



Research Paper

Comparative Study of Cognition in Religious Knowledge and Contemporary Philosophy through a Conceptual Model

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Abstract

The pursuit for the premises of cognition urges a systematic separation of ontological and epistemological considerations. This is while both the mundane (collective intellect) and divine (revelation) imprints on cognition are to be taken into account, which suggests a comparative study based on the philosophy of mind and religion. Present article provides a two dimensional model to classify and compare these views. The horizontal and vertical axes of this model respectively represent the ontological and epistemological stands. In the epistemological axis, three faculties of cognition, namely sense, intellect, and intuition are listed, whereas the ontological axis lists three aspects of being, appearance and function of cognitive data. This encompasses nine approaches of the modern philosophy (positivistic, phenomenological, scientific, speculative, dialectical, critical, existential, aesthetical, and hermeneutical) as well as nine mainstreams in religious wisdom (ascetics, jurists, scholars, theologians, dialecticians, sophists, sufis, mystics, commentators). Though each of these currents has been the subject of uncountable discussions, a one-to-one correspondence has never been established, and such a comprehensive overview provides a clear vision of human approach to the category of knowledge.

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The philosophy of cognition deals with fundamental issues of cognition from a philosophical perspective. The two basic issues in this philosophy are the means and subject of knowledge, which refer to the agent (subject) and predicate (object) of knowledge, respectively. The main means of cognition are sense, reason, and intuition, and the subject of cognition can be essence, attributes, or actions, through which, what, how, and why are questioned, respectively.

The basic question in the philosophy of cognition is the degree of philosophical validity of the findings of sense, intellect, and intuition, and in each of three subjects of cognition, the validity of these three means of cognition can be questioned. In this way, a conceptual model is obtained, whose columns and rows are subjects and means of knowledge, respectively. For example, in the place corresponding to the intellect (means of cognition) and essence (subject of cognition), the question of philosophical validity of intellectual findings in the cognition of essence (object in itself) is Kant's main concern in criticizing pure reason. The analysis presented based on this model has a prior view of the category of cognition in religious knowledge and contemporary philosophy, which is confirmed by historical considerations. A brief look at the history of knowledge indicates the existence of nine philosophical schools in the philosophy of knowledge and nine schools of religious knowledge, which are matched and compared in this model.

2. Methodology

The current research is a qualitative and comparative study. In this research, cognition in contemporary philosophy and religious knowledge have been compared

from a methodological point of view and their points of analogy and difference have been examined in a conceptual model.

3. Research findings

A comparative study of cognition in contemporary philosophy and religious knowledge is possible from the point of view of principles, presuppositions, goals, or methods. In terms of principles and presuppositions, contemporary philosophy has many points of difference with religious knowledge. The main reason for this difference is the reliance of philosophical implications on the sensory experience and rational understanding and their avoidance of accepting presuppositions. In its historical course, religious education has avoided accepting the reliance of its teachings on philosophical principles (Jilson 1375, 50). Moreover, in terms of the goal, except for the general goals that are usually shared between different fields of human knowledge, there are important differences between goals of seeking knowledge in contemporary philosophy and religious education. This is despite the fact that an important part of religious education (such as the science of principles and theology) has significant methodological analogies with philosophy. These considerations indicate that a comparative study based on the analogies of these two fields inevitably should rely on methodological studies. In this research, in a methodological perspective, the nine approaches of contemporary philosophy to the category of knowledge (positivistic, phenomenological, scientific, speculative, dialectical, critical, existential, aesthetical, and hermeneutical) are corresponded respectively to the nine dominant currents in the history of religions, which are mostly known by their representatives (ascetics, jurists, scholars, theologians, dialecticians, sophists, sufis, mystics, and commentators). There are



three schools of authenticity, which respectively question authenticity of experience, reason, and intuition. These correspond to the existence, appearance, and evidence of the truth (that is, the knowledge of essence, attributes, and actions of the Supreme), and ask what, how, and why things represent the truth.

In religious knowledge, the school of authenticity of experience has been led by three powerful and influential currents in the history of religions, which are ascetics, jurists, and scholars. The originality of reason has been represented by theologians, dialecticians, and sophists. Finally, the school of authenticity of intuition was founded by sufis, mystics, and commentators.

In application of knowledge in contemporary philosophy and religious knowledge, positivists, phenomenologists, and scientific scholars are placed next to ascetics, jurists, and religious scholars. Speculative, dialectical, and critical philosophers are comparable respectively to theologians, dialecticians, and sophists. Existential philosophers, aestheticians, and hermeneutical philosophers are also placed next to sufis, mystics, and esoteric commentators.

4. Conclusion

This study deals with the comparative study of cognition from philosophical and

religious perspectives in the two axes of ontology and epistemology. The axis of epistemology is divided into three categories of sensory, intellectual, and intuitive cognition with regard to the means of cognition. The subjects of cognition in the axis of ontology include three categories of essence, attributes, and actions. In the resulting model, from the integration of these two axes, nine approaches of contemporary philosophy to the category of knowledge were compared to nine dominant currents in religious epistemology. Despite the basic similarities they share in the means and subject of knowledge, corresponding approaches in these schools have many points of difference and perhaps conflict due to fundamental differences in worldview and basic principles, in such an extent that sometimes their arguments go to the point of denial.

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Conflict of interest

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