Methodological discussions between expository and demonstrative epistemologies in Islamic thought

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Abstract

In the basis of the subject which we try to deal with, it stands two worldviews based on expository and demonstrative epistemologies that formalize the intellectual building of Islamic culture. It seems that the main point here is about discussions between exposition and demonstration. Methodological discussions enlighten how are used on the one hand exposition as religious method and on the other hand demonstration as rational or intellectual method.

Keywords: Expository, demonstrative, epistemology, method, discussion, Islamic thought

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İslâm düşüncesinde Beyânî ve Burhânî epistemolojiler arasında yöntem tartışmaları

Özet

Ele almaya çalıştığımız konunun temelinde, İslâm kültürünün düşünce yapısını şekillendiren beyânî ve burhânî epistemolojilere dayanan iki dünya görüşü bulunur. Buradaki temel noktanın beyân ile burhân arasındaki tartışmalarla ilgili olduğu görülür. Yöntem tartışmaları bir yandan dinsel bir yöntem olarak beyânın ve diğer yandan akıl ya da düşünce yöntemi olarak burhânın nasıl kullanıldığını açığa çıkarır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Beyânî, burhânî, epistemoloji, yöntem, tartışma, İslam Düşüncesi.

Introduction

The main subject which we try to put forward, it stands two of trio world views based on expository, mystical and demonstrative epistemologies that are thought to formalize the intellectual building of Islamic culture by al-Jābirī.[1] Leaving aside theosophical world view in the methodological context, it seems that the main point is concern with discussions between exposition and demonstration. Methodological discussions illuminate how are used on the one hand exposition as religious method and on the other hand demonstration as rational or intellectual method, while it constitutes a field that provides to see epistemological occurrences of Islamic culture.

Actually, the name expository epistemology is not an information field. Whereas expository epistemology means a way of using theoretical knowledge by theology, the source of demonstrative epistemology is intellect and its followings are philosophers. Although it is claimed that reasoning and inferences concerning expository field are constructed by intellect, it seems the relation between intelligent and intelligible is literalistic.[2] Such a way of approach definitely happens by reason of that theology uses holy or divine knowledge. Here, by term theology, we do not mean science *kalām* (theoretical theology) but religious sciences as a whole. Soever we have a possibility to say all religious sciences have a way of distinctive method, we can see that sciences *kalām* and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) constitute expository knowledge system, also taking along science *usūl* (methodology). Despite a number of people argue that the method of *kalām* was received from Aristotle, there is no way to say so clearly.[3]

Expository Epistemology

It is right to say that expository epistemology is not an only method of knowledge. There are several sections which constitute this epistemological approach, that we cannot

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[1] It is used terms, in English, expository for *bayānī*, mystical for *'irfānī* and demonstrative for *burhānī*. But we occasionally prefer to mention, in turn, *theological*, *theosophical* and *philosophical* instead of those words. For usage these terms, even for work on which my article is found, especially see Muhammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *Bunya al-'Aql al-'Arabī*, Beyrouth: Al-Markaz al-Thakāfī al-'Arabī, 1997, part I, ch. 1. See also *Takvīn al-'Aql al-'Arabī*, Beyrouth: Al-Markaz al-Thakāfī al-Arabī, 1991, part II, ch. 7.

[2] In Islamic thought, it is used *'āqil* for intelligent and *ma'qūl* for intelligible. For the meaning of intellects, see Alfārābī, *Risāla fī al-'Aql*, ed. Maurice Bouyges, Beyrouth: Dār al-Mashriq, 1983. Regarding detailed knowledge about this matter, see Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfārābī, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

[3] See Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976. In this book, the topic is discussed sophisticatedly.

explain it without explaining them: Two of those are *essential* and *subordinate*.[4] But, first of all, we have to express clearly that expository epistemology can never be achieved philosophical analysis but it can be entirely dealt with its linguistic sense. For it is required to act in accordance with Arabic grammar and the meaning for which it gives the notion in order to understand exposition. In this sense, exposition is a notion which aims to explain and it also symbolizes to state evident thing but self-evident like demonstration.

Quranic text and prophet's words and actions give birth to exposition in point of the constituting element of expository epistemology. Since sacred texts are essentials, they meet us with constituting identity exposition. They, in this regard, place expository knowledge to basis or give birth to knowledge that places to basis it. The term exposition including to intension of the text in both positions has to explain the four basic elements in case of determinative of theological intellect or to state things which they want to explain: These elements are called as sacred text, tradition, consensus, and analogy.

Consensus is the most important element in reasoning that are done to understand sacred text, or rather, to reach a common view.[5] Because, theologians are likeminded on difficulty to reach any valid knowledge in *kalām* or other religious sciences, unless it is reached to any opinion by way of consensus itself. Consensus, in this respect, is more privileged from the other sources in the matter of explaining sacred text, and it is eventually a true explanatory for *essential* with regard to base on an *essential*. There, in addition to text, is causality as a question called the causal problematic that exposition scholars present an explanation putting to basis that God is almighty, whilst they deny the principle of causality. Accordingly, depending on a reason for every cause is contrary to which God is almighty. To deny the principle of causality or thinking of necessary connection bases on impossibility to restrict God's power of judgment.

Since the relation between language and thought that would turn out to be one of the most important problems of expository world view has admittedly been commented in language's favor, it could not be produced a systematical thought in exposition field. In other words, exposition scholars have expressed that the interpretation of statement could be done

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[4] Expository epistemology is based on two basic parts called *asl* and *far'*. These notions correspond to the *primarily* and the *secondarily* religious sources. See Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, *Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī bayn al-Asāla wa al-Tajdīd*, Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1999.

[5] Four terms we mentioned above refer to four sources of religious knowledge. Those are sacred text or *kitāb*, tradition or *sunna*, consensus or *ijmā'* and analogy or *qiyās*. For instance, see Alghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Usūl*, ed. Hamza ibn Zuhair Hāfiz, Madīna: Al-Jāmi'a al-Islāmiyya Kulliyya al-Sharī'a, 1993.

in which way, rather than how should be thought on anything. That's why, though having produced a language and statement, they have not focused on the meaning of the statement and they could not put forth a thinking system. In this regard, the priority of the meaning to utterance and of thought to language have lost their effects and then logic and syntax have been intermixed with intention towards language to thought but not towards thought to language.[6]

In expository epistemology, the pair of substance and accident occupies a place in the most influential status. Despite the fact that substances are inseparable parts of being, they have no being without accidents. Substances constitute being as uniting with accidents, however, accidents seem to us as momentary events. As accidents have no possibility of consecutive existing, it can be thought maintaining their own beings without substances. The pair of substance and accident, in a sense, expose the problem on which argued several views caused distinction between exposition and demonstration.

Demonstrative Epistemology

Whenever it is said demonstrative epistemology, we, of course, are associated logic. Passing through stage of analysis the existence in conceptual sense, building truth thinking is only concern for scholars of demonstration field which is different from exposition, thinking method of theological intellect, and which tries to understand things by some principles of intellect without keeping to thinking structure esteemed by exposition. Logic, found by Aristotle, even though it also includes other topics except for demonstration, the essential part of logic consists of demonstration. Attempting to apply logic to all sciences by Peripatetic philosophers has worked it up into a methodology or epistemology in these lands.

Despite Aristotle has given name *analytic* to his method, this method has been called logic as a whole, with attendance categories and propositions into analytic. In any case, the application of demonstrative method to science is to say to take action in order that inference unknown from known. It is necessary to be only universal and deductive for theory of syllogism which constitutes the basis of demonstration. It cannot be said that every kind of syllogism speaks of truth or give us true knowledge, in spite of there are several kind of syllogism within demonstration. For it is not possible to be demonstrative for syllogism

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[6] For grammatical expressions, see al-Jāhiz, *Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, ed. Abd al-Salām Muhammad Hārūn, Cairo: Maktaba al-Khānjī, 1998, pp. 75-97. Also for discussions on utterances, see Alfārābī, *Kitāb al-Hurūf*, ed. Muhsin Mahdī, Beyrouth: Dār al-Mashriq, 1990, ch. 2.

without beginning with universal proposition.

Aristotle speaks of syllogism to get knowledge by knowing itself. It is made reasoning in demonstrative syllogism, putting identity, noncontradiction, and impossibility of the third condition in the basis. The most important thing here is application the principle of noncontradiction. This would enable to impossibility of the third condition that could be explained by causality. Though demonstrative syllogism or apodictic demonstration is deductive, Aristotle does not speak of any noninductive knowledge. If knowledge is not innate, then the premises of demonstration should be empiric, and this shows that universals simply consist of particulars. Nevertheless, according to Aristotle, we cannot make universals from particulars, and then, universal is extant as included.[7] We do not mean sense data one by one by experiment but knowing things belonging to universal in sense data by intuitional way. Thus, we acquire a universal notion from a particular one. By intuition, nothing should be sought except for intellect. The principles of intellect does not need to any proving, because intellect comprehends these principles immediately.

When we think that the application field of demonstrative epistemology is the pursuit of natural philosophy, we understand to be interested in predicates belonging to existence is main subject of demonstration. Existence gets itself mention in point of becoming existence or substance in any respect, and this remind us the class of categories. In conception of existence made from substances and accidents, it is dealt with the most fundamental subjects of natural philosophy, such as form-matter dichotomy and mind-body relation. We can understand what a kind of interest between logic and metaphysics.[8]

At the beginning of basic logical subjects, there exist categories and utterances. On the basis of relating between intellect and utterance, it will be appropriate to say to be complementary for these two structures each other. For, as becoming separately from interpretation of the relation between mind and language in ancient eras, it is entirely troubled to be determined the status within another cultural circle for utterances. There will naturally be some difficulties for notions dealing with here, caused by belong to another cultural circle and to be evaluated and understood within another cultural environment.

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[7] Aristotle, *Analytica Posteriora*, trans. G.R.G. Mure, *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. W. David Ross, Oxford: Clerandon Press, 1928, vol. I. See also Alfārābī, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, ed. Mājid Fakhrī, *Al-Mantiq ʿinde Alfārābī*, Beyrouth: Dār al-Mashriq, 1987.

[8] See Alkindī, *On First Philosophy*, trans. & ed. Alfred L. Ivry, *Alkindī's Metaphysics*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974, p. 55ff. Also see Averroes, *Fasl al-Maqāl fī mā bayn al-Hikma wa al-Sharīʿa min al-Ittisāl*, ed. Muhammad ʿAmmāra, Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1983, ch. 2.

There seems that the relation between expository and demonstrative epistemologies has begun exactly here.

The Relation between Exposition and Demonstration

As soon as the study of Greek philosophy was introduced into Islamic circles, a certain tension between theologians used expository epistemology and philosophers used demonstrative epistemology has been bound to exist.[9] There, of course, were many reasons for this tension. Firstly, cultural structure referred by followings philosophy was keeping in itself some views contrary to Islamic tradition. Consequently, trying to constitute a culture in methodic sense by referring to a work different from Holy Scripture of Islam was not a situation which would adopt and approach in tolerance by exposition scholars.

Another reason for tension between exposition and demonstration is that attempt of demonstration scholars to application their methods into theological field. Actually, the enmity followings exposition and following demonstration has gradually increased due to the refutation of expository discourse by philosophers, on which God has body but not look like bodies. Even, in this matter, exposition scholars have argued for which who work at logic were unbeliever and have condemned philosophy completely by virtue of an incorrect proposition that *the refutation of proof requires the refutation of which be proved.*[10] Yet, they have not come to their mind that this expository reasoning is incorrect. The science logic has been deported like other philosophical fields and counted in the forbidden sciences until coming to Alghāzālī's time. Even though counted in expository field by Alghāzālī, it was maintained disaffection to demonstrative epistemology by who has possessed the power.

One of the subjects dwelled upon by Alghāzālī and other Ash'arites was undoubtedly speculations on what science logic was. Alghāzālī has mentioned that logic actually was not different from science sight but this arises from implying that exposition scholars did not know this science and from presenting under the name logic by philosophers. Telling about truth, Alfārābī and other Peripatetic philosophers has said that this science was not known by

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[9] See George F. Hourani, "Introduction" to Averroes' *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, trans. & ed. George F. Hourani, London: Luzac & Company, 1976, p. 2ff. This book is an English translation of Averroes' work we stated above it.

[10] The word *unbeliever* is equivalent to the word *zindiq*. The proposition we quoted here was used by al-Ash'arī and argued for centuries by Ash'arite scholars. See al-Ash'arī, *Al-Ibāna 'an Usūl al-Diyāna*, trans. Walter C. Klein, New York: American Oriental Society, 1967, p. 22ff.

other people. Alghāzālī has written a book in this topic in order to point to know logic.[11] Addiction of exposition scholars on logic has led them to error of perception it as Islamic science and of evaluation by logic other Islamic sciences such as commentary, jurisprudence. However, the purpose of logic is not commentary and interpretation on the Holy Scriptures but usage appropriates the speech or statement about being.[12] It will certainly be absurd for exposition scholars to research logic on God's book. So, logic must not be applied to divine speech, otherwise, the worth of logic in presence of the scripture might be damaged in a straightened way. When considered the forbiddance of Aristotle's logical works in Western world, we would have comprehended.

We can instantly see Alfārābī makes an effort to show that meaning comes before utterance but not utterance before meaning, in violent time between followings exposition and demonstration. Alfārābī tries to make an explanation based on truth, by observing what the object of perception occurred before the perception. The defense of expository view can in fact be connected to that God has commanded to existence to be and the existence has happened after the divine logos. But philosophers assert that the meaning of existing comes before logos on account of they identify God's knowledge with His volition, and for this reason, the priority of the logos cannot be possible.[13] Moreover, according to some of exposition scholars, Mu'tazilites, notwithstanding God's thinking belongs to Himself, the *logos* is creature, and from this point of view the meaning comes before utterance. Nonetheless, despite utterance seeing as reflection of meaning in mind becomes different language by language never can be differentiation in meaning.[14]

Seen exposition scholars as peoples who are using the art of dialectic by demonstration scholars can only be associated with a tradition or a religious apprehension, which they have to defend. But there is nothing any tradition or religion to defend for philosophy, and its only purpose is to show the truth to minds simplificatively. But these minds are undoubtedly the intellectual people's but not the public people's. Here, presentation of the truth to be apprehended by public as symbolic or more apparent things

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[11] See Alghazālī, *Mihakk al-Nazar fī al-Mantiq*, ed. Rafīq al-'Ajam, Beyrouth: Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnānī, 1994; *Maqāsid al-Falāsifa*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1961. For Alghazālī's critiques against philosophers, must be applied to *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1972.

[12] See Alfārābī, *Ihsā al-'Ulūm*, ed. Alī Abū Mulhim, Beyrouth: Dār wa Maktaba al-Hilāl, 1996.

[13] As regards qualities of God, see Alfārābī, *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāzila*, ed. Alī Abū Mulhim, Beyrouth: Dār wa Maktaba al-Hilāl, 1995.

[14] See Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought: 'Abd al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī*, London & New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 42-73.

can be by means of exposition. However, after all, it is clear that exposition scholars persist in which only truth is put forth by them. According to them, demonstration scholars are people who seek after truth by intellect and they distort it because of not comprehend or misunderstand.

The basic problem here is that the truth is obtainable by which principle. The principles of intellect based by demonstration scholars contradict to the sacred text possessed by exposition scholars. Contradiction is about understanding manner rather than the tension between the sacred text and demonstrative philosophy. It is true that demonstrative view is dependent on the principles of intellect and in this respect; it is not required to be discussed. But the method used about interpretation of sacred text and deduction outcome from it can be caused to be understood separately. Consequently, whereas exposition field is a model for its following, philosopher's opinions is not a model for demonstration owing to the its principles are *a priori* and not clear to interpretation.

It is necessary to be required to a method inasmuch as arrangement of the relation between religion and philosophy is a matter of epistemology. Methodological dimension of this relation determines both logical and epistemological dimensions at the same time. Because, in traditional epistemology, logic is not only a method but also a science determined quantity and quality of ontological and metaphysical speculations on account of an epistemology. No importance was not given to the differentiation between grammar and logic or utterances and categories by exposition scholars, and accordingly, they accepted grammar as their special logic. Yet, the distinction between logic and grammar which is one of the most sensitivity of demonstration scholars, in fact, has an importance on distinguishing epistemological sources of religion and philosophy. For if it is not considered the differentiation between intellect and revelation, it is made a mistake, by confusing demonstration with exposition. Although yet logic and grammar look like together in giving speech rules; logic makes rules the universal language or using notions, while grammar makes rules of words in public language. Whereas grammar determines the rules of utterance namely external speech, logic strengthens the third speech namely innate faculties as thinking about the rules of either external and internal speech namely mind. Otherwise, exposition scholars were also carried away a mistake in giving name the term logic to their some works on external speech.

Conclusion

One of aporia in which exposition field falls is not to be a universal notion for itself. The way to follow for an epistemology deprived of universal notion is not aside from utterances and their denotations. Universal, one of the foundations for demonstrative epistemology, necessarily exists in the act of inference, therefore it is possible to be done deductive inference. But since lack of exposition scholars from the universal notions, it was necessary to benefit from analogy for them. For instance, science *kalām* has tried to disclose the truth by way of analogical syllogisms from comparison of Islamic law. But the possibility of comparing between two events merely contains subjects relating to practical occurrences. Actually, taking such an event about argumentations universally can never take it much further than dialectics. In fact, to claim universality for *kalām* is only consisting of legitimating itself by analogy, and eventually it is unavoidable to be contented with a dialectical method.[15]

Expository knowledge system endeavors to call into being itself by dint of atomism. In atomist theory, atom has taken the place of the substance in existence which consists of substance and accidents. Whereas in Greek sources it is stated that atom is a body and extent, in Islamic tradition it is nonextent. Greek atomists are likeminded in that body does not contain substance although there is substance in existence. Yet, so exposition scholars could not abandon, they had to accept that atoms were nonextent things.

We want to interest here in that it is taken Plato's philosophy as source but not Aristotle's. Because, while substance is not thing except for the matter in Aristotelian natural philosophy, Plato qualifies substances as ideas and says that the sources of everything is these substances or forms.[16] For this reason, not only does Aristotle speaks of forms cannot be independent from matter, but he points out an acceptance adopted by exposition scholars as well. Furthermore, exposition scholars also think that there is nothing in existence aside from substance and accident, and either has to be together. But the atomist theory accepted by exposition scholars is concluded with an idea which does not accept sequence of accidents.

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[15] See Averroes, *Fasl al-Maqāl*, ch. 2. Cf. Alfārābī, *Kitāb al-Milla wa Nusūs Ukhrā*, ed. Muhsin Mahdī, Beyrouth: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968.

[16] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee, London: Penguin Books, 1987, 517a-b. For Aristotelian natural philosophy in Islamic world, see Averroes, *Talkhīs al-Kawn wa al-Fasād*, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-'Alawī, Beyrouth: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1995.

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