

Ontology

Ontology in Greek means “on being.” Its other meaning is, “being qua being.” The word ontology was coined in the early seventeenth century to avoid some ambiguities of “metaphysic” – Leibniz was the first philosopher to adopt the word.

The terminology introduced by Christian Wolf in the early eighteenth century came to be widely adopted: ontology is the general theory of being as such, and forms the general part of metaphysics, or theoretical philosophy.

The three special parts are general cosmology, rational psychology and natural theology, i.e. the theory of the world, the soul, and God. It is on the ontological question that modern materialism, physical and naturalism differ sharply from their opponents: the question of what there is (Maunter, 2005).

In Islam, it is believed that the world outside the mind has a real being. The original fact in everything is its “being” (Tabataba’i, 1971) and the “being” is considered as the most evidential things which do not need to be proved (Ebrahim Zadeh, 1990). The world is not only summarized in the material aspect, but also immaterial facts have reality.

The reality of the being, in spite of having different forms, is unique and one (Tabatabaie, undated). Infirmity of the effect is inherent in it and dependent being will never be needless of the “cause.” In other words, the being and existence of the effect is the very belonging and dependence to the creator cause (Mesbah Yazdi, 1986).

Thus, the being of the world is the very belonging and dependence on God, that is, the entire world is as an effect, the cause of which is God. Each particle of the world owes its being to God. In other words, God is absolute and complete being who has encompassed the world, and that’s why the entire universe manifests the existence of the creator.

Therefore, God can’t be considered as an existing for example, “in the sky”, who is creating the being and the creatures.

The God which the Glorious Qur’an defines is peerless and unique, creator of all things and the worlds,

and all other things are created by Him (Goreshi, 1985). The origin of the world, i.e. the creator or God, should possess the necessary conditions and merits for creating the world.

The creator of discipline and general movement should have continuous knowledge, intellect, episteme, innovation, life and management. The main origin of the world should possess originality and should be pre-existing and eternal (Dashti, 1981).

The world is a goal-centered. There is resurrection or eternal life and then a new birth as an undeniable principle in the whole of the being and existence system. The appearance of creatures is possible through cooperation and unity of diverse forces and elements of the world.

A new creature is created by combination of different elements that this birth is very principle of resurrection, and so the world is created based on this dynamic and productive principle (Dashti, 1981).

Change and transformation are from the characteristics of matter, thus each material "being" takes part in this process. According to this, absolute destruction and annihilation can only be considered as a relative interpretation that measures each stage of the change process against its previous one, because all material things are always confronting frequent changes and transformations in the route of their continuity.

In other words, the being goes through stages in a goal – centered style and flows dynamically in the way to accomplish the creation goals. For example, a seed is dropped in the earth. This very seed will grow into a corpulent and giant tree having many branches, leaves and fruits, that is, a collection possessing millions of cells each of which has thousands of particles and ingredients.

The seed in the very beginning can't be compared with the greatest computers and the most complicated programs of the world. That seed possessing such a program has a potential power to go through the highest stages of transformation. Such a program is definitely governing the universe and its events.

On the other hand, if the leaves of that tree are fallen on the earth they will fall to decay by passing of time and will turn into other particles in the soil... This is an unlimited process and it is a transformation. It is a process in which there is no sign of destruction.

That is the reason why the Holy Qur'an has not used even for one time in its verses the word "**fout**" = (passing away, dying) for man; rather it has used the word "**vafat**" = (departure) because in the Arabic language the word "fout" indicates absolute destruction and the word "vafat" = (departure) indicates transformation and change from one stage to another.

The first and the most important belief in Islam is the doctrine of the oneness of Allah (God). This belief is called the "Tawhid." This is made clear in the shahadah, the first pillar of Islam, which states that, "There is no God except Allah the One God & "Muhammad" is the Messenger of Allah.

A Muslim is someone who has submitted himself or herself to the will of Allah. Since Allah (God) is beyond all human understanding, so human beings cannot describe Him: “Say: He is Allah, the One and the only; Allah, the eternal, Absolute; He beget not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him” (quoted in Keene, 2005).

The first statement of the Holy Bible describes God as the creator of the heaven and the earth whose command encompasses the entire world, “God said, let there be light and there was light... And let the dry land appear: and it was so...” (Genesis 1: 2 & 7).

God is the central subject of the Bible and always presented in relationship with the world, with that which is not God. God’s existence is assumed from the first verse of Genesis, God’s core character and most basic purposes are very constant across two testaments, and the divine speaking and acting are always in service of those purposes, whether in creation, judgment, or salvation.

God is a character in every biblical tradition (except Esther). God is presented as one who speaks, is spoken to, and is spoken about (though God’s direct speaking is rare in the NT), and one who acts and is affected by the action of others (e.g. provoked to anger).

Most commonly, God is presented as a character in a narrative, whose presence may be depicted as both intense (Sinai, Jesus Christ) and unobtrusive (the Joseph story). Narratives provide depth to God’s character without bringing closure to the depiction of God; they present God as a complexity.

The following claims are central regarding the biblical understanding of God; texts are cited from both OT and NT and are significantly represented across various genres and traditions: living and eternal, unity, unique and incomparable, present, active, relational, intentional, interactive, situational, effective, vulnerable, use of agents, mighty acts, extraordinary events (Fretheim, cited from Freedman, Myers & Beck, 2000)

Christians believe that God is omnipotent (the all – powerful creator of everything) who has a plan and purpose for all things, omniscient – the Being Who knows everything and everyone, perfect – the perfectly good and all-loving Being, eternal – outside and beyond all space and time, the Judge – the one who decides what happens to us when we die, the Father – the one who cares for us all.

Christians believe that God is one but is known or experienced through Holy Spirit. They call this belief the Trinity (Keene, 2005).

From the viewpoint of the Bible, God is not only “one” in an absolute sense, but also contains “within himself”, so to speak, a plurality of characteristics and personhood (Renn, 2005).

In the Bible, God has been variously defined as “God most high” or “most high God” (Gen. 14:1377; Dan. 3:6; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; Dan 5:13,2), “almighty” (cf. Gen. 17:11;35:11; Exod. 6:3, Num. 24:4&16; Ruth 1:20, 21; ps. 63:14; Isa. 13:6; Joe 11:15) “holy one” (cf. 2Kgs. 19:22; ps. 89:12; Isa. 5:19;

Hab. 3:3), “mighty God ”(cf. Isa. 9:6; 10:21; Jer. 32:12), “righteous” (cf. exod. 9:27; 2 chr. 12: 6; pss. 129:4; 145:17; Lam. 1:13), “King” (e.g. pss. 24:8010; 29:10; 89:13; Isa. 6:5; 43:15; Jet. 10:10; 48:15; Zech. 14:9, 16, 17; Mal. 1:14), and such other names and properties as: father, judge, redeemer, saviour, deliverer, shield, strength (Renn, 2005).

“God is our refuge and strength” (Psalm 46:1). “God is my salvation” (Is. 12:2). “Beside me there is no God” (Is. 44:6). “There is one God” (Mk. 12:32). “Heavens declare the Glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). “All the earth bows down to you, they sing Praise to you, they sing the Praises of your name” (Psalm 66:4). “Tremble before him, all the earth” (Psalm 96:9).

Therefore, as for man as a particle of the universe: “come, let us bow down in worship, and let us kneel before the Lord our maker” (Psalm 95:6).

Then, the duties of mankind and bondman before such God are referred to: “Ask of God, God will give it thee” (In. 11: 22). “You believe in God” (Acts 5: 29). “Fear God” (rev. 14: 7). “Follow him” (I King 13: 21). “In God I have put my trust” (Psalm 56: 4). “Give thank unto the God of Gods” (Psalm 136: 2). “Hope is in the Lord his God” (Psalm 146: 5), etc.

One of the oldest and the most important Christian statements of belief is the Nicene Creed, which goes back to the fourth century C.E. It opens with the words: “I believe in one God...Maker of heaven and earth and all things visible and invisible...” This is the point at which the Bible also begins.

The universe, the world and human beings are not divine – as God is. They are created, God is the creator. That is the real message behind the two Creation Stories in Genesis (Keene, 2005).

Jesus came into the world to share its hopes and sadness – and to show just what God was like. He left behind the teachings that would allow people who followed also to know what God is like – as they can read the Bible: “The word (Jesus) became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory of the one God and the only, which came from the father, full of grace and truth” (John 1.14) (cited from Keene, 2005).

According to the Bible, the world was created with purpose in mind, and God is closely involved in this purpose (Dewar, 2002). That’s because He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things the universe finds its purpose and meaning only in Him (Perks, 1992).

Therefore, since the universe has not been created in vain, there will surely be an eternal life after this worldly life: “**The gift of God is eternal life**” (6:23). “About the resurrection of the dead – have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and God of Jacob’, He is not the God of the dead but of the living” (Matthew 22:31–32).

The story of the creation of the universe and all forms of life, both animal and human, is told in the opening chapter of the book of Genesis. The description there speaks of the essential godness of

God's creation: "God looked at everything he had made and he was very pleased" (Genesis 1.31). The creation was perfect and God was totally satisfied with all that He had made (Keene, 2005).

The idea that everything strives towards the ultimate good is based on Aristotle's Four Causes. This striving towards ultimate reality is also the basis of Augustine's theodicy (Dewar 2002). Unlike the Greek idea of God being associated with the world of humans, He intervenes directly in events. In other words, the Bible shows God's involvement in the world to be dynamic (Dewar, 2002).

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/shared-religious-foundations-education-islam-christianity-hamid-reza-alavi/ontology#comment-0>