faith and disbelief
C. Extremes
D. Cultures

3. Which of the following is a source of Islamic ethics?
A. Astrology
B. Revelation
C. Superstition
D. Mythology

4. Islamic ethics considers humans morally:
A. Independent of actions
B. Accountable for actions

C. Controlled by fate only
D. Free from responsibility

5. Which concept refers to scholarly consensus?

A. Qiyās
B. Ijmāʿ
C. Sunnah
D. Fiqh

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

6. The virtue of fairness and giving others their rights is called _____.

7. Temperance refers to self-_____.

8. Muslim philosophers adapted aspects of the virtue ethics of _____.

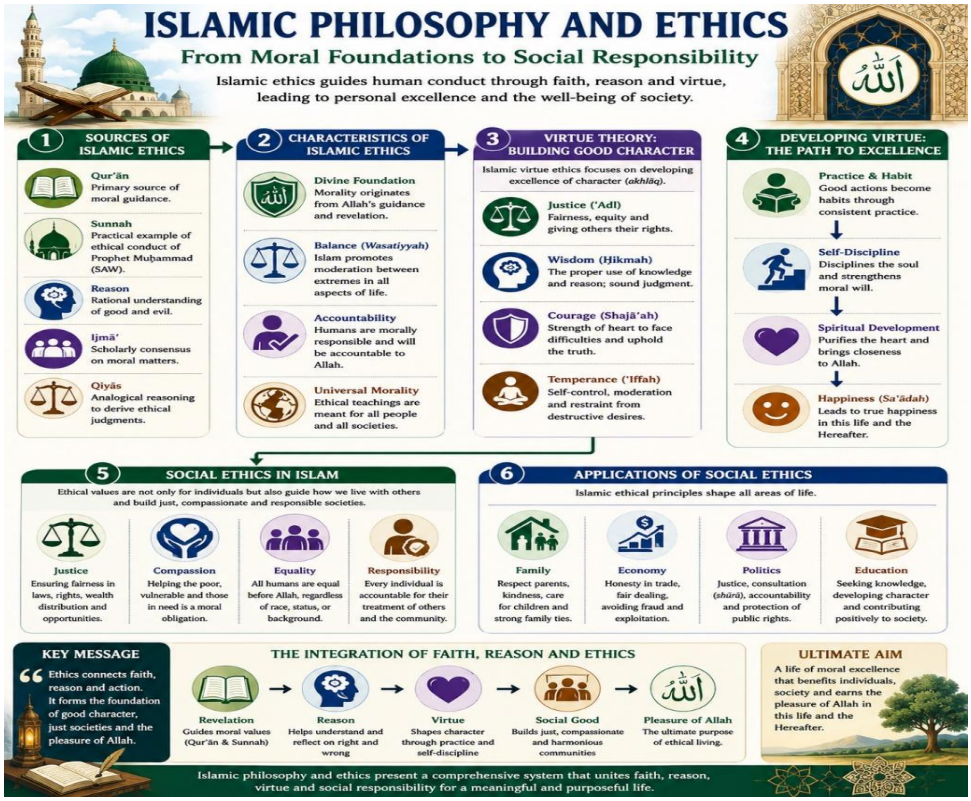
9. Virtue theory focuses on the development of good _____.

10. Wisdom involves the proper use of knowledge and _____.

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B

Column A	**Column B**
11. Justice	A. Moral strength
12. Courage	B. Fairness and equity
13. Temperance	C. Self-control
14. Compassion	D. Care for others
15. Wisdom	E. Sound judgment

You have now explored the foundations of Islamic ethics, the development of virtue and the application of ethical principles to social life. Study the infographic below to see how these ideas connect, from the sources of moral guidance to personal character and social responsibility.



2.6 Summary

In this unit, you examined Islamic ethical thought and its foundations in the Qurʾān, Sunnah, reason and moral responsibility. You learnt that Islamic ethics emphasises divine guidance, balance, accountability and universal moral responsibility.

You also explored virtue theory and examined virtues such as justice, wisdom, courage and temperance. Muslim philosophers engaged with Greek philosophical ideas, particularly those associated with Aristotle, while developing ethical thought within an Islamic framework. Virtue theory emphasises the development of good character through practice, self-discipline and moral conduct.

Finally, you examined Islamic social ethics and its emphasis on justice, compassion, equality and responsibility. These principles can be applied to family life, economic relations, politics and education. Islamic philosophy therefore presents ethics as a connection between faith, reason, personal character and social harmony.



2.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Fakhry, M. (2004). *A history of Islamic philosophy* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.

Leaman, O. (1999). *An introduction to classical Islamic philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*. State University of New York Press.

Sharif, M. M. (Ed.). (1963). *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Otto Harrassowitz.

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**2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):**

1. B
2. C
3. B
4. B
5. B

6. justice
7. control
8. Aristotle
9. character
10. reason
11. B
12. A
13. C
14. D
15. E

Unit 3 Revivalist Thinkers and Modern Islamic Thought

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Learning Outcomes
3.3 Muhammad Iqbal
3.4 Nasr and Metaphysics
3.5 Contemporary themes
3.6 Summary
3.7 References/Further Readings
3.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



3.1 Introduction

How should Islamic thought respond when society, science, politics and culture undergo major changes? This question became increasingly important in the modern period as Muslim societies encountered colonialism, Western ideas, modern science, secularism and globalisation. These developments encouraged Muslim scholars and reformers to reconsider how Islamic intellectual and moral traditions could respond to changing realities.

Revivalist thinkers sought to renew Islamic thought while maintaining its connection with the Qurʾān and Sunnah.

They addressed questions of reform, ijtihād, education, governance, social justice, and the relationship between Islam and modernity. Among these thinkers, Muhammad Iqbal and Seyyed Hossein Nasr developed distinctive responses to the intellectual and spiritual challenges of modern life.

This unit examines Iqbal's philosophy of selfhood and intellectual reconstruction, Nasr's ideas on metaphysics and sacred knowledge, and selected contemporary themes in modern Islamic thought.



3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- identify major thinkers associated with modern Islamic thought;
- explain Muhammad Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* and his call for intellectual renewal;
- discuss Iqbal's views on *Ijtihād*, science, religion and Muslim revival;

- explain Seyyed Hossein Nasr's ideas on metaphysics and sacred knowledge;
- discuss Nasr's critique of modernity and his environmental concerns; and
- appraise selected contemporary themes in modern Islamic thought.

3.3 Muhammad Iqbal

Among the thinkers who sought to renew Muslim intellectual life in the modern period, Muhammad Iqbal occupies an important place. His philosophy centred on the development of the individual, intellectual freedom and the capacity of Muslims to respond creatively to changing circumstances. Muhammad Iqbal was one of the most influential Muslim thinkers of the twentieth century. He was born in Sialkot in 1877 and is widely recognised as a philosopher, poet, reformer, and political thinker. His intellectual project sought to revive Islamic civilisation by harmonising Islamic spirituality with modern scientific and philosophical thought. Iqbal's works addressed the crisis of Muslim decline, colonial domination, and intellectual stagnation in the Muslim world.

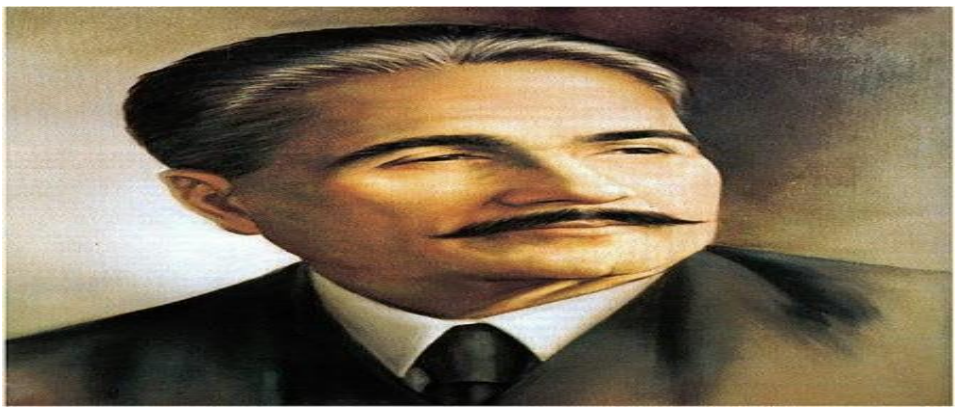


Figure 3.1 Muhammad Iqbal
Source: Aiwan-e-Iqbal Complex, Art & Portrait Gallery, Lahore.
Author to verify image copyright/reuse permission.

Iqbal studied in Lahore before proceeding to Europe, where he attended the University of Cambridge and the University of Munich. Exposure to Western philosophy deeply influenced his thought, particularly the works of Nietzsche, Bergson, and Goethe. Nevertheless, he remained committed to Islamic principles and sought to reconstruct Islamic thought in response to modern challenges. Iqbal's concept of Khudi can be understood through four closely related ideas: self-realisation, spiritual development, purposeful action, and moral responsibility.

1. Iqbal's Philosophy of *Khudi* (Selfhood)

The central concept in Iqbal's philosophy is *Khudi* (selfhood or ego). According to Iqbal, human beings possess immense spiritual potential

that can only be realised through discipline, faith, and action. He rejected fatalism and encouraged Muslims to cultivate self-confidence and creativity.

2. Features of *Khudi*

Table 3.1:

Concept	Explanation
Self-realisation	Human beings must discover their inner potential
Spiritual development	Nearness to Allah strengthens the self
Action and dynamism	Muslims should actively transform society
Moral responsibility	Individuals are accountable for their choices

Iqbal believed that a strong self is developed through:

1. Obedience to Allah.
2. Self-control and discipline.
3. Service to humanity.
4. Courage and creativity.

Pause and Reflect

Iqbal encourages individuals to develop their potential through discipline, faith, and action. What do you think might happen when individuals fail to take responsibility for developing their abilities?

Possible Answer:

They may become passive, dependent on others, or unable to contribute meaningfully to society. In Iqbal's view, developing the self involves active effort, discipline, and responsible action.

Iqbal's emphasis on a strong and active self also influenced his broader understanding of Muslim intellectual renewal. He argued that Muslims needed to engage changing circumstances through renewed reasoning rather than relying solely on blind imitation**.**

3. Reconstruction of Religious Thought

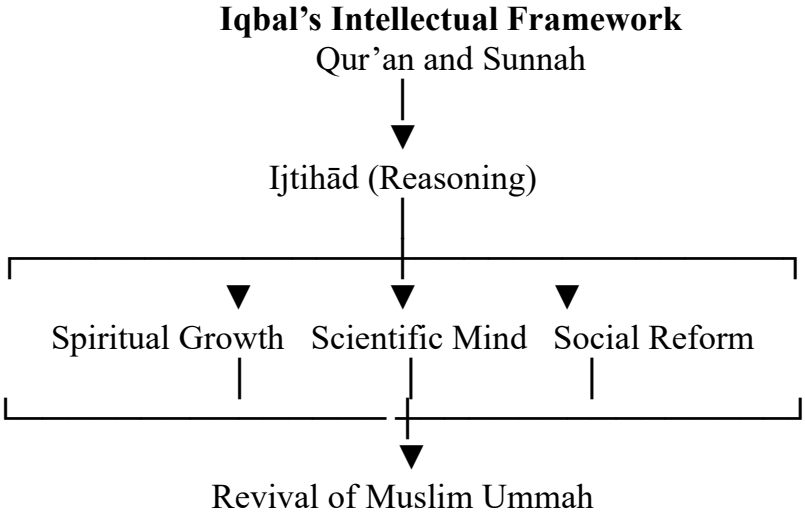
Iqbal's famous work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, emphasised the need for *ijtihād* (independent reasoning). He argued that Islamic law and theology should respond creatively to changing social realities while remaining rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The following are major themes in his reconstruction:

Table 3.2: **Major Themes in Iqbal's Reconstruction**

Theme	Description
Ijtihād	Reopening intellectual reasoning in Islam
Science and religion	Compatibility between Islam and scientific inquiry
Democracy	Political participation rooted in Islamic ethics
Education	Intellectual and moral reform of Muslims

4. Iqbal and Muslim Revivalism

Iqbal viewed Islam as a dynamic civilisation capable of addressing modern political, economic, and ethical issues. He criticised blind imitation (*taqlīd*) and called for intellectual awakening among Muslims.



Influence of Iqbal

Iqbal's thought influenced Islamic modernism, educational reforms, and Muslim political consciousness, particularly in South Asia. He inspired later scholars and reformers who sought to integrate Islamic tradition with contemporary realities.

3.4 Nasr and Metaphysics

Iqbal responded to modern challenges by emphasising selfhood, intellectual renewal and active engagement with changing realities. Seyyed Hossein Nasr offered a different but complementary response, focusing on metaphysics, sacred knowledge and the spiritual consequences of modern secularism. Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a contemporary Muslim philosopher known for his contributions to Islamic metaphysics, traditionalism, and environmental ethics. Born in Iran in 1933, Nasr emphasises the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of Islam in contrast to modern secular materialism.

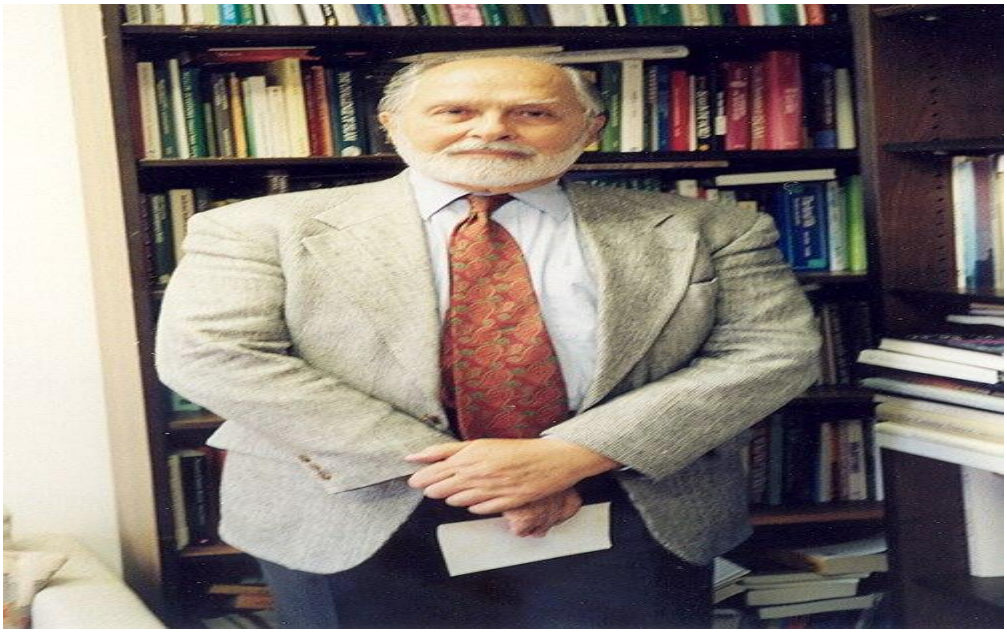
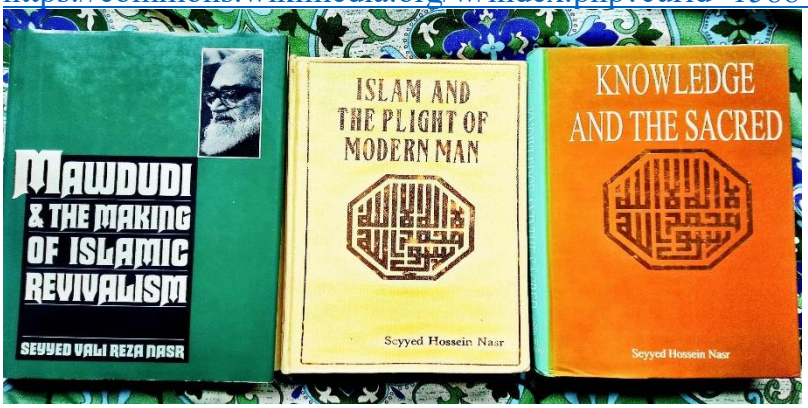
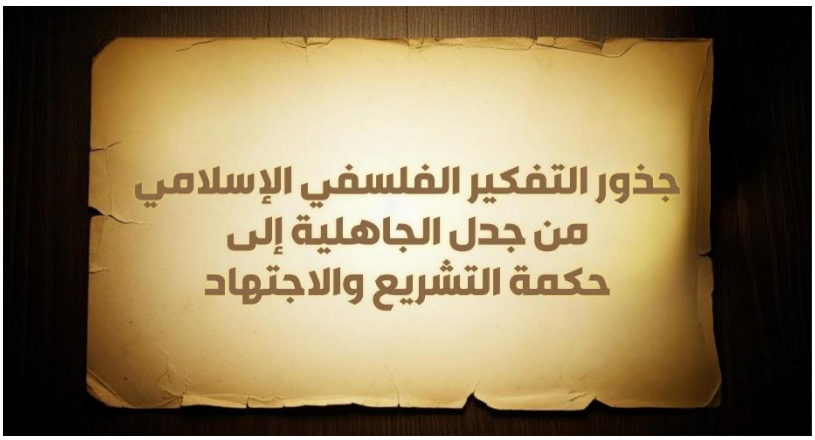


Figure 3.2 portrait of Seyyed Hossein Nasr photographed by **Ashk Dahlén in 2002**.

By Ashkdahlen, CC BY-SA 3.0,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1588401





Nasr argues that modern civilisation suffers from a spiritual crisis because it has separated knowledge from sacred reality. He advocates a return to sacred knowledge grounded in revelation and metaphysical truth. Here are some of his philosophical thoughts:

1. Meaning of Metaphysics in Nasr's Thought

Metaphysics refers to the study of ultimate reality beyond the physical world. For Nasr, Islamic metaphysics is rooted in *tawḥīd* (the unity of Allah) and the belief that all existence points toward the Divine.

Key Elements of Nasr's Metaphysics

Table 3.3:

Element	Explanation
Tawḥīd	Unity of Allah as the basis of existence
Sacred knowledge	Knowledge connected to revelation
Spiritual cosmology	The universe reflects divine order
Traditional wisdom	Ancient religious truths remain relevant

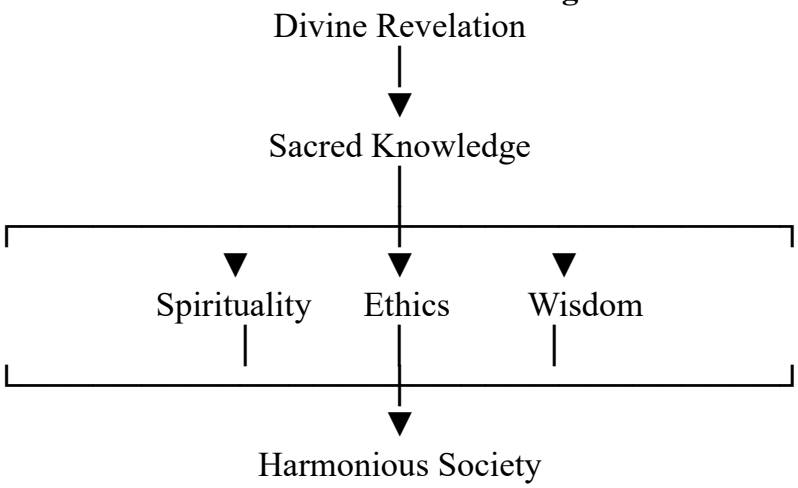
2. Nasr's Critique of Modernity

Nasr strongly criticises secular modernity because it promotes materialism, weakens spirituality, damages the environment, and separates science from ethics. According to Nasr, modern science should not reject spirituality; instead, scientific inquiry must operate within ethical and sacred limits.

3. Sacred Knowledge

Nasr distinguishes between secular knowledge and sacred knowledge. He argues that sacred knowledge leads humans closer to Allah and helps maintain moral balance in society.

Nasr's View of Knowledge



4. Nasr and Environmental Ethics

Nasr is among the leading Muslim thinkers addressing environmental crises. He believes nature is sacred because it is a creation of Allah. Humanity therefore has a moral responsibility to protect the environment.

Pause and Reflect

Nasr argues that knowledge should remain connected to ethical and spiritual values. Why might he consider the separation of knowledge from ethics a problem?

Possible Answer
Because knowledge and scientific advancement can affect human beings and the environment. Nasr therefore argues that knowledge should be guided by moral and spiritual responsibility rather than being pursued without ethical limits.

3.5 Contemporary Themes

Contemporary Islamic thought addresses modern global challenges while remaining grounded in Islamic teachings. Muslim scholars today engage issues such as democracy, globalisation, gender justice, human rights, bioethics, environmental sustainability, and interfaith relations. Here are major contemporary themes in Islam:

Table 3.4:

Theme	Description
Human rights	Balancing Islamic law with universal rights
Gender issues	Women's participation and equality debates
Democracy	Islamic perspectives on governance
Bioethics	Islamic rulings on medical technologies
Environment	Ecological responsibility in Islam
Interfaith dialogue	Peaceful coexistence among religions

Here are some of the contemporary Islamic thoughts:

1. Islam and Globalisation

Globalisation has increased interaction among cultures and religions. Contemporary Muslim thinkers discuss how Muslims can preserve Islamic identity while engaging modern societies.

2. Islam and Science

Many Muslim scholars argue that Islam encourages scientific advancement. Contemporary discussions focus on artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and ethical applications of science.

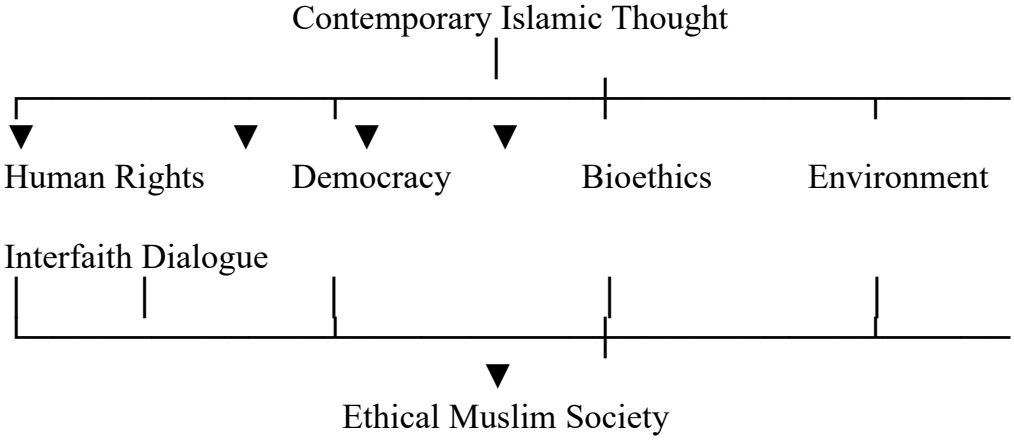
3. Gender and Social Justice

Modern Islamic scholarship increasingly addresses women's education, economic participation, and leadership roles. Some scholars advocate reinterpretation of classical rulings in light of contemporary realities.

4. Interfaith Relations

Islamic thinkers emphasise peaceful coexistence and dialogue with followers of other religions. This approach promotes tolerance, mutual understanding, and global peace.

Contemporary Themes in Islamic Thought



Pause and Reflect

A new technology offers significant benefits to society but also raises questions about human dignity and environmental harm. Based on the ideas discussed in this unit, what should guide the Muslim response to such a development?

Possible Answer

The response should consider both the benefits and ethical consequences of the technology. Islamic ethical values, responsibility, sacred knowledge, and concern for human dignity and the environment should guide its application.

⚠Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. What is the central concept in Iqbal's philosophy?

A. *Taqlīd*
B. *Khudi*
C. Secularism
D. Mysticism

2. Which work is associated with Muhammad Iqbal?

A. Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn
B. Muqaddimah
C. The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam
D. Al-Qānūn fi al-Tibb

3. Iqbal encouraged Muslims to revive the practice of:
A. Isolationism
B. Monasticism
C. *Ijtihād*
D. Polytheism

4. According to Iqbal, a strong self develops through:
A. Laziness
B. Blind imitation
C. Discipline and faith
D. Materialism

5. Muhammad Iqbal was born in:
A. Cairo
B. Istanbul
C. Sialkot
D. Baghdad

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

6. Nasr believes that all existence points toward the _____.
7. The concept of the unity of Allah is known as _____.
8. Nasr criticises modern civilisation for promoting excessive _____.
9. According to Nasr, true knowledge should be connected to _____.
10. Nasr argues that nature reflects divine _____.

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B

Column A	Column B
11. Bioethics	A. Relations among religions
12. Interfaith dialogue	B. Environmental protection
13. Environmental ethics	C. Medical and scientific ethics
14. Democracy	D. Political participation
15. Human rights	E. Protection of human dignity



3.6 Summary

In this unit, you examined the emergence of modern Islamic thought in response to intellectual, political, social and religious challenges associated with modernity. You explored Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy

of *Khudi*, his emphasis on self-development, intellectual renewal and *Ijtihād*, and his call for the reconstruction of Muslim thought.

You also examined Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Islamic metaphysics, particularly his emphasis on *tawḥīd*, sacred knowledge, and the spiritual dimensions of existence. His critique of secular modernity and concern for environmental responsibility were also discussed.

Finally, you explored contemporary themes including human rights, gender issues, democracy, bioethics, environmental responsibility and interfaith dialogue. Together, these discussions demonstrate how modern Islamic thought continues to engage contemporary challenges while drawing on Islamic intellectual and moral resources.



3.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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3.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. C
5. C
6. Divine
7. *Tawḥīd*
8. Materialism
9. Revelation
10. Order

11. C
12. A
13. B
14. D
15. E

Unit 4 Challenges to Islamic Philosophy in the Modern World

Unit Structure

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Learning Outcomes
4.3 Modernity
4.4 Secular philosophies
4.5 Philosophy and modern education
4.6 Summary
4.7 References/Further Readings
4.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



4.1 Introduction

In the previous unit, you examined the ideas of Muslim revivalist thinkers and their efforts to respond to intellectual and social changes affecting Muslim societies. Building on that discussion, this unit takes the argument further by examining some of the major challenges that Islamic philosophy encounters in the modern world. You will explore modernity, secular philosophies, and the changing nature of education, as well as the ways Muslim thinkers have responded to these developments. Islamic philosophy has long sought to bring revelation, reason and human experience into meaningful conversation. From the classical contributions of Muslim philosophers to the reformist ideas of modern thinkers, this intellectual tradition has continually responded to changing circumstances. However, the modern world has introduced new intellectual, cultural, scientific and technological developments that raise important questions for Islamic thought.

In this unit, you will examine modernity and secular philosophies and consider how they challenge traditional Islamic understandings of knowledge, morality, spirituality and society. You will also explore the implications of these developments for education and the ways Muslim thinkers have sought to respond to them.

As you study the unit, consider this question: **How can Islamic philosophy engage with the modern world without losing its spiritual and ethical foundations?** The discussion will help you appreciate Islamic philosophy as a continuing intellectual tradition capable of responding to contemporary challenges.



4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the major intellectual challenges posed by modernity to Islamic philosophy;
- distinguish between Islamic philosophical perspectives and major secular philosophies;
- examine Muslim intellectual responses to modernity and secular thought;
- explain the role of Islamic philosophy in reforming modern education;
- discuss the importance of integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual development in contemporary education.



4.3 Modernity

Think about how differently people live, communicate, learn, work and understand the world today compared with previous generations. From smartphones and artificial intelligence to scientific discoveries and changing ideas about freedom and society, the modern age has transformed almost every aspect of human life. But what happens when these changes encounter a philosophical tradition grounded in revelation, spirituality and moral responsibility? This is where the question of **modernity** becomes important.

Modernity refers to the social, intellectual, scientific, political, and cultural transformations associated with the modern age. It emerged prominently in Europe after the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods and later spread across the world through colonialism, globalisation, industrialisation, and technological advancement. Modernity emphasises reason, scientific inquiry, individualism, freedom, and progress. While these developments have contributed to human advancement, they have also posed serious challenges to Islamic philosophy and traditional religious worldviews.



Figure 4.1 Learning with Faith and Technology: Muslim students embracing Modern Education
Image generated by Raliyat Salihu using ChatGPT(OpenAI)

Islamic philosophers and scholars have responded differently to modernity. Some view it as an opportunity for intellectual renewal and scientific development, while others criticise aspects of modernity that conflict with Islamic values and spirituality. Here are features of modernity:

Table 4.1: Features of Modernity

Feature	**Explanation**
Rationalism	Emphasis on human reason and logic
Scientific advancement	Dependence on science and technology
Individualism	Focus on personal freedom and rights
Secular governance	Separation of religion from politics
Globalisation	Increased interaction among societies

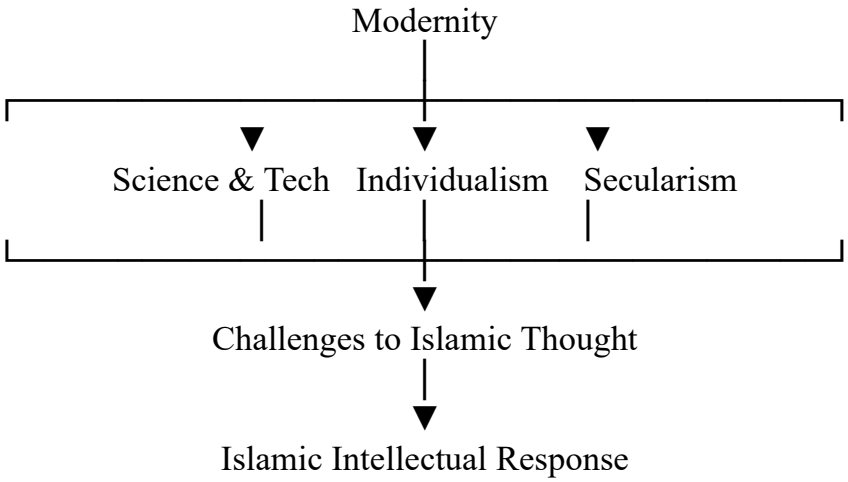
4.3.1 Challenges of Modernity to Islamic Philosophy

One major challenge is the dominance of secular and materialistic thinking, which often minimises the role of revelation and spirituality. Modernity also promotes cultural values that sometimes conflict with Islamic teachings regarding morality, family structure, and social responsibility. Furthermore, rapid technological advancement has introduced ethical questions relating to artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, digital communication, and consumerism. Islamic philosophy must therefore provide ethical guidance rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

4.4.2 Islamic Responses to Modernity

Several Muslim thinkers attempted to reconcile Islam with modernity. Muhammad Iqbal advocated intellectual renewal through *ijtihād* and encouraged Muslims to embrace science while maintaining spiritual values. Seyyed Hossein Nasr criticised excessive materialism and called for a return to sacred knowledge and spirituality.

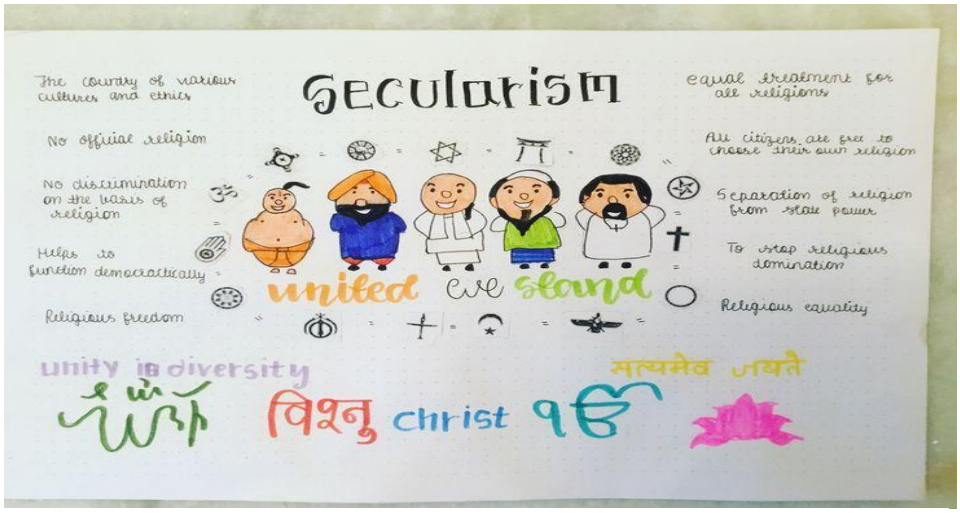
Modernity and Islamic Philosophy



Despite its challenges, modernity has also contributed positively by encouraging educational development, expanding scientific research, promoting global communication and advancing human rights discussions. Islamic philosophy therefore seeks a balanced engagement with modernity by accepting beneficial developments while rejecting ideas contrary to Islamic teachings.

4.4 Secular Philosophies

Secular philosophies are systems of thought that interpret human existence and society without reference to divine revelation or religious authority. Secularism generally advocates separating religion from political, educational, and public institutions. In the modern world, secular philosophies have significantly influenced politics, education, economics, and culture.



PROGRESSIVISM AND METHOD OF TEACHING

- Project method-for active participation
- Socialized method
- Group interaction/conference
- Experience practical situation
- Active participation in life activities
- Principles of motivation and appreciation
- Self directed learning experiences
- Criticism: these classroom lack in discipline

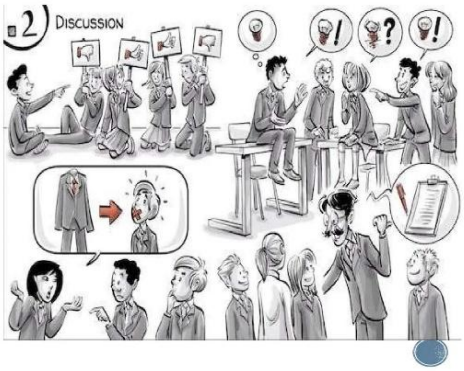




Figure 4.2

Islamic philosophy differs fundamentally from secular philosophies because it integrates reason with revelation. While secular thought often places human reason as the ultimate authority, Islamic philosophy recognises Allah as the source of ultimate truth.

Major secular philosophies are:

Table 4.2:

Philosophy	**Main Idea**
Humanism	Human beings are central to moral values
Materialism	Reality consists mainly of matter
Existentialism	Individuals create meaning through choices
Positivism	Only scientific knowledge is valid
Liberalism	Emphasis on personal liberty and rights

4.4.1 Secularism and Religion

Secular philosophies often argue that religion should remain a private matter and should not influence public policy. This perspective challenges Islamic teachings, which view religion as a comprehensive way of life that includes spiritual, social, political, and ethical dimensions. Islamic scholars criticise secular philosophies for neglecting spirituality, promoting moral relativism, separating ethics from divine guidance and encouraging excessive materialism. Seyyed Hossein Nasr argued that secular modern civilisation has created spiritual emptiness because it disconnects knowledge from sacred reality. Here are areas of Conflict

Between Islamic and secular thought:

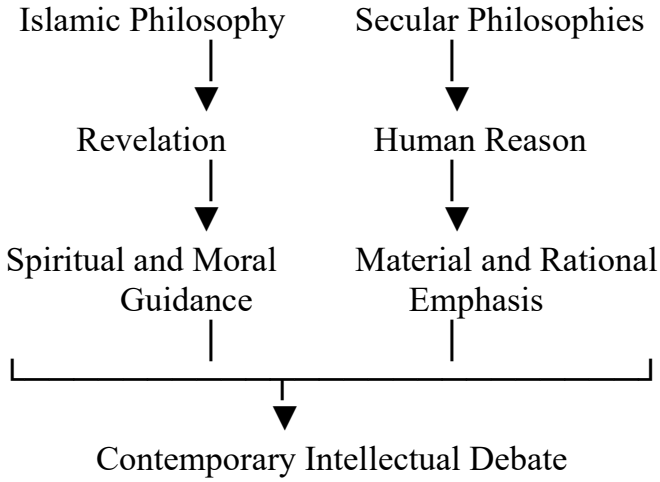
Table 4.3:

Islamic Philosophy	**Secular Philosophy**
Revelation is a source of truth	Human reason alone determines truth
Morality comes from Allah	Morality is socially constructed
Religion guides society	Religion is separated from governance
Spirituality is essential	Material progress is prioritised

4.4.2 Contemporary Engagement

Despite disagreements, some Muslim scholars engage secular philosophies critically in order to promote dialogue, understand modern intellectual trends, develop Islamic responses to contemporary issues and benefit from useful aspects of modern knowledge.

Islamic Philosophy versus Secular Philosophies



4.5 Philosophy and Modern Education

Education plays a central role in shaping human thought, values, and civilisation. In the modern world, educational systems are heavily influenced by scientific progress, globalisation, technological advancement, and secular ideologies. Islamic philosophy therefore examines how education can combine intellectual development with moral and spiritual formation.

Classical Islamic civilisation valued education as a means of developing both the mind and the soul. Scholars such as Al-Ghazali emphasised that knowledge should lead to moral refinement and closeness to Allah. Here are the goals of Islamic education.

Table 4.4:

Goal	**Description**
Intellectual growth	Development of reasoning and understanding
Moral discipline	Building ethical character
Spiritual development	Strengthening faith and worship
Social responsibility	Contributing positively to society

4.5.1 Challenges in Modern Education

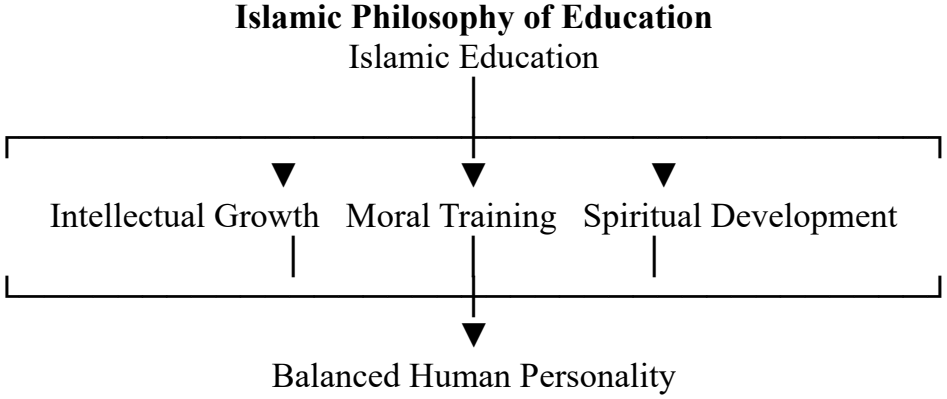
Modern education faces several philosophical challenges, such as overemphasis on technical and vocational skills, neglect of moral and spiritual values, influence of secular ideologies, commercialisation of education, and weak integration between religion and science. In many societies, educational institutions prioritise economic productivity over ethical formation. As a result, students may achieve scientific advancement without corresponding moral responsibility.

4.5.2 Islamic Philosophy and Educational Reform

Modern Muslim scholars advocate educational reforms that integrate religious knowledge, scientific inquiry, ethical values and critical thinking. Muhammad Iqbal stressed the importance of dynamic education that encourages creativity, self-confidence, and intellectual independence.

4.5.3 Integration of Knowledge

Islamic philosophy promotes the integration of revealed and acquired knowledge. This means that science, technology, and humanities should function within ethical and spiritual frameworks guided by Islam.



4.5.4 Technology and Education

Modern technology has transformed education through online learning, artificial intelligence, and digital communication. While these innovations improve access to knowledge, Islamic philosophy emphasises responsible and ethical use of technology.

⚠Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Modernity is primarily associated with:
A. Tribal isolation
B. Scientific and social transformation
C. Rejection of education
D. Elimination of technology

2. Which of the following is a major feature of modernity?
A. Monasticism
B. Rationalism
C. Polytheism
D. Fatalism

3. Muhammad Iqbal encouraged Muslims to:
A. Reject science completely
B. Isolate themselves from the world
C. Combine science with spiritual values
D. Abandon Islamic teachings

4. One challenge modernity poses to Islamic philosophy is:
A. Increase in spirituality
B. Growth of secular materialism
C. Decline in technology
D. Elimination of globalisation

5. Islamic philosophy seeks to engage modernity by:
A. Rejecting all modern developments
B. Ignoring scientific progress
C. Accepting beneficial aspects while preserving Islamic values
D. Promoting atheism

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

6. Secular philosophies generally separate religion from _____ life.
7. In Islamic philosophy, ultimate truth comes from divine _____.
8. The philosophy that emphasises matter as the basis of reality is called _____.
9. Secularism often regards religion as a _____ matter.
10. Seyyed Hossein Nasr argued that secular civilisation creates spiritual _____.

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B

Column A	**Column B**
11. Intellectual growth	A. Ethical character formation
12. Moral discipline	B. Online learning and AI
13. Spiritual development	C. Development of reasoning ability
14. Technology in education	D. Strengthening faith and worship
15. Social responsibility	E. Positive contribution to society



4.6 Summary

In this unit, you examined the major challenges that modernity presents to Islamic philosophy. Modernity has brought scientific advancement, technological development, individualism, globalisation and secular approaches to governance and knowledge. While these developments have created opportunities for progress, they have also raised questions about spirituality, morality and the place of revelation in human life.

You also explored major secular philosophical approaches and their differences from Islamic philosophical perspectives. Muslim thinkers such as Muhammad Iqbal and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have responded to modern intellectual developments by calling for intellectual renewal, critical engagement, spiritual awareness, and the preservation of Islamic ethical foundations.

Finally, you considered the relationship between Islamic philosophy and modern education. Islamic educational thought seeks to integrate intellectual growth, moral formation, spiritual development and social responsibility. Thus, Islamic philosophy can engage contemporary developments critically while continuing to provide ethical and spiritual direction.



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Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy – Islamic Philosophy
Oxford Islamic Studies Online
UNESCO – Education and Philosophy Resources

**4.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):**

1. B
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. C

6. public
7. revelation
8. materialism
9. private
10. emptiness

11. C
12. A
13. D
14. B
15. E

Unit 5 The Future of Islamic Philosophy

Unit Structure

5.1 Introduction
5.2 Learning Outcomes
5.3 Philosophy and Globalisation
  5.3.1 Positive and Negative Effects of Globalisation
  5.3.2 Islamic Philosophical Response to Globalisation
  5.3.3 Globalisation and Islamic Identity
  5.3.4 Future Prospects
5.4 Dialogue with Modern Thought
  5.4.1 Islamic Critical Engagement
  5.4.2 Challenges in Dialogue with Modern Thought
  5.4.3 Importance of Dialogue
5.5 Interdisciplinary outlook
  5.5.1 Importance of Interdisciplinary Studies
   5.5.2.1 Islam and Scientific Ethics
   5.5.3 Education and Interdisciplinary Knowledge
  5.5.4 Future Importance
5.6 Summary
5.7 References/Further Readings
5.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



5.1 Introduction

In the previous unit, you examined some of the major challenges that modernity, secular philosophies and contemporary education present to Islamic philosophy. You also considered how Muslim thinkers have responded to these challenges while seeking to preserve the intellectual, ethical and spiritual foundations of Islam. In this final unit, the discussion moves from challenges to possibilities. You will explore how Islamic philosophy can engage with globalisation, dialogue with modern thought and benefit from interdisciplinary knowledge as it responds to the needs of the future.

Islamic philosophy has continually evolved by engaging with changing intellectual, social and scientific realities. From the classical contributions of Muslim philosophers to the reformist ideas of modern thinkers, it has sought to bring revelation, reason, spirituality and human experience into meaningful dialogue. Today, globalisation, scientific advancement and technological innovation are creating new questions about ethics, identity, knowledge and human development.

In this final unit, you will explore the future of Islamic philosophy through three interconnected areas: globalisation, dialogue with modern thought and interdisciplinary knowledge. You will consider how Muslim thinkers can engage contemporary ideas critically while preserving Islamic values and identity. As you study the unit, keep one question in mind: How can Islamic philosophy remain rooted in its tradition while contributing meaningfully to the future of humanity?



5.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- assess the opportunities and challenges globalisation presents to Islamic philosophy;
- explain how Islamic philosophy can engage critically with modern thought;
- examine the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge to the future of Islamic philosophy;
- discuss ways Islamic philosophy can contribute to contemporary ethical and global issues.



5.3 Philosophy and Globalisation

]

Look around you. The way you communicate, study, shop, access information and interact with people in other parts of the world has been transformed by globalisation. But global interconnectedness brings more than opportunities for communication and learning. It also raises questions about culture, identity, values, and the place of religion in an increasingly connected world. How, then, should Islamic philosophy respond?

Globalisation refers to the increasing interconnectedness of societies through communication, trade, technology, education, migration, and cultural exchange. In the modern world, Globalisation has significantly influenced religion, politics, economics, and intellectual traditions. Islamic philosophy therefore faces the challenge of engaging global realities while preserving Islamic identity and values.

Figure 5.1



Globalization: An Islamic Perspective

Nasser Elahi
Mofid University, Iran

http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/jgcg/2007/sp07/jgcg-sp07-elahi.htm

This paper investigates from an Islamic perspective the consequences of globalization in general. To specify my argument in accordance with my understanding of Islam, I would strive to argue that globalization might be very harmful before society reaches maturity but very useful after that. Allow me a brief prefatory note about my methodology in this essay: in the first part, I provide many specifics about how Islamic texts and sources view the human being as God's creation and his ultimate goal in the world. In the second part, after a brief definition of globalization, I apply the analytic method employed in the conventional literature of economics to show why the market mechanism fails to satisfy equality and eradicate poverty in the globalization era. Finally, I try to explain how a free but virtuous, mature society can satisfy equality throughout the world in this era. Obviously, my argument relates, to some extent, to normative aspect of economics. However, it does not follow the ideological methodology at all.

Let me begin by elaborating briefly on the ultimate goal of man's creation in Islam, since this is so essential to understanding my argument.

The Human Being as God's Creation

From monotheism, the pivotal pillar of the Islamic worldview, we can conclude that the universe is the best and perfect manifestation of God's beautiful names and that there is no better alternative system to govern the universe. Indeed, this principle refers to the conception of creation. That is, God is like a secret treasure, so He creates and expands the universe not only to give a clue to His throne but also to reveal His beauty and His brilliance. Some facets of His attributes such as His majesty may manifest themselves in a deterministic environment such as with galaxies and other physical phenomena. There are, however, other facets of His characteristics such as His wisdom and His mercifulness that are impossible to manifest themselves except in indeterministic form.

Islamic philosophy views humanity as a universal community created by Allah, and Globalisation can provide opportunities for intercultural dialogue, educational advancement, and cooperation among nations. However, Globalisation also spreads secular ideologies, consumerism, and cultural practices that may conflict with Islamic teachings.

5.3.1 Positive and Negative Effects of Globalisation

Table 5.1

Aspect	**Contribution**
Communication	Faster exchange of ideas and knowledge
Education	Access to global learning resources
Interfaith dialogue	Better understanding among religions
Technology	Advancement in research and innovation

Table 5.2: Negative Effects

Aspect	**Challenge**
Cultural dominance	Weakening of Islamic identity
Materialism	Excessive focus on wealth and consumption
Moral relativism	Decline in absolute moral values
Media influence	Spread of harmful social behaviours

Pause and Reflect

Globalisation allows people to access ideas and cultures from different parts of the world. Identify one benefit and one possible challenge this may create for Muslim communities.

A benefit is increased access to educational resources, knowledge, and opportunities for intercultural dialogue. A possible challenge is cultural influence that may weaken aspects of Islamic identity or encourage values that conflict with Islamic ethical principles.

5.3.2 Islamic Philosophical Response to Globalisation

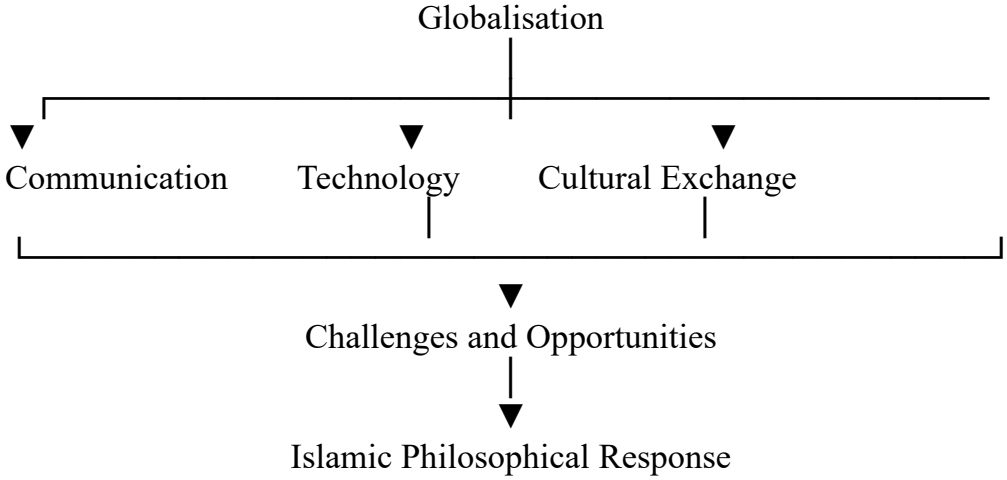
Islamic philosophers encourage balanced engagement with Globalisation. This means Muslims should benefit from scientific and technological progress while maintaining Islamic ethical principles. Muhammad Iqbal emphasised intellectual dynamism and creative engagement with modern realities, while Seyyed Hossein Nasr warned against excessive materialism and spiritual emptiness.

5.3.3 Globalisation and Islamic Identity

Islamic identity is not preserved simply by withdrawing from global society. Rather, Islamic philosophy encourages Muslims to participate actively in contemporary life while maintaining the moral, spiritual, and cultural principles that shape their identity. Islamic philosophy emphasises:

1. Moral discipline.
2. Spiritual consciousness.
3. Cultural preservation.
4. Ethical use of technology.

Globalisation and Islamic Philosophy



5.3.4 Future Prospects

Globalisation can become beneficial when guided by ethical values, justice, and mutual respect. Islamic philosophy therefore seeks constructive global engagement without compromising Islamic spirituality and morality.

The future of Islamic philosophy depends on how effectively it responds to a changing world while remaining rooted in its intellectual, ethical and spiritual foundations. The infographic below brings together the key ideas explored in this unit, showing how Islamic philosophy can engage with globalisation, critically assess modern thought, integrate different fields of knowledge and contribute to contemporary human concerns.

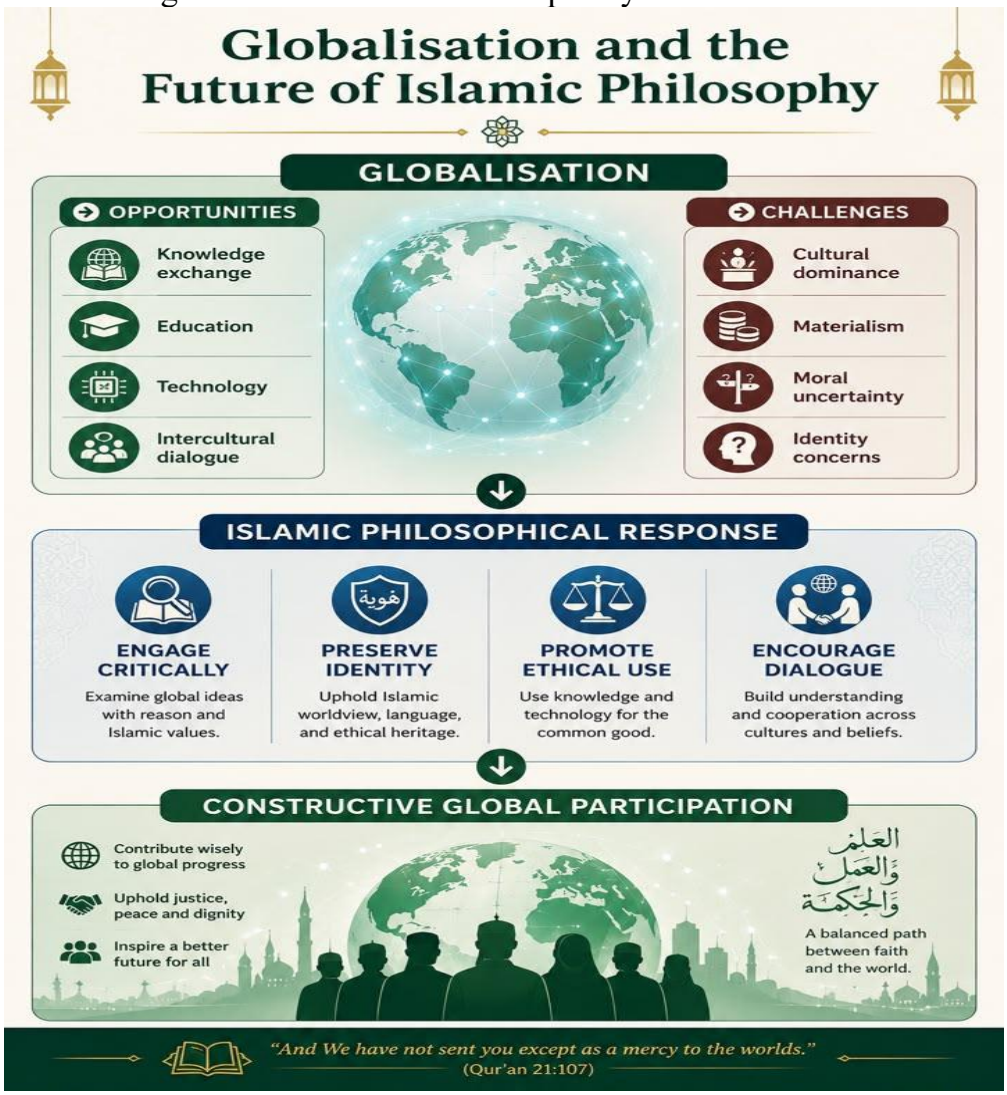


Figure 5.2: Globalisation and the Future of Islamic Philosophy
Developed by Raliyat Salihu using OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool, 2026.

5.4 Dialogue with Modern Thought

Globalisation has created greater interaction among societies, ideas and cultures, making it increasingly important for Islamic philosophy to engage with diverse intellectual perspectives. However, engagement does not mean accepting every idea uncritically. **How, then, can Islamic philosophy respond to modern intellectual trends while remaining faithful to its principles?** This section explores the role of dialogue, critical engagement, and intellectual openness in responding to modern thought. Islamic philosophy does not have to choose between complete rejection of modern thought and uncritical acceptance of it. A more constructive approach is **critical engagement**: understanding modern ideas, examining their assumptions, and evaluating their usefulness or compatibility with Islamic principles. Modern thought includes contemporary intellectual movements such as secularism, liberalism, humanism, existentialism, feminism, scientific rationalism, and postmodernism. Islamic philosophy engages these modern ideas critically in order to understand contemporary realities and provide Islamic responses to emerging challenges.

Islamic philosophy does not reject modern thought entirely. Rather, it evaluates ideas according to Islamic teachings derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Some aspects of modern thought, such as human dignity, justice, and scientific inquiry, are compatible with Islamic principles, while others may contradict Islamic beliefs and morality. Here are areas of dialogue:

Table 5.3:

Modern Theme	**Islamic Philosophical Response**
Human rights	Emphasis on justice and dignity
Science	Encouragement of beneficial knowledge
Democracy	Support for consultation and accountability
Feminism	Recognition of women's rights within Islamic ethics
Environmentalism	Stewardship of nature as divine trust

5.4.1 Islamic Critical Engagement

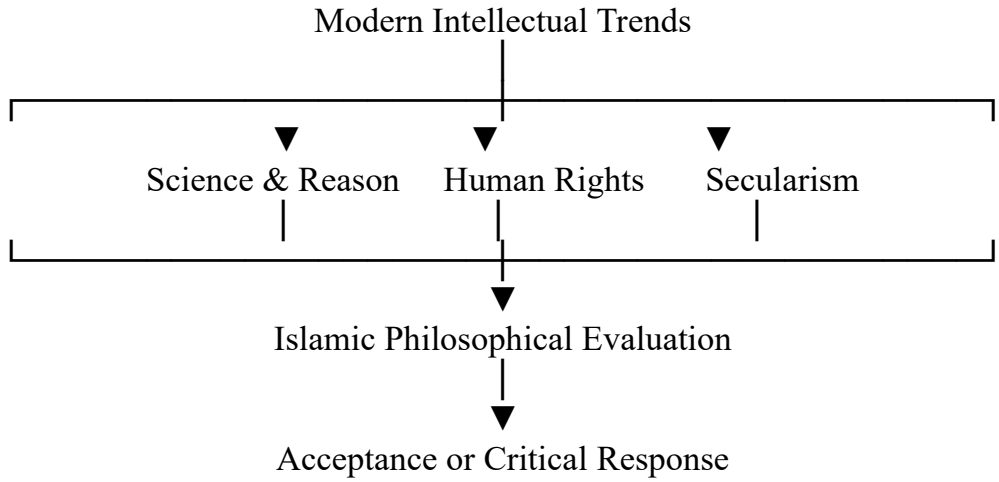
Muslim thinkers emphasise that dialogue with modern thought should preserve Islamic identity, encourage intellectual openness, promote ethical reflection, and avoid blind imitation. Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman advocated reinterpretation of Islamic teachings to address contemporary issues while remaining faithful to Islamic principles.

5.4.2 Challenges in Dialogue with Modern Thought

Islamic philosophy faces difficulties when modern ideologies:

- Deny religious authority.
- Promote moral relativism.
- Prioritise individual freedom above moral responsibility.
- Separate ethics from spirituality.

Dialogue Between Islamic Philosophy and Modern Thought



5.4.3 Importance of Dialogue

Constructive dialogue helps Islamic philosophy remain intellectually relevant and capable of addressing modern global concerns. It also promotes peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding between civilisations.

5.5 Interdisciplinary Outlook

An interdisciplinary outlook refers to the integration of different academic disciplines in addressing human problems and generating knowledge. Islamic philosophy increasingly adopts interdisciplinary approaches in order to engage modern sciences, social sciences, humanities, and technology.

Classical Muslim scholars often combined multiple disciplines such as theology, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, ethics, and philosophy. Ibn Sina, for example, contributed to medicine, metaphysics, and logic simultaneously. Modern Islamic philosophy seeks to revive this tradition of integrated knowledge. Here are areas of interdisciplinary engagement:

Table 5.4

Discipline	Contribution to Islamic Philosophy
Science	Ethical evaluation of discoveries
Sociology	Understanding social change
Economics	Islamic financial ethics
Environmental studies	Ecological responsibility
Technology	Ethical use of innovation

5.5.1 Importance of Interdisciplinary Studies

An interdisciplinary approach helps Islamic philosophy:
1. Address contemporary issues effectively.
2. Integrate faith and reason.
3. Encourage creativity and innovation.
4. Promote holistic understanding of reality.

5.5.2 Islam and Scientific Ethics

Modern developments in biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and medicine require ethical guidance. Islamic philosophy therefore collaborates with scientific disciplines to ensure technological advancement respects human dignity and divine guidance.

Think about This

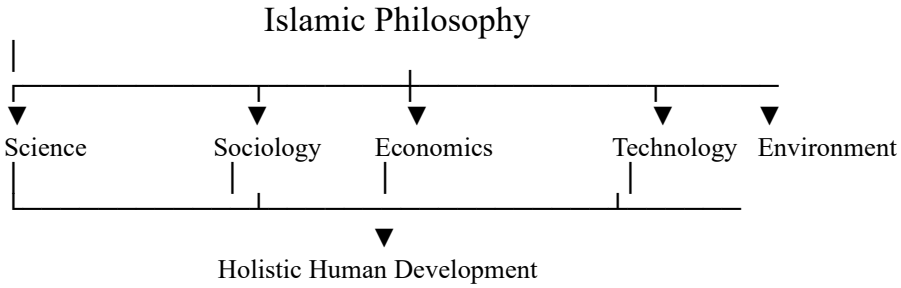
Artificial intelligence can improve education, healthcare, and communication, but it can also create ethical concerns. Identify one ethical question that Islamic philosophy could help address.

Possible Answer
One ethical question is whether AI should be used in ways that compromise human privacy, dignity, or autonomy. Islamic philosophical reflection can help consider whether technological use promotes human welfare and justice while respecting ethical principles.

5.5.3 Education and Interdisciplinary Knowledge

Modern Islamic educational institutions increasingly promote integration between religious studies, natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. This approach helps produce balanced scholars capable of solving modern challenges from both scientific and ethical perspectives.

Interdisciplinary Islamic Philosophy



5.5.4 Future Importance

The future of Islamic philosophy depends greatly on interdisciplinary cooperation that combines revelation, reason, ethics, and scientific inquiry. Such collaboration can help address global problems including poverty, climate change, bioethics, and social injustice.

⚠Check Your Understanding

Attempt the following questions to evaluate how well you have understood the concepts presented in this unit before proceeding to the summary.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Globalisation primarily refers to:
A. Isolation of societies
B. Increased global interconnectedness
C. Rejection of communication
D. Elimination of religion

2. One positive effect of Globalisation is:
A. Cultural isolation
B. Reduced communication
C. Access to global educational resources
D. Decline in technology

3. One challenge Globalisation poses to Islamic philosophy is:
A. Strengthening moral values automatically
B. Weakening Islamic identity
C. Elimination of technology
D. Reduction in cultural interaction

4. Seyyed Hossein Nasr criticised Globalisation mainly for encouraging:
A. Spirituality
B. Materialism
C. Scientific balance
D. Moral discipline

5. Islamic philosophy encourages Muslims to:
A. Reject all modern technology
B. Isolate themselves from the world
C. Engage Globalisation ethically
D. Abandon Islamic identity

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

6. Islamic philosophy evaluates modern ideas according to the _____ and Sunnah.

7. Modern thought includes ideologies such as secularism, liberalism, and _____.

8. Muhammad Abduh advocated the reinterpretation of Islamic _____.

9. Islamic philosophy encourages intellectual openness while avoiding blind _____.

10. Constructive dialogue promotes peaceful _____ among civilisations.

Column A	Column B
11. Science	A. Understanding social change
12. Sociology	B. Ethical use of innovation
13. Technology	C. Ethical evaluation of discoveries
14. Economics	D. Islamic financial ethics
15. Environmental studies	E. Ecological responsibility

5.6 Summary

In this unit, you explored the future of Islamic philosophy in a rapidly changing world. Globalisation creates opportunities for communication, education, technological advancement and intercultural dialogue, but it

can also raise concerns about cultural identity, materialism and moral values. Islamic philosophy therefore seeks constructive global engagement while preserving its ethical and spiritual foundations.

You also examined dialogue with modern thought. Islamic philosophy does not require either complete rejection or uncritical acceptance of contemporary ideas. Instead, critical engagement allows Muslim thinkers to examine modern intellectual trends and respond to them in the light of Islamic principles.

Finally, you considered the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge. By bringing together revelation, reason, science, technology, and the social sciences, Islamic philosophy can contribute to contemporary discussions on ethics, justice, environmental responsibility, and human development. Its future therefore depends on intellectual creativity, ethical commitment, and constructive engagement.



5.7 References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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5.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. B
2. C
3. B
4. B
5. C

6. Qur'an
7. Humanism
8. Teachings
9. Imitation
10. coexistence

11. C
12. A
13. B
14. D
15. E