Modern Division of Philosophies

Modern Division of Philosophies

Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari

al-Islam.org

Author(s):

Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari [1]

This work presents the division of Philosophies and how they may relate to people I function of their relationship with themselves, the universe, Allah and other human beings. All the divisions were presented with the object in mind of their usefulness for an individual's cultural enrichment.

Get PDF [2] Get EPUB [3] Get MOBI [4]

Topic Tags:

Philosophy [5]

Modern Division of Philosophies

Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari

This paper was presented in Athena University, Greece, March 1995.

About the Author

Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari (1925–1998) was born in Tabriz, Iran. He was one of the greatest contemporary philosophers of the Muslim world. His primary focus was on comparative studies between Islamic philosophy, western philosophy and contemporary issues. He has authored 50 books and tens of articles. His most important books are "*Tafsir wa Naqd wa Tahlil–e Mathnawi*" (commentary and criticism and analysis of *Mathnawi*) which is published in 15 volumes and "*Tarjome wa Tafsir–e Nahjul Balaqah*" (Translation and commentary of the *Najul Balaqah* [Peak of Eloquence which is a collection of the sermons, letters and short sayings of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib]) which is published in 27 volumes.

Abstract

The primary topics that have been presented to philosophies for solving is the reality of the quadruple relationships, which are the relationship of the human being and her/him Self, of the human being and God, of the human being and the universe of existence and of the human being with other human beings. Different sciences have assumed the responsibility of solving the manifestations and inherent laws of these relationships and have tried their utmost thus far. However, research and study on the nature, general principles, main results and the factors of these relationships is the responsibility of philosophies and is what they have been engaged with and have been researching since time

immemorial, both in the East and the West. Therefore, what should be considered is this: in relation to the foresaid relationships, is the issue the subject for consideration for the thinker or not?

For example, is time related to our senses or does it have an objective reality? Is this vast universe finite or infinite? What is the cause of movement in history? For if the issue is raised it requires an answer, whether yesterday or today; Eastern or Western; Muslim, Christian or Jew; be it Aristotle, Plato or Sadr al-Muta'allehin (Mulla Sadra), Mirdamad or William James and John Dewey. Philosophies can be divided into four kinds which will be discussed in this paper, these are: 'Temporal Division', 'Religious and Ideological Division', 'Regional Division', and 'Based upon the Philosophical Characters' Way of Thinking'.

We need to consider the significant and important question of universalism versus relativism and of the issues that are at work in cross-cultural dialogues. In other words, is it possible to introduce to contemporary audiences the system of thoughts of previous ages and centuries? Or to put it otherwise, is it possible to introduce the system of thoughts of the West to the people and thinkers of the East and vice versa? Last but not least, we need to inquire whether this approach of cultural exchange would yield any results in terms of cultural enrichment.

With this introduction, we will precisely study philosophical modalities in the following fashion:

First Kind - Temporal Division

First Kind - Temporal Division[1]

This division is not based upon the definition of time itself, which is mental continuance caused by the continuance of the mentality with inner-natural or outer-natural movement. It means that the variety and the difference of philosophies are not referred to the potential of time itself, but to the positioning of thinkers regarding the world with which they are related. This positioning has two major characteristics, which are as follows:

The First Characteristic - is the particular mental condition of the thinker, which specifies the quality of her/his understandings about the world with which s/he is in relation. This characteristic encompasses all thinkers of all ages, and in any doctrine and region in which they live. This characteristic is not an extrinsic and secondary phenomenon, but rather, is founded on one of the most essential principles of human knowledge. This principle is: the necessity of the relationship of the human being with actualities through the various means of knowledge, such as the senses and the laboratories, constructed by her/his own hands for the advancement, development and deepening of her/his knowledge and advancement. All thinkers of all ages are involved with this positioning and only two matters are exempt from this principle:

A) The self or the essence of the human being becomes known to him by present knowledge, and no external cause or factor from the essence of the percipient and the perceptible in the acquirement of this

knowledge.

B) God, who can be comprehended by sound intellects and pure natures without the interference of external factors.

The Second Characteristic – is that the advancement of human knowledge occurs gradually through time. Philosophy faces two types of issues with regards to the gradual advancement of sciences and insights:

A) The first type is issues which occur in the arena of science, whether in human territory or that of the phenomenal world. There is no doubt that the appearance of modern sciences and thoughts causes the advancement and increment of the depth of philosophical issues related to those sciences and thoughts, as mentioned before.

B) The second type is some general definitions and issues which have always been raised to philosophical thinkers and ontologists throughout history, and which will continue to be raised in the future. In Eastern philosophy these definitions and issues are referred to as 'general matters' or 'general origins'. Reality, manifestation, existence, nonexistence, law and order, knowledge, time, place, finiteness, infiniteness and others can be considered to be from this type. Feeling the necessity of discussing and thinking of this type of issues is safe from the theft of the passage of the ages and centuries, and the appearance of modern sciences and thoughts. For example, modern philosophers are involved in discussing and thinking about reality and manifestation, just as the thinkers of ancient India were.

Second Kind – Religious and Ideological Division

Second Kind – Religious and Ideological Division[2]

The history of human science has witnessed the appearance of various doctrinal, philosophical and ontological ideas, beliefs and systems. Sometimes, there were essential differences between them, and at other times, their differences were unessential, adjustable and co–understandable. There is also an important issue which we need to take into consideration in terms of philosophies and religious and doctrinal systems, namely, the fact that a considerable majority of these various ideas, beliefs, systems and doctrines have appeared with a reality–finding goal. In other words, the belief–systems which lack clarity of ideas and soundness of visions, and which have also lost objective vision of reality due to various subjectivistic modalities are indeed a minority.

Accordingly, study and research should be performed on the causes of natural doctrinal differences, and not about the differences caused by the foresaid inability. Now, we contend that because there is no doctrinal and ontologistic system that can refer all of its fundamentals, issues and reasons to sensible objective manifestations, then it is natural to build a group of the aforementioned matters based upon

absolute rational principles, basic principles, abstraction and style-orientation. Some of the differences are the results of these principles and of pure mental activity, and we should consider that these kinds of natural and involuntary differences do not cause devastating contradictions and knowledge-corrosive disputes.

These differences are evident in the doctrines which we mentioned as examples in the endnotes, such as the interpretation of free will and determinism which have been introduced in various shapes in the foresaid doctrines. Sometimes however, some principles and perceptions occupy the depths of the mental levels of the thinker, such that s/he involuntarily makes fatalistic justifications for her/his thoughts, the fatalistic nature of which often remains unnoticed by the thinker because of the background assumptions which are, so to speak, implicitly operative in the back of her/his mind.

We assume that Machiavelli or, for example, Hobbes have considered and found the issue that "Human nature is intrinsically evil" to be in accordance to the reality, to the extent that it has occupied the depths of their mental levels and has become an inner active element for them, and their love and belief for the foresaid matter is so powerful that it is as if they have created the human being themselves.

Undoubtedly, regardless of the extent of the claim of such a person that s/he is searching for the truth and nothing else, and expresses only the truth, this is contrary to the reality for they cannot but be influenced by their reasonless beloved.

Even if the only people of the world were Abraham the friend of God, Moses the son of Amran, Jesus the son of Mary, Mohammad ibn Abdullah, Ali ibn Abi Talib, Abu Zar Ghaffari, Uwais al-Qarni and Socrates, then the biased thinker would, knowingly or unknowingly, gloss over and falsify their movements, thoughts and expressions. Why?

Because s/he is a lover and a lover is capable of seeing nothing but her/his love. According to the opinion of all the thinkers of the East and the West, of both yesterday and tomorrow, there is no pest more deadly than the expression "it is what I say it is", particularly for philosophy and ontology.

Therefore, we say explicitly that: the thinker who thinks about the issues of philosophy and ontology should certainly abstain from love and extremism for the matter which occupies all of her/his deep mental levels, as it causes the negligence or false justification of all realities and truths. This is because any matter which passes through the mind of a human and enters and occupies the deep mental levels of that person after victimising pure thoughts and senses and trampling on them, not only affects the results and goals of the assumed system, but also, it should be said, that if such a person thinks about anything then s/he is thinking about herself/himself and not about the realities and truths out of her/his nature.

Now, we explain the fundamental principles which play the most essential role in philosophies and doctrinal ontologies. For the generalisation of the studies in this discussion, we name all of these principles as 'topical principles'. In relation to this type of principles, we make use of a topical principle,

the correctness of which has been accepted. Generally, those topical principles which justify and prove the doctrinal systems are divided into two main types:

First – It is interesting to note that issues such as self-realisation and the perfection of the human self, which are of a dynamic and infinite nature, are also considered of dynamic and infinite significance in Islamic philosophy. Accordingly, no philosopher can limit the scope of human perfection and prominence in one or some phenomenon which are of considerable significance for her/him. In other words, the potential of self-actualisation and unlimited ascendancy does exist in human beings, both by considering the ages and by considering the innumerable types of modalities of perfection; the end of self-realisation in Islam is the *attainment of divine attraction*, and in Buddhism, *Nirvana* or *Nibbana*. In other doctrines like Christianity and Judaism, the final destinations are also interpretable to be that which is mentioned in Islam. In addition, it should be emphasised that, according to the principle of' 'the necessity of truth-recognition', no system or doctrine should establish principles for itself which are opposed to the foresaid principle.

It is possible to say that if we assume that a doctrinal principle, which has imposed its necessity on the minds of philosophical thinkers for several centuries and was considered as a proven principle, is disproved by science and something is proved against the foresaid philosophical principle, then the ontological system of Islam puts aside the disproved principle concerning that reality. If this realism is executed in all schools of philosophies then an effective step will be taken in the advancement of knowledge and intellectual enlightenments.

By considering the openness of the various paths and methodologies for understanding and accepting the most essential topical principles, which in Islam include 'goal-orientation of the universe of existence', 'self-consistent existence that is called God', 'His supervision and domination over the universe of existence' and 'His legislative will for human perfection and development which has been and is expressed by conscience, inner intellect and great prophets', it seems that not only does the mind of the human being not stop and become stagnant by a simple imposed "it is not other than this"; but rather, it can be said that without the understanding and the acceptance of those principles, no system or doctrine, be it religious or not religious, can save their topical principles from the dead end of "it is what we say it is" in deep analyses.

If we gather all of the contemporary philosophers and ontologists and ask them what the relation is between the variables of the world and the constants, which in the form of laws make up all of our sciences and our ontology, and whether this relation demonstrates a possible contradiction, what would their answer be? For answering this question which is of utmost importance, employing general concepts such as "nature is like this", if not increase our darkness, certainly do not create any light for us. This is the reality that any philosopher whose mind has not been formed by specific forestructures understands, whether they be Muslim like Avicenna, Christian like Thomas Aquinas or Jewish like Philo of Alexandria.

Second – Those kinds of principles which are topical that can be seen in some of the doctrines of all

three of the Ancient, Middle and Modern Ages. Of such principles we can refer to principles of ancient Aristotelian philosophy, absolute abstractive principles of the Middle Ages and the fundamentals of extreme objectivism (positivism) of the Modern Ages, which have had and continue to have effects on different doctrines. It appears that the clearest factor for the openness of topical principles of all philosophical systems, with which it is possible to adjust the philosophical and doctrinal distances and which can be introduced as a common denominator of all of the types of philosophical and doctrinal systems, is the encompassing factor of science; it means that all systems can equally introduce that group of philosophical issues which are built upon definitive results of sciences, and it is possible to gain generalisations which begin from smaller circles and reach larger circles which are higher generalisations.

As it is possible to start from more general concepts on which there is common consensus among philosophers such as the existing reality, and then move to more specific general concepts like the specified laws which rule different branches of sciences; if these two kinds of movement constantly act as agents of renewal in the minds of doctrinal and philosophical thinkers, then they will, by design, dynamise the philosophies and ontologies and remove the inert topical principles from the path of any philosophical thinker of any period. The truth is that we humans fall into the darkness through solid topical principles or dogmatism more than through the natural limitedness of senses, means and the inherent playfulness of the mind, which may put us at risk in distinguishing forms of reality with aspects of illusions.

It is not farfetched to argue that if doctrinal and philosophical systems approach topical principles according to the abovementioned caveat, then destructive doctrinal/ideological and philosophical contradictions would be converted to constructive intellectual competitions that could even transform the history of human knowledge to self–realisation and perfection.

Third Kind – Regional Division

Third Kind – Regional Division[3]

This division is based upon the geographical division in which the thinker resides. Since the dawn of modernity, some researchers have come to believe that we need to divide the philosophical systems into two broad camps of Eastern and Western philosophy.

Some scholars have taken this division very seriously, as far as contending that the mind of people in these two regions in terms of 'inner–self' and 'outer–self' are essentially different.

In the past, I believed that I should attempt to compare the philosophical thoughts and worldviews of the people of these two parts of the world as much as possible, but later, I recognised that the basis upon which this division is founded is incorrect, and thus gave up that avenue of research.

Those who consider this division correct consider the following differences between these two philosophies and worldviews:

1) Eastern philosophy is a chain of thoughts which is saturated by spirituality and supernatural truths, while Western philosophy is mostly naturalistic and moves more objectively than the Eastern philosophy.

2) Eastern philosophy often uses the absolute reasoning concerning the realities of the universe of existence, while Western philosophies, from the time of the Renaissance prefer to connect with the realities by senses, experiments and other such means.

3) Western philosophy does not insist on finding universal rules, definitions and principles for the world of existence; it mostly works with experimental methods for recognition and emphasises using analytical methods. Eastern philosophies and worldviews, however, focus mostly on general principles which interpret the world of existence.

4) In the philosophy of the West, the criticism and revision of general philosophical rules which have remained from previous ages is considered a proper act and is even a necessity in the opinion of some of the thinkers of that region; while scholars in the schools of Eastern philosophy and worldview do respect ancient principles and rules and rarely criticize the received traditions.

5) Philosophies of the West strongly insist on separating the realms of fact and value, or the context of 'Is' and 'Ought-To', except for some of the doctrines which were founded in the nineteenth century. Philosophies of the East do not insist on this separation, but they do consider the perfection of human knowledge to be in the conjunction and coordination of these two territories.

It seems that none of these differences are of a general nature, and thus, cannot be taken as demarcating principles in distinguishing the nature of philosophies in these two regions. Before studying the foresaid differences, we need to take into consideration three important principles:

First Principle - Various situations and circumstances of the thinker in communication with the human and the world render certain issues appropriate to those situations, and because those issues are not separated from the human and the world, then consequently, the same issues will be introduced to a thinker who is in the same situation. For example, today industry is the basis of social living in some countries; evidently, this kind of basis forces the thinkers of those societies to make their livings by considering the phenomenon of industry as the basis of economy in economic thoughts. Therefore, if the same matter occurs in other countries, then they will have the same system of thoughts which the foresaid societies have.

Second Principle - No reality will be clarified for a thinker unless it is surrounded by darknesses and semi-darknesses.

Third Principle - This is contrary to the second principle and holds that there is no dark reality for a

thinker unless there are darknesses, lightnesses and semi-lightnesses surrounding it. According to the second and third principle, it is possible for a thinker to think only about the matter which s/he faces directly and to disagree with another matter. By precisely considering these three principles it is possible to say that if, for example, a specific situation requires that the thinker is forced to think about time, both from a mental perspective and an actual perspective, then the thinker's research and understanding of this phenomenon as their mental need is considered a vital necessity.

Further, it is possible that the necessity of solving the problem and the necessity of understanding time has not reached the same level of intensity for another thinker, such that s/he considers it as a part of her/his intellectual life. In this assumption, it should not be said that there is no issue called time simply because the second thinker does not consider it necessary or pay any attention it. The reason for this matter is that the human being, whoever s/he may be and whichever race or territory s/he is assumed to be from, is facing the inner-self and outer-self movement with her/his senses and mind, and certainly, this encounter gives rise to an issue named time in reality, which if each thinker were to recognize and were the conditions which place this issue in the circle of her/his thoughts present, then undoubtedly, s/he would pursue understanding that issue.

Accordingly, most of the philosophers and sages of societies have introduced this issue and have presented a theory concerning it.[4]

Let me explain these issues in some detail. Development of industries, changes in social relations and new interpretations of Epicurean freedom or the modern approaches to the question of liberty, both in an individual sense and in a collective fashion, introduced new issues to the West which caused philosophers and sociologists to rethink the foundations of the 'received tradition' in the occidental context. Needless to mention that if similar intellectual events occurred in the East, we could certainly have witnessed similar trends in the oriental context, which could have transformed the intellectual landscape as it did in the West. Comparable historical events are discernible and one could mention the florescence of sciences and schools of thought in Islamic societies where certain aspects of Greek philosophies were transferred and considered to be important issues, as though these issues were home-grown, while we know that most of the Greek problems were not originally of Islamic origin but that, due to their significance, Muslim thinkers paid due attention to these problematiques regardless of their geographical origins.

Again, the same process of transplantation of sciences and intellectual problematiques occurred, but this time, from the Islamic context into the Western European context. In other words, issues which were by origin of Greek philosophy in the hands of Eastern philosophers were refined as well as reworked in a deeper fashion and in this profound mode, once again, were introduced to modern philosophers of Europe who incorporated them into the body of their post-Scholastic worldviews and schools of thoughts.

In the third, fourth and a part of the fifth century, the scientific culture of Islamic societies flourished

considerably and experimental researches opened the territory of science to scientists. This scientific culture transferred to the West gradually and caused their awakening.

Offering these vital services of science by the Islamic East in benefit of the West is clearly evident and certainly, cannot be denied.[5]

As examples, we offer some expressions from Western researchers in the history of science:

1) John Bernal says:

Islam has been the religion of science and knowledge from the very beginning. Furthermore, unlike the Roman Empire, Islamic cities did not isolate themselves from the rest of the East. Islam was where Asian and European sciences met. Thus, inventions were made that were totally unknown – or even unachievable – to Greek or Roman technology, such as steel products, silk paper and enamelled chinaware. Such inventions also led to other advances, bringing about more activity in the West and eventually the 17th and 18th century industrial revolutions.[6]

2) Again, the same researcher says a notable expression about the history of science:

In fact, it would have been more logical to consider the history of science confined to the period between the 7th (1st century Hijra) and 14th centuries (7th century Hijra), regardless of the difference of languages of Syriac, Persian, Hindi, Arabic or Latin books, as a joint chapter of the advancement of human thoughts and mind.[7]

3) Sigrid Hunke says:

We have inherited science and technology not only from Rome and Greece, but also from the world of Islamic thought. The West undoubtedly owes Islam a great deal.[8]

4) Hunke believes:

Using their scientific research and experience, the Muslims changed the raw material they got from the Greek into a new face of science. In fact, it was the Muslims who established the role of experience in scientific endeavour.[9]

Briefly, by considering all the aspects of the natural, mental and spiritual structure of the human, and by considering the world in which humans live, any issue which is introduced to a nation because of the occurrence of specific factors and conditions will be introduced exactly or similarly to other nations by the occurrence of the same factors and conditions, whether they are related to the industries, sciences or even the worldviews. At most, regional, historical and ethnic characteristics which cause the domination of a specific culture over the society may colour the introduced issues and their answers and give a specific condition and feature to them, whilst preserving the truths of their nature.

Therefore, there is no certain reason for dividing the philosophy as 'Eastern' and 'Western'. Accordingly, by considering that the conditions and parameters of thoughts of the West are of universal significance, there are contemporary people in the East who could be considered as Westernized, and contrarily, certain Western thinkers like Whitehead, Henri Bergson, Goethe and Victor Hugo who could likewise be counted as, so to speak, Easternised or people who have had thoughts infused with the truths of Eastern worldviews and anthropology.

When in the West the dispute between idealism and realism arose[10], it created conditions which rendered the same issue strongly attractive to scholars of the East who then took it into consideration.

Accordingly, Muslim scholars studied the same issue, and one would hasten to add that they seem to be more accurate in their analyses in terms of the philosophical differences which are at work in these debates.

Now, we study the differences which have been noted regarding the philosophies of the East and the West:

First Matter – "Eastern philosophy is saturated by spirituality and supernatural truths, while Western philosophy is mostly naturalistic and more objective than Eastern philosophy".

This matter, which has been declared as a demarcating factor between the Eastern and the Western philosophies, is incorrect because:

Firstly – The inclination of Western philosophy to naturalism and methods of objectivism and positivism began in the 16th century by thinkers like Francis Bacon, and it is not possible to confine Western philosophy to that recent movement which has driven some of the thinkers to extreme positions of objectivism. Furthermore, since that time, hundreds of thinkers and intellectuals have been found in the West whose thoughts have had superior supernatural aspects, and the necessity of naturalism had not prevented them from engaging with supernatural realities.

Max Planck and Einstein's absolute scientific method and Bergson and Whitehead, who introduce the issues in all its aspects, are not Eastern, and these thinkers who introduce the principles and sources of supernaturalism in their worldviews are too innumerable to be mentioned here.

Secondly – Regarding what has been performed by some western thinkers from the 17th century, knowingly or unknowingly, whereby philosophical thoughts have been executed without spirituality and transcendental truths, it can be understood that in fact, they have been active in a specific aspect of the system of existence, which is its natural aspect, and with specific means like the senses and laboratories; until this kind of worldview works with absolute objective matters, it is a scientific method and not a philosophical or universal worldview. The same method, as we will see in the second matter, has moved the caravan of absolute science from the beginning of the 2nd century to the middle of the 5th century Hijra in Islamic societies. I do not think that if they had been asked "Why have you chosen a

limited viewpoint in your worldview and why do you limit and confine the realities to the things which senses and laboratories show?", they would have answered that, "Realities are absolutely these matters which we introduce, and the only means of achieving knowledge about the human being and the universe are these laboratories and senses". Besides, if some Western thinkers make such claims, then surely no logical and scientific reason can confirm them.

Thirdly – Naturalists and objectivist thinkers of the West should not deprive themselves of having a universal philosophy and a systematic and general worldview because of the severe indignation which they harbour against scholastics. Today, we have the same regret that Whitehead expressed in regards to the Western thinkers of the Middle Age when he said:

Medieval people's extreme belief in and respect for the two grand pillars of the West, who are Aristotle and Plato, deprives us of the superior thoughts of medieval thinkers. We regret that some of the recent Western thinkers have deprived their societies and other societies from their beneficial thoughts by leaning extremely towards naturalism and objectivism.

As a result, an abyss has been created between issues of transcendental significance and matters of empirical importance by thinkers who have failed in constructing complete systems of intellectual significance. In other words, by failing to create relevant worldviews which could give man a plausible frame of reference, modern scholars have been content to work upon disparate but interesting issues without having a rounded framework that could induce a sense of meaningfulness in the minds of modern man!

Let us have a look at some passages from *Knowledge from Islamic Thinkers' Point of View* by Dr. Mohamed Ghallab:

Metaphysical knowledge is that superior knowing which consists of all kinds of knowledge, while not placing itself in any of their situations; rather, it recognises all of those types and understands their principles and foundations, and guarantees their unity by this knowledge, understanding and circumambiency over them.

Jacque Maritain, one of the proponents of neo-Thomism says:

"The truth is that metaphysical knowledge is neither employable for producing experimental sciences nor is proud of discovering and getting involved in matters of innovation in the phenomenal world, and the greatness of metaphysical knowledge lies in this. Aristotle has proved this matter from the ancient times that metaphysical knowledge is employed for nothing, because this knowledge is beyond all the services. This knowledge essentially deserves to be understood, because if it has been made for helping to understand the phenomena then it is useless and is not superior to them. That metaphysical knowledge which does not adapt itself to the secret of what is available, and even starts recognising the contingent realities, is deficient and aberrant like the claim of this expression (the goal of metaphysical knowledge is understanding the phenomena), whether expressed by Descartes or Spinoza."

Metaphysical knowledge is a truth which is circumambient and dominant over its self-evident principles, unlike the sensible world that tries to hide those self-evident matters from metaphysical knowledge.

Metaphysical knowledge considers purification of wisdom and purification of the will necessary, until it makes this ability for the human being to prevent herself/himself from making opportunistic relations between the self and the truth. Nothing is like going beyond opportunism for man, because what we need are not truths which serve us, but it is the truth which we should serve; because it is serving the truth which is the sole sustainer of the soul.

Metaphysical knowledge of Reality gives coherence to all aspects of human existence, as knowing reality is knowing human reality and vice versa. It is this knowledge that specifies natural limits of different sciences and their solidarity and expresses the limits of their positions. This knowledge is more important to humankind than the most enriched scientific products which are the result of surrendering natural phenomena to mathematical methods; because what is the benefit of gaining all the interests of the world, while you break up the solidity of the intellect.

Is it possible for the East and the West to leave this metaphysical knowledge and still claim that "I have a philosophy!", "I have ontology!", "I have the right to express my opinion about the universe in which I live!" and "I can have the right of criticizing others' worldviews!"? If such knowledge is introduced to a person, whomsoever s/he may be and whichever environment, region and period in which s/he may live, then by having such knowledge, that person:

1) Will see all of his/her knowledge and understandings like the waves or particles of that knowledge.

2) Will find general principles and sources, as well as goals and extremes of all kinds of recognised things and matters in that knowledge.

The clear reason for these two very important conclusions is the intellectual human being's extreme thirst for gaining an exalted unity in all the different types of her/his knowledge.

Methodology or recognising the methods of sciences was a primary work, which can become the primary steps of a rational and sweeping metaphysical knowledge by continuous pursuance and a type of thinking which yields results.

3) Maritain makes a worthy observation in analyzing metaphysical knowledge:

The truth is that metaphysical knowledge is neither employable for producing experimental sciences nor is proud of discovering and getting involved in matters of innovation in the phenomenal world, and the greatness of metaphysical knowledge lies in this.

This matter is because any truth which is discovered and enters from behind the curtain of our points of view expands our relation with the particles of nature and their various relations. In other words, it adds to our knowledge about nature, but does not explain its superior principles, sources, general goal and

fundamental telos. For example, the distance of primitive man's knowledge concerning the most basic elements of nature, known as The Four Elements[11], and what we know today about the fundamentals of reality thanks to the advancement of science, is very incomprehensible to the mind of primitive man. Feeling the beauty of the scenes of nature and the beauty of the beautiful after all this deep scientific and artistic discussion and research concerning beauty and creation of aesthetic arts is not superior or more extreme than the previous eras, and is not greater than foresaid discussions and researches. Feeling the greatness and glory of freedom, justice and knowledge, and feeling the attraction of perfection is not more superior and stronger than the past, while thousands of books have been written about these matters and hundreds of thousands of articles, speeches and researches have been initiated in this regard.

By the increment of discoveries and innovations, the notion of the existence of a superior goal of life is not advanced, and yet, it has somehow ceased. Relations between these superior feelings, without which we cannot imagine a considerable meaning for human life, and the growth of understanding and the advancement of the ability to exploit nature is not the relation of cause and effect. This means that it is not so that any individual or any society who achieves greater innovations and discoveries than others will of necessity benefit more from the foresaid feelings. The truth is that the feeling of existence and competence of being for existence, which is the subject of metaphysical knowledge, can answer these feelings and give meanings to the discovered truths.

4) Metaphysical meaning cannot be employed by other knowledge because it is beyond all other knowledge and gives meaning to all of them. If we can recall, Avicenna has warned explicitly in the book *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* (*Remarks and Admonitions*) that: A person who considers truth as medium and means is, in a way, pitiful.

This is because all of knowledge and all actions should be for the truth and in the way of the truth, as truth is the goal of all the goals and the ultimate of all ultimates. Metaphysical knowledge cannot be treated instrumentally, as this mode of discernibility is the Alpha and Omega of all pursuits of knowledge, and additionally, it should be reemphasised that the ultimate peak of metaphysical comprehension is gnosis.

5) Metaphysical knowledge is above being used for the study and recognition of the incidents which are like small and large waves and foam in the ocean of existence, reduced and removed after they occupy some time (passing an instance in actual life) and making a change in the outward aspect of things.

6) Denying metaphysical knowledge will result in denying reality, because it confines the human being in the recognition of phenomena and relations which are all related truths and are not interpretable and justifiable without the recourse to the transcendental realm.

7) If we try to employ all truths for ourselves, then always some truths will employ us for themselves, adding to the impossibility of such desire and the fact that we are not the absolute served ones; there is

a superior truth which if we do not recognise and serve, we cannot make any claim concerning real spiritual growth. Is the necessity attributed to this matter in the two territories of the East and the West different because of the people living in these territories?

Second Matter – "Eastern philosophy often uses absolute reasoning with regards to the realities of the universe of existence, while Western philosophies, especially since the time of the Renaissance onwards, prefer to connect with the realities by senses."

There is no doubt that the sensible and laboratorial method has broadly advanced in the West in recent centuries, and based upon these, has established the fundamentals of knowledge about nature and anthropology; however, this phenomenon should be made subject to necessary and sufficient study and research. If in the East there is the need of recognising the characteristics of plants, chemical elements and physical manifestations, then do they build their knowledge based upon the matters related to abstractive principles, like the law of unity:

"Nothing proceeds from the One but one"?! Are the founders of sensible and empirical and experimental methods in the sciences in the lands of the East not Muslims? Are the books of *The Canon of Medicine* by Avicenna and *The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing* by Khwarazmi; the researches of Hasan bin Haitham in optics and of Muhammad bin Jabir al-Battani in trigonometry; the chemical works of Muhammad bin Zakariyaye Razi and the mathematical researches of Ghiyath al-Din Jamshid Kashani – that without which, according to Hunke in *Allah's Sun over the Occident*[12], Logarithm would not have appeared[13] – based upon abstractive imaginations, or on senses and laboratories? However, mathematical research is obliged to use the power of wisdom and rationality for mathematical operations, whether in the East or West, yesterday, today or tomorrow, because it is based upon rational abstraction.

Generally, by considering the subject and the meaning of the matter which relies on sensible realities, truth-finder logic necessitates that we should rely on these matters (senses and laboratories) in achieving this knowledge, and this activity is the same pure scientific endeavour in its normal definition, which is being practiced without exclusiveness to the East or West, yesterday, today or tomorrow. This activity is something other than the philosophical thoughts and worldviews that if a person claims that s/he has no need of, renders her/him as either a very narrow-minded person or someone who does not have the ability of philosophical thinking or constructing a worldview. Moreover, if we remove the necessity of abstraction and rational general thinking from the factors of knowledge, then how can we subtract general laws and principles from the governing view of the world of existence and execute scientific methods?! How is it possible for us to have a premise called 'law and principle' from the reflection of the manifestations and specific movements of two territories of the universe and the human being without rational thinking? On the other hand, what will extremist empiricists say about mathematics?! Should we throw out all mathematical books, which are of the most evident signs of human growth, into the sea? Everyone knows that mathematics is one of intellect's superior abstractive

activities!

Third Matter – "Western philosophy does not insist on finding universal concepts, definitions and principles of Reality, and focuses mostly on analytical approaches as well as experimental methods in the construction of conceptual frameworks, while the state of affairs in the Eastern paradigms of thoughts are different; in interpreting the gamut of Reality, they focus on universal principles and synthesis as well as synoptic methods, rather than solely working with analytical approaches."

This difference which has been noted about the philosophies of the East and West seems not to be accurate either, because the analytical method of some of the thinkers, like Bertrand Russell who says "I have only one label and that is logical atomist", has appeared in the West and is of those exaggerations which cannot answer the needs of recognising general principles of existence, and this mental need does not leave any thinker. Essentially, is it possible to make a doctrine without understanding and recognising universal ideals, general definitions and principles about the entire gamut of reality?! Even those paradigms in the West which intended to endow positivistic leanings on philosophy by distinguishing between science and methodology on the one hand, and philosophy on the other, failed, as the Enlightenment philosophy, based on Positivism, could not bring about what they had promised at the dawn of modernity. By failure we refer to the inability of Kantian Positivism, which seemed to deny any significance or relevancy in the paradigms of intellectuals such as Whitehead, Max Planck and others who rejected reducing the question of reality into terms set by Kantian Positivism.

If we take into consideration the aforementioned caveat, then we would be able to conclude that the *raison d'être* for the introduction of methodology has to do with the removal of universal as well as abstractive and a priori concepts and principles from the scientific context which is objectively researchable. The same motive that was present in both regions and exists in all schools of thoughts in defining that group of issues of knowledge which require observation and experimentation; it is neither exclusive to the West nor to the East, and is not exclusive to yesterday, today or tomorrow.

What is forgotten about this matter is the question of whether or not there are other issues introduced to human beings besides sensible objective realities which are capable of being studied by senses and sensible means of recognition? For example, with weak belief in those objective issues, is this issue raised of whether objective reality is infinite or finite, and if it is finite, then whether it is then limited or unlimited? And is it possible for us to contact the realities "as they are" or not? Rather, what is possible for us, is contacting the realities through the channels of senses and other means of recognition.

Fourth Matter – "In Western philosophy, criticism and revision of general philosophical rules, which are received from previous ages, is a desirable act and is even deemed necessary; while the philosophers and sages of the East have a different approach to the past by demonstrating a very deep respect for the 'received tradition' and rarely dare to put these received wisdoms under the critical eyes of scrutiny or critique them analytically."

This point also seems to be inaccurate when the paradigms of thoughts in both the East and the West are considered. This critique could be easily falsified by a quick glance at philosophical treatises in the East which are filled with discussions and criticisms of each other, and of critical engagements in their endeavours to unearth the aims and goals of a particular school of philosophy or the worldviews in general.

Is Avicenna the pure follower of Aristotle or Farabi's general philosophical principles and rules? Is *The Book of Healing* another issue of Aristotle's *The Study of Nature, On Generation of Corruption and The Theology*?! No, not at all! Have Aristotle or Plato ever thought about the issues which Avicenna introduced in philosophy like 'unity' and 'multiplicity' and their contrasts?! Are Ibn Tufail, Kindi and others like them the followers of the Greeks?! Has Sadr al–Muta'allehin not criticised and discussed tens of principles and laws of previous philosophers and sages?! Have Heraclitus or Westerners after Heraclitus ever thought about the precise issues of 'substantial motion' and 'the unity of the intellect and the intelligible', which Sadr al– Muta'allehin had thought about?! When Farabi begins adjusting the opinions of Aristotle and Plato and conciliates them in a concise book *The Gathering of the Ideas of the Two Philosophers*, is it not the reason for the fact that not only this person was circumambient over the thinking ways of both philosophers and had the ability of judging between them, but also superior meanings have been created in the mind of Farabi in this adjustment and reconciliation with which he has been able to perform such an important task!

What is the meaning of Ghazali's book *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* and what does Ibn Rushd's *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* mean? It means that if the principles, laws and opinions of predecessors were accepted indisputably in the East, then these books which directly criticise the philosophical opinions and ideas and worldviews were nonsense. Moreover, the progress of philosophy until the time of Agha Ali Zonouzi and Sabzvari, which is a continuation of the path of Sadr al–Muta'allehin, encompasses both aspects.

Fourth Kind – Based upon the Philosophical Characters' Way of Thinking

Fourth Kind – Based upon the Philosophical Characters' Way of Thinking[14]

Undoubtedly, the appearance of philosophical thoughts during the history of humanity, whether in the East or the West, has risen from the intellect of thinking human beings; at times other thinkers have continued in their intellectual endeavours by considering those thoughts, and at other times, simultaneously with the manifestation of a type of thinking in one section of the world – for example in a place in the East – or the passage of a period of time, be it short or long, from its manifestation, exactly the same type of thought appears in other parts of the East or West without either of the two having knowledge of the existence of the other. This overlapping and agreement of ideas is called the confluence of thoughts.

The relevancy and dissemination of a philosophy are interdependent on how systematic and universal the thought of a philosopher is. In other words, the universal character of a philosopher's system of ideas has deep correlation with the extent of its influence, as we can see in the philosophies of Aristotle, Plato, Descartes, Kant and Hegel from the West, and in the philosophies of Avicenna, Farabi and Sadr al-Muta'allehin in the East, that have various degrees of similarity with each other and with other philosophical thinkers.

We should also mention the fact that some philosophers and intellectuals admit their respective indebtedness to their predecessors or contemporaries, and this affirmation is nothing but a sign of their humbleness and also demonstrates their professional integrity. For example, Mir Fendereski says:

کاش دانایان پیشین باز گفتندی تمام؛ تا خلاف ناتمامان از میان برخاستی

I wish the past wise men had said it all complete; In order to remove the false expressions of those who are incomplete.

Ferdowsi says in *Shahnameh*:

بر باغ دانش همه رفته اند سخن؛ هر چه گویم همه گفته اند

Whatever I say, others have said; Everyone has gone to the garden of knowledge.

The result of Hegelian philosophy is concluded as follows:

So, the novelty of the work of Hegel is not in making a new doctrine in the history of philosophy, but is in arranging the previous Western doctrines in the new system.[15]

In this division (of philosophy based upon the thinking ways of philosophical characters), it is possible to derive the unity of generalities of human knowledge concerning quadruple relationships (relationship of the human being with her/him Self, with God, with the universe of existence and with other human beings) with a necessary and sufficient notice.

It is possible to summarize the majority of the common differences of the thoughts of philosophical characters in the following types:

1) Difference as the result of characteristics of positioning is not only common in philosophies but can also be seen in sciences, especially their theoretical aspects. For example, the worldview and anthropology of a philosopher who favours matter over spirit, is certainly imbued by materialism. On the other hand, a philosopher who favours spirit over matter undoubtedly perceives reality from the vector of transcendentalism. If these two philosophers precisely analyse and combine their positions regarding the

main subject, then they would perhaps understand the main issue, which may assist them in converging their opinions and, as such, reach unity of opinion.

2) Difference as the result of a variety of perspectives and the concentration of the mental powers of any of philosophers who have disagreement with each other based on a specific type of perspective.

Like the differences of views of those who had not seen the elephant and then gathered on a dark night in order to see it, whereby each of them described the elephant according to the condition of the limb or part which s/he had touched. The person who had touched the elephant's ear said the elephant is a big fan. The one who had touched the elephant's trunk said the elephant is a chute and...

In this case, gaining information from the thoughts of other philosophers and experts would be useful and enable us to solve the problem.

Some thinkers have noticed this type of difference. We read in the explanation of Hegel's philosophy:

Hegel took the disagreement between philosophers very seriously and this led him to the second principle of his philosophical thought. In his opinion: philosophy is alive and is a complicated matter, such that it is not possible to summarise the truth from its point of view in a weak and simple sentence, and accordingly, it is possible for any of the philosophical doctrines to include a part of the truth or to complement another doctrine.

Therefore, anyone who wants to establish a new doctrine in philosophy and opens a new way to the truth should first understand the previous philosophical doctrines comprehensively, and deeply explore the results of those centuries of work and thinking. Accordingly, this is the advice of Hegel to the innovators and creators of all time: "True innovation needs true education."

Hegel says:

The mistake of great philosophers was that they saw each other as competitors and enemies and did not understand their relation in a useful way, while a proper philosopher should be sea-hearted and open-minded and always open the doors of her/his mind to learning from the knowledge of other people, because the pest of her/his vision is selfishness and dogmatism.

Following the same principle, Hegel rarely insisted on his innovations of opinions and mostly tried to collect and remind of the opinions of previous philosophers. Once, he summarised his method in this expression, "When a person reaches the point which knows nothing better than others do - meaning that the thoughts of others does not make a difference for him, and he is only seeking their arts - then he reaches peace of mind."

3) Difference as the result of verbal velitations, like the disagreement of Zeno with other philosophers. Zeno denies the locomotion but he places continuous stops, which is another term for locomotion!

4) Difference as the result of personal taste, the proof of which to someone else is not possible through reasoning.

5) Difference as the result of prefabricated principles which move the thinker according to themselves. Therefore, it is possible to say that we can achieve more realities in worldviews and we can eradicate the unpleasant results of disagreements of thought through interpretation, research and finding the common aspects of all the various ways of thinking which are called philosophical systems.

Fifth Kind – Based upon their Definition

It is certain that philosophical knowledge has seen this many different definitions for itself. These definitions are so numerous that some thinkers have said: "Each philosopher has a definition exclusively for herself/himself." This expression has some kind of exaggeration, but by considering an important mental principle in philosophical knowledge and human sciences in general, the interference of the personal feelings and tastes of the thinker is a necessary reality, even though the thinker is unaware of their activities. In philosophy and human sciences, there is a direct positive correlation between the level of generality and abstractive-ness of the issues at hand, and the possibility of the levels of interference of personal feelings and taste.

This principle relies on a more general principle which has been accepted by everyone since the time of the Chinese Lao Tse till now.

That principle is:

In the great drama of existence, we are both spectators and actors.

Hitherto, there are some famous definitions available for the followers of the way of philosophy, including:

1) Philosophy is: some general definitions about the human being and the universe.

2) Philosophy is: gaining knowledge about the universe of existence in analytical and syntactical ways.

3) Philosophy is: knowledge about the available truths through intellect as the amount of human capacity.

4) Philosophy is: an inquiry into the quality of human knowledge in relation to the world of existence.

By paying the necessary and sufficient amount of attention to these definitions and others like them, we reach the conclusion that no contradiction exists between these definitions; for this reality that the human being has a strong and serious desire for attaining knowledge of the world of existence – that s/he herself/himself is a part of and also wishes that in this understanding s/he is purified of imagination and delusion and instead gains pure knowledge – is a certain matter which all philosophers and scholars

agree on. By considering that all of the foresaid definitions can provide one dimension of the dimensions of this knowledge, the contradiction of those definitions is removed, and if some premises can be found in these definitions or other definitions which are not in harmony and unity, then it still cannot be a reason for the real contradiction of those premises and definitions; as we mentioned in previous divisions, if we consider the positioning of any specific philosopher which has resulted in her/his philosophy or philosophical method to have a specific characteristic, then any other thinker who finds herself/himself in the same position – as happens in discussions and criticisms and results in the refutation of theories – will also result in their philosophy or philosophical method having the same characteristics.

Sixth Kind – Based upon the Goal and the Ultimate

The goal and the ultimate of philosophical knowledge can be considered in several different types, some of which are mentioned here:

1) Becoming familiar with philosophical knowledge itself, which means: the goal of knowing is recognising the principles and issues of philosophy itself.

2) Studying philosophy and researching its issues for benefitting from the pleasure of philosophical knowledge.

3) The ultimate could be gaining a sense of unity by the thinker who is attempting to go beyond the sense-perception.

4) The goal is: the evolution of the nature which is mentioned in the definition of Sadr al-Muta'allehin 'to seek the perfection of human nature'. It is the goal that converts conversational philosophy to wisdom, the goal that the caravan of prophets, guardians of God and those who are free of selfishness and hedonism have spent their lives seeking and working for the advancement of. We can bravely say that from the time when thinkers neglected this aim of philosophy and settled instead on one of the three foresaid goals, philosophy lost its truth, motive and results and became a profession which it is fitting to term as "chess playing of the brain", and by this conversion, a philosopher gave her/his place to the clerk of philosophy.

It is expressing the matter that Professor Mayer noted in reply to my question, when he came to my home in Tehran in 1984 with a group of companions. I had commented that: "The philosophy of you Germans was a deep philosophy and you had no motive for surrendering to positivism". He answered as such:

Today, we don't have philosophers in Germany, but employees at the department of philosophy.

Also, it is possible to say that when philosophers neglected the fourth goal (seeking the perfection of the self or self-actualisation), the active source of the minds of geniuses was blocked; maybe no issue

remains for philosophy and thinking, and we should busy ourselves with verbal velitations or pure technology!! If philosophy becomes active with the goal of seeking the perfection of essence, according to the fact that there is no limit for the positioning of the human in quadruple relationship (relationship of the human being with Self, with God, with the universe of existence and with other human beings) and by considering the advancement of sciences and industries, then philosophy would consider it a necessary and important activity, and the human sciences would also become free of inaction.

In sum, that which is necessary for philosophers is the revision of the question of the goal of philosophical inquiry, not the revival of the previous divisions among the various schools of thoughts, which again, could give birth to more contradictions in the future.

1. In this division, the effect of time itself, which is a mental protraction abstracted from motion, is cancelled.
2. This division has been made based upon doctrinal differences, like: Peripatetic philosophy, Illumination philosophy, Riwaq, Idealism, Realism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Romanticism and Rationalism etc.
3. Like the philosophy of India, Greece, Rome, Alexandria, Philosophy of the East and the West. Today, this division is very common.
4. Albeit, we know that Zeno has started a philosophical joke here and intends to deny the truth by reasonable-looking paradoxes and proves his paradoxes by the expression of continuous stops which is another expression for locomotion. For studying the theory of Zeno and the criticism which I have made on that, refer to the book Communication of Human-Universe by M. T. Ja'fari.
5. Refer to the preface of the book History of Science by George Sarton and Science in History by John Bernal and the book Allah's Sun over the Occident by Sigrid Hunke.
6. Science in History, John Bernal, vol. 1, page 206, Persian translation by Asadpour Piranfar and Kamran Fani.
7. Science in History, vol. 2, page 218.
8. Science and Religion in Rational Life, M. T. Ja'fari, page 25, 4th edition, Tehran, 2008.
9. Allah's Sun over the Occident, Sigrid Hunke, page 401.
10. Albeit, historical experience of this discussion is extensive, in the past it was being debated and discussed briefly or in other forms, like the thoughts of Sophists against other philosophers and sages.
11. The Four Elements: Water, Fire, Earth, Air.
12. His book has been translated into Persian with the title Islamic Culture in Europe.
13. Aldo Mili says in the book Science at the Hands of Arab and Muslims that the person who created logarithm by consideration and research in Indian arithmetic is Abul Hassan Ali ibn Ahmad Nasavi.
14. Like the philosophy of Aristotle, Plato, Avicenna, Farabi and that of Descartes and Hegel.
15. The Philosophy of Hegel, W.T. Stace, translated to Persian by Hamid Enayat, page 14 & 15.

Source URL:
https://www.al-islam.org/modern-division-philosophies-muhammad-taqi-jafari#comment-0

Links
[1] https://www.al-islam.org/person/allamah-muhammad-taqi-jafari
[2] https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/46505
[3] https://www.al-islam.org/printepub/book/export/html/46505
[4] https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/46505

[5] https://www.al-islam.org/tags/philosophy