



The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist

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Islam's Intellectual Suicide—and the Threat to Us All

People are shocked and frightened by the behavior coming out the Islamic world—not only because it is violent, but also because it is seemingly inexplicable. While there are many answers to the question of “what went wrong” in the Muslim world, no one has decisively answered *why* it went wrong. Until now.

In this eye-opening new book, foreign policy expert Robert R. Reilly uncovers the root of our contemporary crisis: a pivotal struggle waged within the Muslim world nearly a millennium ago. In a heated battle over the role of reason, the side of *irrationality* won. The deformed theology that resulted, Reilly reveals, produced the spiritual pathology of Islamism, and a deeply dysfunctional culture.

Terrorism—from 9/11, to London, Madrid, and Mumbai, to the Christmas 2009 attempted airline bombing—is the most obvious manifestation of this crisis. But Reilly shows that the pathology extends much further. *The Closing of the Muslim Mind* solves such puzzles as:

- why peace is so elusive in the Middle East
- why the Arab world stands near the bottom of every measure of human development
- why scientific inquiry is nearly dead in the Islamic world
- why Spain translates more books in a single year than the entire Arab world has in the past *thousand* years
- why some people in Saudi Arabia still refuse to believe man has been to the moon
- why Muslim media frequently present natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina as God's direct retribution

Delving deeper than previous polemics and simplistic analyses, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind* provides the answers the West has so desperately needed in confronting the Islamist crisis.

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

"The lack of liberty within Islam is a huge problem. Robert Reilly's *The Closing of the Muslim Mind* shows that a millennium ago Muslims debated whether minds should be free to explore the world—and freedom

lost. The intellectual history he offers helps to explain why Muslim countries fell behind Christian-based ones in scientific inquiry, economic development, and technology. Reilly provides astonishing statistics . . . [and] also points out how theology prefigures politics."

—*World Magazine*

"As Robert R. Reilly points out in *The Closing of the Muslim Mind* . . . the Islamic conception of God as pure will, unbound by reason and unknowable through the visible world, rendered any search for cause and effect in nature irrelevant to Muslim societies over centuries, resulting in slipshod, dependent cultures. Reilly notes, for example, that Pakistan, a nation which views science as automatically impious given its view that an arbitrary God did not imprint upon nature a rational order worth investigating, produces almost no patents."

—*American Spectator*

"What happened to moderate Islam and what sort of hope we may have for it in the future is the subject of Robert Reilly's brilliant and groundbreaking new book. *The Closing of the Muslim Mind* is a page-turner that reads almost like an intellectual detective novel...One thing Reilly's account makes clear: Only when we move beyond the common platitudes of our contemporary political discussion and begin to deal with Islam as it really is — rather than the fiction that it is the equivalent of our Western culture dressed up in a burqa — will we be able to help make progress in that direction." — *National Review Online*

The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Details

Date : Published May 17th 2010 by Intercollegiate Studies Institute

ISBN : 9781933859910

Author : Robert R. Reilly

Format : Hardcover 240 pages

Genre : History, Religion, Islam, Philosophy, Nonfiction, Politics, Cultural, Theology

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Razi says

A small book but full of half-forgotten historical details bringing back memories that just would not go away. The debate between al-Ghazali and Averroes on philosophy and its place in religion shows a dynamic picture of a lively intellectual tradition. Although al-Ghazali was "declared" the winner of this debate, this did not bode good for either of the two. al Ghazali gave up on theology as a science and branch of knowledge and turned to suffism (he had been a great philosopher in his youth, a greater theologian in his middle years, the principal of the Nazamia university in Baghdad) only to renounce it all and turn to God as a suffi. Avcenna was banished from Cordoba and his books were publicly burned. His writings disappeared from the Islamic world only to resurface in the West. He brought Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas who, in turn, reconciled Christianity with the Greek philosophy and helped the West gain a perfect balance during the Renaissance.

Right from the outset the distinction between 'Islam' and 'Islamism' is clearly maintained. Islamism is the worship of pure power, "God's Will" as opposed to his justice. According to author this worship of power has seeped into the very foundations of certain societies supporting totalitarian regimes at the cost of human development and contribution.

Reilly's conclusion is good and balanced although he reaches it after going through alternative scenarios including a nuclear holocaust turning the whole world in a wasteland, "man into one of the living dead, a scorched land." Quite a lot of the passages (including the one just quoted) are from author's research into rationalist voices from the Islamic world.

I think this is the crux of the problem: representation. Since al Ghazali's time theologians made the best use of the channels of communication available to them, the pulpit or the mosque. Soon Islamic theology ossified into Islamism of the Wahabis with its political connotations and thirst for and access to power (started in Saudi Arabia, now they are everywhere). Reason (philosophy) was totally side-lined. Mongol invasion, the sack of Baghdad and Kharasan and the Reconquista of al Andalusia did not help either. While theology without reason degenerated into mullahism that we see running riots everywhere, philosophy and rationalism just curled up and fell dormant in the absence of any channel of communication and representation.

About Reilly's conclusion: he calls for a "recovery of reason" thoroughly grounded in revelation. "Reason raises questions that it cannot answer, and revelation's answers cannot be understood without reason. Divorcing reason from faith (the current crisis of the West) or faith from reason (the crisis of Islam) leads to catastrophe; they should be in partnership."

Michael Connolly says

About the Author: The author is a fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council in Washington, D.C. He was director of Voice of America from 2001 to 2002. He has a master's degree in political science from Claremont Graduate School.

Overview: This book is about how Islam turned away from reason and embraced religious dogmatism. The

author explains at the outset that this book is a history of Sunni, and not Shia, Islamic theology. He mentions Shia theology only briefly. Much of the history of Islamic theology is about reason versus revelation. During the development of modern Christianity, Saint Thomas Aquinas was successful in reforming dogmatic Christianity by tempering it with Greek Aristotelian philosophy. Similar efforts in the Islamic world were met with greater opposition, as chronicled in this book.

Free Will vs. Determinism: In the early days of Islam, there were the Qadariyya, who believed in free will, and the Jabariyya, who were determinists. The Jabariyya believed that God controls man's actions. When Muslims say insha' Allah (God willing), they are expressing the theological doctrine that God controls everything that happens.

Metaphysics of the Quran: Another important issue in Islamic theology is whether the Qur'an has always existed, or was created by the prophet Mohammad. The more mystical Islamic thinkers believed that the Qur'an has always existed in Heaven, and that all the Prophet Mohammad and his disciples did was write it down in material form. The more rational Islamic thinkers believe that the Qur'an was created by the Prophet Mohammad based upon divine inspiration.

Mu'tazilite Theology: Wasil ibn 'Ata (700 A.D. –748 A.D.) founded the Mu'tazilite school of Islamic theology, based on the earlier Qadariyya school. The Mu'tazilite school was strongly influenced by Aristotle and believed in reason. The Mu'tazilites believed that God is not only power, but is also reason and justice. On the issue of time and the Qu'ran, the Mu'tazilite teaching was that the Qur'an was created in time, and not eternal. Baghdad Caliph al-Ma'mun (813 A.D. – 833 A.D.) supported the Mu'tazilites. We know about the Mu'tazilites from Abd al-Jabbar, who wrote *Book of the Five Fundamentals*.

Caliph Ja'afar al-Mutawakkil and ibn Hanbal: Caliph Ja'afar al-Mutawakkil (847 A.D. – 861 A.D.) outlawed the Mu'tazilite school of Islamic philosophy. It became illegal to copy or sell Mu'tazilite books. This Caliph also freed Ahmad ibn Hanbal from jail. Ahmad ibn Hanbal was a critic of Mu'tazilite theology and the founder of the most literalist school of Islamic jurisprudence (Hanbali). Persia took in the Mu'tazilites refugees from Arab lands. Eastern Persia (which was Shia) was more tolerant of the Mu'tazilites, than was orthodox Sunni Islam. By the end of the Abbasid Age, Mu'tazilism existed only near the Caspian Sea and Yemen.

Ash'arites: Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari (874 A.D. – 936 A.D.) was the founder of the Ash'arite school of Sunni theology. The Ash'arites objected to philosophy, because it implied that the human mind could understand reality without the need of scripture. The Ash'arite school eventually defeated the Mu'tazilite school. The Ash'ari believed that:

- God is power and will, unknowable, arbitrary, and not teleological
- There is no connection between cause and effect
- There are no natural laws
- Everything that happens is a miracle, because its cause is an unknowable God
- There is no restraint on God's omnipotence: God is not obligated to do good
- The Qu'ran is eternal, and was not created at some point in time
- God cannot be just if he allows men the free will to choose evil, therefore there must be no free will

Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina: Al-Ghazali (born in Tus in Iran in 1058 A.D.) was a Muslim theologian who wrote *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, a criticism of the earlier attempts to incorporate Greek rationality into Islam. In particular, he criticized Ibn Sina (980 A.D. – 1037 A.D.) the Persian philosopher and physician, whose Westernized name is Avicenna. Al-Ghazali favored Sufi mysticism over reason, because reason sometimes made mistakes. Al-Ghazali was responsible for incorporating Sufism into Sunni orthodoxy. Al-Ghazali terminated the influence of Greek philosophy on Islam.

Ibn Rushd: Ibn Rushd (Western name: Averroës) was a Spanish Andalusian Muslim who wrote a criticism of Al-Ghazali called *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*. In 1195 in Cordoba 108 of Averroës's books were burned. Averroës had his main impact in Europe, not in the Arab world.

Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab: Ibn Taymiyya (1263 A.D. -1328 A.D.) feared that scholastic theology (kalam) would lead to atheism. Ibn Taymiyya was even more opposed to reason than was Al-Ghazali. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703 A.D. –1792 A.D.), the founder of Wahhabism, was a follower of Ibn Taymiyya.

Four Main Sunni Legal Schools

- Imam Al-Shafi'i
- Abu Hanifa
- Ahmad ibn Hanbal
- Malik ibn Anas

Jurisprudence: Current Islamic scholarship is about jurisprudence not theology. The theological issues are regarded as being settled. All that needs to be discussed is how to interpret the Qur'an's rules regarding proper behavior and how these rules should be enforced. The jurist Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi classified human actions into five groups:

- Obligatory
- Recommended
- Permitted
- Discouraged
- Forbidden

Legacy

- The result of rejecting reason has been the curtailment of economic development in the world of Islam. Excluding oil, the entire Arab Middle East exports less than Finland.
 - The main obstacle to democracy in Arab countries is not dictators but rather Islamic epistemology (opposition to reason).
-

Peter says

This is a book that reminds us to ignore history is folly. Recent events have proved that more so. Whenever I hear commentators talk, or opine about clearly Islamist terror; I want to holler, read the book you a**holes. History repeats itself. First, as farce then tragedy.

Tim Fountain says

Don't let the title fool you. This is not some predictable anti-Muslim screed.

It is a scholarly book about the history of Islamic thought. In fact, the author dedicates the book to "courageous men and women throughout the Muslim world." He is well read and the quotes are mainly primary Muslim sources, both classical and contemporary. Reilly also knows and defines key terms from Arabic.

What the book shows is Western ignorance of and blindness toward the forces driving what Reilly terms

"Islamism" today. By the 10th century, forms of Islam that were able to engage and even incorporate the insights of other cultures - Greek philosophy in particular - were suppressed by those who (my summary on my terms, not necessarily Reilly's) limited God to their experience of the desert. Their god was a pure will, not mindful of people, doing whatever and not accountable to any reasonable expectations. Because this god was pure will with no reasonable or moral attributes, Islamism sees violence as normal and necessary to forcing people (including large segments of the Muslim population) to submit to... there's the rub. To sharia, the law which God supposedly revealed to Mohammed and his "companions," because God is unknowable and only blind submission to the law imposed by his Prophet and the Prophet's successors will do.

The upshot is that many of our Western assumptions about how to respond to Islamism are flawed. Liberal assumptions about "improving the material conditions" of Muslim countries ignore the core theological imperatives driving the violence. Neo-conservative ideas about "building democracies" fly in the face of deeply embedded religious assumptions that man-made institutions are inherently blasphemous and must be destroyed. And reactionary calls to ban Muslim immigration wind up sacrificing the safety of many Muslims who hold to the older, broader forms of thought and might be agents of moderation.

Reilly writes with great clarity, considering the depth of the subject matter. But have your thinking cap on. This is a book of big ideas from philosophy, theology and history.

Daniel says

This book is a serious page turner; I can't recommend it enough. Reilly argues that a defected view of God, as articulated by the Ash'rites during the medieval times, has won the day. Two deadly doctrines concern a radical voluntarism and occasionalism. Reilly traces the pernicious effects these doctrines have had on the Muslim world to the present day.

Joel Zartman says

This book sets out to answer the question: what happened to Islam to make it such an enormous problem today? The author's strategy is to explain what happened so that we can go on to make a correct diagnosis. Islam has been voided of reason (dehellenized) and as a result turned into an ideology: Islamism. "Islamism is grounded in a spiritual pathology based upon a theological deformation that has produced a dysfunctional culture. Therefore the problem must be addressed at the level at which it exists."

Roger Scruton says in the Foreword: "In his celebrated treatise *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, al-Ghazali set out to show that reason, as enshrined in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and their followers, leads to nothing save darkness and contradiction, and that the only light that shines in the mind of man is the light of revelation." The result was incoherence. If you drive out good philosophy, your only alternative is bad philosophy. If you decide that God is not on the side of reason, the you have to be irrational.

The spiritual pathology is to ratchet up a high view of God by degrading man excessively. No man can think. Man is not made to think, but to obey. Man must submit to God even by refusing to reason. The theological deformation is Voluntarism and philosophical occasionalism. There is no such thing as cause and effect: things follow because God arbitrarily wills them at every moment. We cannot know him, we cannot understand him, we can only submit. The dysfunctional culture is one in which power and authority are one, all inquiry into anything is discouraged, and the resulting degradation of life is resented. It can't be blamed on God, it must be blamed on incomplete submission.

To me, al-Ghazali sounds like presuppositionalism, which is why I read the book. It is far more interesting than reading stuff by presuppositionalists.

'Izzat Radzi says

"Dalam mendapat ide-ide baru, bacalah buku yang kamu musuhi ideanya"
- Requote dari Black Swan, NNT

Buku ini sebahagian besarnya adalah berkaitan perbincangan teologi yang telah mendasar dalam komuniti/umat islam, dengan sedikit sebanyak sejarah dua aliran dari masa dahulu yang berdebat mengenai penggunaan aqal dalam islam, iaitu aliran Mu'tazila/Jabbariah dan Asha'irah/Hanbaliah/Wahabi (dalam konotasi Negara Arab). Dan diakhiri dengan kaitannya dalam negara Arab Islam moden dari segi politik dan perkara sekitarnya.

Penulis di satu bab memberikan parameter kemunduran dengan membandingkan karya-karya yang ditulis, jumlah karya yang diterjemah dan karya-karya saintifik.

Namun, hal ini saya kira turut bergantung kepada faktor lain, seperti peruntukan belanjawan, budaya intelegentsia dalam masyarakat dll (isu ini kompleks).

Penulis menukikan bahawa disebabkan karya al-Ghazali Tahafut al Falasifa itu (dan karya Abu Hasan Asha'ari) diangkat dalam dunia Islam, ia sejurusnya membawa kepada penolakan aqal dalam menginterpretasi teks agama. Hal ini kerana, penulis berhujah bahawa dogma dari alGhazali ialah antaranya kebenaran sesuatu dicapai dengan 'kenaikan maqam' (transcend state). Maka, aqal (reason) malah wahyu (revelation) seolah tidak lagi penting (dan hal ini perlu saya selidiki dahulu).

Namun di sini, saya sedikit bermasalah dengan argumennya; kerana dalam disiplin ilmu islam, hadith misalnya, sememangnya ada usul diraya yang menilai hadith nabi dalam erti kata logikanya dengan apa yang berlaku, sama ada hadith tersebut secara bersendirian atau bertentangan nilainya dengan hadith yang lebih utama/berautoriti (dari sudut sanad misalnya).

Dan saya juga sedikit bermasalah bila wacana aqal dalam islam sebelum pertengahan buku ini seolah-olah aqal yang paling utama sehingga menolak/membelakangkan nas/teks utama dalam ugama. Namun, isu ini diselesaikan bila penulis menulis akan insiden-insiden fatwa yang pelik, atau soalan-soalan yang pelik yang membawa kepada fatwa yang pelik -yang sedikit sebanyak memberi sisi pandang penolakan penggunaan penaakulan (aqal) dalam pertimbangan & penerimaan ideologi taqlid buta (sehingga isu mudah pun perlu fatwa)- khususnya di daerah negara Arab. Ini saya tinggalkan dahulu.

Kembali kepada al-Ghazali, dengan sebab itu, penulis berhujah dalam dunia Islam ia membawa kepada taqlid buta dan penutupan pintu Ijtihad terhadap perkara/isu baru.

Hal ini dilihat dalam karya al-Ghazali tentang sufisma, yang menghujahkan tiada apa yang boleh meyakinkan seseorang melainkan wahyu (revelation). Agak menarik (atau mengejutkan), penulis turut mencatat budaya membelakangkan nas (pensyariatan); "The Ulema observed certain Sufis exempting themselves from the ritual observances of Islam with the excuse that they had transcended such rituals". Saya tidak pasti kenapa ini ditulis, sama ada ia jelas dalam budaya Sufisme, atau beliau hanya pilih bulu (cherry-picked).

Juga saya ingin tegaskan, hujah penulis boleh dipertikaikan bila hanya membawa wacana kemunduran Islam hanya di Timur Tengah (hanya dikhususkan Arab), kerana negara Islam tidak hanya di sana (dan saya apologetik disini).

Malah, telah biasa dalam perjumpaan persatuan Islam di peringkat Antarabangsa negara Islam yang lain

menempelak negara-negara Arab yang tidak bersatu dan tidak habis-habis berperang sesama sendiri.

Dan cara untuk reformasi atau maju ke hadapan, nukil penulis hanyalah dengan cara "claim a more authentic understanding of Islamic scripture than the one which the ruling order is based" (Chapt 6, Decline and Consequences).

Juga inilah yang cuba dibuat oleh beberapa reformer yang beliau nukilkan, yang hanya diakhiri dengan dibuang (exiled) atau dipulaukan pandangan mereka. Hal ini juga berlaku kepada beberapa ilmuan Islam, yang menurut penulis, tidak patut diangkat oleh negara Islam ini sebagai penyumbang dalam ketamadunan seperti Ibn Rush (Averroes), Al-Farabi dan Ibn Sina (Avicenna) kerana dizaman mereka berkarya, ironinya karya mereka diharamkan dan dibakar. Juga tidak pelik melihatkan kerana kewujudan aliran yang berbeza, maka mereka ingin mempertahankan kesucian ideologi dari dicemari.

Berbalik semula kepada perbincangan teologi tadi, penulis membawa pembaca ke perbahasan dogma menerima bulat-bulat (taqlid) yang membawa kepada penolakan vaksin (kerana disebabkan penolakan aqal, lalu yang hanya tinggal adalah teori-teori konspirasi) dan radikal Islam. "Conspiracy theories are the intellectual currencies of an irrational world. Muslims are transformed from actors into victims - usually of some Jewish or Western conspiracy." (Chap 6)

Dan kepercayaan teologi ini membawa kepada penglabelan orang lain yang tidak sebulu, yang nampak jelas di dunia Islam hari ini dan apologetik pula terhadap diri sendiri jika bala menimpa diri sendiri tetapi menjadi tuhan bila ia menimpa orang lain!

"non-conformists dare to challenge this self-assumed religious authorities in Islam by presenting a rational or alternative interpretations of their faith are invariably branded as apostates, heretics, and non-believers." (Chap 6)

Sedangkan, perkara-perkara ini boleh sahaja berbeza kerana interpretasi berbeza, posisi dan sudut pandang politik dll.

Kembali kepada radikal Islam. Penulis beragumen bahawa titik tolaknya adalah dari Ibn Taimiyah, Muhammad Abduh, Maududi dan beberapa tokoh reformasi yang lain.

Dan orientasi mereka, yang berkehendakkan akan perubahan, diujahkan sama dengan fascism dan communism. "Bernard Lewis suggests it was because of these ideologies were anti-Western and anti-Christi, but also because 'the ideologies and social strategies that were being offered corresponded in many ways much more closely to both the realities and the traditions of the regions'".

Adalah pelik kerana, contohnya, Ibn Taimiyah adalah antara tokoh yang bila dilihat, sangat mengutamakan aqal (reason) dalam mendepani isu baru, malah membuka pintu ijtihad.

Dan celah mana pula Abduh sealiran dengan wahabiah? Pfftt, beliau reformer tetapi beliau sufi!

Malah, Abduh yang mempertikaikan kurangnya pengajaran teologi dan falsafah (kalam), apabila ditanya oleh Ulama konservatif Azhar "...asking if he had given up Asha'rite teaching to follow the Mu'tazilite,"

Abduh menjawab, "If I give up blind acceptance (taqlid) of Asha'rite doctrine, why should I take up blind acceptance of the Mu'tazilte?" (Chap 7, The Wreckage : Muslim Testimonials)

Sekali lagi, isu ini saya tinggalkan dahulu untuk meneruskan bacaan lain.

Kedua, penulis berhujah dari penulis al Qaeda yang mengatakan, "What threatens the future of Islam, in fact its very survival is American Democracy." Beliau juga menukikan perkara hampir sama dengan Jihadis Palestin. Disini boleh dibantah hujahnya. Tidakkah beliau perhatikan apa yang dimaksudkan dengan istilah 'American Democracy' itu, di zaman yang mana negara-negara telah mempunyai kedaulatan tersendiri dan pentadbiran tersendiri, namun negara Amerika masih

sesuka hati masuk ke negara lain, meruntuhkan negara tersebut dalam skala besar dari segi pentadbiran, pendidikan, ekonomi lalu pulang setelah merenggut segala isi bumi? Tidakkah penulis memerhatikan isu Palestin-Israel yang kompleks, yang rundingan seseolah tidak mungkin, kerana teologi dalam pembinaan negara Israel itu sendiri? Juga, hujah-hujahnya yang diquote dari ucapan atau tulisan pemimpin tertentu,

semestinya harus dilihat dari konteks ucapan politikus, yang hanya ingin membangkitkan semangat atau mencari kader-kader baru tanpa mengambil kira kesan jangka panjang. Semestinya saya melihat dari sudut berbeza dan disini berlaku sedikit tidak adil terhadap penulis, yang mencoretkan sudut pandanginya. Namun, ini (counter-argument) tidak sama sekali bermakna saya menyokong radikal Islam, bahkan saya menentanginya. Cuma, saya tidak diyakinkan dengan hujah penulis di sini.

Berbalik kepada isu penafsiran dan ijtihad, hal yang kompleks pula berlaku di Malaysia. Kebanyakan kalinya, penafsiran sesuatu ayat dibuat atau tidak berdasarkan keperluan (dan juga siapa). Maka, kerap kali umat Islam di Malaysia dipolemikkan dengan Wahabiah-Salafiyah (yang berbeza konotasi dengan wacana di atas) dengan Asha'irah-Sufi, termasuk mengatakan apa yang orang tidak kata (putting words in other's mouth). "There are notable Muslim thinkers who wish to do so and who are struggling to find the public space within which to make the effort. Unfortunately, the ideas gaining traction today are not theirs. That is the crisis" (Chap 9, The Crisis) Tanpa memanjangkan polemik ini, saya berhenti di sini.

Perkara ini sewajibnya ditekuni lagi dengan lebih mendalam. Dan sebagai anak muda, saya akui revidu ini sebahagian besarnya dangkal atau cetek sekali telahannya. Semoga bacaan selanjutnya akan menemukan hujah yang lebih kuat, dengan teknik membaca yang lebih baik.

Bacaan lanjutan dari buku :

Al Ghazali - The Incoherence of Philosophers
Averroes (Ibn Rush) - The Incoherence of the Incoherence
Fazlur Rahman - Revival and Reform in Islam
George Hourani - Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics

Bacaan lanjutan luar :

Mohd Zaidi Ismail - Aqal Dalam Islam: Satu Tinjauan Epistemologi
Ahmad Wahib - Pergolakan Pemikiran Islam : Catatan Harian Ahmad Wahib
Adian Husaini - Filsafat Ilmu : Perspektif Barat dan Islam
Abdul Rahman Abdullah - Wacana Falsafah Sejarah : Perspektif Barat dan Timur

Allama Iqbal - The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam
Abdolkarim Soroush - Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam : Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush
Talal Asad, Judith Butler etc - Is Critique Secular : Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech
Cafer S. Yaran - Islamic Thought on the Existence of God: Contributions and Contrasts With Contemporary Western Philosophy of Religion
Majid Fakhry - A History of Islamic Philosophy
Etienne Gilson - Reason & Revelation in the Middle Ages

Kristin Zahra Sands - Sufis Commentaries on the Quran in Classical Islam
Diana Lobel - Between Mysticism and Philosophy : Sufi Language of Religious Experiences in Judah Ha-Levi's Kuzari
Frank Griffel - Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology
Farouk Mitha - Al-Ghazali and the Ismailis: A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam
Muhammad Ali Aziz - Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam: Theology and Sufism in Yemen

terms of "Cause and Effect" method, which are alien terms to them because of destructive Ash'arite philosophy they adopted centuries ago which destroyed their faculty of thinking rationally and thrust them into blind alley. Muslim destruction came when it became heresy and apostasy to think rationally and in terms of logic and rational laws. This wrecking machine still continues to roll until some reformer alter the path and revive the rational thinking in the Muslim thought. Till then Muslim mind will remain "Closed".

Steven Hull says

How much do we know about Islam? Do we always associate Middle Eastern terrorism with radical Islam? What about those who say Islam is not in itself inhumane and violent? They claim that a few radicals give Islam a bad name because they use religion as an excuse for the violent subjugation of others. They have politicized and warped Islam for their own purposes. In *Closing of the Muslim Mind*, Robert Reilly claims that the foundation of today's radical Islam is religious and was established between the 9th and 12th centuries. During the course of this three-century long struggle, an inherently anti-western, aggressive, violent brand of Islam, Sunni Islam, triumphed. This victory insured incompatibility with western religious and intellectual thought and is the foundation, today, for the life and death struggle between what Reilly calls Islamism and the west.

Much of the book is a journey through the development of Islam from the 8th century onward. Those that most influenced the creation of belief systems and the translation of those systems into the economic, legal, and political foundations of the ancient and modern Arab world are discussed. We are introduced to the Mu'tazilites or rationalists. The Mu'tazilite religious scholars believed in a God and religion markedly influenced by Hellenic philosophy and rationalist thought. They believed God had revealed the Qur'an to man. He was a knowable, rational God that created a world governed by reason that man could know and discover. This was also a loving God that would not deceive or trick man, one whose actions were for the most part rational. Faith was important, but so was reason.

For three centuries, tension existed between these scholars and the traditionalists known as the Ash'arites. The Ash'arites believed in a much different God. He was not knowable by man because to believe this was to challenge His omnipotence. His governing of the world did not have to make sense and could be arbitrary. Every thing was predestined. He revealed things to man, man discovered nothing, and rationalist thought was discarded. His will was absolute. Mysticism and myth replaced reason. Every moment for everything in the world was governed by the will of God. A man did not throw a rock. Rather, God willing, a man would throw a rock. Hellenic thought was rejected and along with it rationalism, western philosophy, and modern scientific thought. By the end of the 12th century, this reactionary, conservative branch of Islam came to dominate the Arab world. It still does today and is known as Sunni Islam.

What did this turn of events lead to? As the western world increasingly embraced rationalism, science, and technology the Sunni Arab world remained mired in the ways of the 12th century. Sunni Islam's jurisprudential scholars, or ulema, became dominant. In a chaotic world governed by God's will, they developed the moral codes governing daily life. There was zero tolerance for deviation from God's will, ensuring a religious reign of absolutism and totalitarianism; and aggressive intolerance was shown towards non-Sunni religions and belief systems.

In Chapter 7 Reilly describes the world created by radical Sunni Islam as "The Wreckage" and in it and the subsequent two chapters chronicles the incompatibility of this brand of Islam and the modern world. For example, Pakistan has had eight patents in the last forty-three years—single individuals in the west have more. Spain and Italy each produce more of the world's annual scientific literature than forty-six Muslim countries. The decline of Islam, from being one of the world's leading civilizations, is seen as God's punishment for the loss of faith. The answer? Purge all that is new and firmly reestablish the old ways of life

in a new Caliphate. Any country or individuals that disagree must be destroyed. Force and brutality are acceptable means to accomplish this end. There is no compromise, no reasoning out of differences, and no co-existence with infidels.

If Reilly is right and religion governs all that is evil in today's Islam, a battle of extinction between Islam and the west is inevitable. Yet, is this the only context for understanding Islam? Others claim radical Islam or Islamism is religious veneer for many radical groups. Their motivation is power, control, and wealth, not religion. The most obvious example is ISIS. With money and weapons a small number of Islamists may create chaos that camouflages their true size in relation to the rest of the Islamic world. The west must be careful to distinguish Islamism from Islam. Every Islamic person is not a jihadist. Many are trying to modernize Islam. Hatred of the west is a well-publicized attribute of the Islamists, but the reality is they will never invade or control western countries. Reilly's book provides a framework for understanding this centuries old brand of radical Islam, which has proven it can disrupt and kill. It is important for westerner's to understand how radical and extreme Islamism is, but also acknowledge it is a movement of small numbers that is containable.

Fabrício Tavares De Moraes says

Essa obra sucinta porém de densidade invejável traça as origens filosóficas e teológicas da crise política, moral e espiritual que o mundo muçulmano hoje enfrenta. Citando amplamente as obras de Al-Ghazali, de Al-Kindi, de Averróis, assim como o pensamento dos asháritas (que lamentavelmente terminou triunfando no pensamento do Islão) e dos mutazilitas, Reilly demonstra como o islamismo -- a atual ideologia que surgiu dentro do Islão e que fomenta o aspecto revolucionário -- é o fruto espúrio de uma combinação entre o ocasionalismo, o império da vontade e a ruptura epistemológica entre causa e efeito (todos resultados de uma percepção teológica equivocada que rejeita a razão) e das ideologias modernas ocidentais, as quais foram assimiladas por líderes como Hassan al Banna, Maududi e especialmente Sayyid Qutb, e transformadas em forças catalisadoras para a imposição brutal de uma agenda que, como todas as ideologias, visa o estabelecimento do "paraíso" na terra.

Darius says

Well documented study of the treatment of reason by Islamic intellectuals

Religions and intellectuals who say that faith is supreme, must nevertheless take a position on reason. What is the interplay between reason and faith? Are they opposites? Do they address separate spheres of life? Is reason efficacious, and -- if so -- to what extent? This book documents the debates of two key Islamic intellectuals -- Ibn Rushd and Al-Ghazali -- supporting and denying a role for reason. Unfortunately, Ibn Rushd, the Aristotelean, lost the intellectual battle and his teachings became heresy. (It is ironic that Ibn Rushd played a role in bringing Aristotle to the attention of Christians, and thus a role in the opening of the Christian mind to reason, but failed to do so for his own religion.) Muslim scholars who echo Ibn Rushd's views are still at risk of persecution and exile.

The author draws a line from the anti-reason ideas and the notion of "God a pure will" to modern resurgence of Islamic extremists who seek to impose their will upon the world. He shows how the intellectuals of Al Queda and similar groups explicitly echo the anti-reason philosophy of Al-Ghazali (and of the even more anti-reason Hanbali school)

I'd have been happy with a book that was half the length, but I don't fault the author. He has done a thorough job of quoting a variety of Muslim sources and other scholars of Islam, to back his views. The topic of the book is pretty specific, but if the topic interests you this author has done a good job of taking an abstract topic and making it live.

Abubakar Mehdi says

Some might find the title of this book 'problematic' or 'condescending' but I thought it was a pretty apt title for a book that discusses the evolution of theology and religious thought in Islam. There is a plethora of literature that tries to demonise Muslims without any logically or empirically valid argument. However, this book is an exception. It tries to dig deep into the theological underpinnings of fundamentalism and fanaticism to lay bare the core principles of Muslim thought that stagnated the growth and liberalisation of Muslim social, political and religious thought. So if the reader is stubbornly persistent in believing that nothing is wrong with either Islam or Muslims, they are bound to be offended by the very title of the book. But those for whom the quest for truth and primacy of reason holds some value, this book will be an articulate and thought provoking analysis of Islamic philosophy.

Islam and Muslims are in a state of crisis right now. Educated and liberal minded youths are deserting the faith because it simply doesn't appeal to them anymore. Some of its tenets are incongruent with the realities of science and modern life. So while some have deserted it for a life of scepticism, many still hold on to these beliefs. And these conservative Muslims give precedence to faith over reason and modernity. Robert Reilly believes that there was a point in history when it all changed. A point where reason was defeated by faith. This book discusses that very turning point from where the Islamic Civilization started its descent from the zenith of progress and modernity to fundamentalism and intellectual stagnation.

When Islam was exposed to Hellenic thought after its conquests, the role of reason became the centre of debate in philosophical circles. The traditional way of thinking was confronted by the Hellenic philosophy with its rich literature and gigantic mentors. There was a need felt by the Muslim intelligentsia to re-evaluate the role of reason in the matters of faith and God.

Two groups emerged as a result of this conflict. The Mu'tazilites believed in primacy of reason and the capacity of human faculties to understand and analyse God and nature. While the Ash'arites believed that God was 'unknowable' and that reason was incapable of 'knowing' God and reality.

There are two fundamental ways to close the mind. One is to deny reason's capability of knowing anything. The other is to dismiss reality as unknowable. Reason cannot know, or there is nothing to be known. Either approach suffices in making reality irrelevant. In Sunni Islam, elements of both were employed in the Ash'arite school.

Al-Ghazali was the most significant of the Ash'arites and his opponent Averroes (Ibn e Rushd) was the leading philosopher of the Mu'tazilite school. The debate centered around the conception of God as the sole and supreme deity posed some serious questions. Mu'tazilites perceived God as the supreme fountainhead of reason, and we as his creations are hence blessed with reason and critical faculties capable of understanding him and natural phenomena. The Ash'arites deemed this to be blasphemous. According to them God was pure will and we are a result of his will. Our duty is to follow him and not to understand him. The creation, they held, cannot claim to have anything in common with the creator. This was one of the many instances where the traditional conservatism of Ash'arites confronted Mu'tazilite liberalism with regression.

For the Ash'arites, revelation was the only source of wisdom and knowledge. It was beyond our capacity to understand God or nature without the aid of revelation.

The autonomy of reason was anathema to them. Revelation was primary and supreme. In Ash'arism, as we shall see, the primacy of revelation over reason rises from the very nature of what is revealed: God as pure will and power. The response to this God is submission, not interrogation.

To inquire is to blaspheme, according to the ash'arites. God and his will cannot be scrutinized by man for it is beyond his capacity to do so. Man must only submit to the divine will.

This unsettled the Mu'tazilites. How could a God, so intelligent and all-knowing, create a man incapable of knowing and understanding Him? Surely God must have given man some ability to investigate and conceive natural order. But this line of questioning brought man too close to the critical question of 'Why' rather than 'How'. So the only way to ensure that 'man does not go astray', all inquisition into this divine phenomenology must be abandoned.

the introduction to his translation of Averroes's *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Simon Van Den Bergh quipped: "One might say that, for the [Muslim] theologian, all nature is miraculous and all miracles are natural."³⁷ In other words, every "natural" event is the result of a particular divine act. If this is true, if divine intervention is used to explain natural phenomena, then rational explanations for them or inquiries into them become forms of impiety, if not blasphemy.

Rather than accepting morality as within the reach of reason, the Ash'arites seemed to suffer from an underlying fear that if man could autonomously reach an understanding of good and evil, perhaps he might become autonomous, as well. This possibility could not be allowed, as it would directly challenge the radically contingent status of man as totally reliant on an all-powerful God. God is not "like" anything, or comparable to anything. If man could ascertain morality through his reason, he would be, in a way, God-like or in His likeness. Such a proposition was sheer shirk.

Then there was the denial of cause and effect by Ghazali. The Ash'arites viewed this Hellenic theory with great skepticism and found it inimical to the narrative of traditional religion. This complete repudiation of Greek thought led to an absurd and illogical stance that God willed everything, everywhere all the time. So God doesn't really cause anything to happen, but he "Wills" it to occur. To cause a thing to happen would be too humane and simple for the divine and it would make the divine irrelevant in the presence of natural order. So there is no natural order as per Ash'arites but a constant divine intervention that makes everything happen. From sunrise to ocean tides, from gravity to rain, everything happens because God makes it happen and not because he has put in place a system that does so. God is omnipresent and omnipotent, and his Will is the prime instigator for everything.

Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy, a Pakistani physicist and professor at Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad, said that "it was not Islamic to say that combining hydrogen and oxygen makes water. 'You were supposed to say that when you bring hydrogen and oxygen together then by the will of Allah water was created.'" The result of this obscurantist approach has left the Muslim Mind completely numb to sciences and modern reality. Scared of transgressing, a Muslim Mind must follow the rules enshrined by the traditionalists and enquire only as far as his conclusions are conforming to what he already knows through revelation.

Adonis, the great Arab poet sarcastically remarks that, “If we are slaves, we can be content and not have to deal with anything. Just as Allah solves all our problems, the dictator will solve all our problems.”

In past fourteen hundred years, Muslim civilization has utterly failed in evolving a counter narrative to confront this retardation. Today, Muslims are languishing far behind the rest of the world in Science and Philosophy. Our universities have become the new hotspots for radicalization of the youth. A cursory look at the textbooks being taught in schools would be enough to see the destructive influence that Ash’arism has had on the Muslim mind. Recently, an Arab student was awarded a PHD for his thesis that the Earth was flat. Every chapter of every science book begins with the declaration that God is the creator of the universe and all that we know for certain can only come from revelation. Then what is the point of teaching Science? Free inquiry and modern education is being sacrificed at the stake religious fanaticism. This, in Reilly’s view, a continuation of the regression that Ghazali precipitated in the Muslim Culture.

Jews comprise less than 0.2% of the world population and yet they have won the greatest number of Nobel prizes. The contribution of Jews to philosophy, medicine and every other field of modern sciences is too great to ignore. And yet Jews are adherents of a conservative religious culture. If they can manage to get past the obstacles of dogmatic belief, why have Muslims failed to do the same? My view is that there is a great emphasis on reason and critical inquiry in the Jewish culture that has made them the most prolific contributors to human prosperity and growth. While the same is lacking in the Islamic culture.

Religious extremism also finds its roots in the belief that reason is not good enough to abide by and that morality is only what religion tells us it is. The zeitgeist of the medieval age became the code for the 21st century. And the de-humanization of those who do not follow this path, regardless of what they call themselves, has led to moral sanctification of violence. And thus begins an endless circle of violence and genocide, which is not by any means unrelated to this tradition of theology.

"So long as some part of the world eludes the control of the Islamist revolutionary, conflict continues—with the dar al-harb (the abode of war)—just as perpetual revolution was proclaimed by Marxists until the complete overthrow of the bourgeois order or by the Nazis until the eradication or enslavement of inferior races. Since total control is never achieved, an excuse is always available for why the kingdom has not arrived, just as it was with the ever-receding prospects of a classless society for the Marxists. The excuse for not having achieved the utopia of God’s kingdom on earth, or of the Thousand-Year Reich, or of the classless society, is always the same, and roughly analogous: An infidel has escaped our grasp, a Jew has escaped, or a capitalist has eluded us. Thus, paradise is forever postponed, and the war continues as part of a permanent revolution. As Qutb proclaimed, “This struggle is not a temporary phase but a perpetual and permanent war.” And Hassan al-Banna said, “What I mean with jihad is the duty that will last until the Day of Resurrection.”"

Reformers in the Muslim world have a monumental and almost Insurmountable task of reforming an intellectual culture that is jealously sitting on the ashes of its dubious past.
