

Interrelation Between Religion and Science: An Islamic Philosophical Perspective

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Abstract

In recent decades, the discourse on the relationship between religion and science has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars, particularly philosophers, scientists, and theologians. Religion and science are often perceived as distinct entities with roles and characteristics. This perspective has laid the groundwork for numerous studies exploring the interrelation between the two. This research aims to conduct a comparative analysis of arguments concerning religion and science from an Islamic perspective. The study uses a qualitative method through library research to draw upon various books and scholarly articles as its primary data sources. A historical and philosophical approach is adopted to examine the intersection of religion and science within Islamic intellectual thought. The data are analyzed using content analysis, involving critical interpretation of written materials, and supplemented by a comparative study of relevant arguments. The findings indicate that religion and science can coexist harmoniously without necessarily leading to conflict or contradiction. Throughout history, various efforts have been made to integrate these two domains, although some perspectives continue to emphasize their separation.

Keywords: Interrelation, Religion, Science, Islamic Philosophy

Abstrak

Dalam beberapa dekade terakhir, wacana mengenai hubungan antara agama dan sains semakin menarik perhatian kalangan akademisi, khususnya para filsuf, ilmuwan, dan teolog. Agama dan sains sering dipandang sebagai dua entitas yang berdiri sendiri, masing-masing dengan peran dan karakteristik yang berbeda. Pandangan ini menjadi dasar bagi banyak peneliti untuk mengkaji lebih dalam mengenai relasi antara keduanya. Tujuan penelitian adalah analisis perbandingan atas argumentasi-argumentasi antara agama dan ilmu pengetahuan dalam perspektif Islam. Penelitian ini merupakan studi kualitatif dengan pendekatan kepustakaan (*library research*), yang dilakukan melalui analisis terhadap berbagai buku dan artikel ilmiah sebagai sumber data utama. Pendekatan yang digunakan bersifat historis dan filosofis guna menelaah hubungan antara agama dan sains dalam perspektif filsafat Islam. Data yang ditemukan akan dianalisis menggunakan analisis konten (*content analysis*) yakni penulis melakukan interpretasi kritis terhadap data tertulis yang didapatkan. Selain itu, juga akan dilakukan analisis perbandingan atas argumentasi-argumentasi pada tema terkait. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa agama dan sains pada dasarnya dapat berdampingan secara harmonis tanpa harus menimbulkan konflik atau pertentangan. Dalam lintasan sejarah, tercatat berbagai upaya untuk mengintegrasikan kedua ranah ini, meskipun tidak sedikit pula pandangan yang menegaskan pemisahan antara keduanya.

Kata Kunci: Interaksi, Agama, Ilmu Pengetahuan, Filsafat Islam

Introduction

Religion and science are two fundamental aspects of human life. For humans, religion serves as a guide and a source of belief that aligns with their innate disposition (fitrah), which they possess from birth. This includes a pure nature, moral inclination, a sense of truth, and compassion. Over the past four decades, science and religion have developed more fertile and systematic thought forms (Bullion et al., 2022). However, science tends to reject the validity of religion, and religion often rejects science, with each recognizing only its legitimacy.

Meanwhile, despite their separation, both acknowledge the legitimate existence of one another and maintain that there is no intersection between science and religion (Heyden, 2025). Scientific knowledge and religious belief are considered distinct, as each operates based on different epistemological frameworks. On the other hand, the clear separation between science and religion became a widely accepted notion in society during the Renaissance period.

The relationship between science and religion has long been a subject of interest among scholars for centuries. Initially, this relationship was a controversial topic in the Western world (Strube, 2023). However, the development of science and technology in the West has significantly impacted the Muslim world. The debate between scientific knowledge and religious belief remains an active and ongoing discussion among Muslim intellectuals. Even today, many still believe that "religion" and "science" are fundamentally incompatible within broader society. Each occupies a separate and distinct domain (Abdullah, 2006). Since the emergence of secularism in the Western world, history has recorded that the relationship between science and religion in the West gained prominence following Galileo Galilei's introduction of the heliocentric theory (Rostami, 2024). The Church, which held authority over determining truth, was taken aback by the criticisms it received from scientists, particularly concerning the discrepancies between scientific truths and Church doctrine. This event paved the way for increasing secularization in the West, especially after figures such as Galileo, Isaac Newton, and other secular scientists rejected the idea of divine intervention in scientific inquiry. Thus, Western culture (Shamsae, 2021), Having adopted secularization doctrine, clearly separated religion from science. In contrast, a significant difference is evident in the history of Islamic science, where scholars did not experience conflict between scientific inquiry and their religious beliefs. (Ruswandi et al., 2022).

Western culture, through the process of secularization, has drawn a clear line between science and religion, rejecting any attempt to connect the two. Based on the preceding discussion, this study aims to explore the relationship between religion and science, focusing on the historical influence shaping this relationship, especially within the context of the history of Islamic philosophy of science.

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between religion and science. Among them is the research by Reeves (2023), *Exemplars in Science and Religion*, which employs Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigms and exemplars to elucidate the differences and similarities between science and religion. Reeves emphasizes that religion and science can develop harmoniously by acknowledging tacit knowledge and embodied practices within communities. Another significant study by Soleh (2023), titled *Quantum Integration Model for Religion and Science*, introduces a quantum integration model highlighting equality, openness, and theistic

values between religion and science. This approach avoids dichotomous thinking and offers a philosophical and comprehensive two-way integration. In his work *Science and Religion: The Relationship between Islamic Teachings and Modern Cosmology*, Hammad Ullah Khan argues that Islamic teachings align with modern cosmological theories such as the Big Bang and the universe's expansion. The Qur'an is seen as encouraging scientific reflection as a means of recognizing the greatness of God.

Norman and Walid (Norman & Walid, 2024), In their article *The Convergence of Quantum Science and the Islamic Concept of the Soul: Exploring Metaphysical Realities*, provides a novel interpretation of consciousness and reality as a unity of material and spiritual dimensions, establishing a metaphysical bridge between religion and science. In the study by Sutan Maulana (Sutan Maulana, 2022), titled *Agama dan Sains Modern*, the author asserts that religion and science are complementary. The paper emphasizes the importance of dialogical and integrative approaches to ensure both fields contribute positively to understanding reality. Lastly, Ihsan et al. (Ihsan et al., 2021), in *The Relationship between Religion and Science: A Critical Study of the History of Islamic and Modern Philosophy of Science*, distinguish between Islamic science, which is rooted in revelation and reason, and modern Western science, which emerged from secularization. The authors advocate for the Islamization of science as a necessary response by Muslim scholars to the dominance of modern science. What distinguishes this study from the research above is its specific focus on examining the relationship between religion and science from the perspective of Islamic philosophy while simultaneously providing a comparative analysis with the secular philosophical perspective.

Research Method

This qualitative study employs the library research method, which involves collecting and analyzing information from literature related to the relationship between religion and science. This method aims to comprehensively understand relevant concepts and theories through critically examining various sources, including books, scholarly articles, academic journals, and prior research documents pertinent to the research theme. This approach allows the researcher to identify gaps and develop a solid theoretical foundation to formulate research problems and hypotheses. The data will be analyzed using content analysis, in which the researcher interprets textual data. Critically (Krippendorff, 2004). Furthermore, a comparative analysis of arguments related to the topic will be undertaken. The study employs historical and philosophical approaches to examine the relationship between religion and science from the perspective of Islamic philosophy.

Research Result and Discussion

A. The Concept of Religion

In English, *religion* is "a strong belief in a supernatural power or powers that control human destiny." This refers to a strong conviction in a supernatural force that governs human fate (Shamsae, 2021). The meaning of *religion* in Arabic will then be elaborated. The term originates from the word *al-dīn*, which carries various meanings, including possessing, having authority over, regulating, coordinating, compelling, accounting, making decisions regarding matters, rewarding, and appreciating. Upon analysis, religion *al-dīn* can

be understood as a structured way of life based on the principles of law and justice. Thus, when referring to Allah's religion, Islam, it is understood that it was perfected and implemented in a specific location known as Madinah (M. K. Muslih, 2018).

When analyzed, religion within its context represents a structured life system based on principles of law and justice. Accordingly, when referring to the religion of Allah, namely Islam, it is understood that it was perfected and implemented in a specific place known as Madinah. Therefore, in similar terms, religion can be defined as an institution that governs belief in metaphysical realities in which God holds the highest position within that belief system. God is understood as the one who regulates life through the principles of law and justice. (Mohamed, 2024). Fundamentally, religion acknowledges God's physical and non-physical existence as the supreme and absolute being who governs all that exists.

B. Definition of Science

The concept of knowledge will then be elaborated. Etymologically, *sains* is derived from the English word *science*, which in turn originates from the Latin term *scientia*, meaning "to know" or "knowledge," and also from the Latin verb *scire*, which means "to learn." (Norman & Walid, 2024). Both terms share similar meanings with the Arabic terms *'alima* and *'ilm*, which in the Islamic tradition are further distinguished from the terms *idrāk* (perception), which is based on sensory observation, and *'irfān* (gnosis or intuitive knowledge). This distinction reflects the nuanced understanding of knowledge in Islamic thought, where *'ilm* is generally associated with rational and systematic inquiry, *idrāk* with empirical perception, and *'irfān* with inner, spiritual recognition (M. Muslih, 2017). Although science originates from diverse etymological roots, it has been defined in various ways depending on its context and application.

One widely accepted definition describes science as "knowledge derived from the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical world, especially through observation, measurement, experimentation, and the development of theories to explain the results of these activities (Draper, 1875). Thus, in terminological terms, science is understood as knowledge of physical phenomena acquired through experimentation, experience, and the development of theories to form rational thought. The above definition highlights several important points. First, science is concerned exclusively with physical objects of knowledge. Secondly, science only acknowledges two sources of knowledge: reason and empirical experience. This definition reflects the concept of science as understood within Western secular culture.

Nevertheless, Islamic science does not entirely reject the Western definition of science mentioned above. Islamic knowledge also recognizes the sensory world as a legitimate subject of study and reason and the senses as valid tools for acquiring knowledge. However, Islamic science further acknowledges revelation (*wahy*) as a fundamental source of truth. (Khan, 2024).

Its ultimate aim is to apply the values of Islamic knowledge and *adab* (ethical conduct) in all scientific and technological activities. (H. F. Zarkasyi, S. Arif, 2016). Thus, religious knowledge (*wahy*), which does not originate from rational thought or sensory experience, is granted a rightful and integral position within the framework of Islamic science.



C. The Relationship Between Religion and Science

Religion and science are not always in conflict; many scholars have attempted to explore the relationship between the two. Some have even established connections, arguing that religion and science are not inherently contradictory. Some believe that religion does not dictate the direction of science, nor should science be compelled to conform to religious doctrines. Another group maintains that science and religion can never be reconciled, as they are fundamentally different and autonomous entities, each occupying distinct domains in terms of formal and material objects, research methodologies, criteria for truth, and their respective roles. In general, the relationship between science and religion can be understood through four main approaches: the Conflict Approach, the Independence Approach, the Dialogue Approach, and the Integration Approach (Sutan Maulana, 2022).

1. Conflict

From the conflict perspective, religion and science are fundamentally opposing concepts. They are viewed as being in direct contradiction and difficult to reconcile. Within this framework, it is believed that one cannot simultaneously support scientific theories and maintain religious beliefs (Rostami, 2024). Science is perceived as capable of delivering definitive and measurable evidence, whereas religion often lacks concrete proof for its claims and perspectives.

On the other hand, religious scholars argue that science does not possess the exclusive authority to explain all aspects of existence. They contend that human capabilities, the main tools of scientific inquiry, are significantly limited. From this viewpoint, religion is seen as the only domain capable of comprehensively revealing the phenomena and mysteries of life. Two major opposing camps can be identified within the broader conflict between science and religion: Scientific Materialism. This view holds that matter constitutes the fundamental essence of the universe and prioritizes empirical reality as the primary focus. Scientific materialists believe the scientific method is the most reliable means of acquiring knowledge about the world. Scriptural Literalism. This approach recognizes sacred scripture as the sole source of truth, eternal, and entirely accurate because it originates from divine revelation. It rejects all other sources of knowledge, including scientific discoveries, as being inferior to the authority of holy scripture (Barbour, 2006).

Ren and Bell (Renz & Bell, 2024) argue that it is a mistake to believe one must choose between science and religion as a guiding framework. For Renz, religion offers a broader perspective on the meaning of human life. Science, he asserts, remains unable to fully explain the complex dimensions of human experience or the potential for personal and societal transformation as comprehensively as religion does. Religion provides a worldview that transcends the limitations of science, particularly in reflecting on the meaning and purpose of life.

2. Independence

The independence perspective asserts that religion and science occupy separate domains of autonomy, each with its influence, language, scope, and subject matter (Qidwai & Einstein, 2024). They are understood to develop independently without the necessity of influencing one another. Religion is bound to values, while science is tied

to facts. This approach emphasizes that religion and science address different questions, operate within distinct spheres, and employ legitimate methodologies. Although direct communication between the two is not considered essential, mutual respect for integrity is strongly encouraged.

This separation model was not only intended to avoid conflict between science and religion but also emerged due to the continuous evolution of scientific knowledge. Langdon Gilkey provides a fundamental distinction between religion and science: (1) Science deals with objective, general, and repeatable phenomena, whereas religion focuses on explaining existence, the structure, and the beauty of the universe. (2) Questions typically involve "how" objective inquiries in science. In contrast, religion emphasizes "why" questions, those that are deeper and concerned with meaning, purpose, origin, and ultimate destiny (3). The basis of scientific authority lies in logical coherence and consistency with experimental results. In contrast, in religion, authority is derived from God or divine revelation (4). Science produces quantitative predictions that can be tested through experimentation. In contrast, religion employs symbolic and analogical language grounded in the belief in God's transcendent nature (Haught, 2005). This separation model was initially intended to resolve the tensions between science and religion. However, in practice, it may deepen the divide between the two, as it promotes parallel development without fostering dialogue or cooperation.

3. Dialogue

The dialogical approach advocates for constructive interaction between religion and science through exchanging perspectives to enrich our understanding of reality without requiring agreement or conceptual unification. Unlike the independence model, which emphasizes differences, the dialogue model seeks areas of common ground between science and religion (Reeves, 2023). This approach proposes a more collaborative relationship that is less confrontational than the conflict model and more integrative than the independence model.

It acknowledges that certain parallels exist between science and religion that are worth exploring through dialogue, allowing each to inform and support the other. Dialogue in this context emphasizes similarities in methodology, conceptual frameworks, and interpretative strategies employed by both domains. One way to foster dialogue is by comparing the methods used in science and religion to highlight both their similarities and differences. However, the goal of dialogue is not to achieve conceptual unification, as in integration, but rather to promote harmony and mutual respect (Rostami, 2024).

Rational discourse plays a central role in this model, especially when addressing abstract or metaphysical questions that are not easily observable, such as discussions about God, the universe's origin, or the existence of life after death. For example, science explains the universe through theories in physics and cosmology, utilizing mathematical models and empirical experiments to investigate measurable phenomena such as the origin and evolution of the cosmos. In contrast, religion offers metaphysical and spiritual explanations concerning the existence and purpose of the universe,

employing symbolic language and analogies that are not subject to empirical testing (Reeves, 2023).

Dialogue can also be applied to questions beyond the limits of empirical understanding, such as why the universe is intelligibly ordered or what significance human existence holds. Scientists and religious thinkers can engage in respectful conversations to address such questions while upholding the integrity of each domain. This perspective is well illustrated by Albert Einstein's well-known assertion: "*Science without religion is lame,; religionwithout science is blind.*" The statement emphasizes the complementary nature of science and religion, each employing different methodologies, yet both contributing meaningfully to a more profound understanding of reality(Barbour, 2006).

4. Integration

The integration perspective advocates for a deep and coherent relationship between religion and science, particularly regarding their fundamental views on reality, without compromising the distinct identities of either domain (Haught, 2005). This view promotes a more harmonious connection than the dialogue model, as it emphasizes the integration of science and religion into a unified worldview. In this integrative framework, scientific knowledge and religious values are considered consistent and complementary sources for shaping a comprehensive understanding of the world. For believers, scientific insights can enhance their spiritual knowledge, fostering a more holistic perception of existence. This approach asserts that scientific knowledge is not limited to physical or material aspects but also has the potential to influence spiritual and religious dimensions, enriching human understanding of existence, the universe, and divine unity.

Several methods have been proposed within this integrative model to achieve a balanced relationship between science and religious teachings. One approach involves utilizing scientific data to reinforce religious beliefs, aiming to reach a shared understanding and awareness of the existence of God. Another strategy involves re-examining religious doctrines to assess their compatibility with scientific theories. This entails testing religious claims against certain rational or empirical standards and aligning them with recent scientific discoveries (Astutik et al., 2022). In this context, religious thought is often reformulated using process philosophy and a shared conceptual framework, as exemplified in the work of Ian Barbour. Barbour suggests that integrating theology with scientific insights allows for developing a dynamic and evolving theology responsive to contemporary scientific understanding while remaining rooted in religious tradition.

The relationship between religion and science has been a subject of considerable interest among scholars for centuries. Initially, this topic was regarded as highly controversial within Western societies. Nevertheless, advancements in science and technology have had a significant global impact on Muslim communities. The interplay between science and religion continues to be a compelling topic of discussion to this day.

Science seeks truth through specific empirical methods, while religion offers a profound understanding of that truth. Integrating the scientific pursuit of truth with the deeper meanings conveyed through religious teachings remains a complex challenge that is not universally accepted (Astutik et al., 2022). However, the harmony between science and religion should neither be feared nor dismissed as a mere coincidence. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, all truth is derived from the Divine. Religious truth is believed to originate from God and is manifested through His revelation, while scientific truth is based on empirical reality. The encounter between religion and science in the West has been ongoing since the region's early stages of scientific advancement.

D. Points of Convergence Between Religion and Science

Their meeting should not be reduced to juxtaposing two unrelated domains when religion and science intersect. It is essential to recognize that these two spheres often coexist side by side in many aspects of human life and are, in fact, difficult to separate. In axiology, religion and science can engage, converse, and collaborate in guiding humanity's interactions with the natural world and the surrounding social and cultural environment. Religion and science share a common objective: to guide human beings in navigating life. In pursuing this shared goal, religion and science explore, seek, share, and develop an understanding of truth from their respective ontological and epistemological perspectives. This collaborative endeavor reflects their mutual potential to enrich and support one another in shaping a comprehensive vision of human existence.

John F. Haught and Mehdi Golshani offer differing perspectives about integrating science and religion, yet they share certain commonalities. Their convergence is evident in using metaphors stemming from similar foundational concepts. Haught relates scientific thought to religious perspectives on relativity, while Golshani examines the distinction between the terminologies of "Islamic science" and "secular science." (Haught, 2005).

Mehdi Golshani (Khandaghi et al., 2024) asserts that metaphysical elements often have roots traceable to religious worldviews. According to him, metaphysical concepts in science, such as deep reality, the order of nature, and causal relationships, are frequently linked to religious beliefs concerning the presence of God and the structured nature of the created world. From this standpoint, Golshani emphasizes that science and religion have the capacity for dialogue and can also mutually support one another in developing a more comprehensive understanding of complex reality.

E. Islamic Perspective on Religion and Science

In Islamic teachings, most commands and prohibitions in the Qur'an are accompanied by explanations of their underlying reasons, making them easier for humans to understand. Golshani notes that one of the distinguishing features of Islam compared to other religions is its strong emphasis on the knowledge of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Islamic teachings encourage continuous learning and the pursuit of knowledge, elevating scholars to a highly respected and honored status (Mohamed, 2024). Historically, we observe two conflicting trajectories regarding the relationship between science and religion: one rooted in the Islamic intellectual tradition and the other in the Western philosophical tradition.



Islam is a religion that strongly emphasizes the use of intellectual capacity and the contemplation of the wonders of the universe. As stated in the Qur'an, Surah Ar-Rahman, verse 33: *"O assembly of jinn and humankind, if you can penetrate beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, then do so; you will not pass except with authority."* In this verse, Allah (SWT) invites humans to reflect and explore the universe using their reason and intellect. Therefore, the pursuit of space exploration should be viewed not merely as a scientific endeavor to uncover the mysteries of the cosmos but also as an act of devotion aimed at safeguarding the future of human life (Ihsan et al., 2021).

Muhammad Ismail explains that Islamic understanding is essentially the result of clear reasoning that can be comprehended logically as long as it remains within the scope of human understanding. When it lies beyond that scope, its truth becomes evident through undeniable and observable evidence. Thus, the role of reason in human life is both fundamental and essential, as it enables individuals to discern what is best for their worldly life and the hereafter. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once stated that there is no religion (Islam) without the use of reason. This implies that a Muslim's faith in Islam must be built upon sound reasoning and rational understanding rather than blind adherence to imposed dogma or unverified information. Reason must, therefore, be exercised properly and purposefully (Sudjana, 2008).

Allah bestowed a most valuable miracle upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), namely the Noble Qur'an (Al-Qur'an Al-Karim), as a guide for the continuity and betterment of human life. The Qur'an is the holy scripture that serves as the primary source of guidance for Muslims, and it also completes the teachings revealed to the prophets before Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Qur'an is a Muslim religious guide and contains universal values relevant to humanity. It encompasses a vast source of knowledge, including insights related to scientific understanding. Although the Qur'an is not a scientific textbook, scientific information can and should be referred to within the framework provided by the Qur'an. It offers clear references to natural phenomena and events on Earth, which can be verified through scientific inquiry (Ihsan et al., 2021).

From this, it can be concluded that Islam does not reject science. Through science, humans can utilize both reason and divine revelation to understand the essence of all things, including God, the universe, and humanity, based on the values and teachings of Islam. Science also contributes to the development of Islamic civilization in a more rational and scientific direction. It is not merely an act of free thought but a process of thinking grounded in faith, revelation, and ethics. It is a means of attaining a deeper understanding of the world and life itself in pursuit of wisdom and closeness to the Creator.

Conclusions

Science and religion are two distinct yet complementary aspects of human life, each playing a vital role. When science is perceived as an all-encompassing ideology capable of solving every problem, it may appear to rival religion. However, when understood as a technical tool and a means to interpret the universe, science becomes a medium through which religious understanding can be deepened. In Islam, science is not separate from faith; it is a process rooted in reason, revelation, and ethics. Based on Islamic values, it allows humans to

comprehend the nature of existence, including God, the universe, and humanity. Thus, science in Islam is not merely free intellectual inquiry but a pursuit of knowledge guided by faith and morality, which contributes to developing a rational and scientifically grounded Islamic civilization.

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