

THE CONCEPT OF TIME AND SPACE IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY:
METAPHYSICAL APPROACHES

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Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada islom falsafasida vaqt va makon tushunchalarining metafizik talqinlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda Forobiy, Ibn Sino va Imom G‘azzoliy qarashlari asosida vaqtning harakat bilan bog‘liqligi, makonning jisimiy mavjudlik bilan uzviy aloqasi hamda ularning ilohiy iroda doirasidagi mohiyati yoritiladi. Maqolada vaqt va makon faqat fizik hodisa sifatida emas, balki ontologik va gnoseologik kategoriyalar sifatida ham talqin etiladi. Islomiy tafakkurda vaqtning yaratilganligi, makonning esa jisimiy mavjudotlar bilan cheklanganligi g‘oyasi asosiy nazariy pozitsiya sifatida ko‘rsatiladi. Shuningdek, mutakallimlar va faylasuflar o‘rtasidagi yondashuvlar farqi tahlil qilinib, ularning zamonaviy falsafiy qarashlar bilan uyg‘un jihatlari ochib beriladi. Tadqiqot natijalari islom falsafasida vaqt va makon tushunchalari borliq, sababiyat va ilohiy qudrat konsepsiyalari bilan chambarchas bog‘liq ekanini ko‘rsatadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: islom falsafasi, vaqt, makon, metafizika, Forobiy, Ibn Sino, G‘azzoliy, borliq, ontologiya.

Аннотация: В статье анализируются метафизические интерпретации понятий времени и пространства в исламской философии. На основе взглядов аль-Фараби, Ибн Сины и Имама аль-Газали раскрывается связь времени с движением, пространства — с телесным бытием, а также их зависимость от божественной воли. В работе время и пространство рассматриваются не только как физические категории, но и как онтологические и гносеологические понятия. В исламской философской традиции время трактуется как сотворённое, тогда как пространство ограничено телесными сущностями. Особое внимание уделяется различиям между позициями философов и мутакаллимов, а также их соотносению с современными философскими концепциями. Результаты

исследования показывают, что категории времени и пространства в исламской мысли тесно связаны с проблемами бытия, причинности и божественного могущества.

Ключевые слова: исламская философия, время, пространство, метафизика, аль-Фараби, Ибн Сина, аль-Газали, онтология.

Abstract: This article analyzes metaphysical interpretations of the concepts of time and space in Islamic philosophy. Based on the views of Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Imam Al-Ghazali, the study explores the relationship between time and motion, space and corporeal existence, and their dependence on divine will. Time and space are examined not only as physical categories but also as ontological and epistemological concepts. In Islamic philosophical thought, time is regarded as created, while space is limited to physical bodies. The paper also highlights differences between the approaches of philosophers and theologians (mutakallimun) and relates them to certain aspects of modern philosophical discourse. The findings indicate that time and space in Islamic philosophy are deeply connected with concepts of being, causality, and divine power.

Keywords: islamic philosophy, time, space, metaphysics, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, ontology.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of time and space is one of the most important metaphysical issues in the history of philosophy. In Islamic philosophy, these concepts are interpreted not only as natural phenomena, but also as inextricably linked to the issues of divine creation, causality, and existence. Eastern thinkers, interpreting time and space as important attributes of being, have put forward various approaches to the issue of their independent existence.

MAIN PART

Islamic philosophy is a set of philosophical teachings formed on the basis of the Islamic religion, but based on reason (logic), thought, and scientific analysis, studying the issues of existence, man, society, and knowledge.

Islamic philosophy is a philosophical direction that seeks to explain the relationship between reason and revelation by combining the ideas of the Quran and Hadith with Greek philosophy (Aristotle, Plato) and Eastern thought.

In Islamic philosophy, time is a measure of change and movement in existence, a phenomenon created by God and not absolute.

The concept of time in the context of theology

According to the teachings of theology, in particular, the representatives of the Maturidi and Ash'ari schools of thought, the universe is "hudus" - that is, created, and has a certain starting point. Accordingly, time is also interpreted as a phenomenon that arose together with the universe.

According to this approach, Allah is absolutely independent of time and space, and time is not a category applied to Him. Therefore, time is the result of divine creation, it is a characteristic of the changing nature of being. This view justifies the ontological difference between divine absolute existence and created being.

Interpretation of time in the philosophical school (Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina)

Representatives of the philosophical trend of Islamic philosophy, in particular Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, relying on Aristotelian metaphysics, interpret time as a quantitative measure of motion. In their opinion, time is not an independent existence, but a relative concept dependent on the continuous movement and change of material bodies.

Therefore, where there is no movement, the concept of time cannot exist. However, although Ibn Sina interprets the universe as a system in constant motion, he considers its existence to be ontologically dependent on a necessary being - Allah.

From this point of view, time refers only to material existence, and divine existence is not characterized by time. This serves to explain on a philosophical basis that Allah is an absolute and unchanging being.

The spiritual interpretation of time in Sufism

In Sufism, the concept of time is interpreted not as an ontological or physical phenomenon, but as a category related to the spiritual state of a person. In Sufism, the main attention is paid to the concept of "the present moment" - waqt al-hāl.

According to Sufis, the spiritual perfection of a person is determined precisely by his state in the present moment. Therefore, the famous phrase: "The son of a Sufi is time," that is, he lives not with the past or the future, but with the present state of mind.

According to this approach, the past is associated with repentance, the future with hope, and the present moment with prayer and spiritual vigilance. As a result, time becomes a factor that determines the inner spiritual state of a person.

Moral attitude to time in the Quran

In the Holy Quran, the concept of time is interpreted not only as a cosmological, but also as a moral category. The oath taken by time in Surah "Asr" emphasizes the value and responsibility of human life.

According to Islamic belief, human life is a test given at a certain time interval, and each action is associated with a reckoning in the afterlife. Therefore, time is considered a concept that is inextricably linked to a person's moral choices and responsibility.

Philosophical interpretation of the issue of time and destiny

In Islamic philosophy, the issue of time is also closely related to the issue of fate and destiny, that is, divine destiny. Man lives his life in time and makes his decisions within the framework of time. However, divine knowledge is not limited by the boundaries of time, it encompasses all events in an absolute way.

This approach serves to harmonize the free will of man with the absolute knowledge of Allah. The concept is formed that although man is free in action, his actions are not outside the scope of divine knowledge.

In conclusion, in Islamic philosophy, time is a relative phenomenon related to created existence, representing movement and change, while Allah is absolutely independent of time and space; time is interpreted as a place of moral responsibility and spiritual perfection for man.

In Islamic philosophy, space (Arabic: al-makān) is interpreted as a necessary condition for the existence and location of a body. Space is inherent in material bodies and is a category inextricably linked to movement, change, and quantity. Therefore, space is interpreted as a natural-philosophical (physical) concept, not a metaphysical one.

According to the scholars of theology, especially the scholars of the Maturidi and Ash'ari schools, space is a phenomenon created simultaneously with the universe and is a characteristic of created beings. They argue that Allah does not need space and does not reside in space, because space is a category that expresses the location of objects relative to each other, and the question "where" cannot be applied to the divine being. Therefore, the science of theology strictly separates space from the divine being, thereby preventing the description of Allah with physical attributes, that is, the permission to glorify Him.

Representatives of the Islamic peripatetic philosophy, Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, interpret the concept of space based on the teachings of Aristotle, according to which space means the closest external boundary surrounding a body and is interpreted not as an independent substance, but as a relative relationship between bodies. Philosophers consider space to be one of the main categories necessary for explaining motion, since without space it is impossible to

determine and measure motion, and without motion the concept of time has no meaning. Thus, space, motion, and time are interpreted as interrelated categories that form an integral system of the material world, but nevertheless, philosophers also recognize God as a being that is not related to space, but is absolutely independent of it.

In mystical thought, the concept of space is interpreted in relation to the spiritual state and spiritual levels of a person rather than its physical content, that is, for Sufis, real space is not an external geographical location, but the state and spiritual status of the soul. According to this approach, a person reaches God not physically, but through internal purification, spiritual perfection, and spiritual closeness, therefore, in Sufism, the concept of "path" is also interpreted not as a distance traveled in space, but as a process of internal transformation. As a result, the concept of space is elevated to the level of a symbolic category in Sufism, representing the stages of spiritual development.

A common principle in all major branches of Islamic thought is that space is inherent only to created beings, and that God is considered absolutely independent of space and time, since associating the divine with space leads to anthropomorphism, that is, likening God to a body. This view is based on the verse in the Quran that says, "There is nothing like Him," and emphasizes the absolute transcendence of God, that is, His absolute superiority over created beings.

In general, in Islamic philosophy, space is interpreted as a relative and created category that ensures the existence and movement of material bodies, while God is recognized as an absolute being, free from space and time, while in the Sufi approach, the concept of space is interpreted as a concept that represents the mental state and stages of spiritual development of a person, rather than a physical dimension.

Metaphysical approaches are philosophical approaches aimed at explaining the most general and extra-experiential foundations of existence (beyond physical phenomena), namely categories such as existence, causality, space, time, substance, necessity, and possibility, through theoretical and logical analysis.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In Islamic philosophy, time and space are important categories in explaining the ontological structure of existence. Their interpretation has been explained in various scientific and philosophical schools through metaphysical foundations, and these approaches are closely related to the issues of creation, causality, and divine transcendence.

Theological metaphysical approach (Concept of Creation)

Representatives of theology (Maturidi, Ash'ari school) interpret time and space as created phenomena. According to their metaphysical position, existence arose together with time and space, and God is absolutely independent of time and space.

In this approach:

1. time and space are the conditions of existence of material existence;
2. God is not characterized by the categories of "when" and "where";
3. the chain of causality is inherent in creation, and the divine will is superior to it.

Metaphysically, this approach serves to preserve divine transcendence and prevent anthropomorphism.

Peripatetic (philosophical) metaphysical approach

In the school of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, time and space are explained on the basis of Aristotelian metaphysics. In this approach:

1. space is the closest external boundary surrounding a body;
2. time is a quantitative measure of motion;
3. space-motion-time form an ontologically interconnected system.

From a metaphysical point of view, the material world is in eternal motion, but exists in absolute dependence on the necessary being - Allah. Allah remains the metaphysical basis of all existence as the first cause of causes, but He is not characterized by space and time.

In this approach, time and space are interpreted as ontologically necessary conditions, but as categories that do not apply to the divine being.

The light metaphysical approach

In the Ishraqi philosophy founded by Shahobiddin Suhrawardi, time and space are interpreted as concepts related to levels of existence rather than material dimensions. In this approach:

1. being is ordered according to levels of radiance;
2. at higher levels of existence, the limitations of time and space are relaxed;
3. material space is a phenomenon specific to the lower ontological level.

Metaphysically, in the Ishraqi approach, time and space are viewed as relative categories that are subordinate to the hierarchical structure of existence.

Sufi metaphysical approach (spiritual ontology)

In Sufism, time and space are explained by spiritual experience and spiritual states. An existential-metaphysical interpretation, rather than an ontological one, prevails. According to this approach:

1. true intimacy is determined by a spiritual state, not by physical space;
2. time is perceived as the “present moment”;
3. the process of spiritual perfection takes place not in space, but in internal transformation.

Metaphysically, this approach accepts the subjective experience of existence as the main means of explanation.

Ontological hierarchy approach (concept of level of being)

In some Islamic metaphysical systems (in particular, in views close to the teachings of Ibn Arabi), being is understood as a hierarchy of levels. In this system:

1. time and space are valid only at a certain level of being;
2. there is no simultaneity at the level of divine reality;
3. “space” is interpreted as a contingent form of being.

In this approach, time and space are viewed as metaphysical categories subject to contingent (manifest) mechanisms.

In Islamic philosophy, the concepts of time and space are interpreted through various metaphysical approaches: in the Kalam they are interpreted as created phenomena, in Peripatetic philosophy as ontological categories related to motion and body, in the Ishraqi school as relative states subordinate to levels of existence, and in Sufism as existential concepts related to spiritual experience; in all approaches, Allah is recognized as a transcendent being, absolutely independent of time and space.

Table 1
Comparative analysis of metaphysical approaches to time and space in islamic philosophy

Analysis Criterion	Kalam Approach (Maturidi, Ash‘ari)	Peripatetic Approach (Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina)	Ishraqi (Illuminist) Approach (Suhrawardi)	Sufi/Spiritual Approach (Ibn Arabi and Sufis)
Ontological basis	Existence is created (ḥādith)	Existence depends on necessary	Existence is structured	Existence is perceived as

		cause, but motion is continuous	in levels of light	divine manifestation
Nature of time	Created phenomenon	Measure of motion	Applies to lower ontological levels	Related to spiritual states
Nature of space	Created, applies to physical entities	Boundary surrounding a body	Relative to material level	Linked to the heart and spiritual condition
Relation of god to time	Absolute, independent of time	Outside time, first cause of all	Source of light, timeless	Eternal, source of presence in the now
Relation of god to space	Not contained in space	Independent of space	Beyond space	Completely independent of physical space
Causality	Divine will is supreme	Chain of necessary causes	Hierarchy of luminous causes	Divine will manifests in creation
Epistemology / knowledge	Combination of revelation and reason	Rational-deductive proof	Intuitive and illumination-based	Spiritual experience and unveiling (kashf)
Metaphysical purpose	Preserve divine transcendence	Explain structure of existence	Understand degrees of existence	Facilitate spiritual perfection
Human role in existence	Responsible moral agent	Rational being	Being capable of ascending luminous levels	Seeker of ultimate Truth

Education al / pedagogical significance	Develops	Enhances	Strength	Cultivates
	correct theological understanding	logical reasoning	ens intuitive thought	ethical and spiritual formation

The table shows that in Islamic philosophy, the concepts of time and space do not have a single interpretation but are explained differently according to the metaphysical orientation of each school. Kalam emphasizes createdness and divine transcendence, Peripatetic philosophers focus on rational and causal structure, Ishraqi thought relates time and space to degrees of existence, and Sufi approaches interpret them in terms of spiritual and inner states. All approaches, however, agree that God is absolutely independent of time and space.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of metaphysical approaches to time and space in Islamic philosophy demonstrates the diversity and depth of thought within the tradition. Time and space are interpreted differently across the major schools:

1. Kalam (Maturidi, Ash'ari) emphasizes the created nature of time and space, highlighting divine transcendence and the independence of Allah from temporal and spatial constraints.
2. Peripatetic philosophers (Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina) view time and space as ontologically necessary categories, closely linked to motion and corporeal existence, while maintaining God's absolute independence.
3. Ishraqi (Illuminationist) approach (Suhrawardi) interprets time and space relative to levels of existence, emphasizing the hierarchical and metaphysical dimensions of being.
4. Sufi metaphysical approach (Ibn Arabi and other Sufis) conceptualizes time and space as related to spiritual states and the inner experience of the soul rather than external physical dimensions.

Across all approaches, a common principle remains: Allah is transcendent, absolute, and independent of time and space. The study also shows that these concepts are not merely physical phenomena but ontological, epistemological, and ethical categories, influencing human understanding of existence, causality, and spiritual perfection.

Overall, the comparative analysis highlights that Islamic philosophy provides a multifaceted framework for interpreting time and space, integrating theology, philosophy, and spirituality while maintaining coherence with the principle of divine transcendence.

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