A Schema for the Islamic Epistemological System

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Abstract

Today, 'system-generation' in the sphere of religious sciences and teachings as well as other basic affairs is among the important and critical issues now seriously considered by the elite. In regard with religious sciences and knowledge, one can achieve perfection, comprehensiveness, and good epistemic logical structure (moving from generalities and foundations to specifics and results) when the findings of those spheres are formulated in the form of an 'intellectual system' or 'behavioral system' like a general system with specified goals, enjoying coherent constituents and interactive and related components. One of the philosophical and religious sciences of great importance with a basic role in other religious sciences and an accumulated background in the works and texts of earlier, later and contemporary Muslim philosophers is '(Islamic) epistemology'. The present study claims that it can offer a systemic image of Islamic epistemology. Thus, it has tried to offer a

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schema for 'the System of Islamic epistemology' and explain its nature, components and features in short, based on the process of Islamic system-generation. According to the present study, the theoretical framework and the main axes of the discussions on formulating an Islamic epistemological system can be suggested to be as follows: concepts and definitions, features and characteristics, status and importance, goals and ends, foundations and presuppositions, components and constituents, method and sources, usage and efficiency. In addition, for instance, the authors of the present article consider the usage of the System of Islamic epistemology in the 'Islamic methodology'. The research method in this study is substantially a rational one, and it has used library sources in data collection.

Keywords

system, system-generation, epistemology, epistemology system, Islamic methodology.

Introduction

In general, 'system-generation' in the sphere of religious sciences and teachings as well as other basic affairs is among the important and critical issues now seriously considered by the elites. And in specific terms, among the scientific essential tasks in the contemporary Iran is offering the discussions and findings of the religious sciences and teachings in the form of an 'intellectual system'.

Regarding religious sciences and teachings, one can achieve perfection, comprehensiveness, and good epistemic logical structure (moving from generalities and foundations to specifics and results) when the findings of those spheres are formulated in the form of an 'intellectual system' or 'behavioral system'. The intellectual system is a general system with specified goals, enjoying coherent constituents and interactive components. Thus, if that group of sciences and teachings are presented in the form of intellectual systems, one can explain the pillars and constituent parts of each – in their mutual relationships – with a certain methodology and with more precision and cohesiveness.

In our country, the scientific institutes and some authorities have taken some steps to design some of the religious systems including the political system of Islam, the legal system of Islam, the economic system of Islam, the ethical system of Islam, the educational system of Islam, and the managerial system of Islam. However, it seems that foundational works are to be done and we must continue our efforts. Most of instances of system-generation are of the type of inferring and formulating 'social' and 'behavioral' systems, while it is also important to formulate 'theoretical' systems of Islam as well.

One of the philosophical and religious sciences of great importance with a basic role in religious sciences and an accumulated background in the works and texts of earlier, later and contemporary Muslim philosophers is 'epistemology' that must be presented systematically. The Islamic epistemology system can be inferred from two important main sources: Islamic philosophy and religious texts.

Islamic philosophy includes the following philosophical schools: peripatetic, illumination, Yemeni,[1] transcendental, and Neo-Sadra'id schools. However, it must be noted that the main concern of Islamic philosophers has been ontology and metaphysical discussions, not epistemology. Nevertheless, the texts of Islamic philosophy are full of epistemological discussions (in its general sense, not particular).[2] Besides, religious texts (the Quran and hadiths) contain deep and precise epistemological doctrines.

The present study claims that we can have a systematic formulation of epistemology. Thus, this article seeks to offer a

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1. Among the specific features of Mirdamad's Yemeni philosophy – which is both its distinctive feature from earlier philosophies and influencing the transcendental philosophy – is that Mirdamad has considered the whole universe of possible beings as one single individual unit and a macro system. That is, all worlds with all diversity and plurality of beings form one coherent single system.

2. Epistemology in its general sense is a science used by both Islamic and western philosophers, and it is better to use the term 'philosophy of knowledge' for it. This discipline covers some broader discussions including epistemology in its specific sense, ontology of knowledge, epistemic discussions of psychology and the like. But epistemology in its most specific sense is a knowledge developed by Kant and the contemporary western epistemologists. Epistemology in this sense merely deals with limits of knowledge, definition of knowledge and its components such as 'belief', 'verity', and 'justification' as well as linguistic and semantic discussions.

schema of the System of Islamic epistemology along with an investigation of elements such as key definitions of discussion as well as the essence, components, features and functions of that system.

In the present article, based on the 'process of generating Islamic system' – designed and offered in the 'circle of system-generation' of the Research Center of Islamic Culture and Thought, and a summary of it has been formerly published in the form of an article[1] whose detailed copy is being prepared to be published in the form of a detailed series. By using some studies, conducted in the related subjects including Islamic humanities, social systems of Islam, and Islamic epistemology, we attempt to present firstly a definition of system of Islamic epistemology, then to explain the theoretical framework and the main axes of the discussions related to formulation of that system and, finally, to explain its application in Islamic methodology.

This article deserves to be considered by the scientific community as a schema and a suggestion as the first step in formulating the Islamic epistemology and, consequently, lead to a more detailed and more precise scientific effort in this regard.

As far as the authors have sought, no considerable scientific work has been done – inside the country and abroad – regarding the formulation of the system of Islamic epistemology; and thus, the present article can be considered innovative and without any precedent.

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1. Rashad, A. (1399 SH). "Farāyand Niẓām-sāzī Islāmī bā Ta'kīd bar Niẓām Siyāsī" in *Fiqh wa Siyāsat* Scientific-Specialized Bi-quarterly, 1(2), pp. 7-31.

1. Concepts and Definitions

1-1. System

Some consider 'system' (in its absolute sense) as a coherent series with certain foundations and goals (Sadr, 1375 SH, p. 210). Indeed, 'system' is the title for a purposeful series with components, relations and harmony among the components (See: Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 77; Churchman, 1968, p. 26; Mar'ashi et al., 1385 SH, pp. 34-66). Therefore, any system has components related to one another with a certain goal. 'Goals' are the ends for which the components of the system have been designed. Thus, among the features of the system are having components, elements and its constituents. It is not possible to imagine a system without its constituents, because the whole without the components and the components without the whole are nonsense (See: Durand, 2010, p. 40; Reza'iyan, 1387 SH, pp. 22-24).

Accordingly, the system is a certain whole consisted of the components with mutual relations (coherent); that is, a change in any component affects other components and the whole as well, and none of the components does affect or is affected independently and as separated from the whole collection (Vaseti, 1388 SH, p. 89).

Similarly, in the definition of the system, one can say, "system is composed of various components that are consistent, yet different. Besides, it has demarcations with other systems and has a certain end and goal that must be realized" (Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 11). The system of Islamic epistemology naturally enjoys such components of the system (in the absolute sense).

1-2. Religious system

If we accept that the religion (here, Islam) is completely capable to fulfill all basic needs of human beings in various spheres

of life including beliefs and knowledge, obligations and laws, ethics, education, rights, economics, politics and so on, we may claim that religion is systematic in all and each of those sphere. That is, it starts from certain specific origins and achieves certain results through various methods; and this system is a consistent whole consisting of interactive purposeful propositional and doctrinal components of insight, knowledge, character, action and attitude; and we mean this very idea when we speak of religious system.

In discussing the religious system, we must distinguish two aspects: the aspect of theory and the aspect of practice. We may call the former 'system study' or 'system generation' and the latter 'systemizing' or 'applying system'. The former is the subject of the study, and here, we must infer and extract the religious system in various spheres of life through research. In the latter, however, we must apply the system inferred in practice in the individual and social life. Naturally, it is possible for system study and system generation to have some subcategories (for more information, see: Reza'i-manesh and Baba'i Mojarrad, 1394 SH, pp. 164-166).

It is worth noting that the system of religious (Islamic) epistemology is posed mainly in the sphere of theory, discussion and inquiry, i.e. in theoretical level (though one can consider other usages for it in relation to other sciences). In the system of Islamic epistemology, thus, we are mainly seeking to study and generate system, not to apply systems.

1-3. The Intellectual-Philosophical System

When we speak of the intellectual-philosophical system, the 'philosophical' factor plays a considerable role, and we do not mean any kind of thinking. Rather, we consider the thinking that enjoys a

philosophical character. Three of the intellectual-philosophical systems are as follows: epistemological system, ontological system, and value system.

Any kind of intellectual-philosophical system, apart from the components of system in its absolute sense, enjoys at least these kingpin elements: subject matter, issues, domain, method, ends, and functions (Abbas-zadeh, 1398 SH, p. 18). Naturally, the system of Islamic epistemology enjoys those elements as well.

1-4. The Knowledge

'Knowledge' consists of any kind of cognition, perception and consciousness in the absolute and general sense (Mesbah Yazdi, 1386 SH, vol. 1, pp. 151-152), whether it is science, an intellectual discipline, a belief, or an affirmation and judgment (or even a simple assumption or concept);[1] whether it is general or particular, whether it is theoretical, presumptive, or certain. All these are instances of knowledge. Knowledge is, thus, the divisional category of all of them.

Earlier Islamic philosophers have mainly called knowledge '*Ilm;* and here, they do not mean knowledge in its specific sense or – as Westerners say – science. Rather, they consider the very cognition,

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1. The contemporary western epistemology considers knowledge as merely a 'propositional knowledge', which works in the sphere of affirmations. It does not regard assumptions as knowledge. But the Islamic philosophers consider assumptions as a part of knowledge as well (for example, see: Farabi, 1890, p. 56; Suhravardi, 1388 SH, p. 4; Mulla Sadra, 1388 SH, pp. 54-55). Similarly, in the contemporary western epistemology, knowledge is just of the acquired type, while in the Islamic philosophy, intuitive knowledge (including human's knowledge of his own essence, his own internal states, his own notions and thoughts, the prophets' revelations, the mystics' inspiration, etc.) is also a type of knowledge (Abbas-zadeh, 1401, p. 62).

perception and consciousness in its general and absolute sense, which also includes – as mentioned before – the particular sense of the word.

The above definition is not the real and true definition of the word *'ilm* or knowledge. Rather, it is a mere description of the title (*sharḥ al-ism*). Indeed, knowledge is among the axiomatic conceptions and needs no definitions. In principle, we cannot offer a definition for it, for there is no more evident notion of it by which one can define knowledge. Thus, the statements mentioned in the philosophical and logical books as the definitions of knowledge are not true definitions. Rather, they are specifications of the instances of knowledge (such as defining knowledge as 'acquisition of the image of something in the mind', which states the instance of acquired knowledge). Or they are explanations of the way knowledge is originated or comes to existence (such as defining it as 'presence of an abstract being before another abstract being' or 'presence of something before an abstract being' which states the abstract existence of knowledge and knowledgeable) (Mesbah Yazdi, 1386 SH, vol. 1, p. 152). Similarly, the contemporary Western epistemologists' definition of knowledge as 'justified true belief' (see: Audi, 2003, p. 90 & Chisholm, 1982, p. 90) and some Islamic thinkers' definition of it as 'asserted statement conformed to constant idea' (see: Tusi, 1370 SH, p. 226; Helli, 1412 AH, p. 394; and Jurjani, 1325 SH, p. 67) refer to 'affirmative acquired knowledge'. And this is just one of the instances of knowledge.

1-5. Epistemology

Epistemology[1] is one of the branches of philosophy dealing

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1. The term 'epistemology' is derived from the Greek root and is composed of 'episteme' meaning 'knowledge' and 'logos' meaning 'cognition and consciousness'. Together, it means a cognition about knowledge or theory of knowledge (A'vani, 1399 SH, p. 352).

with study on the essence and nature, the domain, and various aspects of knowledge, possibility of cognition, value of cognition, sources of cognition, method of cognition, human's capacity and ability in regard with cognition and the like (Fa'ali, 1377 SH, p. 29). Altogether, one can define epistemology as a discussion on the nature and essential accidents of 'knowledge' and the related issues (Abbas-zadeh, 1398 SH, p. 18).

Thus, the subject of epistemology is knowledge in its general sense (the absolute notion of cognition and consciousness) and the method of science of epistemology, in the Islamic philosophy, is rational method (see: Avicenna, 1403 AH, vol. 1, p. 308; Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol. 3, pp. 277-360, vol. 8, p. 200; Fakhr Razi, 1966, vol. 1, p. 367). However, Muslim philosophers have also adduced religious texts in their discussions and the later philosophers have conducted more or less rich studies in this regard by adducing religious sources.

Epistemology and logics are two introductory disciplines for entering philosophy. There is also a mutual relationship between epistemology and logics: logics deals with the form of the thought and epistemology discusses the material of thought and the possibility to achieve the reality. Thus, epistemology is, from this perspective, prior to logics. Therefore, the principles and pillars of logical discussions require epistemological investigation, just as epistemology is also based on logical principles and rules. Similarly, epistemology – on the basis of its scope and domain – is of two types: absolute epistemology and restricted (constrained) epistemology. The former means that group of common and general rules and principles of epistemology that is not specified to a certain sphere of epistemology of sciences and affairs and covers all domains of knowledge. And the latter means that group of epistemological

principles and rules that is specified to a certain domain and does not cover all human knowledge and sciences (Hussein-zada, 1382 SH, p. 16).

1-6. The Islamic Epistemology

The Islamic epistemology is the epistemological school based on Islamic philosophy, which enjoys five features: realism, correspondence, foundationalism, certainism, and altogether rationalism (Abbas-zada, 1401 SH, pp. 52-53).

The phrase 'altogether rationalism' has been inserted in the above definition because all Islamic philosophers stress on the unique and non-removable role of reason. Among them, the Illuminative philosophers, Sadra'id and non-Sadra'id, have more considerably stressed on the role of intuition while confirming the reason.

As we said, the subject of Islamic epistemology is knowledge in its general sense (the absolute cognition and consciousness), but the issues of the Islamic epistemology are as follows (Abbas-zadeh, 1398 SH, pp. 19-20):

1. Kingpin issues: knowledge, knower, the known, and their homogeneity.

2. Principal issues: the nature of knowledge, possibility of knowledge, resolving the problem of skepticism and relativism, criterion of knowledge, tools and sources of knowledge, types and orders of knowledge, the relationship of the mind and object (and resolving the problem of mental existence), limits and borders of knowledge, possibility of spontaneity and its criterion, certitude and its ultimate limit, the process of genesis of knowledge and the like.

3. The secondary, related or new issues: verity and justification, the effect of non-epistemic issues on knowledge, definition and its conditions, *a priori* knowledge, the possibility of human's knowledge of others' minds, the possibility of human's knowledge of God, epistemic usage of words and language, (and recently) cognitive sciences and knowledge, the cyberspace and knowledge, artificial intelligence, etc.

Among the Islamic philosophers, the role of the Iranian philosophers, especially early ones such as Farabi, Avicenna, Mulla Sadra, and the later ones (called Neo-Sadra'ids) including Allameh Muhammad Hussein Tabataba'i, Master Murteza Mutahhari, Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, and Ayatollah Abdullah Javadi Amuli, as well as younger philosophers, in emergence of some new issues of Islamic epistemology and diffusion of the discussions and findings of that science – compared to the ancient Greek philosophers and other philosophers before them – is a very important and central role. These philosophers, quantitatively, added new issues, critiques and evidence to the series of earlier discussions; and qualitatively, they made a considerable contribution in scrutiny and deepening that discipline (for more information, see: Abbas-zada, 1400 SH, pp. 277-281).

1-7. The System of Islamic Epistemology

According to the series of previously stated points, in our perception, the system of Islamic epistemology consists of:

"The philosophical system originated from the Islamic wisdom and religious texts composed of pillars (foundations, components and various coherent and interactive constituents of the epistemology) distinct from other systems, and fulfilling certain goals".

2. The Features and Characters of the System of Islamic Epistemology

2-1. The General and Common Features

The general and common features are those features that any epistemic system must enjoy. Considering the definition offered for the Islamic epistemology, some general features of such a system are as follows (see: Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 11):

1. The system of Islamic epistemology is a composite entity (with components and constituents)

2. Those constituents are diverse and none of them is a repetition of others, and each has its own function.

3. Those constituents have their own proportionality and consistency.

4. Those constituents are interacting with one another.

5. This system is distinct from other systems (whether they are macro-system, mid-system or micro-system or even sub-system), and they have specified demarcations and boundaries (both longitudinal and traverse).

6. That system is seeking to realize some certain ends and goals.

7. That system enjoys authentic religious criteria.

2-2. Special Features (Criteria for a System to be "Religious")

By special features, we mean those features that are specified to the system of Islamic epistemology, specifying the demarcations between religious (Islamic) epistemology and non-religious secular epistemologies.

Indeed, any system is conditioned by provisions to be described

as being religious (Islamic) (see: Rashad, 1387 SH, pp. 6-11). And the system of Islamic epistemology has all those provisions; thus, it is described as religious.

Accordingly, some of the special features of the system of Islamic epistemology are as follows:

1. Being founded on religious foundations: the system of Islamic epistemology is founded on religious foundations. That is, the assumption of the existence of One God who is the grantor of all things including 'human's knowledge' goes on with the image that religion offers of the universe and creation of the human being as well as his abilities and weaknesses, and the ways to reinforce those abilities and remove those weaknesses. Indeed, the human's knowledge is a divine grace and the true owner of knowledge is God and the true knowledge comes down from the divine territory to the world of angels[1] and then to the human level (Rashad, 1400 SH, p. 7).

2. Religious nature of the constituents: the propositions of the system of Islamic epistemology (unlike the doctrinal propositions) are not in principle subject to faith, for they are enumerated among the propositions of knowledge. However, since the major propositions of this system are found in their exact or similar form in the religious texts, and they are not contradictory to religion, they are considered as religious.

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1. The Islamic philosophers maintain that the Active Intellect – whose duty is leading the human's intellect from potentiality to actuality and who grants knowledge to the human being – is the same as the angel of revelation (Gabriel) in religious texts.

3. Being obtained from authentic religious sources: the system of Islamic epistemology is obtained from authentic religious sources. That is by referring to the text of the Quran and authentic hadiths, one can explore the epistemological findings of the Islamic philosophers there and adduce them as evidence. Similarly, the common sense ('aql salīm, i.e. 'sound reason')[1], whose authority is confirmed by religion and is considered among the authentic religious sources, is one of the sources of inference in that system as well. In general, intellect, revelation and inspiration, innate nature, sense and the like are all confirmed by religion as sources of knowledge provided that they have the conditions of validity. In that case, they are also sources of epistemology.

4. Inclusion of religious usage (ends and benefits): the system of Islamic epistemology is seeking to realize ends and

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1. There are two readings of reason or intellect: the purely philosophical intellect and the human's general intellect, along with various readings of the purely philosophical intellect, the most common one is the 'argumentative intellect' used by the classic rationalist philosophers and Islamic philosophers. That intellect is of two types: theoretical intellect, which is used in theoretical unpractical reflections, and practical intellect, which is used in practical actual issues. The human's general intellect, however, which is called common sense, is the intellect that 'has some theoretical natural essential principles as well as practical ethical non-acquirable rules for all' ('Abedi Shahrudi, 1366 SH, p. 20). According to the former meaning, any given religious proposition is 'rational' when it can be proved through argumentation and reasoning. But according to the latter meaning, any given religious proposition is 'rational' when it is in harmony with the human's common sense and human's nature. Nevertheless, these two readings of intellect are not precisely distinct; rather, they sometimes accompany one another.

benefits that are confirmed by religion. For instance, in the discipline of epistemology, accessing verity (truth) and achieving certain cognition is an important and central end also confirmed by religion. Similarly, accessing the ability to distinguish right from wrong in human's beliefs is among the benefits of this system, which is also supported by religion.

5. Being shaped by the factors of genesis of religion: the system of Islamic epistemology has been shaped by the religious factors. Human, social, natural and other elements are among the factors for genesis of sciences. The founders and compilers, civilizational and historical containers, cultural and social conditions, etc. are also among the factors for genesis of sciences. Since the authors of the Islamic epistemology are the Islamic and Muslim philosophers who have created that science in the civilizational container of Islam, we may consider it Islamic.

It is worth noting that the religious (i.e. Islamic) nature of any science is a multi-dimensional and gradable affair (Rashad, 1387 SH, p. 11). Accordingly, the more the 'Islamic system of epistemology' is consistent with the epistemological teachings of Islam (texted in the Quran and authentic hadiths), the more it will be religious. Naturally, the contradiction of some of the components of epistemological system to the text of the Quran and authentic hadiths will lead those components out of the religious scope, and this may overshadow the whole system and the knowledge originated from it.

Besides, any science is composed of kingpin components and five genesis-making elements including the following ones:

theoretical origins, subject matter, issues, end, and logic. The consistency and harmony of these five elements is the factor for genesis of knowledge, which is called 'the theory of harmony of elements' (Rashad, 1401 SH, p. 68). Any science will be religious when: (1) its five pillars are prepared with the authentic religious perception, and (2) the existing propositions in it are verified (Rashad, 1401 SH, p. 68). Accordingly, a science is religious when its theoretical origins and bases are religiously valid, its subject matter has a religious identity, the perception of its issues conform to the religious perception, its end has a religious value, the method and logic used in it is religiously valid, and the propositions therein are true and real (Rashad, 1401 SH, pp. 90-99). Accordingly, one can study and prove the religious nature of the 'Islamic science of epistemology' with precision and in detail.

3. The Status/ Position and Importance of the System of Islamic Epistemology

In discussing the classification of the system, there are, in general, four distinct types discernable: macro-system, mid-system, micro-system and sub-system. The Islamic macro-systems are of five groups: doctrinal-credo system, scientific-epistemic system, spiritual system, practical-obligational system, and ethical-value system (Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 20).

From the perspective of the status, it seems that the system of Islamic epistemology is a mid-system under the scientific epistemic system. The relationship of the system of Islamic epistemology with other macro-systems, mid-systems, micro-systems, and sub-systems are infra-structurally important and deserve to be seriously studied, which itself needs a detailed study.

Regarding the 'status' of the system of Islamic epistemology, we may say that the Islamic epistemology is itself the most fundamental basis and is, thus, one of the most important bases. This is because ontology, axiology, methodology, studying religion, theology, anthropology, sociology, scientology and the like – any of which are considered the basis for many systems and sciences – are all based on the epistemological foundations. And if these systems and sciences are to be pursued with an Islamic approach, they will be fundamentally in need of the Islamic epistemology (for more information, see: Abbas-zadeh, 1401 SH, pp. 51-58). And it also seems that if the Islamic epistemology is in itself based on those foundations, there will be a vicious circle.

It is worth noting that priority of epistemology over otology is a logical priority, and logically, ontology is impossible without epistemology. According to some of the contemporary scholars, the ideology of any school is based on its worldview, and its worldview is based on its theory about knowledge (i.e. epistemology) (Mutahhari, 1392 SH, p. 228). Thus, epistemology is prior to worldview (which is of the type of ontology).

Similarly, we can say that from the viewpoint of order of knowledge, epistemology is prior to ontology; but from the viewpoint of the subject of science, ontology is prior to epistemology, for the subject of ontology is 'existence' and the subject of epistemology is 'knowledge'; and until existence is realized, speaking of knowledge will be nonsense. The importance and vitality of the system of Islamic epistemology is discernable through the above discussions.

4. The Goals and Ends of the System of Islamic Epistemology

Among the discussions regarding the system of Islamic epistemology is its goals and ends. By goal, we mean the result of a volitional task

that a free agent considers from the onset and does that task to achieve it. The result of the work is the 'end' because it is the endpoint, and it is the 'goal' because it has been the agent's purpose from the onset. It also is the 'ultimate cause', for its desirability causes the agent to be mentally related to it. The word 'end' usually means the 'endpoint' of a motion, and the relationship between its instances and the instances of the goal is 'partial inclusion' ('*mūm wa khuṣūṣ min wajh*). This is because on the one hand, no goal can be considered for the agent of a natural motion, but the concept of 'end' applies to their 'endpoint'; and on the other hand, in creative task wherein there is no motion, the ultimate cause applies but here the end does not mean the endpoint. However, the 'end' is used here for the 'ultimate cause' (Mesbah Yazdi, 1386 SH, vol. 2, pp. 106-111).

The above point applies also to the system of Islamic epistemology. The goal of the epistemology system means the purpose and motive of those who infer that system, and it seems that the goal of that system is to establish the science of Islamic epistemology, and the end of that science is explaining the value of what the man knows and specifying its scope and domain.

5. The Foundations and Presumptions of the System of Islamic Epistemology

Foundation means the origin and root of something: "foundation is what on which something is founded". The term 'foundations' has different meanings. First, it means the causes of realization of something. Second, it means the affirmative causes of something. And third, it means assumptions or axioms and axiomatic principles. That is, the ideas that no discipline deals with to prove and are considered self-evident, because they are either obvious and need no proof, which are called 'conventional principles' (*uṣūl mutaʿārifa*) or

the place for proving them is in another discipline, which are called 'deducted principles' (*uṣūl mowḍūʿa*) (Saliba, 1366 SH, vol. 1, p. 192).

Mainly, by the term 'foundations' we mean the second and third meanings. Thus, foundations are principles and assumptions on which the sciences, theories and scientific issues are founded, and judgments or taking positions in a science are based on them (see: Avicenna, 1404 AH, p. 157; Tusi, 1375 SH, vol. 1, p.301).

Sometimes, foundations are called origins (*mabādī*). The term 'origin' (*mabdaʾ*) means the source and starting point of something and is used in two senses: first, it is equivalent to bases (infrastructures) and second, it is equivalent for the starting point of a departure or the introductory items dealt with before the main item. For instance, the compilers of an educational source for a discipline, before entering its subject matter, would insert some elementary data of it in the introduction to their book (see: Ibn Fares, 1404 AH, vol. 1, pp. 121-213; Farahidi, 1410 AH, vol. 8, p. 83).

The origins are divided into three types according to the distance or no distance between the origins of the science and its issues: *baʿīda* (far or 'meta-presupposition'), *wasīṭa* (midway or 'presupposition') and *qarība* (close, contiguous with issues or 'supposition'). And the close or even the mid-way origins may be called just origins (*mabādī*). Some close origins are of the type contiguous with the issues of the science and some others are non-contiguous with those issues. The former type are among the internal components of that science and are discussed in that science, but the latter type must be discussed in another science. Thus, by 'foundations' we mean just the non-contiguous origins, because the contiguous origins are inside the science and are considered as the internal components of it (Rashad, 1389 SH, pp. 29-30).

The foundations have various features and functions, such as having a degree of generality and comprehensiveness. Though general, the foundations are limited (limitedness of series of foundations), because according to foundationalism, any foundation leads at last to one or several special foundations, not to infinite continuous series of foundations. Among the functions of foundations are specifying the borders and epistemic distinctions in schools, sciences and attitudes. Some of the foundations are effective in understanding conceptions and influence our perception of the next conceptions. The type of a person's look at the existence, universe and human has a direct effect on his understanding. Among other features of foundations is that they are directing, making goal and specifying favorite causes and ends (Shakerin, 1399 SH, vol. 1, p. 38).

In short, the foundations of any system are fixed and established bases that have been proved or are provable, guiding us to that system, and a change in them leads to a change in the content of that system. Various types of system are – from the longitudinal aspect – far, midway, close and direct. Types of foundations of system are – from the traverse aspect – epistemology, theology, anthropology, sociology, scientology, and the like (see: Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 14).

A movement from the foundations to the religious system requires both using religious foundations and taking rational approach, although in the recent case, there must be no inconsistency with the religious laws and values.

By the 'system of the Islamic epistemology', we mean the theoretical fundamental substructures on which that system is founded. As we mentioned before, the foundations of epistemology are in themselves the most basic foundations of various sciences and

spheres of knowledge. All accidental foundations of sciences and spheres of knowledge are themselves products or subordinate to epistemological foundations. Thus, the system of Islamic epistemology is founded just on some theoretical substructures, which are restricted to the foundations of religious 'system generation' in general and perhaps inserted in some of the meta-epistemological discussions.[1] Besides, some of the presuppositions of the system of Islamic epistemology are as follows (Rashad, 1399 SH, pp. 14-15):

1. The system of Islamic epistemology are there in the text of the religion (in fact-itself and state of affirmation). The religion's attention to the human's knowledge is the necessary condition for comprehensiveness of religion, and the most comprehensive look at the human's knowledge is a systematic look at it. Thus, religion has a certain system of epistemology.

2. The system of Islamic epistemology can be extracted and inferred from the context of religion (in the state of proving).

3. The system of Islamic epistemology has fixed, inclusive and far-reaching essences, including in the inner side and context of religious law (epistemological propositions in the text of the Quran and authentic hadiths).

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1. While epistemology is – in a general definition – a philosophical theory on knowledge and its nature and domain, meta-epistemology tries to go one step back from the internal and minute discussions of epistemology to pose questions on assumptions and essential ideas taken by epistemologists. The major questions in meta-epistemology are as follows: (1) Are there any objective epistemic realities or not? And how are those realities – if existent – described? (2) What is the subject matter in epistemology? And (3) What is the methodology of epistemology? (for more information, see: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaepistemology/)

4. The system of Islamic epistemology has varying accidents that can be extracted with the help from the common sense and the researching experience of the wise people (especially the epistemological findings of the Islamic philosophers).

The Islamic philosophers including Farabi, Avicenna, Suhravardi and Neo-Sadra'id philosophers (from Allameh Tabataba'i on), despite their intellectual disagreements, have attempted to establish the Islamic school of epistemology and deepen it; and of course, their works are always able to be completed and developed.

6. Components and Constituents of the System of Islamic Epistemology

By the components of any system, we mean its internal and external constituents. Any religious system have two sets of components and constituents: essential or fixed, and accidental or volatile. The essential fixed components are elements whose deletion inflict impairments to the religious nature of the system. But the accidental volatile components are those whose lack inflict no impairment to the religious nature of the system, and they can – in proportion to the conditions of time and place – be replaced by other components (for more information, see: Rashad, 1399 SH, pp. 16-17).

Accordingly, the components and constituents of the system of Islamic epistemology are as follows:

1. Laws: the laws of the system of Islamic epistemology are naturally epistemic laws that – sometimes – have some practical benefits as well.

2. Foundations: we have previously mentioned some points regarding the foundations of the system of Islamic epistemology.

3. Ends: we have also mentioned some points regarding the ends of system of Islamic epistemology.

4. Knowledge: the knowledge originated from the system of Islamic epistemology is the knowledge of Islamic epistemology with its tenets and various constituents.

7. The Methods and Sources for Epistemological System Generation

There are three methods for system generation in its general sense: the method of system generation or discovering system; the method of producing the models originated from the system (model is later than the system); and the method of assessment and evaluation of the two methods of discovering model and producing model.

Of course, the third method may not be an independent affair, and with assessing the first two methods, we may well be needless of the third method (Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 17). Regarding the system of Islamic epistemology, the method of generating it or discovering it are naturally 'rational' methods; and of course, we may also make use of 'traditional' method for referring to religious texts. Similarly, in designing any kind of religious system, we must consider six sources of inspiration as well: (1) the Book (i.e. the Quran); (2) Sunnah; (3) common sense; (4) pure innate nature; (5) *Maqāsid al-Sharīʿa* (in its general sense, the macro goals of Islam in enacting religious laws); and (6) the human's vital needs based on the religious view, and the demands of the conditions for inquiry and understanding, as well as commitment and enforcement (Rashad, 1399 SH, pp. 17-18).

Regarding the system of Islamic epistemology, the Book, Sunnah, common sense and pure innate nature are considered among the sources. However, as we mentioned before, the science of

epistemology is a pure theoretical science and it fulfills the human's vital needs just in the theoretical and intellectual spheres, not the practical needs. Its conformation and enforcement is possible just in epistemic issues, not in the sphere of practice and action, though the knowledge – which is of the type of theoretical wisdom – has a determining effect on practical wisdom.

Nevertheless, the effect of conditions and demands of time on the system of Islamic epistemology is important. The science of epistemology is from one angle divided into two types: *a priori* and *a posteriori.* The former type is the pure theoretical epistemology which enjoys – like logics and mathematics – general and fixed principles, and it is not influenced by the conditions and demands of the time. But the latter type is the realized epistemology, which is naturally possible to be affected by various non-epistemic factors.

Non-epistemic conditions and factors effective in epistemology are divided into two groups: *muʿaddāt* (preparatory factors) and *mawāniʿ* (hindering factors) (for instance, see: Rashad, 1400 SH, pp. 12-14).

8. Applicability and Efficiency of the System of Islamic Epistemology

Applicability and efficiency is the criterion for acceptability of a system. In other words, a system that is applicable and efficient and resolves the problems of individuals and societies will naturally have more acceptability among people and the community of elites.

As we mentioned before, the system of Islamic epistemology is a purely theoretical science, but we may consider some usages for it as well. The usages of the system of Islamic epistemology are of two types: the primary (direct) usages and secondary (indirect) ones. The essential and primary usages are directly related to the sphere

of knowledge and epistemic issues as well as the science originated from it, i.e. the science of Islamic epistemology. The accidental and indirect usages can be shown in other human sciences such as founding the philosophy of knowledge with Islamic approach, founding the humanities with Islamic approach, answering some of the doctrinal-religious doubts and the like, which needs in itself a separate study.

But the unique usage of the Islamic epistemology is that the theological authority of any religious system is subordinate to its epistemological authority. That is, any religious system must enjoy sufficient certitude for comprehending the context of reality to be considered right (Rashad, 1399 SH, p. 18).

9. Application of the System of Islamic Epistemology in the Islamic Methodology

The methodology of knowledge has a direct relationship with epistemology (see: Fritz, 1978, pp. 5-6). That is, method is the way tools and sources of knowledge are used or the rules of matter and form are applied for extracting knowledge. And methodology is the investigation of method. The task of epistemology is stating the rules of matter and content of argument as well as how to access knowledge. Thus, since methodology is the way rules of epistemology are applied for acquiring knowledge, it is based on the principles and rules of epistemology and is later than it (Khosro-panah, 1394 SH, p. 36). The general methodology is subordinate to general epistemology; and the methodology of sciences – in addition to general epistemology – is based on epistemology of science.

From the perspective of historical background, epistemology is prior to methodology. Epistemology has grown along with history

of philosophy and philosophy itself; but methodology in its today's form is a new discipline. Any criterion and framework a researcher accepts, he will organize his methodology accordingly.

Methodology is founded on the basis of epistemology, and it will change in proportion to the evolution in geometry of epistemology. Thus, anywhere and anytime when a certain system of epistemology is born and developed, the necessary condition and setting for emergence of methodology specified and in proportion to it will also grow. Consequently, when the system of knowledge and epistemology becomes subject to crisis and disintegration, the system of methodology becomes subject to doubt and wavering (Firahi, 1387 SH, p. 15).

The epistemological origins are one of the influential and decisive factors in taking methodology; and epistemology has a sub-structural and foundational role for methodology. In other words, just as methodology accepts some presuppositions from logics, it will accept assumptions from epistemology as well. Indeed, methodology is – from various perspectives – based on epistemology and feeds on it:

One of the issues discussed in epistemology is the relationship of the observational propositions or scientific premises with reality (verity of premises). By accepting the claims proposed in epistemology, methodology makes them the foundation of its own activity and research; and accordingly, it deals with judgements on the method used there. Methodology takes its foundations from epistemological theories. For instance, the theories of foundationalism, correlation, idealism, and the like can be various foundations for the science of methodology (Haqiqat, 1385 SH, p. 53).

Similarly, regarding the sources, it is epistemology that specifies which sources must be used, and the methodology is

subordinate to the sources of knowledge. For instance, the foundations of sensationalism and empiricism (positivist) have influenced methodology and realized a certain school for which other sources of knowledge are either invalid or are considered ideological and – consequently – unscientific (Sharifi, 1393 SH, p. 375; Sharifi, 1395 SH, p. 36; Chalmers, 1939, p. 7; Iman and Kalata Sadati, 1392 SH, p. 465).

For instance, the intellect is considered as one of the sources for knowledge, and any type of judgment we have about intellect in epistemology is effective in adopting the methodology. Suppose we accept another intellect instead of empirical and critical intellect. Naturally, we will see its effects in methodology. Clearly, if we recognize the existence of metaphysical intellect, theoretical intellect, celestial intellect and the like, and consider divine revelation as one of the authentic sources of knowledge as well, our methodology will be completely changed (Parsania, 1392 SH, pp. 49-50).

Any of the scientific approaches, including the positivist, interpretive, critical approaches as well as unity of the scientific method, compound methods, identification of the method of natural sciences with humanities and the like are based on epistemological foundations (Sharifi, 1393 SH, p. 375). And "considering with which ontological and epistemological features the reality and the social world of knowledge are defined, the scientific knowledge will find an identity relied on those features from the logical, theoretical, conceptual and methodic viewpoints, or – generally – from methodological viewpoint." (Iman and Kalata Sadati, 1392 SH, p. 467).

In view of the above points and considerations, the system of Islamic epistemology, with features and components we enumerated before, completely affect the methodology of knowledge and sciences that are to be furthered through Islamic approach.

Conclusion

The whole collection of aforementioned discussions can show us that offering a systematic image of the Islamic epistemology is possible. In such an image, the essence, the features and the components of the system of Islamic epistemology can be suggested as follows:

1. The system of Islamic epistemology is: "the philosophical apparatus, originated from the Islamic wisdom, and the religious texts, composed of pillars (various consistent and interactive epistemological foundations, components and constituents) distinct from other systems and providing certain goals".

2. Special features of the system of Islamic epistemology are as follows: being founded on religious foundations, religious nature of the constituents, being acquired from authentic religious sources, inclusion of religious application (ends and benefits), and being formed from factors of religious genesis. The religious nature of the system of Islamic epistemology is a multifaceted and multistage affair. Similarly, the religious nature of science of Islamic epistemology can be investigated and proved through the religious nature of its five pillars (theoretical origins, subject matter, issues, ends, and logics) as well as verity of the existing propositions therein.

3. As far as the 'position' is concerned, the system of Islamic epistemology is a mid-way system under the scientific epistemic macro-system. From the perspective of 'status', the Islamic epistemology is in itself one of the most fundamental foundations. This is because ontology, axiology, methodology, studying religion, theology,

anthropology, sociology, scientology and the like – each of which is considered the basis of many systems and sciences – are themselves based on epistemological foundations. The importance of the system of Islamic epistemology is also discernable from this perspective.

4. The goal of the system of Islamic epistemology is the establishment of the science of Islamic epistemology, and the end of that science is explaining the value of human's knowledge and specifying its domain and scope.

5. The system of Islamic epistemology is just founded on some theoretical substructures, which are restricted to the foundations of intellectual system generation in general and perhaps inserted in some meta-epistemological discussions. Besides, some of the presuppositions of the system of Islamic epistemology are as follow: the system of Islamic epistemology exists in the context of religion (in the state of affirmation); and we can discover and infer it from the text of religion (in the state of proving). It enjoys fixed, inclusive and far-reaching essences in the inner side and context of the religion (*Shari‘a*). It also has volatile accidents that can be inferred with the help from the common sense and the researching experience of the wise people (specially the Islamic philosophers).

6. The components and constituents of the system of the Islamic epistemology are: laws, foundations, ends and science.

7. The method for creating or discovering the system of Islamic epistemology is 'rational'. However, the 'traditional' method must be also used to provide its religious aspect. Similarly, Book and Sunnah, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa* (literally,

'ends of religion laws'), common sense and pure innate nature are also among the true sources of the system of Islamic epistemology. The effect of conditions and demands of time on the system of Islamic epistemology is also important.

8. The applications of the system of Islamic epistemology are of two groups: primary (direct) applications and secondary (indirect) applications. But the unique application of the system of Islamic epistemology is that the theological authority of any religious system is itself subordinate to its epistemological authority.

9. The epistemological origins are among the influential and decisive factors in adopting methodology; and epistemology has a sub-structural and foundational role for methodology. Methodology is, from various angles, based on science of epistemology and feeds on it. These include the discussion on truth of propositions, the sources of knowledge, specifically reason and revelation, the scientific approach and so on. Thus, the system of Islamic epistemology will completely influence the methodology of sciences and disciplines to be furthered with Islamic approach.

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