

Zarepour, Mohammad Saleh. (Ed.) *Islamic Philosophy of Religion: Essays from Analytic Perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge, 299 pp.

Jamie B. Turner  
University of Birmingham

In recent years, analytic philosophy of religion has taken a more global and inclusive turn. *Islamic Philosophy of Religion: Essays from Analytic Perspectives* is both a testament to this shift and a timely contribution. The volume brings together leading experts on a range of topics in philosophy of religion, explored from the perspective of themes and ideas within the Islamic tradition, and approached through the methods of analytic philosophy.

The editor, Mohammad Saleh Zarepour, neatly groups the essays in the volume into seven labelled sections: (i) methodology, (ii) existence and uniqueness of God, (iii) attributes of God, (iv) miracles, (v) faith and its obstacles, (vi) ethics and morality, (vii) science and religion. The essays in each section are excellent and meet the aim of the volume. They breathe new life into some well-trodden topics in philosophy of religion and the Islamic tradition. I recommend it to anyone interested in exploring contemporary philosophy of religion from an Islamic perspective. With fifteen essays, I shall not be able to offer substantive comments upon them all of them, but I will make several remarks about those that align mostly closely with my own research. I begin by offering remarks on the two essays in the section on methodology.

The first essay in that section by Sajjad Rizvi, concerns what contemporary analytic philosophy can do for historians of Islamic philosophy. Rizvi's intriguing analysis brings to the fore the tension between philosophical traditions rooted in a specific historic context and the practice of analytic philosophy today. What I found to be especially refreshing about Rizvi's essay was its openness toward the analytic philosophical method as a way to carry Islamic philosophical conversations forward. In pondering ways in which that might be done, Rizvi points to three potential methods: (a) reading Islamic thinkers through the lens of analytic philosophy, (b) adopting analytic methods to affect a conversation between two traditions (i.e., Islam and contemporary philosophy), and (c) translating the arguments of Islamic philosophers into the language of analytic philosophy to open new conversations (pp. 19-20). Rizvi takes it that (c) is the most effective method (p. 20), and I agree. What he does not fully emphasise, though, is how the historian of Islamic philosophy is integral to (c). To add to Rizvi's remarks, I would further point out that the intellectual historian's work is integral to translating arguments of Islamic philosophers into an analytic framework because that effort depends upon understanding those arguments as originally formulated.

The second essay on methodology by Anthony Booth, focuses on what the history of Islamic philosophy can do for contemporary analytic philosophers. Booth dedicates a significant portion of his essay to examining whether intellectual history is *essential* to analytic philosophy. Booth's main argument is that the former is essential for the latter because forming a coherent worldview, which analytic philosophy aims to achieve, concerns both the propositions which make up that view and understanding how those propositions relate to each other. The history of philosophy is thus essential to forming a coherent worldview because it enables us to properly think through our understanding of how the propositions that make up our worldview relate, especially when historical views of how they do so may be on an epistemic par with our own. Booth's essay also connects in important ways to Rizvi's suggestion that method (c) referred to above, is the most effective way to practice analytic Islamic philosophy of religion. Booth himself illustrates this method in approaching Ibn Sina's notion of estimation (*wahm*) through the lens of "understanding-as"; in other words, adopting an Islamic philosophical concept translated and developed into an analytic framework (pp. 27-29).

I turn now to two essays in the section on faith and its obstacles. These essays address two major atheistic arguments against theistic belief, and in doing so, invoke a non-personalist conception of God. I begin with Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen's, "An Analysis of Some Problems of Evil from an Islamic Perspective", before turning to Imran Aijaz's, "Islam and the Problem of Divine Hiddenness". Legenhausen's insightful discussion on the concept of God in Islamic philosophy and its relation to problems of evil is instructive (pp. 205-207). Among the central arguments of his essay, is that a non-personalist conception of God undermines the problem of evil: God is not a person nor an intentional agent subject to moral norms, and therefore, is not blameworthy for permitting evil (pp. 207-210). If this argument works it would not only solve the problem of evil, but it would do so without recourse to an implausible Divine Command Theory of metaethics (i.e., good = what God wills).

However, Legenhausen's solution does not solve the problem. For the proposed solution appears only to be concerned with vindicating God's *moral* goodness, but this is not the real problem. The problem of evil is basically one of axiological expectation mismatch: there is a mismatch between the sort of world we expect to find if God made it and the world as we have it with all its evil. When framed this way, it's clear that absolving God of any *moral* blame for evil does not resolve the deeper issue. For one might simply ask why it is that a being who is the source of all goodness made a world that is replete with such horrendous evil. Explaining how a non-personalist God is not to be blamed for creating the world does not answer this question.

To his credit, Legenhausen recognises that the problem of evil might be reframed even if God is not a person and lacks moral obligations. As he understands it, the problem will now not be one of justifying God's actions but rather our predications of justice and wisdom to God (p. 209). Legenhausen raises an interesting example of this reframing discussed by Shahīd Mutahhari in his work, *Divine Justice*. It seems to me, however, that God's justice and wisdom are not the key concern; the central issue is about God's goodness at a deeper metaphysical level. Suppose we adopt the Islamic philosophical conception of divine action proposed by Mulla Sadra, as Legenhausen

understands it (p. 208), then the fundamental question is thus: why did the self-disclosure (*tajalli*) of the metaphysical source of all goodness result in a world full of horrendous evil? This was not tackled in the essay, and so for all its merits, the heart of the issue remained untouched.

Imran Aijaz's chapter provides an incisive treatment of the divine hiddenness problem from an Islamic perspective. Aijaz argues that Schellenberg's argument from divine hiddenness trades on a personalist conception of God that can be reasonably rejected by reflective Muslims (pp. 183-186). For whereas Schellenberg sees God's openness to personal relationship with non-resistant, non-believers as an entailment of His love, the reflective Muslim can reject the idea of personal relationship as an entailment of God's love (pp. 183-185). Instead, they can follow Avicenna and al-Ghazali, in holding that God's love is His conferring goodness on all creatures (pp. 184-185). Therefore, the presence of non-resistant, non-believers, does not bring into question the existence of a loving God thus conceived. Aijaz does, however, grant that the argument from divine hiddenness might still apply to Muslims who do adopt a personalist conception of God and that the argument may even be reformulated in ways that apply to those who adopt a non-personalist view (pp. 196-198).

I think that Aijaz's basic contention is right and that he does provide a reasonable way out of the divine hiddenness problem for reflective Muslims. I also agree that the divine hiddenness problem might be reformulated so that it applies even to those who adopt a non-personalist conception of God. For instance, many philosophical Sufis adopt non-personalist views of God. Nonetheless, they emphasise the importance of religious experience in coming to know God (i.e., *ma'rifa*) and as part of the good life. If these Sufi thinkers are right, the sort of goodness one would expect God to confer on His creatures includes *ma'rifa* (i.e., an experiential awareness of God's presence). But if *ma'rifa* is conferred on only a small selection of His creatures, especially when many others are open to it, this seems an odd result. Moreover, if the absence of *ma'rifa* is a bad or evil, this raises a similar question to the one stated earlier: why does the self-disclosure of God result in such evils? Perhaps then this is one way to formulate a divine hiddenness argument even for Muslims who uphold a non-personalist view of God.

I reserve my final remarks for an essay in the section on science and religion. In his essay, "Adam, Eve, and Human Evolution: Is There a Conflict?", Shoaib Ahmed Malik addresses the issue of whether it is contrary to science to hold that Adam and Eve were miraculously created by God. Malik succinctly outlines the contours of the debate on human evolution and interpretations of Islamic scripture, providing a neat overview of different models in Islam, before presenting his case (pp. 261-262). In drawing on the work of David Jalajel and Joshua Swamidass, he defends the position, contrary to Nidhal Guessoum, that the miraculous creation of Adam and Eve as stated in the Qur'an does not contradict science. This is apparently because science can neither prove nor deny their miraculous creation given our empirical evidence. Malik's basic argument is as follows (pp. 272-277). The Qur'anic view is that all humans on earth today are genealogically linked to Adam and Eve but is silent on whether humans existed on earth prior to Adam and Eve's miraculous creation. Thus, it may be that humans that existed on earth prior to Adam and Eve were the result of an evolutionary

process, and that Adam and Eve's miraculous creation resulted in an interbreeding between these pre-Adamic humans and Adam's descendants. This is compatible with the view that whilst Adam and Eve are our *universal genealogical ancestors*, they are not *exclusively our genetic ancestors*. The reason that this cannot be scientifically proven or denied is because it is virtually impossible to determine the *genealogical ancestry* of very distant ancestors from *genetic ancestry*. Therefore, the theological proposition that Adam and Eve were miraculously created and that we are genealogically linked to them is beyond the limits of historical science to determine.

I think that Malik's argument is an intelligent response to the problem of human evolution and Qur'anic scripture, but I am doubtful that it wholly does away with Guessoum's concern. One might grant that Malik's argument suffices to show that affirming the science of human evolution and the Qur'anic narrative about human origins to be broadly compatible. But an *epistemic* problem still seems to remain, and I think that this might be Guessoum's real issue. Consider an analogy with the problem of evil. Many philosophers of religion have given up on the logical problem of evil, conceding that it is logically possible that God has some morally sufficient reason for permitting evil. However, that does not mean that the problem of evil has gone away, but just that it resurfaced in a new form: the evidential problem of evil. This problem isn't about the mere presence of evil *pe se*; instead, it concerns the amounts and kinds of evil we find in our world. Similarly, we might concede that it is logically possible that God created Adam and Eve miraculously and placed them upon earth in such a way that the evolutionary story looks like a seamless continuation. But given the scientific evidence we have for human evolution, to what extent is that logically possible scenario *reasonable* to believe? In the same way that many are not satisfied with sceptical theistic responses to the evidential problem of evil, I contend that many will not be satisfied with the proposed *tawagguḥ* response to human evolution.

Overall, I think this is an exceptionally good volume and is significant as the first academic collection of essays on Islamic philosophy of religion from an analytic perspective. I suspect that it will play an important role in opening the door to further work in this area in the near future.

### Copyright Information

This is an open-access article published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)), which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.