The Role of Muslim Ontology in Defining a Schema of Causes and Means of Healing

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• Various understandings of existence (ontology) and how we gain knowledge (epistemology) about it

• Muslim and modern medical ontological understandings

• Serve as a foundation for a schema of causes and means of healing.

• Comparing ontological frameworks facilitates a clearer understanding of the agent and means of bringing about healing.
Agenda

• Background – Islamic Doctrine
• Muslim Ontology
• Schema of Healing based on ontology
• Case example - Fever of unknown origin
Based on three foundational declarations
• Only One Supreme Being and Creator (monotheism/\textit{tawheed})
• The Finality of Prophethood in the person of Muhammad
• The reality of the Last Day (of Judgment)
Background - The Doctrine of Monotheism

- Allah’s existence is eternal and necessary
- He has beautiful and magnificent names and attributes that are eternal
- Nothing is binding on Him
• Allah reveals His Word to human beings whom He appoints as messengers and prophets
• Prophets are role models for other human beings in matters of worship; moral conduct and following the Divine Law. Prophets are infallible.
• Allah appointed thousands of prophets – Muhammad being the last
• The revealed word is known as *Wahi* (revelation). Prophets are obligated to follow *Wahi* in all matters that are pertinent to salvation
Background - Doctrine of the Last Day in Islam

- All human beings will be resurrected (physically according to the Sunnis)
- All human beings will be judged in some way or another by Allah Himself. Allah decides on everyone’s salvation.
- The purpose of *wahi* (revelation) to prophets is to inform human beings what is necessary and pertinent to their salvation
Agenda

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realm of Existence</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lahoot (Creator)</td>
<td>Absolute and Eternal Divine existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malakoot (Creation)</td>
<td>World of spirits (arwaah) and other celestial beings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mithal (Creation)</td>
<td>World of non-physical forms and similitudes; Isthmus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ajsaam (Creation)</td>
<td>World of physical bodies (detectable)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
An Islamic theological perspective defines Allah as the One who heals:

‘And when I (Abraham) become sick, then He (Allah) heals me’ (Surah Al-Shu’ara, 26/80)

Healing comes from Absolute and Eternal Divine existence (Lahoot)

-- Primary concern is ‘how’ does one attract divine attention to heal one’s illness
Means of Healing - Prophets as Role Models

- Ayyub (Job)
  - *Tawakkul*
  - Perfect trust in Allah and reliance on Him alone
- Jesus - the perfect healer
  - Given leave by Allah to heal without conventional means of healing
Means of Healing - Prophets as Role Models

Prophet Muhammad

• Tawakkul (Lahoot)
  • Advised patients to be patient
  • Active, not passive – may not result in cure
• Seeking Divine assistance for cure
  • Dua (supplication); Sadaqaah (charity)
• Seeking human assistance for cure
  • Incantations; Amulets (Traditional healers)
  • Counseling; Meditation
  • Medications; Surgery
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Fever of Unknown Origin

*Defined* in 1961 by Petersdorf and Beeson as the following:

- A temperature greater than 38.3°C (101°F) on several occasions,
- More than 3 weeks' duration of illness, and
- Failure to reach a diagnosis despite 1 week of inpatient investigation

*How does a Muslim patient seek healing?*
Applying Ontology-based Means of Healing

- Tawakkul (Lahoot)
  - Patient is patient
- Seeking Divine assistance for cure
  - Dua (supplication) with certainty that Allah will cure
  - Sadaqaah - good works interceding
- Seeking human assistance for cure
  - Diagnostic testing
  - Medications – empiric treatment
  - Traditional healers - Incantations; Amulets
Differing ontological understandings inform how one understands ‘who’ heals and ‘how’ to seek healing. Healthcare providers may view patients relying on ‘non-physical’ means as passive or fatalistic. Understanding alternate ontologies may broaden this view and facilitate enhanced communications. Important not to play role of Allah, Allah heals; others given Allah’s leave to heal such as Jesus. Need for Allah’s leave for means to heal. What is the threshold to try empiric treatment?
Any Questions?
Back-up Slides
Muslim Ontology

- Belief in Allah
- Belief in Muhammad
- Belief in Afterlife

- Lahout
- Malakout
- Mithal
- Nasout
Muslims believe there are four major sources of (salvational) knowledge in Islam:

1. The Quran (also referred to as recited Wahi)
2. The Sunnah or known practice of the Prophet Muhammad (also known as non-recited Wahi)
3. Ijmaa’ or the consensus of Muslim scholars
4. Qiyas or legal analogy

Muslim theologians and jurists look into all four sources for evidence and inspiration
Wilāyah (authority and governance) and its implications for Islamic bioethics: a Sunni Māturīdi perspective

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Supporting evidence</th>
<th>Level of obligation</th>
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</table>
| **Fard**         | Conclusive textual and contextual evidence from Qur'an, Sunnah, and/or *ijmāʿ* that the action is rewarded in the hereafter | 1. To perform the action  
2. To believe that the action is an obligation                                          |
| **Harām**        | Conclusive textual and contextual evidence from Qur'an, Sunnah, and/or *ijmāʿ* that the action is punishable in the hereafter | 1. To avoid the action  
2. To believe that the action is forbidden                                                    |
| **Wajib**        | Conclusive textual or contextual evidence, but not both, from Qur'an, Sunnah, and/or *ijmāʿ* that the action is rewarded in the hereafter | 1. To perform action  
2. Not required to believe that the action is an obligation                                |
| **Makrūh Tahrīmi** | Conclusive textual or contextual evidence, but not both, from Qur'an, Sunnah, and/or *ijmāʿ* that the action is punishable in the hereafter | 1. To avoid action  
2. Not required to believe that the action is forbidden                                              |
| **Mustaḥab**     | Textual evidence from the Sunnah suggests that the action is rewarded                                         | 1. Encouraged to perform action  
2. Not required to believe that the action is an obligation                                               |
| **Makrūh Tanzāhi** | Textual evidence from the Sunnah suggests that the action is reprehensible                                     | 1. Discouraged to perform action  
2. Not required to believe that the action is forbidden                                                 |
| **Mubah**        | Inconclusive evidence that the action is rewarded or punished                                                | 1. No obligation to perform or avoid action                                                                 |

* This classification system is based on a Ḥanafi Māturīdi construct