



## Islamic Approach to Philosophy of Religion Compared with the Western One

Hamidreza Ayatollahy 

Professor, Philosophy Department, Allameh Tabatabaee University, Tehran, Iran.  
ayatollahy@atu.ac.ir

### Abstract

Research Article



If we want to talk about the philosophy of religion with an Islamic approach, we must clarify what are its differences and similarities with the conventional philosophy of religion in the West. For this purpose, in this paper, the meaning of comparative philosophy and its obstacles, possibilities, necessities, and benefits will first be investigated. After that, it will be shown what considerations should be taken into account in order to have a comparative philosophy. Then, we will show how to have a philosophy of religion with an Islamic approach and what differences and similarities this type of philosophy of religion has with the Western philosophy of religion. Following that, some hermeneutic considerations for this philosophical comparison will be mentioned, and afterward, it will be shown how the Christian background of Western philosophy of religion has affected it. Finally, we will review some of the main subjects of the philosophy of religion if it is to be rationally evaluated with the foundations of Islamic thought to show what differences it has with the conventional Western philosophy of religion.

### Keywords

Comparison, Islamic approach, Christianity, Philosophy of religion, Differences and similarities.

---

Received: 2023/06/25 ; Received in revised form: 2023/07/15 ; Accepted: 2023/07/18 ; Published online: 2023/07/21

■ Ayatollahy, H. (2023). Islamic Approach to Philosophy of Religion Compared with the Western One. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, (Special Issue on "Comparative Philosophy of Religion"), 25(3), 63-82.  
<https://doi.org/10.22091/jptr.2023.9679.2924>

■ Copyright © the author



## Introduction

For more than a hundred years, the philosophical studies of religion in the West have become independent from the theology departments and have been placed in the philosophy departments. These types of studies are no longer concerned with accepting and accompanying religious beliefs, and regardless of the religious consequences of the issues that they study, they have put the philosophical analysis of fundamental religious statements on their agenda. This is how the philosophy of religion began.

While from time to time in the Medieval era, some Jewish, Christian, and Islamic philosophers sought to demarcate philosophy from theology or religion, the evident role of philosophy of religion as a distinct field of philosophy does not seem apparent until the mid-twentieth century. (Taliaferro, 2023)

During this period, many philosophical analyses emerged in the philosophy of religion in Western societies. Since the philosophy of religion deals with arguments to prove or disprove some religious beliefs, it first developed in the atmosphere of analytical philosophy and continued to grow in such a way that people like Swinburne talk about the analytical philosophy of religion and evaluate it in that format (Swinburne, 2005, pp. 37-45). The evolution of Western philosophical attitudes and the emergence of different philosophical currents affected the philosophy of religion, and for this reason, the evolution of the philosophy of religion has been accompanied by the philosophical evolution in the West.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, different views in continental philosophy that had separated their path from approaches in linguistic analytical philosophy followed a different path in their philosophical research. They encountered the discipline of philosophy of religion, so they tried to introduce their own philosophy of religion based on their philosophical attitudes (Critchley, 2001). This is how the continental philosophy of religion was formed. Of course, its intellectual paradigms were very different from the paradigms of the analytical philosophy of religion. Phenomenological, historical, hermeneutic, postmodern, intercultural, and feminist attitudes in the philosophy of religion were introduced in the form of the continental philosophy of religion (see, for example, Burns, 2018).

On the other hand, since the beginning of the 21st century, when many books on the philosophy of religion in the West were translated in Islamic countries, especially Iran, gradually the religious philosophical questions that

arose in Western philosophy of religion were also noticed by Iranian philosophers. The type of argumentative confrontation with fundamental religious statements has had a history of several hundred years in Islamic thought, which has been operating under the title of *Kalam*. With this background, Western philosophy of religion was soon noticed in Islamic societies. Several years have passed and our thinkers, in the process of familiarizing themselves with the philosophy of religion, only played the role of observers about the activities of philosophers of religion in the West and their challenges and their reaction to those challenges. Islamic thinkers thought why not use our own rich philosophical reserves to solve the challenges of the philosophy of religion? Reserves that have created a dynamic flow of philosophy in Islamic thought and continue to expand and grow. Some of them worked in this field as modern *Kalam* (see Muhammadrezaii, 1390). This new approach emerged firstly in the form of numerous university theses, and then with numerous articles written in all branches of Western philosophy of religion from the perspective of Islamic thought which created valuable literature in this field. If in the beginning, the correct and adequate explanation of Western philosophical issues and debates and new ideas that emerged in this field were worthy of attention, later, these types of works were considered review works with a low value, and most of the works that addressed the challenges of Western philosophy of religion from an Islamic point of view were considered as high value, as they show some innovations in the philosophy of religion or new *Kalam*.

Iranian philosophers of religion soon realized that many of the challenges of Western philosophy of religion are influenced by the Western attitude towards Christianity as religion. For this reason, they understood that it is possible that each of these challenges will take on a new attitude in the context of Islamic thought and beliefs. It is also possible that we face different challenges in the context of Islamic thinking. The result of this awareness was the conclusion that before discussing the issues of the philosophy of religion, the Christian contexts of those questions should first be analyzed, and then it should be shown that the answers also make sense according to these kinds of beliefs. So, for them, rethinking those issues in the context of Islamic attitude became important and they started to redesign the philosophy of religion in the Islamic society. It was from this time that in the works and books of the philosophy of religion in Islamic societies, there was talk of the philosophy of religion from the Islamic point of view or the Islamic approach to the philosophy of religion or the Islamic philosophy of religion and similar phrases became the basis of some activities of the philosophy of religion in Islamic circles

(Mohammadrezai, 1390; Zarepour, 2023; Khosropanaah, 1389).

The emergence of the continental philosophy of religion and the Islamic approach to the philosophy of religion made the issue of comparison between different attitudes in the philosophy of religion one of the important issues for the studies of the philosophy of religion. This is how the nature, possibility, method, importance, and benefits of the comparative philosophy of religion became the focus of some studies.

It must be added that due to the emergence of a new current in continental philosophy called intercultural philosophy, a new approach was formed in the space of continental philosophy to examine the ratio of different philosophical attitudes from an intercultural perspective. William Sweet explains the relationship between comparative philosophy with intercultural philosophy as follows:

For some, intercultural philosophy is associated with ‘comparative philosophy’ – the bringing “together [of] philosophical traditions that have developed in relative isolation from one another and that are defined quite broadly along cultural and regional lines.” Yet a number of authors would contest identifying the two, though they may allow that intercultural philosophy requires the kind of knowledge of different philosophical traditions often found in comparative philosophy. (Sweet, 2014, p. 3)

This was a rival approach to comparative philosophy. This caused another approach in comparative religious studies that can affect studying relationships of different approaches to the philosophy of religion. This approach is not intended in this paper; and elsewhere, the intercultural method and comparative method should be weighed together. However, the current comparative methods did not consider this approach suitable for the comparative philosophy of religion at all because the intercultural approach does not find a place in the philosophy of religion, which has made reasoning and rational evaluation the basis of its activities.

### **Obstacles to comparative philosophy**

In the philosophical currents of the world, some topics are discussed in different traditions which are common between many of them. But philosophical concepts have many complexities such that it is not clear whether a philosophical title in one intellectual tradition can be understood in the same sense as it is understood in another tradition. Every philosophical

concept has grown in the context of a culture and has its own color and flavor in that culture. A philosophical concept is understood as a set of concepts concerning a stream of thought, and this relation can be different in different cultures. For this reason, it has led some thinkers to the idea that the meaning of the same concept in two philosophical traditions may differ, so the rulings in one cannot be ascribed to the other. In another paper, some of these misunderstandings from one intellectual tradition and language, when translated into another culture, have been shown (Ayatollahy, 2008). This inability to understand can be seen even among subcultures. For example, expressions understood in continental philosophy are sometimes so different from the same expression in analytical philosophy that there is a lesser possibility of understanding each other. The ridicule and criticism of logical positivists on the philosophy of Hegel or Heidegger point to this inability to understand each other.

For this reason, the philosophy of comparative religion can face such challenges (Ayatollahi, 2008).

### **The possibility of comparative philosophy of religion and its considerations**

Despite the difference in the foundations of philosophical concepts, we see that many thinkers of one intellectual tradition try very hard to understand a philosophical concept in another tradition, and for this purpose, they provide various explanations and interpretations so that their audience can relate to the other philosophical tradition. These efforts, which have often been fruitful, show that despite the aforementioned obstacles, there is a possibility of understanding different intellectual traditions. That is, it is possible to have a comparative philosophy of religion.

But it should not be oversimplified and considered a comparison of two attitudes in the philosophy of religion with a superficial comparison between religious concepts and their explanation in two intellectual traditions. Rather, great care must be taken so that those factors that were obstacles to philosophical comparison cannot prevent the realization of this mutual understanding. Therefore, there are some serious considerations in this comparison:

- 1) The concepts used in an intellectual tradition must be understood in its semantic context. Words are created in a culture and that culture will be the background of the word. Then it grows in the same culture and defines its relationship with other words in the set of beliefs of that intellectual tradition

and finds a meaning appropriate to that culture. It subsequently finds its specialized meanings in a scientific discipline. Therefore, the mere translation of a phrase in two intellectual traditions cannot show the semantic load of a word (especially specialized words) for the understanding of the speakers of the early culture. For this reason, the dialectic of whole and part is necessary for translating a philosophical view from one culture to another and comparing them. In this regard, examples of these famous misunderstandings have been shown in another paper. These misunderstandings distort comparative philosophy and make mutual understanding difficult.

2) Propositions that are used in a philosophical tradition, apart from the problems of understanding the meaning of words, gain meaning concerning other propositions. The set of propositions of a tradition gives a particular spirit to a proposition, which, regardless of it, makes the understanding of that proposition ambiguous in that tradition and renders the propositions resulting from it untenable. Over time, these statements induce their own understandings by finding their role in the views of thinkers and philosophers of a tradition. For this reason, understanding faces challenges that a comparative study should be able to overcome.

This issue can be problematic not only in the translation of English words into Persian but also in the translation of the terms of Islamic culture into English. Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr wrote a book in English in 1357 (1998) on "*Sadr al-din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy*" and he used the word "theosophy" as the equivalent of the word "hekmat", because in his opinion hekmat is a kind of philosophical thinking in theology (Nasr, 1997, p. 85). But in the Christian cultural environment, this interpretation of this word is not used, and this word historically has a negative charge. Webster's dictionary mentions two translations for this word: the first translation considers it a doctrine about God and the world based on a mysterious vision, and the second translation attributes it to the new movement teachings that began in 1870 in America which mainly followed Buddhist and Brahmanical theories, especially pantheistic evolution and reincarnation (Webster, p. 1209). This Western intellectual background certainly cannot achieve the high meaning of hekmat, which is the highest stage of mature human thought. (Ayatollahy, 2006)

The comparative philosophy of religion faces these challenges, and we will recount many of these challenges later in detail so that by solving many of these problems, we can have a closer meaning approach in the comparative

philosophy of religion. And it creates a fruitful comparison to create the best understanding.

### **The importance and benefit of comparing philosophical ideas in two intellectual traditions**

Now the question is, with all the obstacles and challenges that exist in comparative philosophy, why is it necessary and what benefits will it have? It seems that comparative studies are one of the necessities of the current situation of the global world and are inevitable; there are also several benefits to it:

Firstly, in the globalized world, the mutual relations of people due to various types of media and the expansion of social networks, the movement of tourists, and the very easy access to other people's thoughts through the Internet have forced everyone to know each other. Many new ideas are formed as a result of these human interactions and create new literature based on interactions so that all intellectual traditions can understand many opinions even in their own tradition. Globalization has doubled the necessity of these comparisons.

Secondly, one of the plagues of understanding one's own thoughts is the sinking of the thought into itself. If a way of thinking wants to know itself well, it cannot just take its central core and not know its hidden angles of thought. Therefore, the best way to understand an intellectual view is to understand the real limits and boundaries of that thought, and this is not possible unless we can show how far this thought flows and where it is no longer attended. Intellectual boundaries are where the "other" begins. Therefore, to understand ourselves, we need to understand others to clarify our limits with them and to be able to express the relationship of our thoughts with them. It can be said that "it is in the *other* that we know ourselves" (Ayatollahy, 2008). The existential boundaries of a thing make up its quiddity and nature. Those who can understand others well can draw their own point of view much better and become aware of the advantages and disadvantages of their own thinking.

Thirdly, human societies have always been in conflict in various ways. Therefore, they must be careful not to fall under the domination of others and to be able to have a more privileged position compared to other societies. This conflict has been in various military, economic, political, and cultural issues. Intellectual disputes are no exception to this rule. For its survival, a philosophical tradition needs to always defend itself from the invasion of

others and also display its privileges to make its intellectual position in the global intellectual map privileged. This will not be possible unless it shows its relationship with other schools of thought. Comparative philosophy can create this situation.

### **Basic considerations for comparing the Western philosophy of religion with the Islamic approach to the philosophy of religion**

If we consider briefly the philosophy of religion to be the rational evaluation of the fundamental religious statements, then the most important feature of the Western philosophy of religion will be the fundamental Christian statements. Even though Christianity and Islam have similarities in many of their fundamental statements, when it comes to the detailed examination of these statements, the differences between the two should be taken seriously. Even understanding the views in the dominant philosophy of religion in the West will not be possible without paying close attention to Christianity. Therefore, to understand the Western philosophy of religion and also to determine our relation to it, we must present the Christian contexts of many points of view in the Western philosophy of religion (Michel, 1998).

The most important difference between religious thinking in Christianity and Islam comes back to the essence of the two. While Christianity is a historical religion, Islam is a propositional religion. A Christian must believe in things like original sin, Adam's fall, God's love for his servants, God's incarnation in Christ, Christ's redemptive and suffering life, and finally going to the cross to wash away human sin, which are historical events. The main Christian belief is the presence of divinity as mentioned in history. Christian belief is belief in events in a divine logic. While Islamic beliefs are beliefs in statements. Islamic beliefs are in truths such as the oneness of God, the belief in prophets who convey divine instructions to us, and the belief in resurrection.

If a statement wants to find meaning in Western religious thought, it must be understood in the form of Christian beliefs. For example, some have interpreted Nietzsche's famous statement, "God is dead" in the Islamic tradition as "God does not exist" while Nietzsche took his atheistic secular view from the abandonment of mankind after Christ's crucifixion. God is dead is more than an atheistic view. It can even be recognized between religious and atheistic views. For this reason, after him, people like Altizer have spoken about the theology of the death of God (Altizer, 1979, p. 53). Therefore, first

of all, the Christian contexts of the issues of Western philosophy of religion should be analyzed to find out in what format these issues are raised and whether it is understood in the Islamic tradition with this background or should be looked at from another perspective. Several examples of these Christian contexts that should be noted are:

1) Since Adam's original sin, which has become humanity's inherent sin, and Adam's descent from heaven is one of the main axes of Christian belief, therefore, any belief that portrays a man in a different way, like what is discussed in the evolution theory, can give a fundamental blow to Christian beliefs. While the belief in the creation of Adam is one of the Islamic teachings that does not play a central role in the religious belief of Muslims. For this reason, the evolution theory has not been able to raise a serious challenge among Muslims, while one of the most important two-hundred-year continuous conflicts between Christians and scientists is the conflict concerning the scientific view of evolution. The Islamic propositional view has sidelined this challenge. De Cruz points to the challenge of evolution and Christianity: "These findings challenge traditional religious accounts of humanity, including the special creation of humans, *the imago Dei*, the historical Adam and Eve, and original sin" (De Cruz, 2022).

Debates on the Fall and the historical Adam have centered on how these narratives can be understood in the light of contemporary science. On the face of it, limitations of our cognitive capacities can be naturalistically explained as a result of biological constraints, so there seems little explanatory gain to appeal to the narrative of the Fall. Some have attempted to interpret the concepts of sin and Fall in ways that are compatible with paleoanthropology, notably Peter van Inwagen (2004) and Jamie K. Smith (2017). (De Cruz, 2022)

2) The Christian God is a God of pure love for people. For this reason, when a Christian encounters evil in the world, he cannot see it as compatible with the images he has of God. While the God of Muslims, apart from being merciful and compassionate, also plots against and punishes the oppressors. So, the question is not of the same type in Islam and Christianity. Of course, this does not mean that this question is no longer raised in Islam, but rather that the question is raised from another perspective in Islamic intellectual debates, and that is divine justice and the nature of evil, which has had wide-ranging debates in the history of Islamic thought. Two different views of God lead to two different types of reactions and responses.

3) Among the Christian teachings, incarnation is the most important.

Incarnation means that God brought Himself to the earth in the form of the Son, that is, Christ, to cleanse people from sin by sacrificing Himself. This doctrine, which has led to various interpretations of the Trinity, is faced with many intellectual conflicts. As a result, Christians are faced with an intellectual dilemma, whether to take the side of reason or the side of their Christian faith. This caused all kinds of discussions on the relationship between reason and faith to arise in light of this challenge in the Western philosophy of religion. The two kinds of moderate and extreme fideism have also been solutions in the philosophy of religion to overcome this challenge. Hadi Sadeqi (1391, p. 32) explains this issue: “But there are many contexts in the scriptures and the main teachings of Christianity that have caused such a tendency – fideism – to arise; among others, we can mention the doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation and Solvation, original sin, redeeming death and Messiah.”

But this issue has not been raised in this format in Islamic thought. “Fideism did not emerge in the Islamic world because the teachings of the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet have always recommended deliberation and wisdom and have prevented believers from unreasonable faith” (1391, p. 32). Although the relationship between some partial Islamic teachings and reason (especially instrumental rationality) raises the issue of the relationship between reason and religious teachings, the Islamic approach to this issue is different. The fundamental Islamic beliefs in Islamic thought must be completely rational and be believed by reason, and whatever is contrary to it is fundamentally separated from Islamic beliefs.

4) Christian teachings are based on a type of revelation that took place over 1500 years. The first copies of the Bible were written 50 years after Jesus Christ, and their connection with the direct revelation of Christ was very distant. Therefore, understanding religious teachings in Christianity is a human-divine act. While the revelation in Islam was revealed over 23 years and only to the Prophet of Islam, and the words of God Himself were revealed to him. Thomas Michel, a Catholic priest and theologian who has lived for many years among Muslims says the following about the difference between Islam and Christianity:

Whenever a Muslim looks at the Holy Book, he observes that this book is completely different from the Holy Quran. The Qur’an is a single book that was reported to the people by one person [Prophet of Islam], in only one language, within 23 years. If the Holy Bible is a total of 73 (66) books, which were compiled and compiled in various languages

over 1500 years, and a large number of “inspired” authors, whose names have been forgotten by history, were used to prepare it. Complex operations have been performed. This is where these writings have diversity in their historical methods and literary methods. (Michel, 1998, pp. 23-4)

This issue has made receiving religious instructions in Christianity different from Islam.

5) In Christianity, the doctrine of “salvation is possible only through Christ” has taken such a hold in the minds of believers that in their opinion, other religions are completely abandoned by this doctrine. The rational examination of the claims of other religions that consider their own religious thought to be true which is against this Christian belief has become the foundation of religious exclusivism and pluralism in the Western philosophy of religion. Benton says: “Like exclusivists, inclusivists believe that eternal existence in God’s presence is only possible because of the salvific provisions noted in the one true religion. However, they do not maintain ‘that only the believers or practitioners of that religion, during their earthly lives, will be redeemed’” (Benton, 2020).

Although this challenge can also exist in Islamic thinking, the way Islam looks at other religions, which considers them to be in the process of becoming more perfect, provides the answer to this challenge from another perspective. The Quran asserts that:

Indeed, the faithful, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans—those who have faith in God and the Last Day and act righteously—they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve. [62/2]

6) Unlike Islam and Judaism, Christianity does not have jurisprudence. For this reason, the Christian point of view is so strong in the individual relationship between man and God that there are not many social and political teachings in it. For this reason, a topic such as the relationship between religion and politics has not been able to open a significant place in the Western philosophy of religion. While due to the numerous political and social rulings in Islam, this issue would be one of the important discussions in the philosophy of religion from an Islamic perspective. The dominant secularism in the West has been a natural trend from the Christian perspective on political issues, and this current that has been passed in Western modernity cannot be prescribed for Islamic societies.

The mentioned cases and some other cases that show that the Christian foundation in the Western philosophy of religion shows a special approach to the philosophy of religion were mentioned only so that when discussing many issues that are common between Islamic and Christian thought, philosophical evaluation of those beliefs should have serious considerations regarding the context of the discussion and the Islamic point of view should be well recognized. In the comparative philosophy of religion, many religious topics can be analyzed philosophically, but they cannot be generalized about Islamic fundamental beliefs outright. Therefore, philosophical issues should be compared with the Islamic approach to reach the Islamic approach in the philosophy of religion and recognize its similarities and differences with the Western philosophy of religion.

### **The background of Western and Islamic philosophical tradition**

Another consideration that should be taken into account in the Western philosophical explanation is the background of various philosophical views in the Western tradition. This background in Islamic thinking has differences with the Western philosophical attitude which has raised a philosophical view of religious foundations from a different perspective. One of the most important differences in approaches is the predominance of experience and experimental thinking in Western philosophical thought and, accordingly, in the philosophy of religion, while pure intellectualism is the basic characteristic of philosophical approaches in the context of Islamic thought.

The Western attitude in the modern era starts from experience and wants to explore intellectual concepts in this way, the best examples of which can be seen in the philosophy of Hume, Kant, and Hegel. But the Islamic philosophical attitude, which is well represented in Avicenna and Mulla Sadra, starts from pure intellectual concepts and then examines human experience based on that. These are two different starting points. Some Western challenges are based on the fact that it attempts to explain issues that are inherently intellectual through experience-oriented philosophical attitudes. While if some religious statements were evaluated in the context of philosophical thought in the Islamic world, maybe those challenges would not be raised in that way.

On the other hand, when Islamic philosophical thought is faced with the problems of the philosophy of religion that are based on lived experiences, that deep philosophical background will not be effective. Therefore, for the philosophical evaluations of the issues of the philosophy of religion and their

comparison in the two currents of thought, Western and Islamic, one should pay serious attention to the scope of the power of the type of philosophical approaches of each of them.

Another difference between Western and Islamic philosophical contexts is the priority of ontology over epistemology in Islamic philosophical thought and the priority of epistemology over ontology in Western philosophy.

### **The characteristics of the philosophy of religion with an Islamic approach to the topics under the philosophy of religion**

If we want to show the philosophy of religion in an Islamic approach and recognize the issues of the philosophy of religion from this point of view, it is necessary to analyze the topics raised in the Western philosophy of religion and show to what extent the Islamic approach accompanies it and in what topics are offered a different look. But this is a huge work that should be presented in extensive works. Here it is briefly shown how the Islamic approach to the topics under the philosophy of religion is a case-to-case approach and how it differs from the Western philosophy of religion:

1) Arguments for the existence of God: Such arguments in the West have appeared in ontological, cosmological, and design arguments as main arguments, and in arguments from religious experience, moral arguments, and arguments from miracles as secondary arguments (see Geisler, Corduan, 2003, pp. 79-211). In the history of Islamic thought, these arguments are not the kind of ontological argument as has been proposed in Western thought; although in the works of some thinkers, a kind of such an argument can be found. The cosmological argument is closer to the occurrence argument of the Muslim theologians, especially the type of *kalam* cosmological argument. Although some people in the Western philosophy of religion have spoken about the possibility and necessity of explaining the cosmological argument, since this division is based on the facts of the world and not on pure intellectual thought, it has not been very successful. However, in Islamic thought, the possibility and necessity argument has been discussed with Avicenna's argumentation view, which is still considered a decisive argument for the existence of God.

The argument from design is an argument of Western origin that has not been proposed in Islamic thought as an argument for the existence of God in this format. After the introduction of this type of argument into the Islamic platform, some Muslim thinkers analyzed it based on the Islamic intellectual background, some of them did not consider it sufficient, some considered it effective but not certain, and some of them repeated the Western tradition.

Even though we do not have a background of religious experience and thus argument from religious experience in Islamic thought, nevertheless, in the Islamic tradition, it is close to the innateness argument, and a good comparison can be made between the two.

However, the Siddiqin argument, which is a valuable and sublime argument in Islamic thought, has no parallel in Western philosophical thought, and the special feature of Islamic philosophical thought is especially in the light of the principality of existence (see Javadi Amoli, 1374).

The moral argument that has not been able to prove its validity in the Western philosophy of religion has no parallel in Islamic thought. The miracle argument is just a marginal argument in the West that Muslim thinkers have not used.

2) Reason and faith: The issues of reason and faith that have caused various fideistic approaches in Western thought have been raised in a very different form in Islamic thought. This difference was explained previously. If this debate is to be examined in Islamic thought, it will be raised in a different way and for a different purpose. Of course, there is detailed literature in the history of Islamic thought about these approaches to the relationship between reason and faith, and it can still be evaluated (Sadeqi, 1391, pp. 57-70). This issue has been raised in another form in Islamic thought, and that is the ratio of rationality and obedience.

3) Religious experience: The title of religious experience has no history in Islamic thinking, but rather it is more about spiritual states. The religious experience in the West was seriously brought into the literature of Western philosophy of religion with Schleiermacher. The dominance of empiricism in the West and the need for a belief to be confirmed by experience created this type of approach to prove and stabilize religious beliefs. This approach was a way out of the impasse that Kant's and Hume's philosophical investigations had made in the arguments for the existence of God and had shown that the proofs presented at that time could not gain the necessary credibility. It was from here that religious experience has played a role as an important and alternative element in the explanation of religious beliefs until now in the Western philosophy of religion (Qaemini, 1381, pp. 102-15).

When religious experience reaches the mystical experience, it approaches the mystical attitudes in Islamic thinking. In Islamic thinking, not only the term religious experience has not been used, but it has not been considered as an explanation of fundamental religious beliefs. Its closest equivalent in Islamic thinking is spiritual states, which have been considered in the path of

spiritual progress. The validity or authority of these situations and their conflicts has been a serious debate in Islamic thought, which shows that the philosophical discussions around it in Islamic thought are from a different perspective.

4) God and the world of creation: The relationship between God and the universe that He created is one of the topics of the philosophy of religion. In Western religious philosophy, God is the creator of the universe. God is the omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and creator of the universe. God's attributes are expressed in these attributes. The explanation of each of these attributes and their relationship with each other as well as with the realities of the world is one of the most important philosophical studies in the philosophy of religion.

I think what has been overlooked in the modern era in the perception of God is His lordship. In Islamic thinking, God is resourceful and is also the owner or the Lord of the world. Western subjectivism made human thought the center of the knowledge of the world and, as a result, the resulting humanism made man the standard of everything in this world. If we talk about God, God is mentioned from the point of view of man, not the God on whom man has complete dependence. The humanist view of the world made man the owner of everything he could attain, and the planning of all the affairs of the world was only in the hands of this man and based on his self-founded reason. As a result, in social, political, economic, and cultural relations, secularism has been the only acceptable aspect of social systems.

But in Islam, everything in the world, including man himself, is the property of God, and through His permission, man becomes the owner of some things in the world under certain conditions. The resources of the world are always in the hands of God, and any resourcefulness that humans do for the world can only be within the scope of divine resourcefulness.

This type of view of the universe and its relationship with God creates a different current compared to the Western view of God in Western philosophy of religion. Since Christianity emphasizes more on the personal relationship of humans with God, therefore the resourcefulness of the world by God is marginalized, and as a result, secularism becomes its natural result. But in Islamic thought, all kinds of religious instructions that have based on God's resourcefulness push secularism to the sidelines.

The philosophy of religion with an Islamic perspective should bring God's Lordship among the important philosophical topics and analyze them rationally.

Another issue that exists in the relationship between God and the world is the parables that are made from this relationship. Some Christian thinkers have imagined God's relationship with the world as the relationship of a loving father with his children or a gardener with a garden or the regulator of the world (Flew & others, 1971, pp. 1-13). This has caused challenges such as the meaningfulness of religious statements in the philosophy of religion. If God and the universe are imagined as two separate entities, then the world can be easily interpreted in such a way that it can be raised based on its relationships without the need for God, just as a garden without a gardener can finally take its own path. While in Islamic philosophical thinking, this ratio is like the ratio of the imaginary images of man to man himself, which is the same as belonging to man. In this type of Islamic attitude, the world is complete and moment-to-moment dependent on God, in such a way that if God is removed from this relationship, it will no longer be an existing world. It is with this ratio that other attributes of God such as knowledge, power, and mercy should be understood. The Islamic approach to the philosophy of religion takes a different path compared to the simplistic view of some Western religious philosophers. If the question is about proving the existence of God, it should be proved in such a way that God has such a relationship with the world.

5) The diversity of religions and their truth: The differences between Islam and Christianity in this topic were explained. It must be added that this issue is related to the difference in the Islamic view of the role of prophets, including Jesus Christ. In Islam, prophets only have the role of conveying the message from God to mankind and helping to make the message realized. These religious messages make up a person's religious beliefs and religious lifestyle. As was shown previously, if some religions have a part of Islamic beliefs in them, they can talk about their relative authenticity. Although different Muslim thinkers can defend exclusivism or pluralism or inclusivism, the Islamic way of looking at these three categories and the authenticity of religions with the Christian way of looking at it based on the type of teachings of the two religions will be different. Therefore, in an Islamic approach to the philosophy of religion, the diversity and validity of religions will be from a different perspective.

6) The problem of evil: One of the most important challenges of religious thinking in the West is the conflict between the attributes of God and the reality of the existence of evil in the world. This issue has always been an important part of the Western philosophy of religion. As it was explained, this issue has turned into a different challenge in the course of Islamic thought, and that is God's justice (see Motahhari, 1399). In the history of Islamic theology,

the subject of God's justice and its relationship with moral standards has been an important issue, such that different schools have emerged in the face of this challenge. Thus, the problem of evil in Western philosophy becomes the problem of divine justice in Islamic thinking. Therefore, the Islamic attitude in the philosophy of religion should focus more on the rational evaluation of divine justice, and the problem of evil is taken into consideration at the next stage (McGinnis and Acar, 2023).

7) Atheistic views in the Western philosophy of religion: What exists as atheism in the Western philosophy of religion is several currents that existed during the modern era. These currents have tried to explain their atheistic attitudes in the form of philosophical concepts in the philosophy of religion. These attitudes can be shown in the form of several waves of atheism, each of which has been proposed according to the conditions of the religious thought of their time. Some of these waves have been caused by the inability of theists to present a logical view of their religious beliefs. Some of them have been caused by the philosophical attitudes or scientific views of their time which have been able to create a new challenge for religious teachings (see: Baggini, 2003). These various waves of atheism have usually been a reaction to the changes in perspective in the explanation of religious doctrines among thinkers of the modern era. The ups and downs of these currents in a historical process have been affected by the conditions of the respective times (Ayatollahy, 2018, pp. 104-5). But since there has not been an era like the modern era in the developments of Islamic thought, the type of atheism in Islamic societies has not been so influential, nor has it been one of those types that have emerged in the history of modern Western philosophy.

This does not mean that we don't need to clarify our relationship with those types of atheistic views but it is just to point out that the Islamic approach to the philosophy of religion must follow a different path when faced with these currents. Because the theistic currents that existed in the West and their shortcomings became the basis of atheistic views that did not exist in Islamic societies until the time when these views entered the Islamic intellectual circles from the West in the last hundred years and influenced Islamic thinking.

## **Conclusion**

If we want to establish a discipline on the Islamic approach to the philosophy of religion, we must know why this approach is different from the philosophy of religion in the Western tradition. It means that we must introduce a kind of comparative philosophy of religion. In this paper, the comparative philosophy

in general was analyzed first. Some difficulties and obstacles of comparative studies are shown. Then the possibility, necessity, and advantages of comparing some different philosophical attitudes were explained. Based on this explanation, important considerations in comparing the Islamic approach to the philosophy of religion with the Western one were emphasized. The most important one is the Christian background and context of Western philosophy of religion that differ when applied to the Islamic approach. Finally, I showed that if we want to analyze some topics of conventional Western philosophy of religion in the context of Islamic thought, how the problems and solutions will be different. This comparison will pave the way to present a philosophy of religion from an Islamic point of view.

### **Ethics declarations**

### **Conflict of interests**

The author has no competing interests.

## References

- Altizer, T. J. J. (1979). *The descent into hell: a study of radical reversal of the Christian consciousness*. Seabury Press.
- Ayatollahi, H. (2018). *Comparative philosophy: Islamic and Western*. Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Ayatollahy, H. (2006). Hermeneutical considerations in translation of philosophical and religious texts. *Translation Studies*, 4(15). [in Persian]
- Ayatollahy, H. (2008). Remarks on comparative philosophy: Islamic and Western philosophies. *Falsafeh, The Iranian Journal of Philosophy*, 36(3), 91-102.
- Baggini, J. (2003). *Atheism: a very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Benton, M. (2020). Disagreement and religion: problems and perspectives. Forthcoming, M. Benton & J. Kvanvig (Eds.), *Religious disagreement and pluralism*, Oxford University Press.
- Burns, E. (2018). *Continental philosophy of religion*. Cambridge University Press.
- Critchley, S. (2001). *Continental philosophy: a very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- De Cruz, H. (2022). Religion and Science. In E. N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition). Retrieved from: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/religion-science/>
- Flew, A., Hare, R., & Mitchell, B. (1971). Theology and Falsification. In B. Mitchell (Ed.), *The philosophy of religion*, pp. 1-13. Oxford.
- Geisler, N., & Corduan, W. (2003). *Philosophy of religion*. Wipf & Stock Publisher.
- Javadi Amuli, A. (1995). *Tabyeen-i barahin-i ethbate Khoda [Proofs of Divine Existence]*. Esra Publications. [in Persian]
- Khosropanaah, A. (2010). *Kalame jadid ba roykarde Islami [New theology: an Islamic approach]*. Maaref Publishing. [in Persian]
- McGinnis, J., & Rahim, A. (2023). Arabic and Islamic philosophy of religion. In E. N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Summer 2023 Edition). Retrieved from: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/arabic-islamic-religion/>
- Michel, T. (1998). *Christian theology*. (H. Tawfighi, Trans.). Center of Religions Publications. [in Persian]

- Mohammadrezaii, M. (2011). *Kalam-i jadid ba roykard-i tatbiqi [Modern kalam with a comparative approach]*. Maaaref Publishing. [in Persian]
- Motahhari, M. (2020). *‘Adle elahy [Divine Justice]*. Sadra Publication. [in Persian]
- Nasr, H. (1997). *Sadr al-din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy*. Institute for Humanity and Cultural Studies.
- Qaeminiya, A. (2002). *Tajrobe-yi dini va gowhar-i din [Religious experience and religion’s core]*. Bustan-i Ketab. [in Persian]
- Rashad, A. A. (2005). *Dinpajoohi-yi moaser [Contemporary religious studies]*. Institute for Islamic culture and thought.
- Sadeqi H. (2012). *Daraamadi bar kalaam-i jadid [An introduction to modern kalam]*. Ketab-i Taha. [in Persian]
- Schleiermacher, F. (1998). In R. Crouter (Ed.). *On religion: speeches to its cultured despisers*, Cambridge.
- Smith, J. K. (2017). What stands on the fall? A philosophical exploration. In W. Cavanaugh & J. K. Smith (Eds.), *Evolution and the fall*, pp. 48-64. Eerdmans. Quoted in De Cruz, 2022.
- Stiver, D. R. (1996). *The philosophy of religious language: sign, symbol and story*. Blackwell Publishers
- Sweet, W. (2014). The Project of Intercultural Philosophy. In William Sweet (Ed.). *What is intercultural philosophy?* pp. 1-18. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Swinburne, R. (2005). "The value and Christian roots of analytical philosophy of religion" in Harriet A. Harris, Christopher J. Insole (Eds.) *Faith and philosophical analysis* (the impact of analytical philosophy on the philosophy of religion), pp. 33-45. Routledge.
- Taliaferro, C. (n.d.). Philosophy of religion. In E. N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Summer 2023 Edition). Retrieved from: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/philosophy-religion/>
- Van Inwagen, P. (2004). The Argument from Evil. In P. van Inwagen (Ed.), *Christian faith and the problem of evil*, pp. 55-73. Eerdmans. Quoted in DeCruz, 2022.
- Zarepour, M. S. (2022). *Necessary existence and monotheism*. Cambridge University Press. <http://doi.org/10.1017/9781108938112>
- Zarepour, M. S. (2023). *Islamic philosophy of religion essays from analytic perspectives*. Routledge.