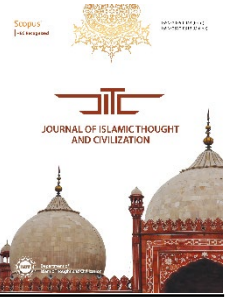
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Title: **Interreligious Engagement: Learning from the Medieval Muslim Intellectual Legacy**

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Interreligious Engagement: Learning from the Medieval Muslim Intellectual Legacy

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Abstract

The current study aimed to analyse the concept of interreligious engagement (IE) or interfaith dialogue (ID) for the medieval period (MP), considering a global, pluralistic, and interdependent society that transcends contemporary society. The study investigated the philosophical inheritance of medieval Muslims on the issue of IE and ID. The thematic approach was used in this study. The interactions of Muslim intellectuals were taken into consideration, such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, Al-Biruni, Ibn Arabi, Al-Shatibi, Ibn Rushd, and Al-Razi with various theological and philosophical traditions, especially Judaism and Christianity. This study showed that although the term IE is unknown in the medieval Muslim intellectual tradition, nevertheless, it offers some insights. This is because this attitude maintained the notion that truth could be derived from various sources, such as from the traditions of other religions and therefore, true knowledge is, by nature, inclusive. They founded a tradition of discourse that blends rationality and revelation. They asserted that human reason and religious revelation do not oppose, however, could illuminate each other. To be sure, science and spirituality may converse and inspire each other. Interfaith discourse, such as medieval Muslim scholarship, is a movement beyond passive tolerance. It pursues common ground, respects divergent positions, and, when possible, seeks partnership in advancing mutual interests.

Keywords: dialogue, *haqiqah*, *ijtihad,* interreligious engagement (IE), medieval Muslim intellectual, synthesis of philosophy and theology

Introduction

'Interreligious engagement (IE),' as it may be applied to medieval Muslim intellectual heritage, is not necessarily a term popularly used during the period. The current study aimed to explore medieval Muslim philosophers whose thoughts align with dialogue. In the present day, IE is not a marker of a particular thinker or theologian. Authors have employed and disseminated the

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terminology, including Boulouque,[1] Adams,[2] and Petito.[3] They root the human meaning of interreligious dialogue as a key to the civilized coexistence of different religious traditions under the same human world. This link helps to understand the differences in religious beliefs and practices while striving for common values that could deepen our understanding of truth, morality, and community.[4]

In the philosophy of religion, John Hick argues for religious pluralism, however, he does not explicitly use the language of IE. According to Hick, interreligious dialogue is necessary to understand the relative nature of theological truths.[5] For instance, Paul Knitter highlights the importance of IE as a method of deepening one's own faith and simultaneously respecting different traditions.[6] Diana Eck has popularised the notion of IE through the Pluralism Project.[7] She focuses on the importance of interreligious dialogue as an essential element of deep spirituality in a pluralistic society. A contemporary Muslim scholar, Farid Esack, emphasizes the role of interreligious partnership to promote social justice.[8]

While no particular academic has held a monopoly on the term, the concept of IE has grown into a core construct. This further emphasizes the presence of active engagement, tolerance for diversity, and efforts to develop amicable interreligious relations.[9] The term IE is used by global communities and organisations, such as Religions for Peace, to describe collaborative efforts across faiths in order to foster peace and justice.[10] The study argued that medieval Islamic philosophical tradition presents significant resources for IE. The study of medieval Muslim philosophical brokers is important for the ID. This is because it shows how Muslim philosophers act as a philosophical intermediary between the involved religions, especially Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Muslim

[1]Clémence Boulouque, "Modes of Interreligious Engagement: From Theory to Social Practices," in *Another Modernity: Elia Benamozegh's Jewish Universalism*, ed. Clémence Boulouque (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 0, https://doi.org/10.11126/stanford/9781503612006.003.0017.

[2]Nicholas Adams, "Obstacles to Moral Articulation in Interreligious Engagement," *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 84, no. 5 (October 20, 2023): 309–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/21692327.2024.2308123.

[3]Fabio Petito, "From Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Advocacy to Interreligious Engagement in Foreign Policy," *Global Affairs* 6, no. 3 (May 26, 2020): 269–86, https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2020.1845098.

[4]Eboo Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012).

[5]John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1989).

[6]Paul F. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013).

[7]Diana L. Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2014).

[8]Farid Esack, *Qur'ān Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression* (London: Oneworld Publications, 1997).

[9]Tanya B Schwarz, "Challenging the Ontological Boundaries of Religious Practices in International Relations Scholarship," *International Studies Review* 20, no. 1 (March 1, 2018): 30–54, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/vix030.

[10]George Rupp, "Religious Communities as a Resource for Conflict Resolution," in *Beyond Individualism: The Challenge of Inclusive Communities*, ed. George Rupp (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2015), 0, https://doi.org/10.7312/columbia/9780231174282.003.0010.

philosophers of the time, such as Al-Farabi (870-950), Ibn Sina (d. 1037), and Ibn Rushd (1126-1198), came up with rational methodologies that added to the Islamic legacy whilst helping ID.

One significant contribution of Muslim philosophy to interfaith communication is the recognition of the universality of truth. A medieval Muslim philosopher commonly maintained that philosophy and religion are different paths leading to the same destination: the understanding of truth and the divine. Ibn Rushd maintained that philosophy is a logical tool to understand revelation, and religion uses symbols to convey truth to the general public. This approach emphasises that differences in faith traditions should not be hinderances, however, must be acknowledged as different attempts to point to the same truth.[11]

The medieval Muslim philosophers served as intermediaries who transmitted, interpreted, and further developed the Greek cultural heritage, a project the Jewish and Christian world assumed. In Andalusia, awkward conversations between Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Rushd, Jewish philosophers (like Maimonides (1138-1204)), and European Christian intellectuals engendered a vital debate of faiths. As such, Ibn Rushd rightly provided Christian scholars, including Thomas Aquinas, the basis to reconcile Aristotelian thought with Christian theology through his accounts of Aristotle.[12] It shows that Islamic intellectual heritage invigorated Islamic philosophy and profoundly impacted other religious thought traditions. This study showed interfaith conversation can occur through intellectual investment and recognition of shared contributions. In this respect, the contribution of medieval Muslim philosophy, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), reconciles Neoplatonic and Aristotelian thought with Islamic theological doctrine that creates a unified philosophical world underlined among different religious traditions. This logical and universal methodology allowed his philosophy to be appreciated by Jewish and Christian intellectuals, stimulating a conversation that transcended doctrinal differences. This study is important to contemporary ID because it shows that rational thought may provide a basis to recognize common values across religions. In addition to reason, medieval Muslim thought emphasized universal ethical and humanitarian values. According to him, an ideal society is one in which all individuals work together to achieve universal happiness without any distinction of religious or cultural differences. It is the vision on which religions can work together to create a fair, just, and balanced society. Additionally, it is a premise most relevant for ID in the present-day multicultural society.

Medieval Muslim philosophers were never labelled under the terms ID or even IE as we know it. Nonetheless, their ideas inherently reflected the acceptance of plurality of religion and openness to other intellectual schools of thought. It shows that ID was organically a part of their thought world. Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, and different personalities have ideals these philosophies represent based on interreligious cooperation.[13] Thus, studying interfaith communication in the medieval era is essential for the future of humanity, especially within the model of an ever more global, plural, and connected society.

The current study explored the contributions of medieval Muslim intellectuals to the idea of interreligious dialogue. Furthermore, it focused on how they used theology and philosophy to understand and address religious plurality.

[11]Driss Habti, "Reason and Revelation for an Averroist Pursuit of Convivencia and Intercultural Dialogue," *Policy Futures in Education* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 81–87, https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2011.9.1.81.

[12]Alessandro Mulieri, "Theorizing the Multitude before Machiavelli. Marsilius of Padua between Aristotle and Ibn Rushd," *European Journal of Political Theory* 22, no. 4 (February 4, 2022): 542–64, https://doi.org/10.1177/14748851221074104.

[13]Habti, "Reason and Revelation for an Averroist Pursuit of Convivencia and Intercultural Dialogue."

1.1. Research Questions

The current study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How did medieval Muslim intellectuals develop the concept of IE?
2. What is the relevance of their ideas for the modern world?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Interreligious Engagement (IE) Concept

The phrase IE[14] connects to a number of similar concepts in theory: (a) interreligious dialogue,[15] ID,[16] or interreligious communication,[17] which is the communicative process between people or groups of different religions to elicit understanding, respect, and cooperation; (b) interreligious spiritual,[18] which means spiritual experiences/practices where, there is interaction, exchange, and understanding between people or groups of different religions; (c) interreligious cooperation,[19] which is purposeful and collaborative interreligious action (common goals: peace, social justice, humanitarian – with the involvement of different beliefs); (d) interfaith education,[20] which is the educational process to encounter and learn about the world's different religions and develop an understanding, appreciation, and tolerance of religious diversity; or interreligious harmony,[21] the degree to which individuals or groups of different religions live in peace and harmony side by side

[14]Youngjin Kiem, "How to Engage with Non-Human Others in Ecosystems from a Phenomenological and Interreligious Perspective," *Religion* 15, no. 12 (2024), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121539; Lucinda Mosher, "Words to Live By: Sacred Sources for Interreligious Engagement," *Anglican Theological Review* 102, no. 3 (2020).

[15]Issa Khan et al., "A Critical Appraisal of Interreligious Dialogue in Islam," *Sage Open* 10, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 2158244020970560, https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020970560; Roger P Schroeder, "Proclamation and Interreligious Dialogue as Prophetic Dialogue," *Missiology* 41, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 50–61, https://doi.org/10.1177/0091829612464749.

[16]Amir Hussain, "A Muslim Perspective on Interfaith Dialogue with Christians," *Review & Expositor* 105, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 53–66, https://doi.org/10.1177/003463730810500106; Roberta R King, "Music, Peacebuilding, and Interfaith Dialogue: Transformative Bridges in Muslim–Christian Relations," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 40, no. 3 (May 18, 2016): 202–17, https://doi.org/10.1177/2396939316636884.

[17]Peter Admirand, "Dialogue in the Face of a Gun? Interfaith Dialogue and Limiting Mass Atrocities," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 99, no. 3 (January 14, 2016): 267–90, https://doi.org/10.5325/soundings.99.3.0267.

[18]Carrie Doehring, "Teaching Interreligious Spiritual Care," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 34, no. 1 (January 2, 2024): 3–16, https://doi.org/10.1080/10649867.2024.2314404.

[19]Bernard R Goldstein, "Science as a 'Neutral Zone' for Interreligious Cooperation," *Early Science and Medicine* 7, no. 3 (January 14, 2002): 290–91; Michael Daniel Driessen, "Interreligious Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding: A Review," *Religion* 16, no. 2 (2025), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16020150.

[20]W Yuspin and Y P Hatinuraya, "Tinjauan Yuridis Penyelesaian Sengketa Perekonomian Syariah Pasca Berlakunya Undang-Undang Nomor 3 Tahun 2006," *Jurnal Jurisprudence*, 2015, https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/jurisprudence/article/view/3000.

[21]Genti Kruja, "Interfaith Dialogue in Albania as a Model of Interreligious Harmony," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 7, no. 3 (January 14, 2020): 76–87.

with respect for others, cooperating despite differences in belief; or (e) religious coexistence,[22] the state in which individuals or groups of different religions live peacefully and harmoniously.

The latter is the term most frequently used by scholars and policymakers engaged in interreligious interaction. The term IE is much preferred since it relates to the work of medieval Muslim scholars. As to Boulouque,[23] Kaur and Mohammed Faisal,[24] Adams,[25] and Petito,[26] IE can be understood through the lens of participation between, but not limited to, individuals, groups, and communities from a wide range of religious or spiritual contexts. These interact with one another to foster understanding, increase acceptance of diversity in religion, and to identify areas where communities may collaborate to overcome social, cultural, and spiritual difficulties. This term includes both theological and dialogical encounters and involves cognitive activity and reflection. Similarly, the study contended that the scholarly interests of medieval Muslim intellectuals gave rise to attempts for IE in relationships between some of the components of humanity.

"Engagement" is characterized as a term which means much more than interaction or contact but comprises active, creative, and participatory elements within a process to include intellectual engagement.[27] Academic engagement is described as a deep level of involvement. This provides commitment of the mind and heart characteristic of a constructive engagement with a particular subject. It is the work of medieval Muslim scholars.

2.2. Medieval Muslim Intellectuals

The analysis in this study applies mainly to medieval Muslim intellectuals. Muslim intellectuals played a prominent role in contributing to the growth of science, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and more during this time.[28] They contributed to the flowering of Islamic civilisation and that of world civilisation. The period flourished through powerful dynasties, such as the Umayyad Dynasty, which spread Islamic influence, and the Abbasid Dynasty, known for its cultural revival by founding important scientific institutions, such as the *Bayt al-Hikmah* (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad. Moreover, other dynasties also spread scientific and religious knowledge by founding major education centres and libraries, such as the Fatimids and the Mamluks.

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[22]Paul Carls, "Modern Democracy as the Cult of the Individual: Durkheim on Religious Coexistence and Conflict," *Critical Research on Religion* 7, no. 3 (January 22, 2019): 292–311, https://doi.org/10.1177/2050303218823069; Murat Iyigun, "Religious Coexistence, Social Peace, and Prosperity," in *War, Peace, and Prosperity in the Name of God: The Ottoman Role in Europe's Socioeconomic Evolution*, ed. Murat Iyigun (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 0, https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226232287.003.0010; Bernard Lewis, "Religious Coexistence and Secularism," in *Islam And The West*, ed. Bernard Lewis (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993), 0, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195076196.003.0011.

[23]Boulouque, "Modes of Interreligious Engagement: From Theory to Social Practices."

[24]Raminder Kaur and Syed Mohammed Faisal, "'God Is with the Patient People': Festival, Class, and Interreligious Engagement," in *Religions, Mumbai Style: Events-Media-Spaces*, ed. Michael Stausberg (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2023), 0, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192889379.003.0007.

[25]Adams, "Obstacles to Moral Articulation in Interreligious Engagement."

[26]Petito, "From Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Advocacy to Interreligious Engagement in Foreign Policy."

[27]Inbal Ben-Asher Gitler, "Modern Typologies as Spaces of Inter-Religious Engagement in British-Mandate Jerusalem, 1917–1938," *Religion* 15, no. 12 (2024), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121490.

[28]Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.7312/columbia/9780231144919.001.0001.

During the Middle Ages, notable cities, such as Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, and Cordoba rose as intellectual centres of the Islamic World, where intellectuals of varying theological and cultural backgrounds gathered to share knowledge.[29] The top institution dedicated to translating classical Greek and Persian texts into Arabic so that Muslim scholars could study and develop these ideas further was *Bayt al-Hikma* in Baghdad.[30] In addition to translations, many scholars produced substantial works in several fields. Al-Khwarizmi (d. 850) is considered as the father of Algebra and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) published the impact of his treatise *Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb* on medicine and philosophy. Other thinkers, such as Al-Farabi, Al-Razi (d. 925), Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and Al-Biruni also left behind intellectual legacies which still resonate. Their contributions were not only limited to the Islamic domain but also played an integral role in the development of science in Europe via translations and subsequent analysis of their works.[31]

3. Methodology

The current study employed the thematic approach to examine the interactions of Muslim philosophers, including Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, Al-Biruni (d. 1048), Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), Al-Shatibi (d. 1388), Ibn Rushd, and Al-Razi, with various religious and philosophical traditions, notably Judaism and Christianity. This approach examines key subjects and persistent themes found in the writings of Muslim philosophers concerning the interplay between religions, intellectual exchanges, and interfaith discourse. The study began with the identification and analysis of the principal writings of Muslim intellectuals of that era. It encompassed books that examined the intersection of Islamic teachings with the philosophies of other religions, particularly on metaphysical theories, ethics, and epistemology. Subsequently, the perspectives of Muslim philosophers were explored about other religions within the framework of intellectual discourse.

They saw the differences between religions not as obstacles but as opportunities to deepen their understanding of revelation and reason. Ibn Rushd worked under the assumption that Aristotelian philosophy, well-formed through speculation by other Greek authors, could examine the core scripture of the religions, particularly Christianity and Judaism, in a relevant manner. Another critical aspect of this strategy is unity in the principle itself and a focus on concepts found in or across faiths. Many Muslim philosophers also absorbed ideas from Jewish and Christian thought during the Middle Ages, such as the One God, eschatology, and the concept of revelation, and then reinterpreted them in the context of Islamic theology. This study focused on how such ideas were contextualised into Islamic philosophy and how this interchange shaped attitudes towards IE.

A comprehensive and structured analysis is achieved by organising collected data using thematic and systematic principles. This approach is adopted to ensure that the research results are comprehensible and easily understood by the readership. Additionally, the study demonstrated how data and thoughts of medieval Muslim intellectuals are collected and analysed in the broader context of ID and mutual understanding.

[29]Jacob Lassner, "Accommodating 'Others': Tolerance and Coercion in Medieval Islam," in *Jews, Christians, and the Abode of Islam: Modern Scholarship, Medieval Realities*, ed. Jacob Lassner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 0, https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226471099.003.0007.

[30]Jonathan Lyons, *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).

[31]Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1987); Oliver Leaman, *Islamic Philosophy 2nd Edition* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 2009).

4. Results and Discussion

Many ideas in medieval Islamic philosophy express scholars participating in actions that can be interpreted as ID by contemporary definitions. Themes include recognition of plurality, promotion of critical and rational thinking, discussion on what constitutes the truth, consideration of the role of *ijtihad*, and interplay of theology and philosophy. These principles resonate deeply with interfaith conversation, termed IE.

4.1. Dialogue and Pluralism

Muslim intellectuals have provided deep insights into religious pluralism. Al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd also recognized that there are other religions and approaches to the same truth in different forms. The comment shows a willingness to engage in ID and understand different expressions of faith. Al-Farabi (872–950 CE) argued that metaphysical truth is one but can be expressed in various modalities including religions. He treated religion as a symbolic representation of universal truth, where religion and philosophy serve complementary roles: philosophy reaches truth through rational investigation, and religion presents it through symbols and teachings, which get a wider crowd. In this way, Al-Farabi enabled the recognition of pluralism, which did not consider religion as an exclusive map to a single truth but regarded all religions as individual pathways to the truth, moulded within the specific socio-cultural environment in which they were rooted.[32] Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of having tolerance and understanding between religions as the integral aspect of a perfect society where everyone works together for mutual happiness.

At the same time, Ibn Rushd (1126–1198 CE), known in the West as Averroes, advanced the recognition of religious pluralism. He insisted that philosophy and religion are not contrary to each other but are rather two ways leading to the same truth. Religion is essential for imparting moral and spiritual guidance to society, while philosophy is a rational way for educated individuals to understand reality. According to Ibn Rushd's view, since all religious traditions grapple to address the same underlying questions about the creation, meaning, and value of life, they can coexist under the umbrella of religious plurality.[33] Ibn Rushd valued multiple religions and highlighted the importance of reasoned dialogue to recognize what is shared across different traditions, specifically the Abrahamic religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.[34]

According to Al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd, truth can be found through different means and is universal. Both emphasized the role of reason to understand religious ideas, allowing respect for many religions. Their approach laid the groundwork for a philosophy of tolerance towards various religions—pluralism was part of the human condition. A similar outlook is reflected in the lifestyle customs of Andalusia, where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived alongside each other and shared in a rich intellectual conversation. Al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd, medieval Muslim philosophers, offered a framework inclusive of the plurality of religious traditions, providing the basis for epistemology through revelation and reason. It laid the foundation for interreligious dialogue that recognized the existence of other faiths and sought common values across traditions.

[32]Abu Nashr Al-Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadilah*, ed. Albir Nasri Nadr (Beirut, 1957).

[33]Habti, "Reason and Revelation for an Averroist Pursuit of Convivencia and Intercultural Dialogue."

[34]Maria Luisa Ardizzone, "Pound's Ibn Rushd (Averroes): The Arabic Contribution to an Alternate History," in *Ezra Pound and the Spanish World*, ed. Viorica Patea, John Gery, and Walter Baumann (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2024), 0, https://doi.org/10.3828/liverpool/9781638040620.003.0002.

4.2. Critical and Rational Thinking

Medieval Islamic thinkers celebrated critical and rational thought. It included rational approaches to understanding truth in both theological and philosophically-informed ways, legitimate interaction with other religions, and the development of Islamic epistemology. The integration between reason and revelation in the search for religious truth and a healthy discourse with different religious traditions was best demonstrated by philosophers, such as Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Al-Biruni. Islamic epistemology is based on reason as God's significant tool for understanding revelation at that moment. Ibn Rushd argued that reason and revelation support each other. He further argued that philosophy, founded on reason, is a way for humanity to grasp universal truth, while revelation provides moral and spiritual guidance to the general community. Ibn Rushd's approach bolstered a legacy of critical thinking within Islam and fostered interreligious dialogue, as reason allows for the logical exploration of multiple beliefs.[35] According to Al-Farabi, religion and philosophy aim to direct people towards the highest good of happiness.[36] He recognized that different religions can represent the same philosophical truths with different symbolisms. This idea advances respect for a plurality of religious systems whilst emphasizing the importance of a critical understanding of distinct religious traditions. Despite various religious approaches, Al-Farabi allows the understanding of all religions to be treated as a piece (or rather a feature) of the same search for the truth.

Although, often considered a critique of philosophy, Al-Ghazali's *Tahafut al-Falasifah* provides rational strategies to critique philosophers' positions.[37] Al-Ghazali does not wholly reject philosophy — he highlights the importance of interrogating rational arguments, especially those that involve religious beliefs. This approach demonstrates the power of reason to explain other religions' theological and philosophic differences with the preservation of one's faith.

Al-Biruni (an 11th-century polymath) used a rational approach that involved features of objective and critical assessment of the teachings of Hindus.[38] He respected all religions while employing scientific and sensible methods to understand and explain the differences between theology and philosophy. This approach provides an important basis for interreligious dialogue based on critical yet respectful scrutiny. Not limited to one discipline or tradition, al-Biruni, known for his objective approach to studying the culture and knowledge of many civilisations, attempted to understand and analyse a wide range of ideas, from Greek to Indian to Persian to Arabic.

Al-Biruni used scientific concepts that focused on verification. He advocated for such a position in his several writings, from his analysis of astronomy and geodesy, emphasizing the importance of direct observation and experimentation in validating hypotheses. He did not merely accept the material at face value but encouraged his audience to test it through thorough empirical experimentation and observation. Al-Biruni highlighted the importance of distinguishing between unsubstantiated beliefs and knowledge gained through observation and evidence. He more often condemned views that lacked scientific method and/or rationality.[39] He stressed that even widely-accepted claims should be scrutinised, if they are unmet by science or robust rationale. A fearless critic of authority and/or convention, Al-Biruni had no qualms about airing his peeves about widely

[35]Habti, "Reason and Revelation for an Averroist Pursuit of Convivencia and Intercultural Dialogue."

[36]Al-Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadilah*; Abu Nashr Al-Farabi, *Kitab Al-Huruf* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2006).

[37]Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1958).

[38]Abū Rayḥān Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitab Al-Hind* (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1941).

[39]Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*.

accepted viewpoints that went unchallenged. He tried to motivate his audience to scrutinize orthodoxy, especially religion, cosmology, and philosophy.[40]

4.3. Discourse on the Concept of "Haqiqah"

Haqiqah (absolute truth) emerged as an important subject matter among medieval Islamic scholars. It reflects the absolute reality beyond religion and dogma as the essence of ultimate reality.[41] These thinkers within Islam argued that this truth could be communicated through different paths or mountains. Thus, they recognized religious pluralism as a legitimate reality essential to search for ultimate truth. The prominent figure behind the idea of *haqiqah* was an acclaimed philosopher and Sufi Ibn Arabi (1165–1240 A.D.). Ibn Arabi coined the term "*Wahdat al-Wujūd*," which means the unity of being, arguing that everything emanates from God, the source of all existence, and all religions return to Him. He claimed that the religious differences are only of form and expression, while the truth underlying the religions is one. Ibn Arabi declared prominently, "My heart is capable of assuming all forms: a monastery for a monk, a temple for a pagan, the Kaaba for a pilgrim, and the sacred texts, the Torah or Qur'ān."[42] It shows his belief that all religions are a path to *haqiqah*. For Ibn Arabi, *haqiqah* is not separate from the world; it is inscribed in all of God's creation. It represents the ultimate principle underlying reality, as each thing or event in the world expresses *haqiqah*.[43] Thus, the realisation of *haqiqah* leads to the recognition that God is the essence of all creation, and the attainment of *haqiqah* is the highest level in the individual's spiritual journey.

The journey towards the "*haqiqah*" is bound up with the "*ma'rifah*" (self-knowledge) — the human being who knows his authentic self would understand the higher truth of what God is and what the nature of existence is.[44] *Haqiqah* refers to mundane reality and sacred knowledge revealed through mystical experiences and divine revelations. Ibn Arabi asserts that the *haqiqah* is the actual truth hidden within the multiplicity of the world, and its understanding brings a person closer to the union with the divinity.[45]

The medieval Muslim Shufi, Jalaluddin Rumi (1207–1273 AD), foregrounded the idea of *haqiqah* as independent of traditional religion. In his famous poem *Mathnawi*, Rumi describes the human spiritual journey or quest for the ultimate truth as an attempt to rise above the limitations of organised religions.[46] In one of his poems, he writes, "The lamps are different, but the light is the same". It comes from a source beyond every form. And this implies that the core of truth is one, even though it differs in religions.[47]

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[40]Madjid Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism: A Short Introduction* (London: Oneworld Pubns, 2000).

[41]Ibid.

[42]Muhyiddin Ibn Ibn 'Arabī, *Fusūs Al-Hikam* (Qahirah: Dar al-Ihya al-Turats al-Arabi, 1946); Muhyiddin Ibn Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūhāt Al-Makkiyyah* (Qahirah: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah al-Kubrā, 1959).

[43]William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989).

[44]Muhyiddin Ibn Ibn 'Arabī, *Fusus Al-Hikam: The Seals of Wisdom* (Chicago, IL: Kazi Publications, Inc., 2020).

[45]Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

[46]Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, *Collected Poetical Works of Rumi* (East Sussex: Delphi Classics, 2015); N Virani, "'I Am The Nightingale of The Merciful': Rumi's Use of The Qur'ān and Hadīth," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 22, no. 1 (2022): 100–111, https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-22-1-2-100.

[47]Leaman, *Islamic Philosophy 2nd Edition*.

To Rumi, *haqiqah* is the ultimate reality beyond all dualities and divisions of existence. Rumi explains *haqiqah* in the context of mystical experience and union with the Divine. *Haqiqah,* to him, represents an infinite oneness that includes the absolute truth and the foundation of existence throughout the cosmos.[48] It is the source and essence of all that is: life, the world, and humanity. *Haqiqah* is not other than this world, but a flowing throughout all of God's creation.[49] Rumi proclaims in his poetry that this world's infinite varieties and diversities are the manifestations of one truth, that one truth being God Almighty. Thus, for Rumi, the investigation of *haqiqah* is an idealistic pursuit that one must undertake in an internally transactional manner. *Haqiqah* can be known directly by the Sufi through spiritual exercise and meditation, especially by participating in and embodying the love of God. Rumi claims that love is the path to understanding *haqiqah*, as it is the energy that moves the universe and joins the *nafs* to the Divine.[50]

4.4. Reinterpretation of Religious Texts (Ijtihad)

Ijtihad, the intellectual effort to interpret religious scriptures, was a core concept in medieval Islamic culture. Islamic philosophy emphasized that *ijtihad* was key to facing modern challenges, understanding diverse societal contexts, and improving interreligious dialogue or interaction. *Ijtihad* allowed sacred texts relevant to the internal needs of Muslims to be reinterpreted, as it also encouraged an understanding and respect between other traditions. The concept of *ijtihad* is based on the idea that the Qur'ān and Sunnah are the primary sources of Islamic law, and there is a need to derive rulings based on these texts pertinent to new and complex situations. Such a notion preaches about justifying rationality and intellectual effort towards understanding arthrodesis against texts and principles of religious scriptures, following the presumption that Islam is a perennial faith. Prominently articulated throughout the literature of great scholars, such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd, and Al-Shatibi, the concept of dynamic interpretation was emphasized to attain the universal relevance of religion.

In the case of Al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE), for instance, he stressed the importance of *ijtihad* as a means of exploring the universal principles of Islam and the basis of its law.[51] He argued that *ijtihad* is a Muslim community obligation (*fard kifayah*) to ensure that religious law responds to temporal and spatial changes. This viewpoint is relevant regarding internal Islamic structure but also shows openness to ID and interaction. Al-Ghazali remained true to Muslim spirituality and elaborated upon the normative framework of Islamic law within the context of multiculturalism systematically and reasoned. An excellent example of *ijtihad* for arguing on comparatives can be found in Ibn Rushd's, in *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* (1126–1198 CE).[52] It offers an alphabet of options on the range of Islamic legal systems available today, urging readers to confront what they mean with a broader and multifaceted approach to interpretive difference. However, this concept does not imply that one should venture to interpret the Quran and Sunnah without having attained incumbencies that would allow him to reach *ijtihad*. He provided an opportunity for discourse between Muslims and other faiths by opening this rational discourse based on universal ethical and legal principles.

Especially in *Al-Muwafaqat fi Usul al-Sharia*, Al-Shatibi (1320–1388 AD) developed the doctrine of *maqasid al-shariah* (the purposes of Islamic law). He stated that the primary goal of

[48]Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[49]Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*.

[50]Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*.

[51]Abû Hâmid Al-Ghazâli, *Al-Mustashfâ Min 'Ilm Al-Ushûl* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1969).

[52]Muhammad ibn Ahmad ib Ahmad Ibn-Rusyd, *Bidâyat Al-Mujtahid Wa Nihâyah Al-Muqtashid* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1995).

Islamic law is to maintain human needs that include religion, life, mind, descendants, and property.[53] Firstly, *maqasid* is an interpretative framework that accommodates the diversity of sciences. *Maqasid al-shariah* can also form a point of convergence within interreligious dialogue in which common denominators that transcend religious barriers may be identified. An exemplar of the *ijtihad*ic potential of a medieval Qur'anic exegete is Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1149–1209 CE), and his work can be usefully explored for its contributions to interreligious dialogue. Al-Razi often uses rational arguments to interpret the Qur'anic text in *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir*.[54] He also discusses various philosophical and religious viewpoints to provide a complete understanding. His approach shows a sense of non-Islamic intellectual traditions, which is significant for the realization that dialogue can occur through critical and comprehensive interpretations of religious writings. The *ijtihad* linked the medieval Islamic world to non-Islamic intellectual traditions, notably Greek, Christian, and Jewish philosophy.

4.5. Synthesis of Philosophy and Theology

Intellectuals in the medieval Muslim world produced a brilliant synthesis of Greek, philosophy, and Islam. This unique synthesis greatly systematized the understanding of religion via a whole logical perspective. This project not only integrated Greek intellectual history into the Islamic tradition but also facilitated the development of philosophy and theology appropriate to the times' spiritual, intellectual, and social needs. This synthesis was greatly influenced by Medieval Muslim scholars and, in turn, greatly influenced both the Western and Islamic worlds' intellectual traditions.

Al-Farabi (872–950 CE), known as the "Second Teacher" (after Aristotle), was arguably one of the first thinkers to synthesize Greek philosophy with Islamic theology systematically.[55] Al-Farabi provided a perfect society (*khairu ummah*) model influenced by Aristotelian and Platonic metaphysical concepts. He viewed philosophy as a way to understand certain universal truths that are a part of Islam. He asserted that religious revelation provides allegory as a guide to metaphysical truth, while philosophy provides rational tools for deeper understanding.[56] Influenced by Neoplatonism, Al-Farabi developed a theory of emanation that explained the relationship between God, intellect, and the universe. This view shows an attempt to bring together theological belief with philosophical reason. In this way, Al-Farabi held that religion—employing its revelations—should lead people to true happiness, while philosophy can provide rational insight into a more authentic understanding of reality. In his works, he developed the concept of the virtuous state, which combines the ethical ideas of Aristotle with the moral code and social ideas of Islam[57] to achieve human perfection and welfare.[58] Al-Farabi showed that reason and revelation complement each other: together, they lead to wisdom and a good life.

[53]Abû Ishâq Ibrâhim ibn Mûsâ Al-Syâthibî, *Al-Muwaffaqât Fî Ushûl Al-Syarî'ah* (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1991).

[54]Fakhruddin Al-Razi, *Tafsir Al-Kabir: Mafatīh Al-Ghaib (Volume 1)* (Cairo: Dar el-hadith, 2012).

[55]Peter Adamson, *In the Age of Al-Fārābī: Arabic Philosophy in the Fourth/Tenth Century* (London: Warburg Institute, 2008).

[56]Al-Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadilah*.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ayman Shihadeh, "Review: Al-Farabi: Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works and Influence Majid Fakhry : Al-Farabi: Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works and Influence," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 3 (September 1, 2004): 347–48, https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/15.3.347.

This synthesis is further explicated by Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980–1037 CE) in his books *Al-Shifa* (The Book of Healing) and *Al-Najat* (The Book of Deliverance).[59] He developed an other-worldly metaphysical system of *wujud* (existence) and essence (*haqiqah*), constituting theories of the God and creation relationship. Ibn Sina defined God as a necessary being (*wajib al-wujud*), and upon all beings derive.[60] Although, he drew from Aristotle and Neoplatonism, Ibn Sina defended the Islamic belief in the unity of God (*tawhid*). In psychology and epistemology, he emphasized the importance of reason in understanding revelation, suggesting that revelation and philosophy enrich and build on each other in the quest for truth. Through explaining God and creation, Ibn Sina considerably affected the notion of "*wujud*" (being). God is a "necessary being" who must have existed for anything to exist, while all other entities are "contingent beings" whose existence depends on God.[61] Ibn Sina attempted to prove God's existence through reasoned argumentation while maintaining that revelation and religious beliefs help us know more about the purpose of human life and our relationship with God. In this synthesis, philosophical and theological thought became so integrated that he could move between ethics and metaphysics within a frame of Islamic religion.

Ibn Rushd (Averroes, 1126–1198 CE), an influential supporter of Aristotelian approaches, also did important work between philosophers and theology. As Ibn Rushd argued, philosophy and religion are not in opposition, but both aim at the same goal: understanding the truth.[62] He argued that revelation employs symbolic language fitting for the mass population, while philosophy provides a deeper intellectual insight. Ibn Rushd argued that there was a religious obligation for those with intellect to study philosophy, as it clarifies the religious laws and beliefs. Ibn Rushd's approach laid the groundwork for communication between philosophy and religion and served as an essential channel through which Islamic philosophy influenced Europe by means of scholastic tradition.[63] In his heart work, *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, Ibn Rushd defended Aristotle's reasoning against the critique of Al-Ghazali, arguing that rationality and faith can coexist. Ibn Rushd, however, contended that human reason may grasp universal principles consistent with those reflected in the revelation, provided that such revelation is interpreted correctly and methodically.[64] He distinguished two ways of coming to knowledge, one through reason and philosophy, for a limited group engaged in deep thought, and the other through revelation given to humankind in general, which must be read in its literal and symbolical meaning. Ibn Rushd claimed that religion and philosophy could even reinforce one another and provide a synthesis of sorts, which is why he was nicknamed the sheikh of the sages.

The previous analysis shows that the medieval Muslim intellectual heritage indicates several fundamental lessons relevant to interreligious dialogue, notably tolerance, cross-cultural and religious understanding, and scientific collaboration. During this period, Muslim intellectuals focused on the intellectual development of Islam while also interacting with various other intellectual traditions, including Greek, Persian, Indian, and Christian. They are open to knowledge

[59]Peter Adamson, *Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna): A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, July 27, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780192846983.001.0001.

[60]S Frederick Starr, "Arguing Aristotle," in *The Genius of Their Age: Ibn Sina, Biruni, and the Lost Enlightenment*, ed. S Frederick Starr (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2024), 0, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197675557.003.0006.

[61]L W C van Lit, "From Ibn Sīnā to Suhrawardī: The Contested Idea of Using Imagination after Death," in *The World of Image in Islamic Philosophy: Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, Shahrazuri and Beyond*, ed. L W C van Lit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 0, https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781474415859.003.0002.

[62]Ardizzone, "Pound's Ibn Rushd (Averroes): The Arabic Contribution to an Alternate History."

[63]Habti, "Reason and Revelation for an Averroist Pursuit of Convivencia and Intercultural Dialogue."

[64]Karen Taliaferro, "Ibn Rushd and Natural Law: Mediating Human and Divine Law," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etw045.

from different religions and cultures.[65] They considered Greek texts as part of a universal intellectual heritage relevant to the Islamic intellectual tradition. They studied with intellectuals from various religious and philosophical schools of thought, developing a sensitivity to the relationship between revelation and reason.

5. Conclusion

Although, the phrase IE is absent from the medieval Muslim intellectual tradition, it offers valuable insights and lessons. Medieval Muslim scholars argued that truth could be derived from multiple sources including religious tradition and that fundamental knowledge was integrative. They set a tradition of discourse that fused reason and revelation. Dialogue and a mutually enriching relationship may occur between spiritual and scientific knowledge. For medieval Muslim thinkers, the interfaith dialogue was a dynamic that required both passive tolerance and active search for what was mutually shared, what should be highlighted in terms of differences, and possibilities for collaboration for mutual enhancement.

These intellectual traditions that evolved among medieval Muslim scholars have left a profound impact on the modern world. As the world has become more interconnected through diverse global networks, the complexities that arise from religious and cultural pluralism have become increasingly multifaceted. This calls for inquiry into positive communicative strategies that allow for peaceful coexistence, common courtesy, and joint action in the face of sectarian and cultural divergence. At the same time, the lessons derived from the intellectual heritage of medieval Islam highlight the importance of interfaith dialogue as more than just a passive tolerance: encouraging a common search for the truth, a mutual respect for what sets us apart, and a cooperative commitment to both social and cultural well-being, as well as the moral progress of humanity.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest regarding the subject matter or material discussed in this manuscript.

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[65]Fadlil Yani Ainusyamsi et al., “Mediaeval Theology of Education: Embracing Philosophy, Kalām, and Sufism,” *Pharos Journal of Theology* 105, no. 5 (2024): 1–15, https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.105.513; Husni Husni and Hasan Bisri, “Inclusivism and Exclusivism: Responses of Prospective Islamic Religious Teachers towards Islamic Sects,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (2024): 1–8, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9361; Husni Husni and Walter Hayden, “The Epistemology of Ta’dib in Islamic Civilizational Discourse: Reviving and Reconstructing Contemporary Muslim Scholars’ Views,” *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 181–97, https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol19no1.14.

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