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THE METHODOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF KALAM THEOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY MATERIALISTIC VIEWS

Abstract. *This article analyzes the influence of contemporary materialistic and secular worldviews on human faith and spiritual consciousness. The study examines modern forms of materialism, including scientism, moral relativism, secularism, and consumer culture, as well as their theological and ethical consequences. Furthermore, the historical formation of kalam theology, its defensive role in protecting Islamic creed, and its methodological foundations based on the harmony of reason and revelation are discussed. Special attention is given to the Maturidi school and its methodological relevance in addressing contemporary ideological and theological challenges. The article concludes that kalam theology remains an essential methodological system for strengthening theological stability and ideological immunity in modern Muslim societies.*

Keywords: *Kalam theology, materialism, secularism, scientism, faith, Maturidism, harmony of reason and revelation, ideological immunity, contemporary thought, metaphysical reality, Islamic creed, theologians, science and religion, moral relativism.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of globalization, the internet, and social media has significantly accelerated the spread of various ideological and philosophical views. As a result, modern individuals, especially young people, increasingly encounter questions concerning faith, science, the origin of existence, the purpose of human life, and metaphysical realities. Contemporary society tends to demand logical argumentation and scientific explanation rather than emotional or purely traditional religious discourse. Therefore, explaining religious beliefs through rational and methodological approaches has become an urgent necessity.

Throughout Islamic intellectual history, the science of kalam played a crucial role in protecting Islamic creed from philosophical deviations and ideological challenges. Muslim theologians attempted to explain matters of faith not only through scriptural evidence but also through rational and logical arguments. They emphasized that there can be no contradiction between authentic revelation and sound reason. In this regard, kalam emerged as a methodological system aimed at preserving theological stability within Muslim society.

Today, the spread of materialistic and secular worldviews has intensified the need for a renewed theological methodology capable of addressing modern intellectual challenges. Particularly, the Maturidi school, with its emphasis on the harmony of reason and revelation, offers an important theoretical framework for responding to contemporary ideological and metaphysical questions. This article analyzes the ideological influence of modern materialistic thought and examines the methodological significance of kalam theology in addressing these challenges.

MAIN BODY

Materialism is a philosophical worldview that considers matter as the fundamental basis of existence. According to this perspective, all phenomena are explained solely through material causes, leaving no place for metaphysical realities such as revelation, divine will, the soul, or the afterlife. In modern times, materialism has evolved beyond explicit atheism into more subtle ideological forms including secularism, scientism, moral relativism, radical individualism, and consumer culture.

Secularism tends to restrict religion to the private sphere, thereby reducing its influence on ethics, society, and intellectual life. Similarly, scientism claims that only empirical science can produce valid knowledge, while metaphysical and religious knowledge are considered irrational or unscientific. Such approaches often elevate science into an absolute criterion of truth, despite the fact that science primarily studies the physical world and is not methodologically equipped to negate metaphysical realities.

Modern materialistic culture also promotes excessive consumerism and individualism, encouraging people to prioritize worldly success and material benefit over spiritual and moral values. Consequently, questions regarding moral responsibility, divine accountability, and the meaning of life become increasingly marginalized.

The expansion of materialistic and secular ideologies has significantly affected contemporary religious consciousness. Through social media and digital platforms, simplified and emotionally charged content often shapes public perception regarding religion and science. As a result, some individuals begin to perceive religion as incompatible with scientific progress. Young people are especially vulnerable to such influences because ideological narratives are widely disseminated online in accessible and persuasive forms. This contributes to the emergence of doubts concerning revelation, metaphysical truths, and religious knowledge. Moreover, moral relativism weakens absolute ethical standards by portraying morality as merely socially constructed and changeable according to human interests.

The weakening of spiritual values may also lead to existential crises, moral instability, and psychological dissatisfaction. Human beings are not merely biological entities driven by material needs; they also seek meaning, moral guidance, and spiritual certainty. Therefore, contemporary materialistic thought affects not only philosophical perspectives but also the ethical and spiritual structure of society itself.

Kalam theology occupies a central position within Islamic intellectual tradition as a discipline dedicated to defending Islamic creed through rational and textual evidence. Its primary purpose is to strengthen faith, clarify theological doctrines, and respond to ideological objections. Sa‘d al-Din al-Taftazani defined kalam as “the science that studies religious doctrines through definitive proofs” (Taftazani, 1998, p. 163). This definition highlights the rational and argumentative character of kalam theology. Muslim theologians sought to establish faith upon intellectual foundations rather than blind imitation.

Similarly, Adud al-Din al-Iji described kalam as a discipline through which religious beliefs are proven and doubts are refuted by means of evidence (al-Iji, 2020, p. 35). Throughout history, Muslim theologians confronted various philosophical schools, sectarian movements, and atheistic tendencies by employing rational methodologies rooted in Islamic revelation. Ibn Khaldun also emphasized that kalam theology aimed to defend orthodox Islamic belief through rational arguments while refuting deviant ideologies (Ibn Khaldun, 2001, p. 580). Therefore, kalam historically functioned as an intellectual defense mechanism safeguarding theological stability within Muslim society.

Kalam theology did not emerge merely as an abstract theoretical discipline; rather, it developed in response to concrete historical and ideological challenges. As Islam spread into Persia, Syria, and Egypt, Muslims encountered diverse philosophical and religious traditions including Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism, and Hellenistic philosophy.

The translation movement during the Abbasid era introduced Greek philosophical works into the Muslim world. Consequently, Muslim scholars had to engage critically with philosophical concepts that sometimes conflicted with Islamic theology. This intellectual encounter necessitated the development of systematic theological methodologies capable of defending Islamic doctrine rationally. Internal theological disputes also contributed to the emergence of kalam. Questions concerning divine attributes, predestination, free will, and the interpretation of ambiguous scriptural texts generated debates among various sects such as the Mu'tazilites and Khawarij. In response, theologians formulated structured theological systems grounded in both reason and revelation.

The historical circumstances surrounding the emergence of kalam resemble contemporary conditions in many ways. Just as early Muslims confronted external philosophical ideologies, modern Muslims face challenges posed by secularism, materialism, and scientific epistemologies. Therefore, the methodological significance of kalam remains highly relevant today.

One of the defining characteristics of kalam theology is its methodology based on the harmony between reason ('aql) and revelation (naql). Muslim theologians did not perceive reason and revelation as contradictory; instead, they viewed human intellect as a divine gift capable of understanding theological truths.

The Maturidi school particularly emphasized the role of rational inquiry in theological understanding. Maturidi theologians argued that authentic revelation and sound reason cannot genuinely contradict one another because both originate from God. This methodological balance is especially important today, as contemporary individuals frequently demand logical and intellectual explanations regarding matters of faith.

Kalam theology also challenges the assumption that scientific progress necessarily undermines religious belief. Science investigates the physical universe through empirical methods, whereas metaphysical realities transcend empirical observation. Therefore,

extending scientific methodology into metaphysical denial represents a philosophical assumption rather than a scientific conclusion.

By maintaining the distinction between empirical inquiry and metaphysical truth, kalam theology provides a balanced framework for understanding the relationship between religion and science. In the contemporary information age, individuals are continuously exposed to ideological influences through digital media. Materialistic and secular narratives are often presented under the guise of modernity, freedom of thought, and scientific rationality. Consequently, some people gradually internalize these perspectives without critically examining their philosophical foundations.

Kalam theology plays a crucial role in developing intellectual and ideological resilience. It encourages analytical thinking, critical examination of philosophical claims, and rational defense of religious belief. Through its methodological approach, kalam transforms faith from mere imitation into conscious conviction grounded in reasoned understanding.

The Maturidi tradition is particularly valuable in this regard because it promotes a balanced intellectual approach that combines rational inquiry with spiritual commitment. Such a methodology can help contemporary Muslim youth respond effectively to ideological doubts and secular challenges.

Therefore, kalam theology should not be regarded merely as a historical discipline but as a living intellectual tradition capable of addressing modern ideological crises and strengthening theological consciousness within Muslim society.

CONCLUSION

The expansion of globalization and modern communication technologies has intensified the influence of materialistic and secular worldviews on contemporary society. Modern materialism manifests itself not only through explicit metaphysical denial but also through scientism, moral relativism, consumer culture, and radical individualism. These developments contribute to the weakening of spiritual and moral values. This study demonstrates that contemporary materialistic ideologies primarily aim to distance human consciousness from metaphysical and divine realities. Particularly among young people, secular and atheistic narratives circulating through digital media generate numerous theological questions and uncertainties. Consequently, there is an

increasing need to explain religious belief through scientific, logical, and methodological approaches. The article also shows that kalam theology historically emerged in response to ideological and philosophical challenges facing Muslim society. Throughout history, Muslim theologians defended Islamic creed through rational and textual arguments while maintaining harmony between reason and revelation.

Furthermore, kalam theology offers a balanced understanding of the relationship between science and faith. Muslim theologians acknowledged the importance of scientific inquiry while simultaneously recognizing the methodological limitations of empirical science in addressing metaphysical truths. In particular, the Maturidi methodology based on the integration of reason and revelation provides an important intellectual framework for addressing contemporary ideological challenges. It strengthens conscious faith, critical thinking, and ideological resilience. Therefore, kalam theology remains not merely a historical intellectual heritage but also an essential methodological system capable of preserving theological stability, strengthening ideological immunity, and harmonizing scientific thought with religious belief in the modern world.

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