



Conceiving the Nature of Things: A Muslim Perspective

Gürbüz Deniz

0000-0002-9651-9645

gurbuzdeniz2002@yahoo.com

Ankara University, Faculty of Divinity, Department of Islamic Philosophy, Ankara, Türkiye
ror.org/01wntqw50

Abstract

This article first aims to explain how God’s knowledge and power are revealed in the created things. It argues that since divine knowledge is infinite, the manifestation of this knowledge into existence, infinite discovery, and production in existence is possible. Indeed, limiting the manifestation of divine knowledge in existence to only one interpretation or discovery can reduce the potential for things to exist. Secondly, it attempts to prove that things are not ontologically evil, but good. Here, the attempt is based on the issue of general and specific experiences, and on the fact that reason always has the ability to overcome evil. Again, it was emphasized that the relationality of evil and the victimization and sufferings caused by the emergence of bad situations due to the conditions of time and space can be alleviated by the “belief in the hereafter” in the Islamic faith. Thirdly, it aims to briefly interpret general opinions on the nature of things in Islamic tradition. This issue is tried to be revealed with an example from history, and how those who say “things don’t have fixed and enduring nature” cause tragic consequences. The ideas that things have a fixed and permanent nature and that even seemingly extraordinary (miraculous) events can be explained within this nature are included. Finally, understanding providence is based on knowing and explaining causality in existence. The compatibility of this view with the principles of the Islamic faith is the underlying theme recurring throughout the article.

Keywords

Islamic philosophy; Divine knowledge; Nature of things; Science; Ontological evil; Relative evil; Providence; Causality

Highlights

- Science can be a sign and evidence that God’s knowledge is embodied as power in all beings, not universally and specifically, but in some respects.
- To recognize God’s power in existence and His purpose in creation, there is a need for research that requires us to devote much of our time to understanding these issues.
- Evil can be claimed as relational (relative) or ontological. The reason for relational evil is that the entity is not explored in all aspects.
- Everything must be explained and discovered on the basis of causality in understanding the nature of existence.
- It is necessary to accept the fixed nature of things and try to use them as a blessing to our existence.

Citation

Deniz, Gürbüz. “Conceiving the Nature of Things: A Muslim Perspective”. *Eskiyeni* 51 (December 2023), 1008-1023. <https://doi.org/10.37697/eskiyeni.1381474>

Article Information

<i>Date of submission</i>	26 October 2023
<i>Date of acceptance</i>	22 December 2023
<i>Date of publication</i>	31 December 2023
<i>Reviewers</i>	Two Internal & Two External
<i>Review</i>	Double-blind
<i>Plagiarism checks</i>	Yes - Turnitin
<i>Conflicts of Interest</i>	The Author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest
<i>Complaints</i>	eskiyenidergi@gmail.com
<i>Grant Support</i>	No funds, grants, or other support was received.
<i>S. Development Goals</i>	4 Quality Education
<i>License</i>	CC BY-NC 4.0 creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0

Şeylerin Doğasını Tasavvur Etmek: Bir Müslüman Bakışı

Gürbüz Deniz

0000-0002-9651-9645

gurbuzdeniz2002@yahoo.com

Ankara Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi, İslam Felsefesi Anabilim Dalı, Ankara, Türkiye
ror.org/01wntqw50

Öz

Bu makalede öncelikle Allah'ın ilminin ve kudretinin eşyada nasıl meydana geldiği anlatılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda ilahi bilginin sonsuz olması nedeniyle bu bilginin varlığa tecelli etmesinin, sonsuz keşfinin ve varlıkta üretilmesinin mümkün olduğu ileri sürülmektedir. Ayrıca ilahi bilginin varlığının tecellisini sadece bir yoruma veya keşfe bağlamak, eşyanın var olma ihtimalini en aza indirebilir. İkinci olarak, şeylerin ontolojik olarak kötü değil, iyi olduğu kanıtlanmaya çalışılır. Buradaki girişim, genel ve spesifik deneyimler meselesinin yanı sıra, aklın her zaman kötülüğü yenme yeteneğine sahip olduğu gerçeğine dayanmaktadır. Yine kötülüğün ilişkiselliği, zaman ve mekân şartları nedeniyle kötü hallerin ortaya çıkmasıyla ortaya çıkan mağduriyet ve acıların İslam inancındaki “ahiret” inancıyla hafifletilebileceği vurgulanmıştır. İslam geleneğinde eşyanın mahiyetine dair genel kanaatleri kısaca yorumlamak gerekirse, bu konu tarihten bir örnekle ortaya konmaya çalışılırken, “şeylerin sabit ve kalıcı bir tabiatı yoktur” diyenlerin ne kadar trajik sonuçlara yol açtığı ortaya konulmaya çalışılmaktadır. Şeylerin sabit ve kalıcı bir mahiyete sahip olduğunu ve görünüşte olağanüstü (mucizevi) olayların bile bu tabiat içerisinde açıklanabileceğini ileri süren fikirlere yer verilmektedir. Son olarak, inayeti anlamak, varoluştaki nedenselliği bilmeye ve açıklamaya dayanmaktadır. Bu görüşün İslam inancının esaslarıyla uyumlu olduğu makale genelinde ortak payda olarak ortaya konulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

İslam Felsefesi; İlahi Bilgi; Eşyanın Tabiatı; Bilim; Ontolojik Kötülük; İlişkisel Kötülük; İnayet; Nedensellik

Öne Çıkanlar

- Bilim, Allah'ın ilminin tüm varlıklarda güç olarak vücut bulduğunun evrensel ve özel olarak değil, sadece bazı açılardan bir işareti ve delili olabilir.
- Allah'ın varlıktaki gücünü ve yaratılış amacını anlamak için zamanımızın çoğunu bu konuları anlamaya ayırmamızı gerektiren araştırmalara ihtiyaç vardır.
- Kötülüğün ilişkisel (göreceli) veya ontolojik olduğu iddia edilebilir. İlişkisel kötülüğün nedeni varlığın her yönüyle araştırılmamasıdır.
- Varlığın mahiyetinin anlaşılmasında her şeyin nedensellik temelinde açıklanması ve keşfedilmesi gerekir.
- Eşyanın sabitliğini kabul edip, onları varlığımıza bir nimet olarak kullanmaya çalışmak gerekir.

Atıf Bilgisi

Deniz, Gürbüz. “Şeylerin Doğasını Tasavvur Etmek: Bir Müslüman Bakışı”. *Eskiyeni* 51 (December 2023), 1008-1023. <https://doi.org/10.37697/eskiyeni.1381474>

Makale Bilgileri

<i>Geliş Tarihi</i>	26 Ekim 2023
<i>Kabul Tarihi</i>	22 Aralık 2023
<i>Yayın Tarihi</i>	31 Aralık 2023
<i>Hakem Sayısı</i>	İki İç Hakem - İki Dış Hakem
<i>Değerlendirme</i>	Çift Taraflı Kör Hakemlik
<i>Etik Beyan</i>	Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde etik ilkelere uyulmuştur.
<i>Benzerlik Taraması</i>	Yapıldı – Turnitin
<i>Etik Bildirim</i>	eskiyenidergi@gmail.com
<i>Çıkar Çatışması</i>	Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.
<i>Finansman</i>	Herhangi bir fon, hibe veya başka bir destek alınmamıştır.
<i>S. Kalkanma Amaçları</i>	4 Nitelikli Eğitim
<i>Lisans</i>	CC BY-NC 4.0 creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/deed.tr

1. Allah's Knowledge and Power Manifested in Being

“Allah is Almighty. Nothing is beyond His power.” The claim or belief in this form includes judgments that every believer will accept easily. How does this power reach the realm of existence? What is its place, value, and importance in our lives? It is not easy to give clear answers to questions such as “how do we know His manifestation and emergence in existence?” in a manner that everyone accepts. Although there are opposing views on this issue, there is still a way to resolve it.

There is certain mental confusion in understanding the actual manifestation of God's power in existence (undoubtedly arising from the structure of existence itself and our phenomenological relation to it), and many opposing views have surfaced parallel to this. As believers, we are allied with expressing that we see the existence or effect of His power at sunrise or in a violent earthquake; there is nothing incomprehensible here. However, this belief and acceptance do not go beyond calling the existence of what is already obvious to everyone, without any mental or actual effort, a dry belief. In this case, this type of belief has not been verified because it has not been proven or evidenced. Despite this belief, there is no concrete being or power that exists in the world of possible existence without predicating anything on its own -unfortunately, (!)- to be referred as ‘divine power is this!’. In other words, God's power is not a field of existence that exists imaginarily on its own, independent of the beings He creates, without touching on their nature or existence, and the discovery of such a possibility has not yet occurred. Well then, “Doesn't God have power?” Can we answer these questions? In our view, if we hold the following approach to this issue, we may be walking on solid ground: God's power has the possibility of existing in things, and we can reach this possibility of existence with our, that is, human will, power, and knowledge. For this reason, finding His power in existence necessitates the special efforts of free-willed beings like us. We need to find His power within the beings He created to beautify and strengthen our world of existence. Other imaginary beliefs and explanations have not offered any substantial solutions to the problems stated.

Beings that do not have will perform their duties, either voluntarily or involuntarily, as a necessary requirement of their nature.¹ As for us humans, making a claim like “they have divine power” without voluntarily knowing and experiencing the what-and-how (essence) of existence, that is, its quality, is a useless rhetoric. In order to make such a claim, we do not have any evidence that can be used as a basis for evidence and persuasion. In this case, there is no difference between having will and not having will. Therefore, such claims represent a type of religiosity that does not go beyond being an ordinary belief, and although they make sense for the general public, they are not important to the people of evidence.

How can we solve or find an answer to this problem that we have attempted to briefly outline? When we put people, specifically Muslim people, at the center, it is possible to start by actualizing the abilities and essence that God has created in man at

¹ Fuşşilat41/11. All Qur'anic verses cited are translated by myself.

birth, which are actual with respect to God's creation but potential in relation to themselves and their knowledge. Otherwise, if a person does not reveal his power in a way that suits his human creation and confines his potential to his existence, this means that that person does not organize his existence in accordance with the divine creation, and it is understood that he does not fulfill his great responsibilities.² At the same time, someone who does not actualize his/her own abilities will never be able to actualize the capabilities of the objects. Human growth is the only way to understand the essence of things and realize their hidden potentials.

Does a person's failure to realize the potential existence (essence) that exists authentically in himself or in any other entity into actuality (functionality) make him accountable? Or is it his primary duty to activate the potential for understanding and doing inherent in his being? Our answer to the first question is as follows: Failure of a person to actually reveal his/her understanding potential in accordance with the abilities that have been present in his/her nature since birth makes him/her absolutely responsible. The answer to the second question is that the individual is, of course, expected to fulfil a special duty in his life and succeed in becoming a true human being and a believer by actualizing the potentials in his own existence, as stated in the Qur'anic expression 'are those who know and those who do not know the same'³ as observed in the practices of the Prophet. In other words, a person's salvation and happiness are directly related to the actual answer he will give to the question of whether they have actualized their potential or given abilities. The majority of Muslims have not provided the necessary answers to these questions and have not actually fulfilled what they have to do, and they often use this lack of answers as a justification for their faith (!).

If we say, "Allah is omnipotent" and fail to understand His power, and if we do not find and extract that power from the nature of existence, and if we cannot actually bring it into existence (as mercy), different images of the divine can make it seem like the omnipotent God in which we believe is a mere appearance. As a result, false powers may emerge in Allah's dominion, and these may evolve into false idols/images that would overshadow the real power of Allah. In this respect, answering the second question constitutes the necessity of the Muslim individual's purpose of existence. Expressing our answer regarding the first option verbally without putting it into action does not constitute evidence of the truth of this claim. In contrast, it remains at the level of a claim that can only be ridiculed. Then, we must establish a theoretical basis and actual proof of the rightness of this view.

It is an obligation, even a religious duty, to bring the power of God inherent in existence into the realm of being with our actions in order to experience existence

² "I swear to time that man is truly at a loss. Except those who believe and do good deeds and advise each other to the truth (they are not at a loss.)" al-'Aşr 103/1-3. In this explanation, we understand the following: A human being is at a loss when he does not actually demonstrate his potential abilities, that is, in a manner compatible with God's creation. Only when he puts them into practice according to faith and goodness can he achieve salvation and happiness.

³ al-Zumar 39/9.

again and to have awareness in accordance with divine power. The person who performs this job resembles the Lord. Because what it reveals and brings to life is what manifests God's essence and attributes into things, these things become visible in that person's life and even become his identity, personality, and character. This realization, as we have just stated, is not only about action but requires preparation for the job by knowing and discovering oneself and other things. Science and its results, which open the door to this situation, that is, to make sense and explain things whose content has become concrete through knowledge and discovery, can be a sign and evidence that God's knowledge is embodied as power in all beings, not universally and specifically, but in some respects. The outcome of this process strongly demonstrates the necessity of belonging to the power of God's creation. While the embodiment of the universal proposition that "Allah is Almighty" is a mental entity, the confirmation of the provision of divine power is revealed for those with pure intentions, with the concrete outcome of the content of the particular, that is, the things that arise from human action.

Now, let us look for an answer to the question of what kind of effort a person should make to reveal the divine power and knowledge inherent in the nature of things. To recognize God's power in existence and His purpose in creation, there is a need for research that is large enough and extensive enough to require us to devote most of our time to understanding these issues. People who have sacrificed their entire lives for this noble purpose and goal feel pleasure from the knowledge they have attained throughout their lives. In addition, they receive uninterrupted rewards by making and continuing to make significant contributions to human legacy. We can also benefit from this sublime knowledge and achieve special happiness with what we discover on this journey. A person who discovers God's knowledge and power, to a greater or lesser extent, has the opportunity to recognize the subtle ways of achieving happiness in this world and the hereafter and to maintain the relationship between existence and being - without experiencing any ontological unrest - in the modern age, where the place of divine power in existence has been forgotten. Discovering God's infinite and absolute divine knowledge and power over existence, and specifically over ourselves, and finding out the ability to be within ourselves, is a mandatory and religious duty for us to be decent people and upright Muslims. When we discover and reveal the divine power in existence from the nature of beings and use it for the happiness and security of people on earth, we build a lifestyle in accordance with God's consent in His dominion. In other words, prioritizing the essence of existence, penetrating its nature with knowledge and action, and performing these actions without compromising moral principles are important means of achieving happiness.

Possible being, which is the source of manifestation of divine knowledge and power, carries many existential possibilities, both horizontally (phenomenal) and vertically (categorical). Because the divine knowledge that manifests itself as the cause of the creation of existence is absolute, its manifestation carries within itself the possibility of being in possible existence - infinitely-in accordance with this absolute knowledge. Thus, it would not be right to consider a single manifestation of divine

knowledge and power as the sole reality or truth of that being. To make a comparison, just as there are many cooperating reasons for a single event in social sciences, explaining a natural entity that is composed of many parts by only one component will lead to a reductionist understanding of science. Therefore, approaching existence with this acceptance of multiple perspectives while discovering the nature and quantity of things, such as social scientists, who explain single events in social issues from many aspects, gives us the opportunity to discover multiple things on an entity. When a single discovered aspect of an entity is not explored in harmony with other possible aspects, positioning the thing into existence with that single discovery may lead to harmful or incomplete results.

Let us express the following point as evidence for what we have said: while an explanation made about an entity can be considered correct with a discovered aspect of that entity, accepting that there is also the possibility of existence of more superficial or deeper (layered) explanations that may or may not include that explanation. There is another reality that has been proven by the explanations made about existence so far. One entity may have been used in one aspect or for one purpose in the past; however, today, it may be used in many ways and for many purposes. While today it offers a solution to the problem of the past, the same thing may have opportunities for other solutions tomorrow. In our opinion, it is possible to approach existence in this way, which is necessary for the continuity and integrity of scientific research. In other words, approaching the discovery of the nature of existence from many fronts or possible fronts is a necessary approach for scientific development. Considering uniform explanations and discoveries as the only ability of a particular being is the path of imposing science, this reductionist and monopolistic approach, although beneficial, will not only block other explanations, but also perhaps even cause harm. Such an approach may have prevented many possibilities embedded in objects from coming into existence. Therefore, as a metaphysical explanation, the Muslim's approach to existence, as per his belief, is that divine knowledge and power have infinite manifestations in existence. Based on this belief, as a requirement of God's knowledge, accepting the manifestation of infinite abilities through one's being and acting accordingly allows endless discoveries. This is the method by which Muslims discover and produce things. This methodology should be encouraged and accepted as a law for scientific research. If discovering and explaining an unknown aspect of an entity does not reveal the unknown aspects of the nature of that entity, it is possible to claim that discovery is monopolistic. The discoveries made about something stand before us as a requirement of the nature of things in that they are the pioneers of other discoveries. While there was no possibility of transformation or change in anything in the past, today, change in the same entity can be an ordinary practice. The material of a writing pen used yesterday to meet a single need can undergo transformation and change today, opening the door to another opportunity to meet other needs. However, it should be noted that the results obtained from scientific research should always be considered relative. In other words, "what is scientific is what is falsifiable." Therefore, it is necessary to adopt this principle.

Therefore, the absolute principles of religion cannot be identified using particular scientific results. While the metaphysical principles of religion are unchanging universal principles, scientific research is about a world of phenomena that is constantly changing. The aim is not to judge these particular results, but to use them for good and to allow their nature to be constantly discovered.

In our opinion, a person who believes in the power and absolute knowledge of Allah cannot be perfect unless he discovers this divine power and knowledge through the objects he tries to understand and know, because perfect faith attains perfection by embodying the knowledge and power (essence) that God has created in objects, in one's own existence, that is, by revealing it in one's existence. Knowledge is knowledge of the cause, and power is the ability of the being arising from this cause. It is a duty and responsibility for a believer to not only follow the cause in words but also to discover it and present God's absolute knowledge for the benefit of humanity. This is what please Allah. Power is also compatible with knowledge. In other words, accepting and expressing the existence of Allah's knowledge and power is a statement that has not been proven when accepted by general observation. When we reveal the ability of being, which is the source of his true knowledge and power of mercy, through scientific discovery, this means that what is inherent in the nature of being emerges from there as mercy into the realm of existence. That's the point! This situation can occur only through individual or special efforts. It should also be noted that unless we know the causes of things, we cannot understand their wisdom. As one becomes aware of their wisdom, one becomes aware of what, how, and why one should do. In other words, as we determine the measure (*qadar*), we achieve wisdom.

If the manifestations of mercy of divine power and knowledge of the capabilities of the being are used for unfair gain, that is, in moral language—by dominating things and wasting them—this—in religious language—becomes a haram occupation. Muslims do not accept this in principle. The greatest waste in science is the use of these discoveries as tools for domination and corruption in the universe and humanity.

To summarize what we have said so far: if divine knowledge and power are infinite and existence is the place of manifestation of this infinite knowledge and power, then it is possible to make dozens, hundreds of discoveries even through a single being. Something that was used for only one function in the past can be used for many functions on many fronts today. The diversity of talent expansions of oil and energy resources, which are indispensable for our time, is of this kind. Of course, it is possible to bring into existence the potential of an item that will replace oil tomorrow and be used for many other purposes. Perhaps when we discover a function in an entity, other unknown aspects will emerge as a result of these discoveries. This pushed us to rethink the same thing and create new theories and experiments. Rethinking existence requires looking at the existence of many fronts holistically. Integrity ensures morality and justice.

2. Ontological and Relational Evil

While talking about things, it is difficult to talk about the fact that the human being, the most perfect being in the possible world, is an active agent and also about the good

or bad nature of the events that affect him, or about the good and evil that arise in human relations. The most important factor that brings this issue to light is that everyone looks at events in the context of their beliefs and philosophical thoughts. Undoubtedly, a certain rhetorical and dialectical style is effective in these evaluations. Analytical explanations of proof or the nature of existence are evaluated in line with a person's worldview and philosophical outlook.

In the Islamic faith, Allah created the universe as necessitated by the name Rahman. The scale of the meaning of the name Rahman is revealed to us in the Book, as the source from which good and beautiful originate. Contrary to popular belief, God's creation of the universe is not neutral. It is confirmed by the Quran that each being carries the good and beautiful in its own nature, and that all other names of Allah are embodied in a particular form when they come into existence through the name *al-Rahman*.⁴ In addition, as a basic approach, Muslim thinkers (especially philosophers) argue that things and their origins are good because the one who created them is "Absolute Good (*al-Hayru'l-Mahz*)" or, in religious language,⁵ *al-Rahman*, therefore existence is also good. They expressed their opinions that this was necessary. If this is the case, then how should we understand or justify evils in the world of existence? The problem can be traced as follows:

In our opinion, if we proceed on the ground we explained above (a), as the potential essence of the thing or object is discovered, it will be revealed that good, useful, and beautiful things predominate in existence—as a requirement of Allah's name *al-Rahman*. Evil can be claimed as relational (relative) or ontological. The claim that evil in existence is ontological can be countered in two ways: The first is the claim that evil exists in existence in a superficial manner, without investigating existence in a vertical and holistic, that is, layered, manner. This claim is indicative of mental laziness. If evil appears outwardly in existence, then in order to discover whether evil exists in the nature of a being, that being must be known and understood vertically and from all its aspects. When such research is carried out, if we consider it by comparing the past with the present, it is seen that a relational evil emerges in existence, not an ontological one, as claimed. We plan to elaborate on this point in the future. The reason for this relational evil is that the entity is not explored in all aspects, or the relationship of one entity with another entity is not matched appropriately. Not conducting vertical research leads some people to believe that evil is ontological. Rather than an

⁴ "Rahman; He taught the Qur'an, created man, taught him the declaration, the sun and the moon are with a reckoning, the plants and stars and the trees prostrate themselves (to Allah), (Allah) raised the sky and set the balance (measure). put it." *al-Rahmān* 55/1-7 See. Gürbüz Deniz, "Rahman, Rahmet ve Merhamet", *YineDergi* (June 5, 2020). <https://yinedergi.com/2020/06/05/rahman-rahmet-ve-merhamet/>

⁵ God; It is good simply because it is necessary, simple, immutable, true, perfect, and complete. Ibn Sina, *Kitabu'ş-Şifa: Metafizik*, trans. Ekrem Demirli - Ömer Türker (Istanbul: Litera 2005), 11/100-101. "Absolute evil beings, mostly evil beings, beings in which good and evil are equal are not created. Because the creation of a great evil in order to create a small good is a great evil. As for absolute evil, its existence is absolutely impossible. Ibn Sina, *Risaletü'l-archiyye* (Hyderabad: 1335 h.), 17. "Existence is pure goodness and pure perfection." See also Engin Erdem, "Doğal Yasa Teorisi ve İbn Sina'nın Sünnet(ullah) Anlayışı", *İbn Sina*, (Ankara: DİB Press, 2015), 110-115.

ontological debate, the problem of evil arises from dealing with a system of lazy arguments in which we do not use our minds sufficiently; that is, from dealing with relational evils that directly affect us. The second claim is that in the evil attributed to the essence of the being, people think that they have discovered the essence of the being, and the product resulting from its processing creates a suspicion of evil depending on the intention of use. This directly results in a judgment of goodness or evil regarding the nature of the thing, depending on its use. In this sense, things allow and give way to both sides: good and bad. However, in the Muslim tradition, the rhetorical expression that “the essential thing in things is permission (*ibaha*).” is held strong.

While good maintains its status of goodness through the correct use of what is obtained from existence, what appears to be bad is still good in terms of its function because the human essence is useful in some way when we put aside the subjective bad intentions and purposes of the person or people making the use.⁶ The Word informs us that human beings are created in the most beautiful way, but that goodness or evil has an extreme relationship due to what they do.⁷ It should be emphasized that human beings are beautiful (*ahsen*) as beings themselves. Plato also stated that the ability of those who want to do evil to calculate down to the smallest detail is due to the sharpness of their intelligence, and the ability to put what this intelligence reveals into practice is due to the magnificence of the physical tools that they use. As can be seen, although evil is relational, the existence of the human who makes it actual is good and beautiful. Because evil and all states called evil are ultimately states, it seems more appropriate to evaluate them as relational rather than ontological.

In summary, the types of evil we are trying to put forward are limited to worldly life, and because they are to test people, they gain position and meaning according to the purpose people aim at. Despite this, people have not yet definitively solved the problems that always arise from existence itself. Despite all the efforts of people, there will always be problems, deficiencies, or evil arising from existence, one way or another (even incidentally). Thus, we can base the relativity of evil as follows. The ontological evils that people could not overcome hundreds of years or a thousand years ago and were accepted as originating from the nature of existence are no longer considered evil today. There are several examples of this. For example, many diseases, such as tuberculosis, which until recently were fatal and incurable, can now be treated. It is understood today that some things that were considered ontological evil in the past were not originally evil. Again, what we consider ontological evil today may not be evil tomorrow. However, tomorrow many new things will be counted as evil again. As explained in (a) above, since this situation requires constant discovery of God’s knowledge and power, attribution of evil will somehow continue their course until

⁶ Plato, *Devlet*, trans. Sabahattin Eyüboğlu - M. Ali Cimcoz, (İstanbul: İş Bankası Press, 2012), 30-32.

⁷ “Indeed, We created man in the most beautiful form. Then We turned it to the bottom of the bottom. Except for those who believe and do good deeds! There is an endless reward for them.” al-Tin 95/4-6. As can be seen, human beings are beautiful in creation, but due to their actions, that is, their relationships, they derive good or bad from their actions.

knowledge of the good is attained. Because the discovery of the good in existence, which is the manifestation of absolute knowledge and power, will continue indefinitely, such claims will continue to exist through the unknown. For this reason, people will definitely not be able to prevent such relational evils due to the limitations of human knowledge and power, that is, their relative impossibility. At this point, if people absolutely solve relational problems arising from things, they can easily fall into the illusion that they have divine power. Although today's people have discovered much compared to the past, they have discovered very little or are aware of very little compared to the ultimate capabilities of being. Despite this, people do not hesitate to emphasize their superiority, even in their tiny discoveries compared to the vastness of the universe.

Islam, as a religion, aims to prepare for the afterlife against the background of the importance it attaches to the world. Since people do not have enough time and opportunities in this world, heaven is promised to them in return for their tolerance and patience towards the evil that may happen to them. If it is not possible to discover all capabilities of existence in this world and destroy evil, if new discoveries cannot continue and lead us to absolute discovery, then it will be inevitable for us to encounter troubles that are beyond us in one way or another in this world of existence. In this case, if we do not believe in the afterlife, it is inevitable for us to constantly feel a lack of happiness. However, if we believe in the afterlife, it is possible for us to find compensation in the afterlife for some of the painful shortcomings that prevent us from being happy in this worldly life. If, as claimed, there is ontological evil in this world and there is no belief in the afterlife, unhappiness will never leave us. However, it will not be easy for a believer who believes in the afterlife but does not devote his efforts to the discovery of existence in this world to the extent of his means to find a good reward in the afterlife. Today's Muslims seem lazy in discovering the universe, just as they are lazy in discovering the capabilities inherent in their own nature. The tragic aspect of the matter is that they enjoy humiliation by blaming Allah (God forbid). In addition, God tests those who claim to do everything perfectly and those who become arrogant by showing His power in other ways. For those who take precautions to withstand an 8.9 magnitude earthquake, the Creator may sometimes upset all existing plans by sending earthquakes of 9.1 magnitude. However, humans can take new measures against 9.5, by evaluating the capabilities in the universe using the intelligence inherent in their own nature. This situation shows that there is a correspondence between the human mind and the universe and that this correspondence can somehow be transformed into experiences that can overcome the problems existing in the universe.

The fact that the human mind takes precautions against evil manifestations is evidence that it is the most superior being in the possible world.⁸ On the other hand, because reason takes precautions against evil situations, it also gives the content of the power obtained through reason good nature. Abandoning the human mind to laziness

⁸ Ibn Sina, *Ispat-i Nübüvve*, in *Resail fi'l-hikme ve't-tabiiyat* (Cairo: Daru'l-arab, n.d.), 123-124.

or conformism means leaving the potential power of that mind idle. Because the mind has divine qualities, it is suitable for preventing evil and making good prevail in the possible world by revealing its power and knowledge in the name of God. We can say that states that manifest in existence, whether good or bad, lead to a neutral state rather than the nature of things. Although his claim is viable, humanity's struggle against evil and the effort to make goodness prevail seems to be more dominant. In our opinion, this tendency towards the good, in which existence reveals its capabilities in different ways, will continue as long as the world exists.

Perhaps one of the reasons why it is frequently brought up that things that affect our worldly life are bad in some way, and why many people's minds are confused due to this claim, may be the Christian doctrine of the original sin and the belief system that rests on the existence of evil.⁹ If so, to reach the right conclusions or judgments on this subject, it is necessary to look at the history of scientific discoveries and independently match and evaluate these results with the positive and negative gains of discoveries made on objects in the world we live in.

3. How do we conceive the nature of things?

While the situation in Christianity is to accept that things are essentially evil, as mentioned above, what could be the reason for disinterest and indifference towards discovering the nature of things in the Muslim tradition? It seems possible to look at this question from two perspectives: one is the generally accepted view, which is supported by theologians, and the other is the suggestion of minority philosophers about nature.

Whether existence has a fixed and permanent nature has been a matter of debate in the Muslim tradition of thought, and unfortunately, in order to make room in theology for miracles, the general tendency has been dominated by the opinion that things do not have a fixed nature (essence) and that what we see as nature is just customs.¹⁰ This belief is based on what we stated before, "Allah is omnipotent." It is a belief that, although it talks a lot about its principle, it does not show any respect or interest in how this will happen and does not even need to show it. For this reason, Islamic civilization has moved away from discovering the essence (compassion) inherent in existence (mercy), as it has developed openly or secretly with this presupposition. However, despite this prevailing general tendency, philosophers state that everything, including miracles, can be rationally explained.¹¹ It seems necessary to bring these discussions back to the agenda due to the current desperate state of our

⁹ See Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 31-45. Arnold Toynbee, *Hatıralarım, Tecrübelerim*, trans. Şaban Bıyıklı (İstanbul: Klasik, 2005), 160-168.

¹⁰ Ebû Hamid el-Gazzalî, *Tehafütü'l-felasife*, trans. Mahmut Kaya - Hüseyin Sarioğlu (İstanbul: Klasik, 2005), 170 and 177. There are also Mutezile thinkers such as Cahız, Nazzam and Sümmame who do not agree with this understanding and say that objects have inherent qualities. Yunus Cengiz, *Doğa ve Öznellik: Câhız'ın Ahlâk Düşüncesi* (İstanbul: Klasik, 2015), 39.

¹¹ Regarding the views of Ibn Sina and Gazzali and the current debates on whether things have a fixed nature based on miracles, see Rahim Acar, "A Naturalistic Explanation of Miracles: The Case of Avicenna", *Toronto Journal of Theology* 33/S1 (April 2017), 161-173.

civilization because the dominance of the outlook that currently and implicitly enables and gives way to this disinterest continues.

The understanding of providence put forward and elaborated by Ibn Sina is the establishment of the order of goodness in the most perfect way possible and the inclusion of all beings in this order as a work and requirement of God's knowledge.¹² This order always leaves the door open to knowing existence, understanding it, and producing works of art from it—that is, the possibility of existence. Contrary to this understanding, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, a strong representative of the Ash'arite tradition, insists that God's choice is not based on justification or reason to suggest a cause.¹³ This approach and general acceptance have led to the belief that good and evil cannot be rationally determined or known. This perspective does not require any effort and serves as an excuse for people's laziness. Such a belief involves trying to find solutions to problems through mythical means. Providence, which is the first understanding of these discourses,¹⁴ does not accept any emptiness or neglect in existence and in understanding things. A person is responsible for every state and situation. "No one can achieve anything apart from his efforts."¹⁵

Ibn Sina is convinced that everything must be explained and discovered on the basis of causality in understanding the nature of existence. In fact, it is noteworthy that, against the statements that the nature of things is habitual and that this nature is not continuous, Ibn Sina states that the reason for the existence of the miracle can be given with respect to the nature of things by saying that every existence in nature has an explanation.¹⁶ The assertion that every possible existence is within the scope of divine knowledge—that is, reason—shows that it is necessary to look at things from this perspective. This opinion is valuable, and this perspective needs to be re-evaluated in the context of reason, knowledge, and discovery. The prevailing opinion made Sheikh al-Islam Kadızâde Ahmed Şemseddin Efendi in 1580s say about Takiyüddin Efendi's observatory that "they are interfering with God's work" and give the fatwa for its destruction.¹⁷ This reasoning can be rejected by using Ibn Sina's approach. It is

¹² Ibn Sina, *al-Shifa al-Ilahiyat*, ed. Hasanzade el-Âmûlî (Qum: 1376h), 48-460; See Hakan Hemşinli et al. (ed.), Yunus Cengiz, "Kötülüğün Soykütüğüne Fahreddin er-Razi'nin Katkısı", *İslam Düşüncesinde Kötülük Sorunu ve Teodise I*, (Ankara: Elis, 2021), 275.

¹³ See Yunus Cengiz, "Kötülüğün Soykütüğü", 269.

¹⁴ For detailed information on the subject of providence, see Emine Taşçı Yıldırım, *İslam Felsefesinde İnyet - İbn Sina Örneği* (Ankara: Gece, 2020). In addition, Fârâbî sees providence as identical with divine justice and generosity. God's placement of justice, that is, the knowable and understandable, in the essence of existence, not arbitrariness, has eliminated uncertainty, that is, meaninglessness. Emine Taşçı Yıldırım, *İnyet*, 417.

¹⁵ See al-Najm 53/39.

¹⁶ Ibn Sina, *İşaretler ve Tenbihler*, trans. Ali Durusoy et al. (Istanbul: Litera, 2005), 201-203. The Jewish scholar Garsonides, who probably lived in the 14th century, explains miracles in terms of celestial bodies. He claims that miracles do not violate the rules of nature. See Yasin Meral, *Yahudi Düşünürlerin Astroloji Algısı* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu, 2023), 151-152.

¹⁷ Fatwa of Şeyhülislam Kadızâde Ahmet Şemsettin Efendi: "Making observations brings bad luck, and the danger of daring to penetrate the secrets of the sky in an arrogant manner is known and certain. "There is no state where the sky has begun to be observed and that state has not been destroyed while it was prosperous." Salih Zeki, *Asar-ı Bakıyye* (Istanbul: 1329 h), 200. Admiral Kılış Ali Pasha demolishes the

necessary to focus on the fact that the Word states that the existence of the earth and sky is fixed and permanent;¹⁸ and that everything that exists is according to a measure (*qadar*).¹⁹ Let us now understand that this is a duty. Seeing things as inert, unreasonable, and unreliable does not lead a person who thinks about things to the Creator and wisdom. In contrast, any claim that evokes coincidence opens the door to atheism and agnosticism. Scientific developments from the past to the present strongly indicate that the correspondence between the nature of things and the human mind is not accidental and habitual.²⁰ If a thing does not have a nature suitable for human intellect, there is no room to understand it and there is no need to deal with it. As is well known, the Quran constantly encourages believers to think and reflect on their existence and the existence of everything else. This reasoning directs us to find evidence of God's existence and creation (both in the inner and external worlds).²¹ In our opinion, Muslims can get rid of the problems they face today by approaching things from Ibn Sina's perspective, discovering the mercy inherent in the problems, and putting them at the service of the people.

Conclusion

In order to say "Allah is Almighty" humans must reveal and concretize the immanence of God's knowledge and power in existing things in a way that will be merciful to humanity. In this context, we believe that Islamic references have strongly preserved their freshness even though they have become ashen throughout history. The emergence of discoveries regarding existence at random and in different images should be continuous. The fact that there is no ontological evil in existence should be considered in the context of the principle of "what is essential in things is permission" and with the understanding of providence. Although some religious sectarian discourses oppose this, Islamic tradition does not accept ontological evil in things; on the contrary, it only accepts the existence of relational evil. We believe that belief in the afterlife alleviates the pain of relational evil, which cannot be overcome despite showing will and power. It is noteworthy that in Islamic tradition, there are those who claim that existence does not have a fixed and continuous nature as well as those who rationally ground the existence of a fixed, enduring, and rational nature of existence. Today, owing to the lessons we have learned from history and the concrete realities we experience; we believe that it is necessary to accept the fixed nature of things and work to use them as a blessing to our existence.

observatory in 1580 by the order of the Sultan. See Ahmet Yüksel Özemre, *İslam'da Aklın Önemi ve Sınırı*, (İstanbul: 1996), 325.

¹⁸ "It is Allah who keeps the heavens and the earth intact and protects them from destruction." *Fāṭir* 35/41

¹⁹ "Surely, we created everything with a measure (destiny)." *al-Qamar* 54/49. See also; *al-Raḥmān* 55/7

²⁰ Aristotle bases the fixed nature of things on the following principles: "He uses the concept of nature in the sense of the emergence of growing things, the first element from which these things arise, the principle of the movement of these things, the first matter of these things and the substance of things." Muhittin Macit, *İbn Sina'da Doğa Felsefesi ve Meşşai Gelenekteki Yeri* (İstanbul: Litera, 2006), 69.

²¹ *Fuṣṣilat* 41/53.

References

- Acar, Rahim. "A Naturalistic Explanation of Miracles: The Case of Avicenna". *Toronto Journal of Theology* 33/1 (April 2017), 161-173.
https://utpjournals.press/doi/10.3138/tjt.33.suppl_1.161
- Cengiz, Yunus. *Doğa ve Öznellik: Câhız'ın Ahlâk Düşüncesi*. İstanbul: Klasik, 2015.
- Cengiz, Yunus. "Kötülüğün Soykütüğüne Fahreddin er-Razi'nin Katkısı". *İslam Düşüncesinde Kötülük Sorunu ve Teodise I*. ed. Hakan Hemşinli - Yunus Kaplan. 263-298. Ankara: Elis, 2021.
- Deniz, Gürbüz. "Rahman, Rahmet ve Merhamet". *YineDergi*. Erişim: 5 Haziran 2020.
<https://yinedergi.com/2020/06/05/rahman-rahmet-ve-merhamet/>
- Erdem, Engin. "Doğal Yasa Teorisi ve İbn Sina'nın Sünnet(ullah) Anlayışı". *İbn Sina*. 99-122. Ankara: DIB, 2015.
- Ibn Sina. *Risaletu'l-archiyya*. Hyderabad: 1335h.
- Ibn Sina. *Şifa/Metafizik II*. trans. Ekrem Demirli - Ömer Türker. İstanbul: Litera, 2005.
- Ibn Sina. *İspat-ı Nübüvve. Resail fi'l-hikmeve't-tabiiyyat*. Daru'l-^cArab, Kahire, n.d.
- Ibn Sina. *eş-Şifa el-İlahiyat*. ed. Hasanzade el-Âmûlî, Qom, 1376.
- Ibn Sina. *İşaretler ve Tembihler*. trans. Ali Durusoy, et al. İstanbul: Litera, 2005.
- Gazzalî, Ebû Hamid. *Tehafütü'l-felasife*. trans. Mahmut Kaya - Hüseyin Sarıoğlu. İstanbul: Klasik, 2005.
- Macit, Muhittin. *İbn Sina'da Doğa Felsefesi ve Meşşai Gelenekteki Yeri*. İstanbul: Litera, 2006.
- Meral, Yasin. *Yahudi Düşünürlerin Astroloji Algısı*. Ankara: Elis, 2023.
- Platon. *Devlet*. trans. Sabahattin Eyüboğlu - M. Ali Cimcoz. İstanbul: İşBankası, 2012.
- Özemre, Ahmet Yüksel. *İslâm Aleminde İlimlerin Gelişimi*. İstanbul: 1996.
- Swinburne, Richard. *Providence and the Problem of Evil*. Oxford: OUP, 1998.
- Taşçi Yıldırım, Emine. *İslam Felsefesinde İnanç - İbn Sina Örneği*. Ankara: Gece, 2020.
- Toynbee, Arnold. *Hatıralar, Tecrübelerim*. trans. Şaban Bıyıklı. İstanbul: Klasik, 2005.
- Zeki, Salih. *Asar-ı Bakiyye*. İstanbul: 1329h.